Learners in the West, practitioners in the East: An investigation of the teaching experiences of Chinese EFL teachers

by

Yifan Liao

B.S., Liaoning Normal University, 2015
M.S., Fordham University, 2017

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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Abstract

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This qualitative study explored the English teaching experiences of Chinese EFL teachers who received professional teacher training in a TESOL program in the United States and returned to their home country. Through phenomenological case study with purposeful and criterion-based sampling, four participants were invited to describe their lived experiences of early English learning, teacher training, and English teaching in China to develop a contextually based understanding of the phenomenon. The data sources included semi-structured interviews and documents. The sociocultural theory was used as the theoretical framework in the study.

The findings highlighted the significance of Western TESOL training on teachers in terms of broadening their horizon, developing critical perspectives on viewing the world, empowering their TESOL knowledge, practical knowledge, and themselves as EFL teachers. At the same time, the study discovered the complexity of EFL teaching, considering teachers' previous learning experiences and various contextual factors. The study will contribute to Western TESOL programs and provide implications for future practice in China.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Socorro Herrera

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, Junfeng Liu, and Nan Liao, my grandfather Baiqing Liu, who have dedicated their lives to assuring my successful life through their love for me.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Under the influence of globalization, the exponential growth of English as a global language across the world is now an international phenomenon with a broad spectrum of local impacts in areas like education, trade, tourism, and foreign relations, to name a few. More than 85% of international organizations use English officially, 85% or more of the world's film market is in English, and approximately 90% of published articles in some areas of academia, such as linguistics, are in English (Warschauer, 2000). It is unquestionably the lingua franca of the world (Ammon, 2008; Crystal, 2003) and consequently is at the center of the cultural, linguistic, educational, and sociopolitical issues structured around it. Coleman (2006) argues that "ever wider use of English is promoted through economic, political and strategic alliances, through scientific, technological and cultural cooperation, through mass media, through multinational corporations, through improved communications, and through the internationalization of professional and personal domains of activity" (p.2). The bi-directional interplay between the English language and globalization makes the complex picture even more complicated for those who want to understand the consequences of the world's linguistic landscape.

The global influx of the English language is probably best manifested in the context of English language education across the world. The importance of the English language in the educational realm is twofold: First, the English language's increased importance is ubiquitously evident in every level of the educational curricula worldwide. Second, the omnipresence of English acts as a positive feedback loop, and consequently systematically contributes to the global expansion of the language (Crystal, 2005). The English language skills are seen as essential qualities of global citizenship and considered to be vital for active participation in the

global economy and accessing the information and dissemination of knowledge that provide the basis for socio-economic development (Burns & Richards, 2009). Therefore, the global demand for English language proficiency necessitates providing a quality education for English language learners (ELL). Today, the English language is an urgent reality in the educational agenda of both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. The diverse implications of the global spread of the English language mingled with the perennial need to provide better education to ELLs worldwide emphasized the importance of teacher education. The global "triumph" of the English language necessitates ubiquitous implementations of activities related to English language teaching. As English has become an integral part of the educational curricula at all levels from kindergarten to post-doctoral levels, the growing need for well-prepared English language teachers has become evident.

The People's Republic of China (PRC), the world's most populous country, is a prominent example. China has 1.265 billion people. Among its population, China has more than 200 million users and English learners, and the number is growing (Zeegers & Zhang, 2016). Thus, it is no surprise that China has the largest population of English teachers and learners in the world. English Language Teaching (ELT) has become one of the key strategies to achieve China's modernization and global economic success. Since 1978, ELT began to expand to its status as a compulsory subject in junior and senior secondary schools and at tertiary levels. In the fall of 2001, the PRC's Ministry of Education (MOE) renewed efforts to put ELT in the primary curriculum by passing a law that required primary schools in cities and county to provide English classes. According to data from 2013, over 7,000,000 university students had continuously (and often painfully) studied English since kindergarten (Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). The number of English language learners in China is larger than the total number of English speakers in

English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The accelerating rate of globalization and the increasing need for communication in English call for effective English teaching pedagogies to serve the needs of the large population of English learners in China. From the audio-lingual approach to the communicative method and the most recent computer-assisted learning, China has been trying to keep up with the latest Western Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) pedagogies (X. Wu & Tarc, 2016). However, the uncritical implementation of Western pedagogies without realizing the power dynamics involved has, in many cases, not resulted in the desired success in English language teaching (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015; X. Wu & Tarc, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Corresponding to the growth of English language learners, the demand for well-trained English teachers increased rapidly in China in the past decades (Y. Guo & Beckett, 2012). This growing trend drives many English teachers and college students who want to become English teachers as their future career to study in Western Countries in order to be more competitive over local-trained English teachers in the job market (Henze & Zhu, 2012; Hong, 2009). It has been a common belief that the teacher training experiences in an English-speaking country may significantly contribute to teachers' English language proficiency level, cultural insights, and English teaching professionalism (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008). Thus, there is a prevailing trend for many Chinese international students/scholars to enroll in TESOL and related programs and return to China to teach English after finishing their studies (Kachru, 1986).

Many studies emphasized the role of Western-trained Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language (CTEFL) in implementing Western pedagogies in specific local contexts (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008; Hong, 2009; H. Li et al., 2012; X. Wu &

Tarc, 2016). Nevertheless, few studies have been written about these teachers' teaching experiences after they return to China and how do their English learning background, teacher training experiences in the West, and their current local teaching context impact their practical teaching implications. Therefore, this study focused on the population of CTEFLs, who are equipped with Western and local language teaching and learning experiences, can fully realize the tensions between native practices and Western theories, and often act as accelerators in giving adapting Western pedagogies in local settings and balance the two different types of pedagogies in proper ways. It is valuable to explore their teaching experiences to gain more insights on this specific group of teachers' teaching beliefs and practices.

Since there is a considerable demand for competent English users in China, many changes aim to improve the quality of English teaching and the ways of adopting Western TESOL pedagogies (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008). In recent years, many studies focused on discussing the appropriateness and effectiveness of importing Western pedagogies to the traditional English classrooms in China (H. Li et al., 2012; Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015; X. Wu & Tarc, 2016). In this debate, the importance of both the Chinese traditional language teaching method and the latest Western approaches are emphasized. For the traditional language teaching method in China, teaching practice and learning goals are greatly influenced by the culture and belief of Confucianism, which proposed that education is a means of cultivating people's virtues to serve the government (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). The traditional way of learning English, which refers to the grammar-translation method, helps students analyze the language structures and understand grammar rules (Maley, 1983). On the other side, the latest Western TESOL approaches are shaped by the Socratic philosophy, which favors student-centered learning and inquiry-based learning, such as Content-based instruction, Task-based language teaching, and

Communicative language teaching (Schweisfurth, 2011). While these Western pedagogies are useful in particular contexts, the 'best practices' may not be well suited to the host context. As Wu and Tarc (2016) discussed, the feasible way to empower our English teachers is to help them adapt Western practices to the demands and conditions for language learning and teaching in China with careful consideration of the sociocultural context.

To sum up, studying CTEFLs who received their degrees in the fields of TESOL in English-speaking countries may provide a unique angle to explore the bridge from Western pedagogy to Eastern teaching. With China's development and international communication, a growing number of Chinese English teachers go to English-speaking countries to pursue graduate degrees. Meanwhile, the number of teachers returning to teach in China after participating in ESL/EFL teacher education programs in English-speaking countries is growing. These teachers are the pioneers in giving Western pedagogy local meanings. Given these circumstances, it is crucial to understand the nature of these teachers' training and teaching experiences, mainly how they apply what they learned into practice when transitioning between their Western education experience and their Eastern teaching setting.

Rationale of the Study

The Influence of Western Pedagogy in the Chinese EFL Context

In the last decades, globalization has given particular visibility to second language teaching (Block, 2001). Western pedagogies have become more readily available to less developed regions through textbooks, academic journals, teacher training programs, professional organizations, and high-tech facilities (A. S. Canagarajah, 2002). Developing countries like China tend to assimilate Western values, theories, and knowledge (Yang & Zhang, 2006). As Kubota (2002) argues, while globalization promotes diversity, it also implies cultural

homogenization, driven by global standardization and cultural goods from the center to the peripheries.

While the economy in China is rapidly growing, English is emphasized as the global language to cultivate global citizens who can foster economic development (J. Chang, 2006). The educational theories derived from developed countries, such as the United States, are paid extra attention to inform the educational reform in China (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). In Second language education, Western pedagogies emphasize student-centered learning, equity, and practical communicative English skills (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015; Zhao & Biesta, 2011). In light of these teaching ideologies, the Chinese educational administrator tended to modify its pedagogy more globally and practically (Zeegers & Zhang, 2016). Indeed, hundreds of thousands of English teachers and learners in China have experienced and continue to live the indications of the conflict inherent to Western pedagogies' adoption. However, there are limited studies explore how Western pedagogies could be adapted or re-contextualized to optimize student language learning in specific educational contexts in China. As a future English teacher and educator, it is necessary to concern the local context of second language teaching and the undesirable consequence for language learners causing from the ignorance of language learning context. Many TESOL programs in English speaking countries are largely ignore what the teacher's real language teaching context is, teachers need to make their own teaching decisions before they start teaching. Confronted with this reality, researching and discussing CTEFLs' teaching practices of Western pedagogy in the Chinese EFL setting can empower English language teachers and educators by pushing them beyond methodologies and liberating them from the common belief of the superiority of Western methods over local practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, many

program administrators, teacher educators, and classroom teachers in China are used to surrendering to the visible and invisible power of Western-based teaching methods, textbooks, media, and even English native speakers. It is urgent to help them realize their strength and capacity by exploring how Chinese EFL teachers make sense of their classroom teaching and how they can apply Western-based pedagogy according to their specific contexts.

Western-Trained CTEFLs

Western-trained Chinese EFL teachers may encounter dramatic changes and clashes between what they learned in the graduate TESOL program in the U.S. and their teaching in the Chinese EFL context (Hong, 2009). For instance, many students who studied in the TESOL program in Western countries believe that English teaching should always be student-centered. English teaching should be meaningful to every student, meaning that the teaching materials and content should relate to students' lives and backgrounds. Nevertheless, English teachers in China often realize that teaching is more complicated than imagined. Many factors may impact classroom teachings, such as teaching environment, institution policy, students' cultural background and learning goals, and parents' expectations (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Hong, 2009). The decision-making of teaching pedagogy should never be separate from the teaching context. Studying Western-trained English teachers who have already gone back and taught English in China may provide significant insights into this complicated teaching phenomenon. Firstly, their lived teaching experiences will guide graduate students in TESOL-related programs to foresee and interrogate their learning and teaching experiences in two entirely different cultures and settings. Secondly, their experiences of change regarding their teaching and learning and how they inform their practical teaching in China may offer some helpful suggestions for teaching in different educational contexts. This study may present their experiences of identity shifting from

a part of the minority group of non-native English speakers to one of the privileged teachers after returning to teach in China. With Western degrees, most of them are more respected, better paid, and take the roles of pioneer English teachers with expertise. They become the administrators and policymakers in the profession. Their Western educational experiences provide them with more opportunities to voice their ideas and also more power to influence other English teachers. Undoubtedly, it should be a loss to ignore this group of teachers. However, little research has paid attention to them so far, and no voices have been heard from them concerning their English language teaching.

Besides, the setting shifts CTEFLs from the West to the East will help readers gain more insights on how these teachers link the theories they learned in the West to their classroom practices in the East. They may yield more insights regarding applying Western pedagogies in local contexts due to their prolonged exposure to Western educational ideology, settings, and culture. Because it has always been a dream and trend for Chinese English teachers to go to English-speaking countries to have real experience in the English language and culture, this group will grow. In this sense, this research will help this group of Western-trained teachers and those who have no chance to go abroad to study to reflect on their classroom teaching.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study aimed to explore the teaching experiences of four CTEFLs' who have studied in a MATESOL program in the United States and are currently teaching English at an educational institution in China. The ultimate goal for the study was not to repeat the cultural and ideological conflicts between Western pedagogies and Chinese traditional English teaching pedagogies nor to encourage or reject Western pedagogies but to give voice to CTEFLs and

highlight how they apply what they learned into practice and create their way of teaching in a globally localized way.

The research questions that guided this research were:

1. How do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States?

2. How do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States?

Methodology

This study explored the teaching experiences of four CTEFLs' who have studied in a MATESOL program in the United States and are currently teaching English at an educational institution in China. The research examined how these CTEFLs' practical English teaching implications were shaped and reinforced through their transnational experiences and how they negotiated what they learned in their current local contexts. To meet this purpose, a qualitative phenomenological case study was used to study and present the complexities of teaching. Phenomenology is particularly helpful when conducting research on how a specific phenomenon manifests and appears and getting fresh insights into human experiences and how they emerge in the world (Creswell, 2014). While other qualitative approaches focus on individual participants' claims, the phenomenological approach examines the collective understandings of a group of teachers' experiences. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the various practical teaching implications of the teachers who experienced TESOL training in Western countries in order to fit their local context better and serve their students (Vagle, 2014).

In line with phenomenology, a case study is "a descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory analysis of a person, group, or event" (Thomas, 2011, p. 513). In this study, the case study

approach was utilized to emphasize the uniqueness of each case and each teacher's subjective narratives of that case. The two approaches focus on the phenomena that emphasize educators' individual experiences and how collectively, the "essence" of a phenomenon may be examined by understanding how people meaningfully engage with and through the phenomena. A phenomenological case study ends up producing "a description that presents the essence of a phenomenon so the reader has a strong sense of how I understand what it is like to have experienced that particular phenomenon" (Vagle, 2014, p. 27). In this study, phenomenology and case study enabled the researcher to understand how CTEFLs' studied in a TESOL program in the United States and returned to China and taught English. This real-life phenomenon was experienced by teachers and was used to determine how those experiences were described and interpreted and how meaning was derived from those experiences and further impacted their pedagogical decision making. Therefore, these two approaches were appropriate for this study.

The study used purposeful and criterion-based sampling to select participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Four CTEFLs were recruited from the graduation list of a TESOL program in a Northeast state university in the United States. The data collection methods for this study included semi-structured interviews, documents, meeting notes, and research journals from both participants and the researcher. As this research involved human subjects, it was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the researcher's institute of higher education to meet ethical guidelines before conducting interviews. Participants were guided to read and sign the consent form before participating in this study.

After collecting the data, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Other data sources enriched and triangled the data during the data analysis, including the researcher's journal entries, email and WeChat message correspondences, and documents provided by

participants such as lesson plans, photos, and students' work. These different sources of evidence provided a holistic perspective on understanding the experiences of teachers' classroom practice after they experienced the phenomenon of having studied in a TESOL program in the United States. During the data analysis phase, NVivo12 software was used to help with coding and analyzing data since computer software could speed up the process of data exploration (L. Richards, 1999).

In this study, Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole phenomenology analysis and Braun and Clark's (2006) six phases thematic analysis were key to examine the data. The whole-part-whole method of analysis was helpful for capturing the full picture of participants' story (the whole), deconstructing the story into relevant pieces (the part), and then reconstructing the story in a new way to demonstrate the essence of the phenomenon across individual accounts (Vagle, 2014). This approach allowed me to see each case separately and then put the individual pieces together in order to generate a cohesive and contextually understanding of the phenomenon of CTEFL's transition from West to East. Thematic analysis will be used to identify themes that emerge in the data related to research questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The detailed procedure of thematic analysis including familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, the two methods were modified and combined in the data analysis process. Details will be explained in Chapter Three.

Definition of Key Terms

In this section, the following definitions are provided to ensure clarity, understanding, and consistency of key terminologies used throughout this study.

1. Pedagogy: According to Merriam-Webster, pedagogy is the "art, science, or profession of teaching." Pedagogy covers a broad aspect of teaching, including teaching styles, feedback, and assessment. For the purpose of this study, pedagogy refers to the ongoing interaction and relationship between teachers and students (Loughran, 2013). It is influenced by the personal experiences of both teacher and student. This kind of pedagogy is characterized by an attitude of caring and reflective insight beyond the situated event during daily interactions between teacher and student. Pedagogy is complicated, and as teachers "learning about practice is enhanced through noticing, then pedagogy becomes both generative and informing as a consequence of an active and ongoing process" (Loughran, 2013, p. 122).

2. Western pedagogy: Refers to the teaching approaches, knowledge, technology, and culture that oriented and widely advocated in Western countries. It emphasizes teachers' professionalism and autonomy, inquiry-based and student-centered learning, practical skills, active learning, and the promotion of equity (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; X. Wu & Tarc, 2016). In this study, Western TESOL pedagogy refers to the ESL/EFL teaching theory and approach that are shaped by the Socratic philosophy and favors student-centered learning and inquiry-based learning, such as Content-based instruction, Task-based language teaching, and Communicative language teaching (Schweisfurth, 2011). These pedagogies are often taught in TESOL programs in the United States.

3. Chinese language teaching pedagogy/ traditional language teaching pedagogy: Many English language learners in China have an analytical knowledge of English in its written form, but even after many years of study have demonstrated a limited ability

to speak it or understand it in spoken form. The challenge with English speaking is thought to be the result of the traditional English language teaching methods in China, a combination of the grammar-translation method and audiolingual methods characterized by explicit and systematic instruction in grammar, extensive analysis of linguistic details and patterns, emphasis on translation, and a firm reliance on memorization and repetition (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

4. TESOL: Teaching English to speakers of other languages. TESOL teacher training courses are often offered by TESOL program in higher education institutions in the United States.

5. CTEFL: In this study, this term stands for "Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language".

6. ELL: English Language Learner.

7. EFL: English as a foreign language. This term is often used in countries where English is not the predominant language, such as China.

8. ESL: English as a Second Language. This term is often used for people whose native language are not English but live in countries where English is the daily communicative language.

9. SCT：Sociocultural Theory. It views language learning within particular social and cultural contexts (Johnson, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study contributed to the literature about Western-trained CTEFLs' English teaching experiences and provided theoretical and practical implications for future scholars and teachers. Narratives and experiences of CTEFLs English teaching in specific educational contexts were

few, and practical stories were limited. This qualitative phenomenological case study offered insights in the complexities of English teaching. Studying CTEFLs' teaching experiences in China after they graduated from Western countries provided a unique angle for exploring the bridge from Western pedagogy to Eastern teaching. It also added to the literature related to how pioneer teachers adopt advanced Western pedagogies to their English language classrooms in China.

For practical implications, through making sense of these teachers' training and teaching experiences, this study gave voice to Chinese English language teachers and highlighted how they balance the Western-based pedagogies and the traditional language teaching pedagogies. Particular attention was given to the ways in which the Chinese teachers of English conceive of Western-based TESOL pedagogy—analyzing some paradoxical effects of their interpretations of and engagement with this imported pedagogy—in relation to what might be seen as 'Chinese' or 'traditional' instructional methods. It also raised CTEFLs' awareness of the complicated relationship between Western-based pedagogies and contextual realities, including how they mediated their teaching using different tools, how they dealt with the contradictions and tensions in their classrooms and schools, and how they established their activity system of teaching in the Chinese EFL context. The research findings provoked their thinking regarding the importation of educational innovations of foreign origin into the Chinese or any other local contexts.

Also, this study could benefit international graduate students in Western language teacher programs. Even though the focus is on CTEFLs who have studied in Western institutions, the results could be relevant to experiences of other non-native speaking EFL teachers studying in one culture and returning to teach in an entirely different one. The study would help EFL teachers foresee and interrogate their learning and teaching experiences in two different cultures

and settings. Meanwhile, the study would deepen understanding of the issues faced by educators who learn and teach in different cultural settings. It would also provide tools for teacher educators to rethink their practices and programs and offer some practical suggestions for teacher educators to meet the needs of non-native EFL teachers better, including discussing both the content and process of learning to teach in teacher education programs, creating an environment for teachers to reflect their teaching critically, and helping them establish and construct their teaching knowledge.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative phenomenological case study examined the individual English teaching experiences through stories told by Western-trained CTEFLs who received their TESOL graduate degree in the United States. In Chapter one, I summarized the context and background of the study. I introduced the problem to be addressed, the rationale of this study, the key terms that will be used throughout the paper, and the following research questions: how do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States and how do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States? To answer these questions, this phenomenological case study used purposeful and criterion-based sampling to select participants who can provide rich information about the questions under study. Data Collection involved multiple data sources, including semi-structured interviews, documents, meeting notes, and research journals from both participants and the myself, to enrich and triangle the data during the data analysis. I interpreted the participants' experiences through the lens of sociocultural theory. Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole approach and Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis were used to examine the data. The remainder of this study will be presented in the next four Chapters.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter delineates the historical and philosophical background of Western TESOL pedagogy and the traditional English teaching pedagogy in China. I discussed the current application of Western TESOL pedagogy, the history of Western educational influence, and the current English teaching trend in China. The theoretical framework of sociocultural theory was explained at the end of the chapter. The purpose of writing this chapter was to ground the study in appropriate theoretical, historical, and empirical context so that arguments could be made about how the current study can contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding Western pedagogies applying in various educational settings in China and open up new spaces for discussion in the field of English teaching and learning.

Western TESOL Pedagogies

Socratic Philosophy

The Socratic philosophy, the origin of Western teaching and learning constructs, was based on Socrates's ideologies that have been an integral part of Western culture and belief. According to the Socratic philosophy, learning and meaning were built on conversation (Crotty, 1998). In other words, conversation was the key to comprehension and meaning making. Socratic philosophy was grounded on discourse theory, critical thinking, informal logic, and social learning theory as a pedagogical method of producing learning and understanding (Gregory, 2014). Socratic-based pedagogy's focus was critical thinking, to be specific, including challenging convention, seeking the truth, and adapting one's life to such truths with ongoing discernment (Gregory, 2014). The Socratic educational method interpreted educators as facilitators instead of knowledge-giver, who promoted a student-centered, inquiry-based learning environment that led to knowledge and wisdom, and emphasized questioning and knowledge

practices (Foster & Stapleton, 2012; Fullam, 2015). This philosophy continued to influence modern Western-based pedagogy in all different fields (Fullam, 2015)**.**

The educational ideologies within Socratic philosophy were orientated in the middle of the 19th century when the development of learning was seen as a cultural and institutional imperative; Workers were trained and qualified for urban and industrial works (Levinas, 2012). Thus, at a young age, the children born in Western countries learned individuality through games and fun child-promoted activities (H. Li et al., 2012). The main teaching techniques were all constructional structures, such as student-centered teaching, inquiry-based learning, small-group activities, and learning by doing (H. Li et al., 2012). These techniques promoted inquiry through discernment as one seeks truth regardless of its consequences or context (Fullam, 2015). In higher education, the Socratic teaching method guided the modern-day instructional practice. Students were learning aims for enlightenment purposes; in other words, acquiring wisdom for its own sake and pursuing the truth (J. Chang, 2006).

Western TESOL Pedagogy

Western TESOL pedagogy was generated from Western cultures and beliefs, emphasizing promoting values such as independence or self-reliance (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). Learners were encouraged to make decisions about their learning and responsible for their own lives. Therefore, students were expected to develop critical thinking, creativity, and innovation skills rather than passively waiting to be taught in the Western culture context under the influence of this ideology (Knowles, 1975). These expectations also applied to English teaching and learning in Western countries.

TESOL pedagogy has its own set of knowledge and teaching principles related to language teaching and practice. In recent years, these pedagogies have become more systematic

and fundamental that all mainstream teachers should learn to teach ELLs effectively. The essential knowledge is the principles of second language acquisition, such as Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Cummins' (2000) theory of language proficiency, Krashen's (1985) five hypothesis of second language acquisition theory, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is one of the most dominant theories of learning and development. When applied to TESOL, it suggested that students learn better through observing and modeling, especially when teachers build a close relationship with students (Ormrod, 2014). A relaxed and safe learning environment is vital for learners to freely express themselves and lower their learning stress. Also, teachers should be aware of students' learning needs: learning styles, interests, and language levels (Bandura, 1977; Ormrod, 2014).

Cummins' (2000) theory of second language acquisition described the connection between language proficiency and academic performance. He coined the terms basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) to increase teachers' knowledge of the development of conversational fluency, typical timelines to reach different levels of language proficiency, and struggles that ELLs face as they compete with their classmates during academic language instruction.

Krashen's (1985) second language acquisition theory significantly contributed to the development of the TESOL system. Krashen proposed five hypotheses: Natural Order Hypothesis, Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis, and Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). The Natural Order Hypothesis suggested that second language acquisition is a process, which occurs predictably and is independent of classroom instruction. The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis held that language learners could develop two types of distinct grammatical knowledge about an L2 through acquisition and learning: a

subconscious process and a conscious process. Adding to this understanding, The Monitor Hypothesis held that learners could use conscious, learned knowledge to monitor the output of subconscious, acquired knowledge, but the learner must have adequate time to access the learned knowledge. The Affective Filter Hypothesis accounted for the attitude L2 learners demonstrate in their production of the L2, and how learners' motives, needs, and emotional states, can affect the acquisition of a language. The final hypothesis, The Input Hypothesis, related to the kind of L2 exposure that learners have access to, suggesting that learners progress in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory in the second language acquisition discipline suggested that the human mind comprises lower mental processes and higher mental processes. Language is a higher mental process that develops through mediation in a social context. That means social interaction is the key to language learning (R. Ellis, 2005). Besides, Vygotsky (1978) pointed out that effective mediation takes place in a learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as, "the distance between the actual development level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Unlike traditional tests that determine the level of development already attained, ZPD refers to what one can do today and what one can do with support to inform what one can do independently in the future. Recent studies have shown that ZPD constitutes a tool and result, as "language use creates a ZPD so learning can happen with scaffolding" (Shrum & Glisan, 2016, p. 27). From this perspective, scaffolding within the ZPD is bidirectional, as the teacher

and the learners provide mutual assistance to complete the task. Teachers become aware of the learners' topics of interest and needs via ZPD activity.

Additionally, TESOL emphasized the accommodations considering ELLs different language learning needs, including visuals support, vocabulary scaffolding, getting familiar with students' sociocultural backgrounds, differentiated instructions, curriculum design considering students' learning interests and goals, and various grouping and instruction strategies that can integrate academic content with purposeful language instruction (Howey & Grossman, 1989; Lucas et al., 2008; Markos, 2012; Shulman, 1986; Tran, 2015). Those approaches and strategies aim to help teachers better facilitate ELL students with varied backgrounds, abilities, and learning interests, who are a growing number of populations in mainstream classes in Western countries.

Graduate TESOL Programs for Non-Native English Speakers

In the past decades, English has cemented its status as a global language, with the numbers of ESLs rising steadily (Seargeant & Swann, 2011). Accordingly, many English teachers worldwide are now non-native English speakers (NNES) (S. Canagarajah, 1999). Partially due to this development, a graduate degree in TESOL (usually a master's degree, or MATESOL), which can be considered the terminal degree for teaching ESL or EFL, has promoted an influx of graduate students who hail from non-English speaking countries. People believe that employers and peers widely regard someone with a MATESOL degree as "a trained professional in the field" (Bagwell, 2013). Many Western-trained teachers also perceive themselves as socially, culturally, emotionally, or experientially sensitive role models in their home countries (Braine, 1999). Thus, more and more NNES graduate students come to the English-speaking countries and have steadily transformed the demographics of MATESOL

programs to the point where it is not rare that about half of all enrolled TESOL graduate students are foreign, NNES students.

The traditional TESOL curricula have attributed critical attention to linguistic knowledge in language teacher preparation activity, as "knowledge of how language is structured, acquired, and used remains fundamental to our understanding of language learning and the activity of language teaching" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 8). The original motivation behind encompassing linguistics and linguistic knowledge in TESOL practices is the assumption that linguistic knowledge may equip teachers with a better understanding of the integral representations of the language that they teach, and therefore enable them with skills needed for catering students' problems (Bartels, 2005). In Pawlak's (2011) book, the traditional views assume that one can take and apply knowledge about second language learning into their language classroom because language teaching knowledge has been defined largely in terms of how second language learners acquire a second language, with little emphasis on how L2 teaching is taught or practiced.

In addition to the curricula emphasizes – linguistic knowledge, most MATESOL programs in the U.S. require supervised teaching practice as part of their curricula, which is presented in a variety of names such as student teaching, practicum, practice teaching, field experience, or internship (Stapleton & Shao, 2018). Gebhard (2009) outlines the following opportunities that the practicum experience provides for pre-service teachers:

- Gain practical classroom teaching experience;
- Apply theory and teaching ideas from previous course work;
- Discover from observing experienced teachers;
- Enhance lesson-planning skills;

- Gain skills in selecting, adapting, and developing original course materials;

- Expand awareness of how to set their own goals related to improving their teaching;

- Question, articulate, and reflect on their own teaching and learning philosophies, which include an amalgamation of assumptions, beliefs, values, educational, and life experiences;

- Se their own teaching differently by learning how to make their own informed teaching decisions through systematic observation and exploration of their own and others' teaching (p.251).

In order to achieve these goals, the practicum activity consists of several teacher development activities including actual classroom teaching, keeping teaching journals and portfolios, observation of other teachers (pre-service and in-service), self-observation and reflection, and seminar discussions (with fellow pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher educators), mentoring, supervision, and action research. The primary goal is to help pre-service teachers to be able to transform their knowledge into practice in their practicum activities.

In general, MATESOL programs emphasize theory more than practice-based components in coursework (Bagwell, 2013; Govardhan et al., 1999; I. C. Palmer, 1995; Stapleton & Shao, 2018). There are two courses directly related to teaching: (a) teaching method and (b) practicum or internship. These two courses do not seem proportionally adequate to prepare teachers for the work field as most graduates from TESOL programs go on to teach after graduation. A conceptual shift in curriculum needs to account for students' end goals, not just the conveyance of academic content (Shestak & Shestak, 2016). This shift will prioritize preparing students for working in the field based on what the students will need in the real world once they have left the classroom (S. Canagarajah, 2016).

In the past decades, the impact and effectiveness of MATESOL programs in preparing

teachers for local and international teaching settings have attracted many researchers (Z. Huang,

2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Micek, 2017; Stapleton & Shao, 2018; Tekin, 2019). Polio and Wilson-

Duffy (1998) observed that there is a general tendency of NNES to go back to their home

countries and teach English after completing their TESOL program study. In the TESOL

program in the United States, most NNES are from Asian countries. It is not difficult to infer that

the number of international students enrolling in language teacher education programs in

Western English-speaking countries will keep growing in the future years. However, the

discussion of Western language teacher education indicates that these MATESOL programs do

not provide enough courses addressing the professional issues and challenges that these

prospective teachers face once they graduate. Nuske (2018) pointed out critically that all

students, despite their linguistic differences and culture differences, are usually given the same

training as their native-speaker peers, which cause the superficial inscriptions of Western

ideologies. As Liu (1998) argued, the main reason for this neglect is the ethnocentrism in

TESOL. The domination of Western-based ideology and methodologies failed to help

international TESOL students distinguish the cultural differences between the teaching situation

in English speaking countries and their context. It was also the ethnocentrism that encouraged

these students to adopt Western-based principles and practices which they might find impractical

or ineffective in their home countries.

More specifically, the relevance of knowledge of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in

the MATESOL program was questioned. The dominant acquisition theories in Western

countries, such as North America, Britain, and Australia, are based on data gathered from

immigrants or international students studying in these countries. These data rarely considered

different EFL teaching and learning contexts (Carrier, 2003). Lo (2005) conducted a case study of one non-native speaker of English focusing on both her learning experiences in a language teacher education program in a university in the mid-West U.S. and her subsequent teaching practices back in her EFL context in Taiwan. The study explored how the EFL teacher made sense of SLA while taking the Western-based MATESOL courses and what the knowledge of SLA means to her after her return to teach. The findings obtained from in-depth interviews and classroom observations showed that this EFL teacher found it difficult to make sense of the theories while studying in the U.S. and also felt the irrelevance of her SLA knowledge while going back to teach in Taiwan.

Literature addressing the discrepancy between Western-based TESOL programs and the specific needs of NNES also highlighted the necessity for curricular change for MATESOL programs to better prepare students for their prospective teaching tasks in the globalized world (S. Canagarajah, 2016; Govardhan et al., 1999; A. J. Miller, 2020). Their curricular recommendations included an infusion of the new courses, or modification of the existing ones to promote understanding of the significance of World English perspectives, and a range of international perspectives on English language learning and teaching. The literature review in the area of Western language teacher education programs and the needs of international students indicate that gaps exist. Few studies have been conducted to provide practical strategies to enhance awareness of the priorities in EFL teaching contexts, particularly in Asian countries, and in Western-based language teacher training programs. Most studies focused on the overseas teacher-trainees' thinking and saying. Nevertheless, little research has investigated what is happening in their classrooms after returning to their home countries. Therefore, the empirical research examining what problems and challenges EFL teachers encounter and how they are

doing to deal with them using their local knowledge in their classrooms can become a significant impetus in creating many courses that can help meet the needs of NNES.

Traditional English Education in China

China is a country steeped in history and cultural traditions. Since ancient times, people in China have had the tradition of respecting teachers and intellectuals. Confucius (551-479 BC) has been regarded as a great thinker and educator. About two thousand years ago, Confucius founded the first private schools and advocated teaching and learning for the masses, ending the notion of education as a privilege for the upper-class and making education possible for ordinary people (Su, 2002). After that, private schools flourished alongside official schools as a component of the educational system in China's history. One primary objective of feudal education was to train officials. Beginning from the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD), the government held examinations to select officials (Su, 2002). Since that time, the imperial examination system has become an essential part of education. Under the imperial examination system, the content for teaching and examinations included poetry, essays, Confucian classics, and comments on strategies of governance advocated by well-known philosophers. During the Ming (1368-1644 AD) and Qing (1644-1911 AD) Dynasties, candidates for imperial examinations were required to write essays strictly following a rigid eight-part form called "八股文", which consists of eight parts: opening, amplification, preliminary exposition, initial argument, central argument, later argument, final argument and conclusion (Su, 2002). This essay form gradually became the standard device of the civil service examination in the middle of the fifteenth century and was accepted as a literary form until the early twentieth century.

Confucian Heritage Cultures

As was previously indicated, Socratic philosophy was directly connected to education and learning in Western countries. Comparably, Confucian philosophy guided education in China. From the Westerners' point of view, Chinese teaching methods are archaic and mainly focus on memorization (Tang, 2009). However, Confucianism, in Chinese education, portrayed students as independent thinkers in a formal, teacher-led environment (La Roche, 2011). The philosophy of Confucianism is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and history and manifests within societal comportment and belief systems (Tang, 2009). As Zhao and Biesta (2011) noted, Confucianism has originated in China and influencing Chinese education for over 2,500 years. It was not only a theory, but a reality that most Chinese lived by, and that continues to shape the identity of people's way of life.

Confucianism is a system of thoughts and ideas based on Confucius's teaching, which has profoundly influenced the life, thoughts, culture, and education of the Chinese people. During the turmoil of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States era (770-221 B.C.E.), several kingdom states arose that were continually at war with each other, making people suffer from disasters, death, and homelessness. Awe to Heaven diminished among the rulers who governed their states with tyranny, getting further away from the way of humanity. The rites and humane governance practiced by the ancient sage kings declined, and society was in disorder (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009). Confucius cherished the harmonious society modeled by the ancient sage kings. Central to his philosophy was the way of humanity which had been implemented by the ancient sage kings (J. Palmer et al., 2002). He set up the ideals of social order, harmony, and humanity as a value matrix. He believed that such social ideals could be realized by restoring the rituals and morality of the ancient kings.

To Confucius, education was a means of cultivating virtues in people, and "virtuous behavior can ensure individual success and societal harmony" (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 92). Holding an affirmative assumption of the inherent quality of human beings at birth, he believes that people are good by nature and have an innate moral sense and that they acquire goodness and evil in later life owing to the environment in which they grow up and the company they keep (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). In other words, people are cultivatable and perfectible if they are led to the right path through education, through their efforts at self-cultivation, and the emulation of models outside themselves. Confucius believed that moral education and the transformation of people were more effective than ruling them with laws and punishment. He argues that if people were governed and regulated with the rituals, they would have a sense of shame. That is why Confucian stress on moral education and has persisted down to the present Chinese education. Confucius believed that scholars and intellectual elites were the main power of societal improvement. His curriculum focused on the history, literature, and documents of the past generations of the kings, particularly the documents of the Zhou Dynasty—a golden age in his eyes (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009). Teaching students in his private school, Confucius aimed to make them the intellectual elites and men of humanity to serve the country and help govern in the way of humanity. Confucian intellectuals associated personal fulfillment with the well-being of the country: they should achieve self-cultivation first, then family harmony, then good order in the country, and finally peace in the world. In Confucian doctrines, the intellectual elites, including the rulers and scholarly officials, were the role model for ordinary people and the cornerstone of a harmonious society. If they modeled virtues, people would be good.

For Confucius, a learner's ability and intelligence are not the decisive factors in learning. He recognized the differences in people's gifts and innate intelligence, but he believed that

effortful learning decides the learning results and achievements. Thus, Confucius's learning is closely tied to diligence and practice, thinking, and reflection. Genuine learning is indispensable to thinking, reflection, and seeking the meaning of what is taught and learned. He believed that new knowledge is acquired based on existing knowledge (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). The principles of learning in Confucius's statements, as Louie (1984) commented, parallel "the modern principles of learning whereby constant review of things learnt was essential for retention and progress" (p. 30). Confucius's epistemological principles entail his attitude toward learning and knowledge—loving learning and being honest to knowledge. He taught his students not to be pretentious about knowledge. With an honest attitude toward knowledge, Confucius was willing to learn from people who knew. He appreciated the person who was diligent and loved learning and was not ashamed to ask advice from those in lower social ranks.

Confucius's epistemological views indicate the role of a teacher and the teacher-learner relationship. The teacher should be the role model of learning, love their students, and set higher standards for their students. Although emphasizing that students should learn from a teacher, he also suggested that a teacher should learn from students. "Not only is Confucius eulogized for having advocated reverence for teachers and knowledge, but his achievements in educational thoughts are said to have included the recognition of the relationship between students learning from teachers, and teachers learning from students" (Louie, 1984, p. 34).

No king accepted Confucius' proposal until after his death. Confucianism was chosen as the state orthodoxy by Emperor Wudi, who commanded that only scholars from the Confucian school could advise political leaders (Tweed & Lehman, 2002; Yuan, 2001). A set of imperial examinations was designed based on the Confucian school's classics to select the worthy and the talented at serving as officials at court and in the provinces. The local examination system lasted

about 12 centuries from the Sui Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty in 1905. Promoted by intellectual elites, mandated by government policies, and reinforced by imperial examinations, Confucian ethics and philosophy became instilled in the fabric of Chinese culture and education. Eisner (1992) pointed out: "When a particular ideology becomes pervasive or has no competing alternative, it tends to become invisible" (p. 303).

Similarly, the Chinese have practiced Confucian ideologies in all social and educational dimensions, sometimes without awareness (J. Huang, 2006). Confucian ideals, which were further enriched and developed by Confucius's followers, were deeply rooted in Chinese education that both Chinese intellectual elites and grassroots people respected the Confucian doctrines as the authority. For 2000 years, Confucianism formed a large and complex educational system centered on the established Confucian philosophy, epistemology, pedagogy, and the roles of teacher and learner.

Traditional Chinese English Teaching Method: Grammar-translation Method

The English teaching method widely used in educational institutions in China today is still the grammar-translation method (GTM) that initially developed from the Soviet Union during the period of the 1950s (Dzau, 1990). Richards and Rodgers (2001) pointed out that the GTM was "based on the assumption that one universal logic formed the basis of all languages and that the teacher's responsibility was to show how each category of the universal grammar was to be expressed in the foreign language" (p. 37). The GTM is known for the rigorous teaching of grammar rules and conjugations through rote learning, translation, and repeating simple sentences. This type of method always involves a short text, which is taught through listening, speaking, and writing. The goal of this method is to help students achieving linguistic competence (Dzau, 1990). According to Dzau (1990), the GTM follows a five-step procedure, in

which the learners study a short passage, examine the text for meaning, analyze the grammatical structure, imitate the pronunciation from tape if available, then finally read it aloud and, if possible, memorize it. In the next stage, several students are chosen to read the text aloud in class, and the teacher asks questions when the class works through the text word by word. In the third step, word study is used to focus on meanings, translations, and uses. The fourth step is the oral translation pattern drill. Students may need to retell, re-write, or summarize the story and offer a written quiz. There are follow up some assignments for students, including transformation, translations, and answering questions. Free Practice takes place if extra time available and may be used for class discussions, role-playing, debate, and compositions. This is something that most educators disregard since they do not see the value for students' achievement (Dzau, 1990).

This strategy has received numerous objections. Maley (1983) believes that this approach disregarded some critical reading skills such as anticipating, guessing, predicting, and questioning the contents and that students cannot discern the essential ideas from the less important ones. However, students are analyzing the sentences to see how well they know the grammar (Maley, 1983). Cortazzi and Jin (1996) have noted that oral skills remain underdeveloped since teacher-centered activities place students in passive roles that focus on literary content that is irrelevant to the students' future needs. Nevertheless, GTM is still prevalent in many countries where English was not used as a second language since the purpose of this method is to help learners better understand the target language and have the ability to quickly translate texts from their native language into the target language. This purpose is well aligned with the English learning goals in these countries where people do not learn English to survive and communicate daily.

Western Educational Influence in China

The Western-based English teaching pedagogies in China have been in conflict for many years; while many saw the Western influx as an intrusion into China's conventional language education and educational ideologies, many saw it as a model to imitate (Ozturgut, 2008). To have a deeper and broader understanding of the current trends of Western-based English language pedagogy in China and the social contexts where Western pedagogy localization was initiated, the following sections will go through the brief history of the introduction of Western pedagogy in China.

The Beginning of Importing Western Pedagogy

Historically, tracing back to the Qing dynasty, China had a sense of superiority in everything which played a fundamental role in shaping Chinese outlooks in the world and formulating China's crucial domestic and foreign policies, including foreign language education policy. Culturally, with thousands of years of uninterrupted civilization, Chinese people had long been proud of the greatness of Chinese culture and language. Therefore, foreign cultures and languages were deemed uncivilized, including English. The sense of superiority and blind resistance to foreign languages and cultures significantly impacted the development of English education in China from the very beginning.

After the Opium War, China started to realize that it was at a disadvantage status in industry, science, and technology (Fairbank, 1983). The government also realized that learning Western languages is essential to learn Western science and technology. Thus, it started to send people overseas to learn directly from educators in the liberal European countries and the United States and brought back to China Western philosophy, education, science, and technology (Yuan, 2001). Although governors still held the traditional belief that Chinese language and culture were

the best, they thought it was necessary to learn and introduce those advanced technologies to defend China against Western powers. They summarized those concepts as 中学为体，西学为用 (Chinese learning for essence, Western learning for application) and 师夷长技以制夷 (learn Western barbarians' skills to beat Western barbarians). Those perceptions have also become the guiding principle and the fundamental ideology of English education in mainland China.

With the Korean War and the ensuing Cold War, China experienced international isolation in the 1950s and had to import everything from the Soviet Union, including education (Ding, 2001). Chinese educators and teachers learned Soviet educational theories and pedagogy, adopted Soviet textbooks, and took over Soviet academic rigor and standards (Ding, 2001). At the same time, many Soviet experts came to China as advisors, teachers, and researchers in Chinese higher educational institutions (Ding, 2001; Hayhoe, 2017). China started to learn from the Soviet Union with critical reflection and adaptation. English has been included in school curricula and high-stake examinations.

English Curriculum Reform

After China carried out its reform and open policy in the late 1970s, English became more and more important to Chinese people considering its vital role in economic, social, technological, and scientific development (Hu, 2005). English teaching and learning had become a large enterprise in China. The Ministry of Education sped up the cultivation of foreign language professionals, paid more attention to the research of English teaching methods, and introduced and learned the latest Second Language Acquisition theories (Zeegers & Zhang, 2016). In 2001, the Ministry of Education proposed the new English curriculum, which was based on Western curriculum theories with an emphasis on a student-centered, communication-oriented, and activities-based approach to teaching, rather than on the traditional Confucian

heritage culture which emphasis on a teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented, and textbook-based instruction (Ministry of Education, 2001). This curriculum reform involved a change in English language teaching and learning and a fundamental cultural shift.

In responding to the curriculum reform and educational needs, many CTEFLs traveled to English speaking countries to pursue their graduate degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs and practice what they learned in the Chinese EFL classrooms (A. J. Miller, 2020). The Western-training experiences provided these teachers in-depth insights into Western curriculum theories and practices and raised some crucial questions. For instance, what Western-based pedagogies are feasible in the Chinese EFL classrooms? Is it possible to combine Western-based curriculum theories with the traditional Confucian heritage culture of learning? These questions brought up for discussions on the significant difference between the traditional language teaching and learning approaches and the dominant Western-based English language teaching pedagogy.

Rationale of the English curriculum reforms in China. The rationale behind the English Curriculum Reforms in China is to change the traditional English curriculum, which over-emphasizes grammar, reading, and vocabulary learning and pays little attention to English practical skills, such as developing students' communicative ability (Ministry of Education, 2001). Based on the Western curriculum theory and ideologies, the new English Curriculum Standard attaches great importance to developing students' interest in learning, confidence, good learning habits, and active learning strategies. The course content are more relate to the students' life experiences and cognitive development levels and promotes active learning through experiencing, participating and collaborating in activities using English (Ministry of Education, 2001). Some fundamental principles are adopted in the new curriculum change, including 1)

promoting whole-person education and the all-round development of the students; 2) making the curriculum objectives holistic and flexible; 3) providing learner-centered curriculum and considering students' individual differences; 4) promoting the activity-based method with the focus on experiential, discovering, exploring, cooperative, and participatory learning; 5) using both formative assessment and summative assessment to evaluate students' achievement; 6) making good use of new educational resources and expanding the use of multimedia technology in teaching (Ministry of Education, 2001).

English curriculum reforms. Communicative proficiency in English has been widely regarded as a desirable goal within education systems throughout non-English speaking countries. The benefits that such proficiency confers on both individuals and the society have provided a rationale for many English curriculum reforms (Wedell, 2003). Curriculum planners often look for English speaking countries as a source for English education ideas and import them into different educational contexts (Wedell, 2003). However, although importing Western curriculum theories may be a positive trend and contribute to the improvement of English proficiency, some aspects of the theories may imply challenges or incompatibilities (Gorsuch, 2001; Luo, 2017; Markee, 1997). As Wedell (2003) indicated, although numerous factors may affect the result of curriculum reform, including curriculum planning, design, implementation, and evaluation, a critical reason appears to be a failure to adequately take into account the cultural continuity between the pedagogic discourse underlying curriculum reforms and existing pedagogic realities. This continuity is tied to the extent of the changes teachers are required to make and how they will experience them.

In the Asia Pacific region, English curriculum reform reflect an emphasis on experienced-based and student-centered models of learning and teaching. However, the

contextual curriculum realities are rooted in the transmission-based Confucian heritage culture, emphasizing knowledge-based, textbook-based, and teacher-centered models of learning and teaching (Carless, 1999). With insufficient support, teachers have been expected to cope with professional and sociocultural adjustments and alter classroom practices based on reforms derived from different educational culture. Many EFL teachers are sent to English speaking countries to get professional training in graduate TESOL programs and come back to teach in China. These teachers are perceived as the most qualified English teachers under the background of English curriculum reform.

Current English Teaching Trend in China

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

Communicative competence. Hymes (1972) proposed that communicative competence, as different from linguistic competence, represents how we connect our linguistic competence to our social use of competence. Savignon (1972), who carried out one of the earliest studies on communicative competence, defined communicative competence as "functional language: the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning involving interaction between two or more

persons belonging to the same (or different) speech community (communities), or between one person and a written or oral text" (p. 303). This definition indicates communicative competence as the capacity to make meaning through interaction with discourse, in contrast with the traditional notion of grammatical competence as the knowledge of the structure of a language at the sentence level.

Many scholars initiated the discussions about the components that construct communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Savignon, 1972; Yalden, 1987). Canale (1983) proposed four areas of knowledge and skills: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Savignon (1972) pointed out that these components are not static knowledge and skills but regularly interact in communication. She suggested that sociolinguistic and strategic capacity allows the learner to measure communicative ability, even before the acquisition of any grammatical competence. Yalden (1987) shared a similar interpretation of communicative competence, and her presentation of this idea is more concrete in objectives and more oriented to the social functions and notions of language. She wrote that the specification of a communicative syllabus should address: (a) language functions, such as agreeing, persuading, denying; (b) general and specific notions expressed through language; (c) rhetorical skills, such as extracting information from a text, obtaining clarification from an interlocutor; and (d) linguistic forms required to express meaning and to communicate (Yalden, 1987). It is important to note that in the descriptions of communicative competence, linguistic competence is just one part of communicative competence.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT seeks to develop communication skills in the target language (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CLT appeared in the changes in

the British language teaching tradition in the 1960s and spread to North America and other ESL/EFL contexts in the mid-1970s. Since its appearance, there have been various understandings of CLT, and they, in turn, have led to different versions of CLT in classroom application. From the 1970s to-80s, CLT was also known by the terms notional or functional-notional approaches (Yalden, 1987). In the 1990s, some new approaches emerged, including Content-based Instruction and Task-based Language Teaching.

Research by Richards and Rogers (2001) suggested that CLT aims to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop procedures for teaching the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. They also maintained that CLT's comprehensiveness makes it different in scope and status from any other approaches or methods of language teaching. They explained that CLT is an integration of grammatical and functional teaching; for others, it means using procedures where learners work together to solve problems (J. C. Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yalden, 1987). In recent years, some initially developed approaches in general education, such as Cooperative Learning and Multiple Intelligences, have influenced language teaching methods and, therefore, have enriched CLT methodology. This typical dominant Western-based English language teaching pedagogy is challenging to implement, if not impossible, in China's EFL contexts. For the last decades, Chinese educational institutions focus more on grammar, reading, and vocabulary teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in recent years, Chinese educators realized that the focus of language should be social behavior but not language learning. As Savignon (1991) stated, language learning should focus more on communicative competence.

Nonetheless, adopting CLT in China without carefully consideration of culture context is problematic. According to Hickey and Williams (1996), CLT is better taught experientially

through meaning-oriented use, and through immersion and content-based instructional programs in native English environments. Nevertheless, when scholars imported CLT into China, they did not address enough considerations to applicability and appropriateness. In Sun and Cheng's (2002) study in a Chinese university, they argue that "context assessment" (p.83) is necessary in order to design a curriculum as there is a diversity of "values, traditions, cultures, political regimes, and educational structures in EFL countries" (p.68). Therefore, they argue that if CLT or other such methods are to be tested in EFL contexts, it is imperative to adapt appropriately to the specific context.

Despite cultural differences, factors that are hindering the implementation of CLT involving teachers, students, and the educational system (M. Chang & Goswami, 2011). The significant problems related to teachers were inadequate teacher training of CLT practical applications and the lack of English teaching knowledge and skills (Savignon, 1991). The challenges dealt with students were the resistance of class participation and limited English proficiency. For the educational system in China, the major constraint was identified as test-oriented teaching. Under the pressure of school graduation and job hunting, EFL students in China are required to pass a variety of English examinations, which the majority of them were not involved in communicative tasks (J. Huang, 2006; Savignon, 1991; Sun & Cheng, 2002). Also, large class size is one of the obstacles to practicing CLT. As EFL teachers mentioned, classrooms with more than 50 students are challenging for teachers to allow every student to practice English and monitor classroom activities (M. Chang & Goswami, 2011)

Although tremendous efforts and resources need to be expended on solving the above issues and revamping the current curricula, many aspects of CLT show the innovative power it brings to traditional English language teaching in China. Li (1984), one of the first defender of

CLT in China, argued that CLT has advanced Chinese English teachers and students in learning how to use and speak English. Lu and Moore (2018) studied and interviewed 60 EFL teachers who had received CLT training in Western countries, emphasizing that there are many perceived benefits of implementing CLT in China, such as motivating students to learn, improving students' English speaking fluency, and promoting creating real-life environment. In short, CLT is the most promising Western pedagogy introduced into the English classrooms in China.

Resistance to Western Pedagogies as Inappropriate for China

When more and more international students are traveling to Western-speaking countries such the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada for a Masters' or Ph.D. degree in TESOL or teacher education-related programs, the most salient issue to be addressed is the discrepancy between Western-based pedagogies and Eastern EFL teaching practices. This segment will address the constraints to incorporate Western pedagogies.

East/West dichotomy of cultures of learning. As Cortazzi & Jin (1996) contended, cultural gap is one of the primary considerations for implementing Western pedagogies in China, which is a challenge for EFL teachers who are teaching native Chinese students. Here are examples of the disparities in education between China and the Western countries (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. East/West Dichotomy of Cultures of Learning.

East	West
Knowledge from teachers and textbooks	Skills in communicating and learning
Collective consciousness co-ordination, group support, social and moral learning	Individual orientation personal needs, attention, talent, uniqueness
Teaching and learning as performance pace, variety, presentation, virtuosity	Teaching and learning as organization pairs, groups, activities, tasks

Learning through practice and memorization towards mastery preparation, repetition, confidence building	Learning through interaction and construction experience, activities, tasks, initial creativity
Contextualized communication listener/reader responsibility	Verbal explicitness speaker/writer responsibility
Hierarchical relations agreement, harmony, face, respect	Horizontal relations discussions, argument, informality
Teacher as model, expert, authority, parent, friend, teacher-centered	Teacher as organizer, mentor, guide, helper, learner-centered

Adapted from Cortazzi and Jin (1996, p. 74)

This divisive dichotomy has been criticized for being colonial, over-simplistic, and stereotypical. While there is a clear relationship between cultural background and language learning behavior in China, stereotypes are potentially blind people to individual differences and potentials (Parry, 1998). Garrott (1995) found that Chinese students are also willing to participate in interesting activities and not just memorize. In a survey anonymously conducted in a Chinese university on 512 students' cultural values and attitudes toward English language learning and teaching, Garrott found that students showed a strong tendency toward individualism rather than the traditional collectivism.

As Spack (1997) argued, scholars' pre-assumptions and bias prevent them from seeing evidence that might lead to alternative interpretations. This does not mean to deny the influence of culture, but to be cautious when interpreting culture (e.g., the Confucian philosophy) to suit one's purpose. Confucius encourages critical thinking, and that memorization was not an end in itself but a way of making the text an integral part of one's experience (Spack, 1997). These components of the Chinese culture are, to an extent, connected to the Western teaching philosophies. Chinese EFL learners face difficulties adjusting to Western-style instructions and practice because Western-trained educators may "fail to comprehend the conceptions of learning and related constructs deriving from this Confucian-heritage culture, which leads them to

misunderstand their Chinese students" (Watkins & Biggs, 1996, p. 269). Teachers need to find ways to adapt their teaching and become more receptive to and draw on the strengths of Chinese EFL students.

Students' language ability and motivation. When adopting a new language teaching pedagogy into the classroom, one of the teachers' challenges is the students' feedback. Since the Western pedagogies require more interactions and engagement in the target learning language, students' language ability is also a major challenge for the adoption of Western pedagogies (Harryba et al., 2012). Some students, along with shyness, and lack of understanding of content, if without language support, may be reluctant to participate in the classroom activities (Harryba et al., 2012). Navigating these types of students and increasing in-class interaction is necessary to be considered before teaching. In addition, as Ozturgut (2007) noted, since a lot of Chinese students do not have the initiative to answer questions or to ask questions in class, the teacher may encounter awkward situation when asking a question to the class and receiving no response. In this case, the lack of participation in classroom activities is oriented from lack of motivation or not get used to the different learning styles. Teachers need to understand the students' behavior as a result of cultural differences and give them more time to adapt to the new teaching and learning styles (Ozturgut, 2007)

Chinese and Western-based teacher roles. The importance of students' cultural background revealed a clear difference between the teacher's role in China and in the West as this related to and resulted in student learning, achievements, and expectations (Dzau, 1990). The common theme across the board is that the teacher in China is always the authority of knowledge and deliverer of information, while the student listened, retained information, and passed examinations as the outcome for success (Tang, 2009). The didactic relationship of the Chinese

teacher and student is substantially different from the Western philosophy of instruction and learning in which the teacher and student played an equal role in teaching and learning (J. Huang & Brown, 2009).

Ozturgut (2008) suggested that EFL teachers trained from the West often encounter challenges adapting the Western-learned pedagogical knowledge in their real teaching practice. In order to use Western-based pedagogy, the EFL teachers have to transfer their role from knowledge conveyer who expect the students to carefully listen and seek answers from them to the facilitator in which the students are expected, through active inquiry, to seek answers on their own (Foster & Stapleton, 2012). Since Chinese EFL students are not familiar with the Western teaching techniques, such as class discussions, small group activities, and case studies, the teachers need to provide scaffolds to support learning, give students time to prepare comments, and encourage students to participate (Foster & Stapleton, 2012).

To summarize, the literature suggested that Western pedagogies developed in another sociocultural context should be adapt rather than adopt in Chinese English classrooms. Different societies have different social, cultural, and educational policy and backgrounds. Cultural appropriateness should be seriously considered when making pedagogical decisions. Moreover, influences from the culture, language, student populations, and teachers' roles should also be considered when making pedagogical changes.

Theoretical Framework: Sociocultural Theory

The theoretical framework informing the present study is motivated by the sociocultural theory that considers human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in specific social contexts (Johnson, 2006). The origins of sociocultural perspectives can be traced back to the ground-breaking work of Vygotsky (1978), a Russian constructivist psychologist. Vygotsky

claimed that knowledge is context-dependent and organized through culturally constructed artifacts. This is opposed to the views of context-independent cognition and stress the significance of cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). As John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) argues, sociocultural perspectives on human learning are built upon the idea that "human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbolic systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development" (p. 191). Human thinking and behaviors cannot be interpreted in isolation, but intertwine with the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which this action occurs (Johnson, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, the core of sociocultural learning is to view learning and knowledge within the social and cultural context.

Sociocultural theory places a considerable emphasis on the dynamic interactions in social activities in the process of construction of human cognition, and it attaches great importance on human agency and the commitment to the social context in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, from this stance, teachers' teaching practice is far more complex and comprehensive than particular theories and practices. In the field of second language learning and teaching, there has undergone a gradual, dynamic, and mediated construction and reconstruction of knowledge within the particular social context (Johnson, 2006, 2009). The framework of sociocultural theory brings a new perspective on teachers' ways of knowing and stresses the role of second language teachers as knowledge creators and theory developers (Johnson, 2006).

From the sociocultural lens of second language teacher education, teacher knowledge is considered to be "normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education

programs, and later as teachers in the settings where they work" (Johnson, 2006, p.239).

Teachers are not viewed as passive knowledge consumer, like "empty vessels waiting to be filled

with theoretical and pedagogical skills" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 401), but humans with

rich knowledge and experiences in diverse contexts that may inform and shape their teaching

beliefs and practice.

Therefore, one of the goals of this study is to focus on CTEFLs mental lives (Freeman,

2002), and explore the role of their prior experiences, the contexts within which they work, and

how they reconstruct themselves as knowledge creators and what knowledge they create to meet

the specific needs of their contexts (Shin, 2006). Instead of assessing or judging whether the

CTEFLs implement specific Western pedagogies successfully or not, this research was guided by

the sociocultural theory framework to provide an interpretative and reflective stance to

understand teachers' teaching practice in terms of considering their prior learning experiences

and their specific educational settings. This process of making their knowledge creation in

classrooms visible can inform other teachers how to deal with their realities.

Early research has consistently demonstrated the gap between Western ESL teaching

theory and classroom practice in EFL contexts (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; H. Li et al., 2012; Lu &

Moore, 2018; X. Wu & Tarc, 2016). Thus, context is highlighted in this study through the lens of

sociocultural theory. It is a widely reported challenge for teachers to implement Western-based

teaching approaches in their local classrooms due to various contextual constraints, such as

cultural differences, a scarcity of teaching resources, and students' low motivation and limited

English proficiency (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Degen & Absalom, 1998; Duckins, 2017). Given

these barriers, it is critical for scholars and teachers to understand how Western-based teaching

approaches could better interact with Chinese cultural contexts and better assist teachers to create

their own ways of teaching. Therefore, the sociocultural perspective is closely aligned with the research purpose and question of discovering how Western-trained CTEFLs negotiate with what they learned in the West and the reality in their particular context and become better Eastern practitioners.

In addition, sociocultural theory has wide recognition in the field of second language teaching due to the emergence of teacher cognition development research (Johnson, 2009). The primary goal of teacher cognition research is to examine "the complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs that language teachers draw on in their work" (Borg, 2006, p. 272). This type of research brings about a number of implications for teacher education. For example, it recognizes that knowledge of teaching is socially constructed rather than acquired, in relation to those affecting and affected by the teaching activity such as students, parents, other teachers, and administrators (Johnson, 2009). In addition, it acknowledges that teacher development is a life-long process and is reliant on social contexts. It is "built through experiences in multiple social contexts first as learners in classrooms and schools, then later as participants in professional teacher education programs and, ultimately in the communities of practice in which teachers work" (Johnson, 2009, p.10).

Lastly, according to the sociocultural theory, telling stories is a powerful way in the research of teacher learning. Through describing and telling their experiences, teachers are also reflecting on their practice and their ways of thinking, and presenting the richness and complexity of teaching, which is why this method plays an essential role in teaching and teacher education research (Carter, 1993). Golombek & Johnson (2004) also stressed the importance of stories in structuring teachers' knowledge since it is helpful for understanding teaching from different teachers' perspectives. In this study, comparing to assessing teachers' practice using

measure forms and questionnaire, stories are viewed as more powerful devices to understand CTEFLs' past English learning experiences in China, their TESOL studying experiences in the United States, and their teaching practices in diverse sociocultural contexts after returning China. The rich context, characters, complexity would be discovered to show teachers' teaching lives. These stories will benefit both the tellers and teachers who are eager to learn from others' experiences, in particular those who have never exposed to Western-based teaching approaches. It will also greatly contribute to current literature of EFL teaching practice in China.

Chapter Summary

With the sociocultural theory as the theoretical framework, this chapter revealed the literature gap that little attention has been paid to how CTEFLs describe their teaching experiences after they received systematic TESOL training in Western countries and returned to China. It began with a discussion on the historical and philosophical perspective of Western TESOL pedagogies. The review of literature explained how Western TESOL pedagogies developed and influenced by the Socratic culture. Besides, the situation of the TESOL training program for non-native English speakers was described, including the curriculum design, the training purpose, and the drawbacks for lack of consideration of non-native teaching contexts. Lastly, through the detailed description of the development of traditional English education in China, which was profoundly influenced by the Confucian heritage cultures, I highlighted the most widely used English teaching method in China, the grammar-translation method. The characteristics of GTM and the limitations of using such method in English teaching were presented. Empirical studies on how Western educational influenced China and the language teaching development process in China were reviewed. It was found that there are conflicts between Western educational ideologies and the EFL teaching contexts, and several factors may

resist against Western pedagogies in China, including the dichotomy of cultures of learning between East and West, the students' language ability and motivation, and the differences of teacher's role in the classroom.

In sum, this chapter provided a review of the literature that informs how this study will address the gaps between Western TESOL pedagogies and the English teaching context in China through the lens of sociocultural theory. In the next chapter, a detailed methodology framework and design of the study will be discussed.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The focus of this study was to explore the teaching experiences of four CTEFLs' who have studied in a MATESOL program in the United States and are currently teaching English at different educational institutions in China. The study gave voice to CTEFLs and highlighted how and why they made certain pedagogical decisions in a globally localized way after they had experienced the phenomenon of transition from West to East. The research questions that guided this research were:

1. How do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States?

2. How do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States?

Approach to the Study

Drawing from the purpose of this study, this study adopted a qualitative, phenomenological case study approach to data collection and analysis. The intent of this study was to present the complexities of teaching and understand the phenomena of transition from West to East. The complexities of teaching were better studied and presented meaningfully within the fullness and depth of qualitative research. In general, the qualitative nature of the research contributed to the understanding of the complexities, challenges, and discoveries of how the Western-trained CTEFLs teach English in their particular teaching contexts after trained in a U.S. MATESOL program.

Qualitative research can be defined as, "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3) where researchers aim to understand or interpret a phenomenon in its natural settings through various data sources and collection methods that lead

to interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It has been widely utilized to explore various perspectives of people and "in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior" (Taylor, 2016, p. 7). Utilizing qualitative methodologies for this study allowed the participants to share their stories which have unique meaning to them in a comfortable environment, and at the same time, offered me the flexibility needed to retell the stories of the participants in meaningful context by utilizing narratives rather than numbers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As discussed in the previous section, guiding by the sociocultural lens, it was difficult to objectively examine the teachers' teaching beliefs and lived experiences of teaching through quantitative, formulated measures. Qualitative researchers believe that there are multiple truths and realities that are closely intertwined with human experience and can be constructed through repeated social discourses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Through the qualitative inquiry, I had the opportunity to understand how different people described their experiences and the unique meaning they made from their experiences (Merriam, 1998, 2009), which was appropriate for exploring and answering the research questions.

In this study, the participants were asked to recount their stories of being a CTEFL, who received MATESOL training in the United States. Their experiences of both Western-based TESOL pedagogies and traditional English pedagogies in China offered them a meaningful forum to narrate their perceptions of English teaching and allowed me to retell their stories through a shared experience of meaning making. As such, qualitative research made it possible for me to understand the participants' experiences through an insider's perspective (Castiglione, 2017). In other words, the relationship between me and the participants were involved in the research process and took into account the role of context in shaping our understanding of reality. The goal of using qualitative inquiry was to collect rich and meaningful data and

delineate the personal narratives of the participants' experiences as described from their own perspectives (Merriam, 1998). It was deemed an appropriate way for this study to explore what CTEFLs' experiences of MATESOL training and English teaching were and how they perceived their experiences.

Subjectivity in Qualitative Research

Subjectivities refer to individuals' "feelings, opinions, or preferences" (Siegesmund, 2008, p. 2). It is an "amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Compare to the conventional conception that subjectivities are detrimental for academic research and reducing academic accuracy, new research has been examined the impact of subjectivities and found that they have positive contributions to the process of qualitative inquiry (Preissle, 2008). As Peshkin (1988) states, "one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our life" (p. 17). It is firmly right that no matter how hard the researchers try to get rid of these, their subjectivities remain powerful in shaping who they are and how they connect to their studies. In this study, it was critical for me, as a qualitative researcher, to be aware and clear about my own "motives, passions, and prejudices in pursuit of answering the questions" (Finlay & Gough, 2008, p. 55) of my study through consistent self-reflection.

Subjectivity statement is "a summary of who researchers is in relation to what and whom they are studying" (Preissle, 2008, p. 2). These require the researcher to be critically conscious of "their personal histories, cultural worldviews, and professional experiences" (Preissle, 2008, p. 2). The purpose of a subjectivity statement is to help the researcher identify how their prior experiences influence all stages of their current research process and increase the overall

authenticity and quality of the study, which if absent, may make knowledgeable audiences unconvinced about what has not been informed (Callaway, 1992; Preissle, 2008). In addressing my subjectivities before beginning this study, I became increasingly aware of not just my identity per se, but the reasoning behind me completing this study, the consideration of my role in my research, and my connections to others, especially my research participants. The narrative below disclosed my beliefs and assumptions that I brought to the table and their roles in shaping this study.

My Subjectivity Statement

My proposed research topic of exploring CTEFLs' English teaching experiences in China emanated from my personal and professional background and interests. As an international student who had been a language learner in cross-cultural settings, I had personally experienced different language teaching pedagogies in different contexts and educational settings. In addition, I am a graduate student focusing on language diversity and multilingual education studies, which provided me deep insights on the complexity of teaching and importance of analyzing teaching in culture contexts. I always believed that it is my obligation and a privilege to empower English language teachers and learners to the best of my ability. The best I could do involves understanding my attributes as a human and a researcher, knowing what limitations I inherently face, and believing in my knowledge and credibility to address such complex educational issues.

I grew up in a highly educated family and was greatly influenced by my mother, who is a college professor loved and respected by her students. During holidays, she always received many gifts and thank you cards from her students, who appreciated her teaching and help. I had went to her classroom and attended her lecture before, and I saw her lessons were engaging and helpful, which benefited her students greatly. I wanted to become a well-liked teacher like my

mother and empower my students' learning and having positively effects on their lives. This career dream had never changed since I was very young.

Growing up, I received the traditional ways of teaching in the formal educational system in China for almost 20 years. I was asked to memorize everything the teacher taught in school without enough practice other than test preparations. The knowledge I learned was not necessarily connected to my real life, and the teachers' lectures often came as the only way of instruction. I was not allowed to, or never thought about to question what the teacher taught, and there were few interactions between students and teachers in class. During my school years, I never felt any problems of learning English in such ways since the essential things in my life were the final scores and my ranking in school. Even though the traditional way of English learning was boring, it helped me passed the college entrance examination with a high score and learned enough knowledge about English grammar and vocabulary. Thus, I never wanted to question or criticize the test-based teaching and learning, or even the whole educational system in China since the educational policy was in the end decided by the sociocultural context.

I was admitted to a Liaoning Normal University, majoring in education (teacher-training). During my four years of undergraduate study, I was immersed in the systematic professional knowledge and theories about education, including General Psychology, Principle of Modern Education, Educational Psychology, and Educational Administration. These course work assisted me in understanding the basic educational theory and students' mental growth. An opportunity to participate in a Higher Education Academic Conference intrigued me to start my academic research journey. Hundreds of professional researchers dressed neatly and exchanged their latest research findings with each other. They presented their papers in front of colleagues of a similar educational field and received constructive feedback. I still remember that some of

their presentations were so insightful and creative. Some collaborated cross-culture teaching projects also very much broadened my horizon and very much motivated me to engage in educational research.

After I graduated from college, I chose to continue pursuing my master's degree. Two choices were put in front of me at that time: going to graduate school in China or studying abroad. I chose the latter. I never thought about studying in another country before. My English level was fair, and I could not speak more languages other than Chinese. I did not have an American dream or any specific interests in the American culture. My family was not wealthy, and I did not want to put a burden on them, even separate from them. However, I did not have the motivation to continue my studies in China since I was tired of test-based learning and rote memorization. During my college year, I learned a lot, but at the same time, there were still some subjects that did not make any sense to me that required me to memorize for passing the graduate entrance examination in China. At that time, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) required for graduate schools in the United States was much more interesting for me, especially the logical thinking throughout the test. I felt like I was not a robot who need to remember the knowledge but a person who can think critically. My pre-assumption for Western teaching was that their classrooms were very student-centered and interactive, which I wished to experience more and learn more. Those thoughts led to my final decision to study abroad.

I chose to focus on TESOL for my master's degree and traveled to the United States, and my career goal was even more apparent since then: I want to become an English teacher when I finish my study and go back to China. I started to dive in language education and intensely engage in both English teaching and English teacher training at all levels. I had access to theory related to second language teaching and learning. Through the courses I took, such as Principles

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of Bilingual Education, Integrating Content Areas in ESL, and Teaching the Structure of the English Language, I had a deep understanding of second language acquisition and the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors in teaching and learning a second language. These pieces of knowledge aroused my interest in the field of language diversity and multilingual education. I had frequent opportunities during various research projects in TESOL program and the fieldwork in multilingual schools to observe students' language learning and examine issues of English language teaching and learning for ELLs (including ESLs and EFLs), and on a more acute scale, had discussed English pedagogies with Chinese international students who had received both ways of Chinese traditional English teaching and Western English teaching.

I had officially transitioned into a researcher through my doctoral journey, involving in English language education and bilingual education studies. I, unquestionably, believed that second language teaching may significantly impact students' language learning experiences. Good language teachers may use advanced teaching pedagogies to open the door for students, consider students' background and learning needs, give learners the opportunities to talk and practice, connect the knowledge to students' life, and make their lessons more entertaining, which some amateur teachers may not be able to achieve otherwise. As I learned more and explored second language learning through courses, literature, and my teaching experiences as a graduate teaching assistant, I found many useful Western language pedagogies I can apply in my future English classroom. At the same time, my personal experiences of learning English gave me a holistic picture of the differences in language educational context in China and the US and inspired me to conduct this research. When I was learning those innovative Western language pedagogies, I was thinking about which one or which part I can take back to China and how I can adapt those pedagogies into my English classroom that fit the Chinese students. I want to find a

better way to balance the Western language pedagogies and the traditional English teaching in China considering the indispensable of both sides.

To conclude, the above narrative may provide my readers with a glimpse into the experiences and beliefs that are the inspiration for this study. The close relationship between this topic and my future career motivated me to conduct this study: the change I will experience from being a Western-trained graduate student in the US in TESOL program to an English teacher and educator in China. As I was conducting the study, these beliefs and experiences were intertwined with me as a person and with my data management, analysis, meaning making, and representation in this study. With high awareness of my subjectivities, I presented a vivid picture of different English language teaching in various contexts and, in the meanwhile, provided better ways of thinking to English language teachers and learners.

Methodology

The methodology of this study utilized a phenomenological case study, which provided a deep insight into the phenomenon of pedagogical practice after TESOL training in the Western country as CTEFLs experience it within their specific educational contexts. While the primary methodology was a hermeneutic phenomenology, the aspect of a case study was also be applied. The goal of combining the two was to allow participants to share their stories and thoughts and help me to explore the given uniqueness to reveal an ongoing phenomenon that otherwise may not be accessible (Merriam, 1998).

Phenomenology

The origins of phenomenology can be traced back to Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, who developed the philosophy of phenomenology which frequently used in sociology, psychology, health sciences, nursing, and education to connect the essence of

meaning with both the experience of the phenomenon and the perceptions of the person experiencing that phenomenon (Husserl, 2013). Unlike other qualitative methodologies, phenomenology focuses on the essence, meaning, significance, distinctiveness, or uniqueness of experiences in our lives (Husserl, 2013; Spiegelberg, 1960; Vagle, 2014; Van Manen, 2014). It seeks an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon specific to the unique characteristics of individuals' everyday life (A. Giorgi, 1994). Applying a phenomenological research methodology to this study offered insights into how Western-trained CTEFLs makes sense of their TESOL training and presents their current teaching experiences.

Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, a significant branch of phenomenology, is an interpretive method that deals with human experience and explores the role of language, questioning, and human conversation while trying to understand a specific phenomenon (J. Smith et al., 2013; Zahavi, 2018). The main focus of this approach is language and interpretation, which is very helpful for researchers to illuminate details within an individual's experience, create meaning, and attain a sense of understanding (Van Manen, 2014; Zahavi, 2018). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a combination of reflections, theory, and practice that intertwines vivid and details descriptions of lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014; Zahavi, 2018). This method is crucial in giving voice to individuals, interpreted texts to elucidate and deepen an understanding of things people engage in and discovering the essence of people's shared experiences (Spence, 2017).

Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the historical and cultural contexts of human experience as it is lived (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). It allowed me to understand and explore CTEFLs language learning, teacher training, and teaching experiences in various cultural contexts. At the same time, this method enabled me to reach the meaning of teachers'

experiences by searching for themes and gathering their narratives of lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Thus, after collecting the experiences and understandings from four participants through in-depth interviews, a cross-case analysis was undertaken to explore the narrative of the essence that everyone's experienced about the phenomenon (Creswell et al., 2007).

Case study. This phenomenology approach is supported by the case study design, which focuses on the detailed description of the case within specific, contextual conditions (Yin, 2009). Case study is one of the most popular and accepted qualitative research approaches to study educational issues because it allows for a holistic understanding of a phenomenon within real-life contexts from the perspective of those involved (Stake, 1995). Stake has depicted case study as possessing the ability to grasp the intricacies of a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). As Yin (2009) describes, case study is best suited to research that asks "how" and "why" questions about contemporary events that the investigator cannot manipulate. The research questions of this study concentrated on how CTEFLs describe and make sense of their Western learning experiences and their teaching practice in China. These research questions were the heart of the present study, and answers to these questions were discovered, not suggest by hypotheses, with evidence directly obtain and display from the teachers. Different teachers' perspectives from various educational settings were included for investigation in this study to gain a deep insight into their English teaching experiences in China after they studied in the TESOL program in the United States.

The qualitative research method with a multiple-case study design calls for the examination of the external interest of a phenomenon, the relationships between different influences and performances, and the complexity of the embedded contexts through the perspectives of multiple cases from multiple sites, which added to the understating of the

phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 1995). In the present study, multiple-case study design allowed for direct replication and analytical conclusions that arise independently within each CTEFLs' case; such findings were often more potent than those attained from a single-case design (Yin, 2009). Contextual variations, which in this case are the different educational institutions, student populations, and educational environments, appeared across multiple case studies. The common and different patterns emerged across cases and provided more robust analytical conclusions (Yin, 2009).

Phenomenological Case Study

Although this research effort focused on a particular phenomenon, this phenomenon took place within the context of a group with its own set of dynamics, which was better to be examined by adding a case study design to complement the phenomenological aspects (Van Manen, 2014). The phenomenological approach allowed one to understand the essence of human experience to gain a rich understanding of a particular experience from the perspective of the participants. These participants' personal, firsthand knowledge provided descriptive data that provided me with a firmer understanding of the "lived experience" for the particular event. A case study helped create a bounded system to present an in-depth understanding of persons or situations for this study (Yin, 2009). It was designed to explore specific characteristics or sight within a social context chosen by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The phenomenological approach fuses with the case study design allowed the researcher to come to make sense of the complexity of human experiences and the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, 2009).

For the present study, CTEFL, who studied in a TESOL program in the United States, was used as the selected case. The design of this study encompassed multiple cases of four

teachers who are currently teaching English in various educational institutions in China after they finished their MATESOL training in an Eastern University in the U.S. All four teachers were novice teachers since they just started teaching for 2-3 years. The phenomenological approach was naturally connected with the selected cases and well-suited to study the particular teachers' lived experiences from their perspectives and provide a rich understanding of the phenomenon of applying Western pedagogies in the local context. Besides, the phenomenological case study allowed the researcher to engage in the *funnel approach* to fieldwork, which is "the strategy is to selectively narrow the focus within a previously explored broad field" (Agar, 2006, p. 61). Since the globalization and localization of Western pedagogies had been broadly studied, this phenomenological case study was unique, as it focused on a specific group of teachers in specific educational contexts.

Research Design

Participant Selection and Gaining Access

This study focuses on the lived experiences of four CTEFLs who were used to study in a MATESOL program in an Eastern university in the United States and currently teaching English in China. I chose this specific MATESOL program since I had studied in this program before. It was an advantage for me to contact the university and gain access to the potential participants. The participants were able to trust and share their stories in-depth with me, and their willingness to share was necessary for me to gather valid data (Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition, I was familiar with the TESOL courses offered in the program and had a deep understanding of the TESOL learning environment there. This understanding helped me to build a closer relationship with the participants and accurately interpret their narratives.

The participant recruiting procedure followed purposeful and criterion-based sampling method (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I set three criterions for the participants. Firstly, the participant needed to be a Chinese English teacher who had completed his or her study in the MATESOL program in the selected Eastern university in the U.S. Secondly, the participant was grown up in China and had the living and learning experience in China. Lastly, the participant was currently teaching English in China and needed to have at least 1 year of English teaching experience in China after they completed the MATESOL studying. These criterions allowed me to intentionally select individuals and sites to facilitate the exploration and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014).

The official recruitment of participants began after IRB approval was received from my institute of higher education. In order to gain access to the potential participants, I first contacted the coordinator of the MATESOL program to request contact information on international students from China who returned to China and teach English after graduation in the past 5 years. Then, I sent out emails to these potential participants and ask them for their consent to participate in this research. Finally, I received responses from four CTEFLs who were working in various educational settings. These teachers met all my criteria and their diverse teaching contexts was helpful for me to gain an in-depth understanding of CTEFLs' lived experiences. All participants were still novice and young EFL teachers in China and their perceptions of Eastern and Western pedagogies could provide insights of this specific population of teachers. After recruiting the participants, each teacher became one of the cases for this study.

Table 3.1. Overview of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	College Major	Working Region	Type of Working Institution	Years of Teaching English

Na	27	Female	Chinese as a Foreign Language	A Top City in Eastern China	A Foreign Language Vocational School	3
Xiao	30	Female	Chinese as a Foreign Language	A Second-tier City in Southern China	A Foreign Language Training Institution	2
Yang	28	Female	English	A Top City in Eastern China	A Public International High School	3
Zhan	28	Female	English Language and Literature	A Top City in Eastern China	A Private International High School	2

Researcher Role

In qualitative studies, a researcher can either be an insider or an outsider; adopting an utterly neutral role is challenging (Creswell, 2014). In this type of study, it is common for researchers to belong to the social group they are interested in studying (Flick, 2009). This makes them an insider within their research, even before it has begun. As Schwandt (2007) explains,

An insider perspective holds that knowledge of the social world must start from the insider or social actor's account of what social life means. To know the world of human action is to understand the subjective meanings of that action to the actors. (p. 152)

Put another way, an individual's world starts from within and is based on his or her experiences. An individual's reality inevitably transcends how each individual perceives his or her experiences, making it virtually impossible to be removed entirely from the study and remain neutral. However, there are various benefits to be an insider within a study. These include having a greater understanding of the culture being studied, gaining access, and working with the ways

the participants create their truths and the way they make meaning (Schwandt, 2007).

Additionally, working from an insider perspective can help facilitate the process of gaining access to participants, which can contribute to the participant reaching a higher level of comfort and feeling safer during the research process (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Castiglione, 2017; Pugh & Brooks, 2000).

Conversely, there are advantages to the researcher being an outsider (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Pugh & Brooks, 2000). One is that participants readily share elaborate information that they may not feel comfortable sharing with a researcher working from an insider perspective. Another advantage is that the researcher can maintain a more analytical and critical approach and attitude toward the study. This may be because the researcher is not viewed as an internal threat or someone who would use this information outside of the research study, within the insider community. The outsider perspective can also lead to fresh ways of organizing experiences and meaning-making that might not be possible from an insider's perspective, potentially leading to valuable new analytical insights (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Pugh & Brooks, 2000). However, in qualitative research studies, outsiders may fail to accurately describe participants and their culture and do more damage than help when they document heavily distorted cultural norms from Western perspectives (P. Smith, 2005).

Being aware of the roles of both stances, I assumed both the role of an insider and an outsider in this study. As such, my role shifted depending on the activities I was involved in during the research process. As an insider, I was identified as a researcher who had an inside status about the subject and as a member of the culture. I shared the same learning experiences in the TESOL program with the participants, and additionally, I had been deeply immersed in

traditional English education in China for over 20 years. These experiences gave me an inside

perspective when communicating with the participants and making sense of the data.

In contrast, I operated in an outsider membership role when I researched the field. As an

outsider, I was not familiar with the teaching settings and context at the participants' locations. I

was unfamiliar with how the participants engage with their students, what teaching pedagogies

they choose in their classrooms, their reasons for using those specific pedagogies, and what

challenges and supports they encountered. Therefore, I was an outsider when it comes to an

understanding of the lived experiences of each participant's teaching practice.

To conclude, I was aware of my membership role shifting between an insider and an

outsider. Throughout the study, I reflected on my role and the influence on my perceptions and

research practice to ensure I remained cognizant of the purpose of the study.

Data Collection

In a phenomenological case study, data is collected from a group of people who

experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014), in this case, teaching English in China after

studying in a MATESOL program in the United States. Multiple sources of evidence were

collected to corroborate "the same fact or phenomenon" (Yin, 2009, p. 116). As Yin (2009)

mentioned, "any findings or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based

on several different sources of information" (p. 116). Therefore, data for this study were

collected from a divergent of sources, including in-depth interviews, researcher's journal entries,

e-mail and WeChat message correspondence, and documents provided by participants such as

lesson plans, photos, and students' work, to enrich and triangle the data during the data analysis.

These different sources of evidence provided a holistic picture on understanding the lived

experiences of teachers' classroom practice.

The data for this study were collected over 20 weeks. The following data inventory in Table 3.2 contains the final number of pages, which were generated as raw data.

Table 3.2. Data Inventory

Source of data	Number of average pages	Number of total pages
Three One-hour Interviews with Each Participant (four participants) and interview notes	35 pages per one hour of transcription	35 x 3 x 4= 420 pages
Researcher's Journal Reflections	1 page per week (20 weeks)	1 x 20 = 20 pages
Communication (email, informal conversation)	5 pages per participant	5 x 4 = 20 pages
Documents analysis	10 pages per participant	10 x 4 = 40 pages
Member Check for each Interview (30 min. each)	10 pages per 30 minutes of transcription	10 x 12 = 120 pages
	Total Pages	620 pages

Interviews

The primary data collection method for this study utilized qualitative in-depth interview to gain a deeper understanding of CTEFLs' lived experiences of English teaching in China. According to Patton (2002), qualitative interviews allow the researcher to gather data on how individuals perceive the world around them and the meaning of those experiences. It is an attempt for the researcher to understand the phenomena from the subject's point of view and to uncover the meaning of the interviewee's experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The purpose of the qualitative interview was to generate alternative perspectives of the phenomena under study. The researcher could not gain valuable information from the phenomena when the studies

participants' accounts of the events duplicate what the researcher already knows. An in-depth interview could foster eliciting the participants' meaning making of their own experiences (Charmaz, 2014). In other words, the interviewer needed to unpack the research participants' experiences to obtain access to deeper levels and more nuanced descriptions of the phenomena under study (Yin, 2009).

This phenomenological case study included a semi-structured interview protocol. This interview method allowed the researcher the flexibility to bring up new questions to get clarification and probe the participants' reasoning during the interview process but respects how the participant's frames and structure their responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In addition, the goal of specificity was achieved by using semi-structured interviews instead of unstructured interviews which usually provided a broad picture of the interviewees (Yin, 2009). All the interviews were conducted through online video chatting and in Mandarin, the language which the participants could express themselves comfortably and freely. Three interviews were separately conducted with each teacher since conducting multiple interviews could assist the development of trust and rapport between the researcher and interviewee, provide opportunities for both the interviewee and the researcher to reflect between interviews, and clarify aspects explore in one interview to explore in greater depth in the subsequent conversation (Earthy & Cronin, 2008).

In this study, each interview was last around one hour. Since I did the majority of the interviews via Wechat video chatting, sometimes the interviews lasted longer than the proposed time period either because the participants were highly involved or because the internet connection was not good. The first round of interview was more structured and focused on the participants' English learning experiences, TESOL training experiences, and teaching

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experiences in China. The second and third rounds of interviews were follow-up interviews and focused on participants' perceptions of their experiences and the Western-based and Eastern-based teaching pedagogies in general. The initial round of interview question prompts were prepared before the interviews which were shown in Appendix D. The participants' responses guided the direction of the subsequent interviews and prompted the development of additional questions.

Interview questions were used to obtain rich, in-depth information based on the participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994). The interview protocol for this study consisted of a range of questions regarding the participants' previous English learning experiences, TESOL training experiences in the United States, their current English teaching practice with their students, and the existing support and challenges for them to achieve their teaching goals. These questions intended to bring out the lived experiences of Western-trained teachers and explore the rationales of teachers' instructional decisions shaped by their backgrounds and diverse teaching contexts. The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, which was Mandarin in this case, to reduce participants' stress or anxiety during participation in this study and accurately share their opinions. Later, adequate thought and attention were given to the data translation process to minimize the loss of language power (van Nes et al., 2010). For example, I gave my best effort to reflect to translation the participants' narratives considering the language and culture differences, reflect on the data throughout data analyses process, keep some of their original words, and provide rich descriptions with the use of their quotes.

Falsification was used in the interview in order for statements to be considered empirically tested (Popper, 2002). The participants described the experiences that contrast their previous statements and, thus, "criticize them effectively" (Popper, 2002, p. 67). Falsification

provided trustworthiness and strength to the data by identifying any corroborative or faulty data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). An example question for this was, "Conversely, can you think of an English teacher that disappointed you? What was different?".

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. The recording was part of the data collection process. According to Polit and Beck (2010), the interview's recording provides the researcher with a data trail that can be referred to in the case of lousy note-taking as a result of memory lapse or research bias. During the interview, the researcher took notes while listening attentively to what the participants said just in case that the recording equipment failed and to capture the non-verbal responses (such as tone of voice, speech patterns, and facial expressions); however, the researcher ensured that notetaking did not interrupt the flow of conversation. These notes were part of the data transcription process and were provided to the participants for review as a part of member checking to ensure accuracy and rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 2017). During the review of the transcripts, the participants indicated that this was an accurate account of their interpretation, and changes were made where necessary.

Documents

According to Flick (2009), document analysis refers to the practice in qualitative research of analyzing and interpreting data that originates in studying relevant documents. It could be "any written or recorded material that was not prepared specifically in response to a request" (Lincoln & Guba, 2017, p. 277). Flick (2009) categorizes these sources of data into public records, private documents, interview transcripts, and others attained from video recordings, and photographs. Public records can include political and judicial reports, television scripts, and minutes of a meeting, while private documents may include medical records, school records, and journals.

In this study, the documents were collected from the participants and analyzed, including those related to CTEFLs' TESOL training experiences abroad such as the courses they took, assignments which reflected their teaching beliefs, and their relevant publications. These material collections offered a good starting point for the researcher to explore how their training experiences in the United States impact their current teaching practice in China. When asked the participants to provide documents that could support my data analysis, I offered them the following prompt: "Could you provide any documents that could speak to your instructions, such as syllabi, lesson plans, term teaching reflective paper, and written feedback on students' assignments?" Then, I collected their documents and organized them in folders. Later, I organized and linked them to the participants' narratives to offer a new angle of the teachers' thoughts and actions and thus provide other specific details to either confirm or challenge the information collected from other sources. In addition, communication e-mails and WeChat messages with the participants were used to yield valuable information and a more in-depth look into the lived experiences of the CTEFLs.

Data Management

In qualitative research, data management can be very complicated since it needs to include various strategies that address the use of an organizational system for data collection and storage (L. Richards, 1999). According to Wood and Kroger (2000),

> The situatedness of discourse suggests that particular care be taken to note the following sorts of information: the circumstances under which the discourse was produced and recorded; date, time, and place; the conditions under which documents (written texts) were produced (e.g., anonymity, confidentiality); and the ways in which they were preserved, stored, and made available to the researcher. (p. 69)

That is, I was proactive in ensuring that information was collected and stored carefully. In this study, data management consisted of interviews, researcher's notes, audio recording transcripts, documents collected from the participants, researcher's reflective journals, and member checks. To ensure the protection of the participants' privacy and confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym rather than the participant's real name for data collection, analysis, and reporting. All copies of raw data were labeled with the pseudonyms and the date of the collection and stored in locked files. All electronic communications were stored in an e-mail account accessible only by the researcher to ensure the protection of the data collected. Audio-recording and transcripts were kept in a password-protected computer file, with backup copies of the audio recordings stored in a locked, metal, fireproof file cabinet for seven years and will be destroyed (shredded) after the 7th year to protect the privacy of the research participants.

NVivo12 software was employed to help categorize and organize raw data. NVivo offers "a range of tools for handling rich data records and information about them for browsing and enriching text, coding it visually or at categories, annotating and gaining accessed data records accurately and swiftly" (L. Richards, 1999, p. 4). All types of raw data were imported into NVivo12 software and categorized in different cases.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is critical and has no specific proper and linear analytic procedures to follow (Saldana, 2016). The data analysis process starts right at the moment when researchers start to conceptualize their study, understand the information they received, clarity what they heard and reflect what they learned (Weiss, 1994). This process occurs concurrently with data collection throughout the study, and each step of the method builds upon one another until the final step, which returns to a holistic understanding of the

participants' lived experiences. For raw data analysis, the procedure usually involves identifying, coding, categorizing patterns or themes, and presenting the data in the form of figures, charts, tables, graphs, diagrams, or a discussion (Creswell, 2014). The research purpose and questions should guide the entire process, and only those related to the research questions and purpose should be analyzed. NVivo12 software was used to help with coding and analyze data since the use of computer software could speed up the process of data exploration. It was critical for me to claassfiy, sort, and arrange information.

In this phenomenological case study, the analysis of phenomenological data followed Vagle's (2014) whole-part-whole guidance process and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Vagle's (2014) whole-part whole approach was modified and used to capture the entirety of the participant's story (the whole), deconstruct the story into relevant, bursting-forth pieces (the part), and then reconstruct each participant's story in a new way to illuminate the phenomenon (i.e., the whole again). The analysis process adopted a line-by-line approach where each line of the transcript was assessed for how that piece of information contributed to the understanding of the essence of the phenomena of study (Van Manen, 2014). Then, I reconstruct their stories in a way that was more relevant to the phenomenon. At the same time, the pieces of information that speak to ideas that might be emerging about the phenomenon were highlighted in different colors (Vagle, 2014).

Next, I adapted Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. According to Saldana (2016), thematic analysis is conventional practice in qualitative research or search for themes that involve the researcher to search through data as part of the research design (research questions, conceptual framework, literature review, and goals) to identify any recurring patterns. A theme is a cluster or pattern of linked categories found in the data that convey similar

meanings or interprets possible observations of the phenomenon under study (Boyatzis, 1998).

As DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) defined, a theme is a persistent pattern (experience) of meaning throughout the text, which identifies and captures the participants' lived experience into a meaningful whole. It is vital to look for these recurring patterns in the data and identify critical themes to describe and understand phenomena in multiple cases (Merriam, 1998).

      The full process of data analysis was elaborated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Data Analysis Phases

Phase 1
Line-by-line reading
Transcribing, reading the entire body of data, noting initial ideas, re-reading and further articulation of meanings of the phenomenon

Phase 2
Re-construct the story
Re-tell the participants' stories, highlight intersting information that are relevant to the phenomenon

Phase 3
Searching for themes
Come up with potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme across cases

Phase 4
Reviewing themes
Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map of the analysis

Phase 5
Defining and naming themes
Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells. Naming themes

Phase 6
Producing the report
The final opportunity for analysis, final analysis of extracts, relating back to research question and purpose, producing a scholarly report

I used the software NVivo12 to help sort out the data. Instead of predetermining all the categories, I selected big chunks of narrative that would go under the three stages of participants' experiences "Early schooling", "TESOL training", and "English teaching in China". I then tried to sort out the units of meaning through finding paragraphs, sentences, and words that would indicate potential concepts and themes. During this phase, twenty-five themes emerged, and required a reorganization of the small units into clusters. The codebook generated from this phase was attached in Appendix F. From the initial twenty-five themes, I ended up with five themes and thirteen subthemes divided into two big categories to answer the two research questions which I presented in Chapter 5. The final codebook was attached in Appendix G.

Reciprocity and Ethical Considerations

Throughout the conduction of this research, the ethical issues were considered, including anonymity, confidentiality, and reciprocity. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, we should be sensitive to ethical considerations throughout the research process. This includes the researcher's role in this study and the manner of securing data and protecting the participants from undue risk. The risks of participants' identity being released may cause stress and undue attention. To ensure participant's anonymity, I let the participants to choose their pseudonyms. None of their exact locations were reported in the paper so that the fear of possible retaliation from the administration was minimal. I also oriented the participant to the research by reviewing the participant's roles and perceived risks as well as the subjectivity and role of the researcher. Consent forms and contact information were explained and collected. Participants had the right to leave the study and discontinue their approval to use documents collected.

Reciprocity refers to the payoff for participants as they are giving their time and efforts for the study (Creswell, 2014). It is "a social behavior—a mutual give-and-take, an exchange of

gifts or services," which is especially crucial in "field studies where the researcher is accorded

the privilege of access to the lives of those he or she studies" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 267). I

reciprocated their efforts by showing respect and giving the participants voice in the dissertation

and future publications. Besides, I offered expertise to the teachers' current teaching practice for

free as professional support for their studies and career advancement.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Addressing trustworthiness in qualitative research is critically important to ensure

academic reasonability (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). Trustworthiness supports an argument that

the inquiry's findings are worth taking into account (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This section will

explain the four trustworthiness criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which used to

guide this study to corroborate both trustworthiness and rigor within this research: credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is an evaluation of "the adequacy of data from the field, which should involve

drawing on different data types, gathered in different ways from different participants" (Lincoln

& Guba, 1985, p. 296). It reflects the degree to which the research findings represent a credible

or believable interpretation of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The primary ways credibility

can be established are incorporating triangulation and member checking in the study design.

Triangulation is a method used to establish trustworthiness and rigor by analyzing research

questions from various perspectives. It involves using a variety of methods to triangulate data

sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Within this study, triangulation was completed using

interviews, documents, and the researcher reflective journals. Using this variety of methods,

triangulation was occurred by analyzing the study's research questions via multiple data sources

and perspectives. Thus, I cross-verified the interpretations of the data from this use of multiple data sources with the participants.

Additionally, member checks are the "quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of what has been recorded during a research interview from participants" (Harper & Cole, 2012, p. 510). The value of member checks in a qualitative study is a co-created narrative where the participant is a co-creator in creating the narrative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, member checking was incorporated into the semi-structured interview process to verify findings or establishing validity by taking the analyzed results back to the participants and asking if the results accurately reflect what they mean.

The transferability of qualitative research shows that the findings can apply or transfer to other contexts or settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that to assess transferability, the researcher must know both the study context and the context to which study findings may be applied. Therefore, it is only possible for the researcher to provide thick descriptions and rich analysis to increase the transferability judgments to their audiences who may wish to apply a study to other contexts or settings. Methods of full description was employed to provide detailed and specific information about the phenomenon and each case, as well as the study design. This description method furthered the reader's ability to make an informed judgment about whether the findings transfer to his or her particular context. As a component of this detail, audiotaped interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Teacher responses to opinion queries were also transcribed and richly described in terms of the respondents' views implicitly or explicitly expressed. These findings were then interpreted in light of current research and educational trends.

Dependability requires the researcher to account for changes that occur during the research process. A question that may be asked is if the research can be reconstructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve dependability, I ensured that the research process was logical, traceable, and documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). When readers can examine the research process, they can better judge the dependability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability refers to the degree that the results of the study could be corroborated by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers do not have statistics that will create a hard and fast number that points to the validity; qualitative researchers must be more descriptive and, in some ways, even more rigorous than the quantitative brethren (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability for this study was enhanced via triangulation of data during the semi-structured interviews. A reflective journal was used throughout the whole research process. It was a result of the interviews and document analysis and traced as much detail as possible during the data gathering process. Reflective journals used in qualitative research enable researchers to make their experiences, assumptions, thoughts, feelings, decisions, and the rationale behind those visible decisions to both themselves and the readers (Scheurich, 1997). It is an acknowledged part of the research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation process (Ortlipp, 2008). Keeping a research journal provided an excellent opportunity for self-reflection and allowed me to record how the research affects and informs the participants in the study (MacNaughton, 2001).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provided a detailed discussion of the research methodology that was used in the study. This section offered a review of the hermeneutic phenomenology case study and its relevance to this study. Next, the researchers' subjectivity story was presented, which showed the reflexivity

of this study and correlated it to the research methodology. Additionally, the researcher outlined

the research design, sampling method, research sites, researcher role, and a detailed explanation

of the data collection tools and procedures, including interviews, document analysis, and

reflective journals. Further sections provided detailed descriptions and procedures of the data

analysis process. The final sections provided information on reciprocity and ethics and

trustworthiness. The next two chapters will structure the study's research questions and report on

the findings.

Chapter 4 - Participants' Narratives

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and a rationale for this study of how CTEFLs experienced the phenomenon of learning English in China, being trained as an English teacher in a MATESOL program in the United States, and teaching English in China after graduation, and how these experiences impacted their pedagogical decision making. Chapter 2 reviewed the research in the field of Western TESOL pedagogies, traditional English education in China, and the Western educational influence in China, bringing to light that most research has focused on teachers' experience in a TESOL program and teachers' implementation of specific English teaching strategies in their local context instead of how their overall English learning and teacher training experiences in the West and the East impact pedagogical decision making. As a result of this gap in the literature, Chapter 3 outlined the methodological approach taken by this study, aimed at developing a better understanding of how teachers make sense of their English learning, teacher training, and teaching experiences. Chapter 4 presents each of the four research participants' backgrounds and their stories of English learning, teacher training, and English teaching.

Phenomenological Case Study Reporting

This study employed a phenomenological approach to "explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of the individual lived experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 19). Through this methodology, participants perceived and interpreted the phenomenon through common experiences with the phenomenon, and the specific essence of the experience was shared among participants (Patton, 2002). These experiences were portrayed as unique expressions via case study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of CTEFLs learning English in China, being trained as an English teacher in a MATESOL program in the United States, and

teaching English in China after graduation. This study also explored how the four teachers make sense of their training and teaching experiences.

The study was grounded in the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory. It emphasized the importance of legitimizing teachers' ways of knowing. The study started with exploring the four teachers' English learning and teacher training experiences and looking at how these experiences informed and shaped their later teaching believes and practice. It did not see teachers as passive knowledge receiver and focus on how efficiently they implement certain theories, methods, or materials imposed on them; instead, it started with exploring how the teachers reconstructed themselves as knowledge creators and what knowledge they created to meet the specific needs of their contexts (Shin, 2006). Context was highlighted when the participants' made pedagogical decisions. Teachers' knowledge and viewpoint were largely structured through stories, which were especially useful devices to get at what CTEFLs know after the immersion in both Eastern and Western education, what they do with what they have acquired, and how to deal with the sociocultural contexts they teach and continue to learn to teach.

In this chapter, I provided a descriptive overview of each participant with the purpose of sharing some of their linguistic, educational, and professional background information. Further, I also provided narratives of each participant's studying, training, and teaching experiences. I wrote in first person for each of the participant's thematic narrative because this enabled me to stay close to the data, and represent their experiences using verbatim excerpts from the interview (Kim, 2016).

Na: An English Teacher in a Foreign Language Vocational School

Na, 27 years old, was born in Z city in the north of China. She was the only child of the family. Na grew up with her parents and moved to S city in southern China when she was in junior high school, where she has been studying and living ever since. When she was a college student, she studied Chinese as a foreign language at a highly ranked university in the local area. She has taught Chinese to foreigners in private institutions in her spare time and has also been a one-on-one Chinese tutor. Initially, Na intended to become a teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, but her love of Western culture drove her to study abroad after graduating from college. Na was admitted to the TESOL program at a university in the Eastern United States. She studied there for two years. After completing her studies, she went straight back and settled in H City, a developed municipality in Eastern China. Na went to a local foreign language vocational school and became a teacher in the Applied English program at the College of English Language and Culture. There, she mainly taught comprehensive English, English listening, and English and American culture overview.

GTM and CLT Do Not Conflict

I have been learning English since I was very young. My aunt was my first English teacher, who taught me the New Concept English (a popular series of English language textbooks teaching the British rules of English). Her English was excellent, so she opened a tutoring class at home and taught several kids and me. I went to primary school in my hometown, Z city, and moved to S city when I went to junior high school. Different from Z city, S city was one of the top developed cities in China. The English I learned in the school in S City was more conversational than the English I learned in Z City. I also met a foreign teacher for the first time there. So, English education in big cities was better than in small towns.

From elementary school to high school, I learned basic English at school just like other students. English was one of the compulsory courses in school, and I learned whatever the teacher teaches. Test score was always the most important thing. During my K-12, I did not meet an English teacher that I particularly liked. My English teacher in my junior high school had a heavy accent, and she relied heavily on textbooks for lectures, which was not fun at all. My high school English teacher was better because she was very good at explaining test questions. In China, people valued exam-oriented education before college. As a result, teachers who can explain test questions clearly were popular and preferred by students.

After the college entrance examination, I was admitted to the Chinese as a foreign language program at a famous university in S city. Although it was a branch of Chinese language and literature, we were required to learn English, Chinese, and education. To become a good teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, I spent a lot of time learning English since it is a necessary skill for teaching Chinese to foreigners. In addition, I hoped that I can understand English movies without subtitles.

I met an English teacher that I like very much. She was very young, just a few years older than me. At that time, she had just returned from studying in the UK and named herself Phoebe (She really liked the character Phoebe in Friends). My classmates and I liked her very much because different from other English teachers, she would show us trailers and clips of European and American movies in class. Sometimes she used video clips to help us practice listening, but other teachers only used textbooks. During the lesson break, she would play us some of her favorite English songs, such as Taylor Swift. She also recommended musicals to us. For example, she showed us Notre Dame de Paris. After that, I felt in love with musicals. She really had a great influence on me, as well as my teaching style. Later, when I started to teach English,

I followed her style. I also recommended Notre Dame Cathedral to my students, and then my students began to love musicals. I did feel that teachers who have studied in Western countries were different from teachers who did not have that experience.

Our school also had foreign teachers, and the teaching methods of foreign teachers were also quite interesting. We had an American teacher, who was a 40-50-year-old man. In my eyes, he was the kind of stubborn old American man. He didn't use any textbooks, and he only gave us some handouts in every lesson. There was once he asked us to imagine traveling to a five-star hotel in Dubai. He gave us such a context and then let us role-play. Some students played the role of staff in the hotel, and some students played the role of tourists. He sent us a handout with different information for different roles. We had to read the information ourselves and then discussed it in groups. His lesson was all in English, which was different from Phoebe's. Phoebe used both Chinese and English.

Both of these two teachers were very good, but at that time, I still liked Phoebe better because I felt a little pressure in an English-only environment. The American teacher always wanted to make sure everyone was engaged in the classroom activities and expressed opinions in English. Although there were many opportunities to practice English speaking in his class, many students still felt stressed when their English proficiency was limited.

After graduating from university, I chose to study abroad. To a large extent, this decision was also influenced by teacher Phoebe. I really wanted to go to the United States and experience the Western culture like her, and I chose the same major, TESOL, as she did. TESOL was also related to my undergraduate major. It was also in the field of language education, and it could be helpful for my future development. My parents were very supportive of my decision. They told me: "我们不只是为了让你去'镀金'，我们看重的是你可以出去开拓眼界，长长见识

(We are not just expecting you to get a degree for showing off, but we hope you to broaden your horizons and gain more insights of the diversity in the world)."

After making up my mind, I started to prepare for the GRE test, TOEFL exam, and the application documents in my spare time. I began to search for information on the Internet, such as test preparation notes summarized by other students and some experience and skills shared by predecessors. Some tutorial books on the market also helped me a lot. To improve my grades faster, I also signed up for a GRE summer camp at Beijing New Oriental English Training School, where the teacher took everyone to train for the tests intensively. At that time, I felt that the students with me in the summer camp all learned English so well. They got very high scores and known a lot of vocabulary. Everyone held a red book (a popular vocabulary book in China used to prepare for the GRE test) in hand every day and memorized hard.

There have always been great controversies in China regarding the test-oriented English learning method. After all, when studying English in China, we were primarily focused on preparing for exams, getting high scores, and not paying much attention to spoken English. But I found that these students who could get high scores in the English tests could speak English very well if given a chance to speak. For example, one of my undergraduate friends with excellent English scores could communicate with our native English teacher in a relatively pure English accent. We all envied him at the time. Because when we were chatting with our teacher, we could only talk about some very naive topics because of our limited English. We could only use some simple sentences and vocabulary. So, in general, before studying abroad, I did not feel that the traditional English teaching or test-oriented teaching in China was out of touch with English language applications.

Personal Experience is More Practical Than the Book

When I first went abroad, I didn't have any idea of how Western classrooms look like. I thought that the Western classrooms were just like my English class with the American teacher. All teaching materials were in English, and for non-native English speakers, the level of difficulty and pressure was huge. After going abroad, I found that the most significant difference between Western and domestic was the classroom teaching model. According to my own learning experience in the university, Classroom teaching in China was more teacher-centered, while student-centered in the United States. When you were in China, the teacher might not pay attention to every student but the whole group. However, in the United States, the number of students in many classrooms was relatively small, and the distance between students and teachers was very close. Everyone had to be highly involved, and there was no opportunity for "开小差" (mind wandering). In addition, students in American classrooms "有更多的话语权" (had a say in their learning). Teachers always asked students about their own experiences and understanding of knowledge. In contrast, "在中国都是老师说什么，学生听什么" (it was all about telling and listening in China). In terms of classroom activities, there were many opportunities for group cooperation in the United States. For homework, compared with domestic test questions and examination papers that required you to give the correct answer, exams in the United States allowed you to express your understanding of knowledge based on your own experience. Completing homework was a process of interaction with subject knowledge, teachers, classmates, and oneself. For example, students posted their answers to some discussion questions online and commented on each other's posts. Before I went abroad, I had never seen students did something like this in China.

In the past two years of studying abroad, the classroom model in the United States greatly impacted my teaching after returning to China. I later brought back many of the teaching strategies that I experienced to my country and used them in my own English classroom. In other words, I taught my students as to how I was taught. What I experienced seemed to be more practical than the theory I learned from textbooks, which impressed me more. After returning to China, I didn't review the educational theories that I learned in the United States but imitating how American teachers taught students. One of the reasons was that the TESOL theories and teaching methods I learned in the classroom were aimed at children or small groups of students. But I taught college students when I went back, which was still different from children. Moreover, in the United States, the desks and chairs in the classroom were movable. During class, we can gather around and discuss with peers, which was very convenient. But desks and chairs were fixed in China. There were too many students in each class, at lEast forty or fifty people. Many teaching methods we learned were too ideal for the domestic environment and difficult to implement. If I were teaching in an international elementary school, I may make better use of these teaching methods since international schools could be taught in small classes just like those elementary schools I visited in the United States, with free layout and furnishings. All kinds of learning materials could be posted in various places, and slogans and posters were all in English. The whole environment could be vivacious and informative. But what you can see in ordinary schools in China was still white walls, just like the classroom when I was in school.

I Teach My Students as How I Was Taught in the United States

After returning home, I taught English at a foreign language vocational school in H city. H City is a well-developed municipality in Eastern China, where people are very innovative, open, and willing to accept new things. This foreign language vocational school is one of the best

private vocational colleges in H city. The English Language and Culture department where I work has the largest number of students in the college, enrolling more than 600 new students from all parts of the country every year.

Interestingly, this school hired a lot of foreign teachers from Africa. These foreign teachers do not have any professional background. The school hired them may be because our school's reputation is limited and the salary is not high, so we can only recruit these non-professional foreign teachers. As a result, students often reported that the overall quality of these foreign teachers was inferior. They were often late or swore in class, which had a bad influence on students. Although the school intended to find some native English speakers to provide students the experience of immersive English learning, not all native English speakers have the qualifications to teach English.

For Chinese teachers, our school required the classroom language to be at lEast 50% English. Teachers had to pay attention to both themselves and their students' language use. When there were no strict requirements, everyone spoke Chinese only. But when our dean made a mandatory request and started to patrol the classes, everyone was forced to speak English. I understood that our dean aimed to let everyone practice English as much as possible. But sometimes, I saw my students struggling to speak English. Some students in our school had a poor English foundation, so they were really anxious. The only thing I could do was to let them practice as much as possible.

Other than the language requirement, the school gave teachers enough freedom. Every teacher could have their own teaching style, and teachers were not required to teach the exact same thing. Maybe this is an advantage of the university. If it was in a middle school or high school, it might be a little bit difficult for teachers to design their lessons freely. Our dean won't

pressure teachers on the students' test score. The assessment for teachers in our school was only based on students' evaluation comments and feedback. It depends on whether students acknowledged the teacher or not. So, our teachers "八仙过海，各显神通" (did whatever they could to give better lessons). Some teachers had learned a variety of teaching methods during graduate school. Some would often attend workshops to learn the latest teaching approaches. Some outstanding teachers would open courses and share their teaching experiences. Our school also financially supported teachers to attend training sessions and conferences.

Outside of work, I often went to other English teachers' classes. We had a male English teacher who graduated from a normal domestic university taught very well, and everyone liked him. When he taught, he prepared a lot of teaching aids. For example, he bought a lot of large white posters, white paper, and markers. He asked students to work in groups in class, and each group completed a large poster and presented it to the class. Students would share their work and interact with each other. I think these activities were very good, but our school did not provide these teaching aids. The office only had printers and textbooks. Teachers had to buy other teaching tools. That was why I usually didn't bother to do it.

In my class, I designed and arranged my course according to my graduate professor's class. I often let students discuss in class, collaborate in groups, and express their views and opinions. These highly interactive activities between teachers and students, students and students, were challenging for some new classes since students had few experiences of these activities. Some students hardly dared to speak English in class. And when I let them discuss with each other, they keep silent. But after the students were gradually familiar with my teaching method and got used to it, they began to speak more.

Most of the homework I assigned to my students asked them to discuss a certain topic and post their comments online in English. I also asked my students to write a reflection after reading. This kind of homework was advantageous for students who were willing to learn. For those students who were unwilling to study, if I assigned them the traditional assignments, such as some multiple-choice questions, they often copied answers or scribbled. But when I asked them to share their thoughts, I found that they started to think and write something out. Although their English had a lot of grammatical errors, at lEast they were willing to express themselves. This could be regarded as the positive effect of the new teaching method I had seen.

In the past two years, we have increasingly combined the Internet, mobile phones, and course learning due to the increasing number of online teaching platforms and resources in China. Initially, the school asked teachers to use an application called "超新学习通" (Chaoxin learning APP). Because even though students were not allowed to bring computers to the classroom, everyone used mobile phones. So, why didn't we let students use their mobile phones to learn? Students were not forbidden to take out their mobile phones during class anymore. Instead, they were asked to complete some tasks on their mobile phones. For example, in the middle of the semester, students were required to complete a quiz on the Chaoxin learning APP. Teachers posted questions on the APP, and then everyone took out their phones to answer the questions in class. In the beginning, this APP was still being tested in our school for some exams on it. The dean of our department was an old man who liked innovation. He wanted to connect English with the Internet and use Chaoxin APP to achieve this goal. In addition, he also asked some experienced teachers to share some software or online platforms that could be used in English learning, and teachers could use them freely. Unfortunately, after several exams, the students didn't like it very much. Students reported that the APP could not distinguish between

uppercase and lowercase letters and often made mistakes on gradings. This added a lot of workload to the teachers: if students' scores were wrong, the teacher had to calculate the score manually.

Later, I found another APP called "微助教" (Micro Assistant). This APP was similar to the online discussion board in the United States. I could build my course on it, create a unique QR code, and invite my students to join. Students could check in on it every time they come to class. The APP allowed students to sign in within a few hundred meters of the teacher's range, so that they couldn't sign in in the dormitory. And I can set a time limit. For example, the sign-in must be completed within two minutes after the lesson starts. This saved the time for the teacher to take attendance during the lesson, and it was very convenient. In addition, this platform allowed teachers to upload course materials, and students could download them in advance. In the past, only those hard-working students would ask the teacher for a copy of PowerPoint after class. Now with this platform, all students can get access to these course materials. I often posted some review questions on the APP. Students could discuss and leave messages on it. After used this APP for a while, all my students liked it very much.

I sometimes showed some English skits to my students like my previous teacher. There were some short episodes like Black Mirror, and one episode was around 40 minutes. Students could finish watching it in one lesson. Then, I would put some thinking questions on the Micro Assistant APP about the video clips. Generally, these questions would be counted as an assessment for their mid-term. But these questions were more interesting than the standard tests, and students were more willing to do them.

Figure 4.1. Thinking Questions for Video Clips
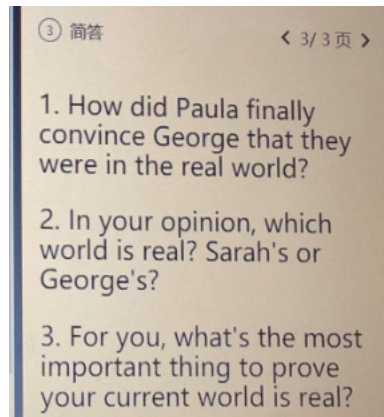
Figure 4.1. This photo was the thinking questions that Na let students to answer after they watched the web drama *Electric Dreams: The World of Phillip K. Dick* produced by Amazon
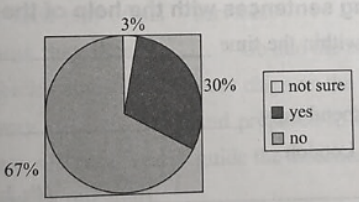
In writing, my student performance has improved significantly. When I taught students how to write, I taught them the American way of writing. In other words, I didn't let them quote sentences, use metaphors, and express very implicitly and abstractly. I taught them how to do write with clear logic and structure. This was what I learned in the postgraduate writing class, and I wrote my thesis in the same way. So, in my own writing class, I emphasized logical thinking and let students practice writing outlines, listing the key ideas, and then extending from each point. Many Chinese students lack these skills. After the practice, my students' writing improved very fast. Once students had mastered this skill, it was easier for them to fill in the content. When my students prepared for the College English Test (known as CET, a national English as a foreign language test in China), they found this skill very helpful in writing. I still remember a student who wrote an essay in his notebook, thanking me helped him a lot. He wrote, "老师, 你不知道你对我有多大帮助！所有的东西你讲完之后我都豁然开朗，尤其是作文这一块，我写得越来越好！您的课我也觉得很有意思。而且您知道吗，有一些以前不喜欢

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学习的学生也都喜欢听您的课，都不翘课了"（Teacher, you really helped me a lot! After I took your lessons, everything was clear, especially the composition part. Now, I am writing better and better! Your class was also very interesting. You know, some students who didn't like to study before also like to listen to your lesson, and they never skipped your class). When I saw it, I felt so accomplished and happy. In fact, I saw some students who often miss classes would come to my class, and some naughty would come to me and ask for credit. There was one time a naughty came to me and said: "老师, 今天我一看第 1 节是你的课，我专门起床过来上课，上完你课我就准备去玩了！"（Teacher, today I saw that the first class in the morning is your class, I got up so early for your class. And I am ready to go out and play after your class!). Even though I didn't show it, I still felt a little proud. I knew that my class had successfully attracted them.

Figure 4.2. Example of An Essay Question

Figure 4.2. This photo is an example question that Na used for student's composition practice

But my class was not always interesting. Sometimes there was no way to be interesting. At the end of the school semester, the final exam questions were still grammars structures and cloze tests, and they were all based on the textbooks. So, students still had to memorize phrases and sentences by rote. My lesson was mainly based on the order of the teaching materials. The textbooks we used were all "十二五职业教育国家规划教材" (the national planning textbooks for vocational education during the 12th Five-Year Plan period, which were specifically aimed at higher vocational schools). I used it for the comprehensive English class. The textbook is called "致用英语" (Practical English), which was published by "外语教育与研究出版社" (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press). Each unit in this book has two main readings: Reading A and Reading B. When I taught these readings, I let my students discuss in groups and do various activities. But when I taught the grammatical point after these two readings, I would find a PowerPoint that introduces the grammatical point and then follow the courseware. I didn't seem to be able to use other activities in this part. After the grammar point was finished, the corresponding exercises needed to be done later. The following lesson will explain these grammar questions. Therefore, the process of lecturing was relatively boring: the teacher taught, and the students listened. Many students in my school had a very poor English grammar foundation. So, even though many of the test questions for the final exam were the original questions in their workbooks, the students could not give the correct answer. I have no solution for this, and it is also where I need to continue exploring and learning and better support my students in the future.

Figure 4.3. English Textbooks and Teaching Plans

周序	月日	星期	授　课　内　容
1	2.26	二	Introduction and Sci-Fi Workshop
	3.1	五	Unit 1 Lead-in and Topic-based discussion
2	3.5	二	Unit 1 Reading A
	3.8	五	Unit 1 Reading A
3	3.12	二	Unit 1 Language in use
	3.15	五	Unit 1 Reading B
4	3.19	二	Unit 1 Project-based activity and Workbook exercise
	3.22	五	Unit 2 Lead-in and Topic-based discussion
5	3.26	二	Unit 2 Reading A
	3.29	五	Unit 2 Reading A
6	4.2	二	Unit 2 Language in use
	4.5	五	
7	4.9	二	Unit 2 Reading B
	4.12	五	Unit 2 Project-based activity and Workbook exercise

Figure 4.3. The picture above (left) is the textbook used by Na to teach Comprehensive English, and the picture above (right) is the teaching plan made by Na. *Language in use* is the grammar phase.

Figure 4.4. Workbooks and Exam Papers
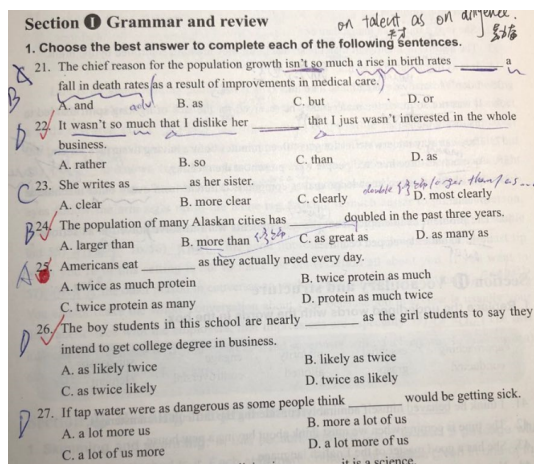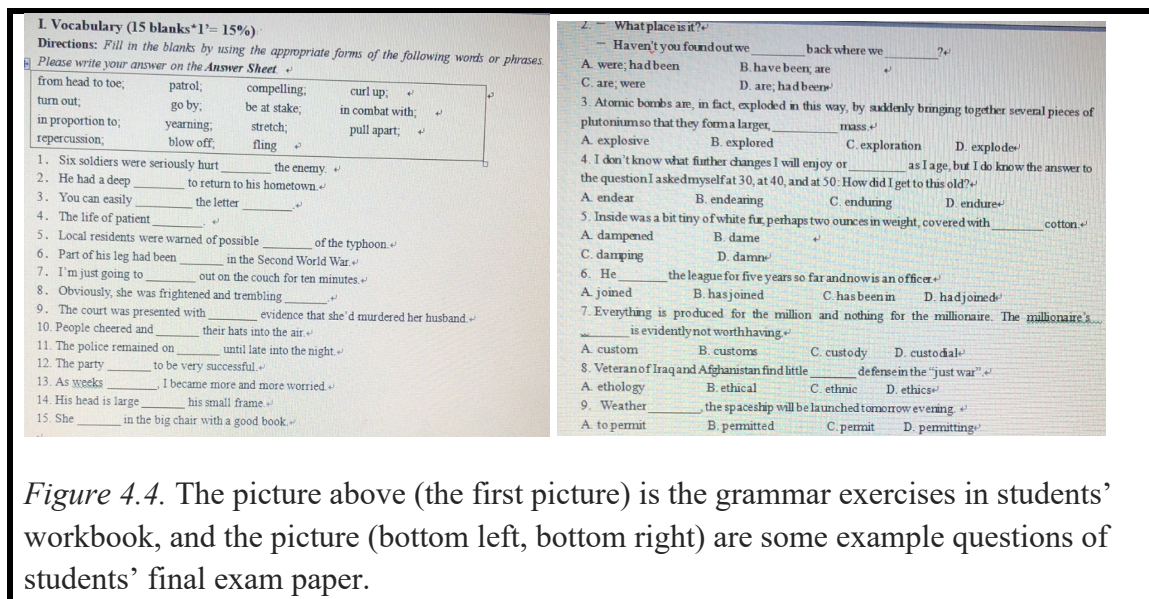
Figure 4.4. The picture above (the first picture) is the grammar exercises in students' workbook, and the picture (bottom left, bottom right) are some example questions of students' final exam paper.

Xiao: An English Teacher at a Foreign Language Training Institution

Xiao is an English tutor at a well-known foreign language training institution in China. She was born in a small city in southern China. Xiao liked English from an early age, but her family couldn't speak English at all. So, she learned English by herself. Xiao's university majored in Chinese as a foreign language. After graduation, she continued to study for postgraduates in the same major and got the opportunity to teach Chinese at a Confucius Institute in Korea for a year. The experience of overseas teaching made Xiao fell in love with teaching and strengthened her professional goal of teaching languages. Later, Xiao went to the United States and studied at a TESOL program in a famous university. There, she got her second graduate degree. After graduation, she returned to her hometown and taught foreigners Chinese part-time while teaching English at an English institution.

There Are Shortcuts to Pass Exams, but Not to Learn English

I was born in a third-tier city in southern China, where I grew up and went to school. Compared with some metropolises, our education level and resources were limited, and parents

didn't pay enough attention. So, I had not been exposed to English before junior high school. In our district, many parents feel that their children are learning Chinese pinyin (the phonetic system of the Chinese language) when they are in the first grade. If they learn English letters at the same time, they will easily get confused with pinyin, which will lead to poor Chinese learning. This was one of the reasons why they refused to let their children learn English. But now I know that children can switch between different languages freely, just like Mandarin and Chinese dialects. When the teacher speaks Mandarin at school, children can speak Mandarin; and when adults at home speak to their kids in dialects, kids also speak dialects. Children have the ability to switch their languages based on different situations. But at that time, in small cities, many people had misunderstandings about language learning. Even now, teachers, English institutions, and language environments in small cities still cannot meet students' needs. Although online learning resources are abundant now, online education is still not trusted and adequately utilized in small cities. Moreover, online education is flawed because education is ultimately humanities. Teaching is not only delivering the knowledge but also about the emotional connection between teachers and students. Online education still lacks emotional communication for children, including discipline, attention constraints, and so on. Therefore, online education can only play a supporting role, and many parents still feel that face-to-face teaching is better.

When I was in the sixth grade, the school started English classes. We had only one or two sessions a week. The teacher simply taught us some easy vocabulary in the class by reading letters. For example, if we were learning the word "apple," the teacher would teach us a-p-p-l-e. We were not required to read the entire word, and the teacher would read the letters when dictating. So, when I went to junior high school, and the English teacher started to dictate by

reading the entire word, I was very uncomfortable. "听写不是要读单词吗？" (Dictation need to read the letters, isn't it?). This was a predicament in the third-tier cities at that time. The popularity of English was low in my hometown, and the school offered English courses relatively late. I had never heard of the English tutoring organization before junior high school. Now, English is something that everyone has been learning since kindergarten.

So, I started to learn English systematically in junior high school. Maybe because I started learning later than other kids, my output ability, such as speaking and writing, was weak. However, my test-taking ability has always been good. I have always felt that test-taking was relatively easy. The domestic English exams are all multiple-choice questions and grammar questions. I am naturally sensitive to the grammatical structure of language, and I am good at doing these kinds of questions. I felt that learning English was the easiest among all the subjects, and my English scores had always been outstanding. Because of this, I like English exams very much.

However, what I learned before college was basically "看的英语" (reading English), which means few opportunities for listening, speaking, and writing practice. The school English taught more about the language rule to satisfy the test-taking needs. After going to university, my goal of learning English was to pass various English examinations and get English qualification certificates. I did not need to learn English every day but prepare for one or two months before the exam. At that time, *Crazy English* in the domestic market was very popular. What *Crazy English* emphasized was to insist on systematically learning English. Students were expected to learn at lEast a whole set of English textbooks. But that did not suit me. I improved my English through various exams: these exams motivated me to learn the required English vocabulary and sentence structures. Therefore, for students like me, "英语基本上是见不得外国人的" (our

English could not be used to communicate with native English speakers), because we had never practiced in real English contexts. All our learning aimed at answering the test questions correctly. So, this was why many Chinese people spent a long-time learning English but still could not speak the language.

The purpose of learning is different, and the result is different. If it is just for good grades, students only need to understand the rules of exams. For me, the exam is like solving a puzzle or playing a game: I will see a result and get instant feedback after I put in the effort. Most people hate exams, but I am on the contrary because I think there are many rules in the exam. If you understand the rules, you can pass the exam easily. So, for me, doing exams is a relatively easy and happy thing, and at the same time, it gives me a sense of accomplishment. I'm relatively lazy by nature, so if you ask me to persist in reading English every morning, and I don't see the effect in the short term, it will be difficult for me to continue. But doing exams is different. If you choose an answer, you will know whether it is right or wrong immediately, and you will get an instant stimulus, which makes me want to continue doing it.

My parents didn't know English at all, so they couldn't help me in English. Even now, my dad can only say one sentence: "excuse me." My mother only remembers one English word: sky. So, I have been learning English on my own since I was a child. I have always dreamed of being a teacher when I grow up. I was longing for the feeling of being respected as a teacher. Initially, I wanted to study the English major at university, but Chinese as a foreign language was considered a new major at the time. Many people thought it would be trendy and make a lot of money since we could teach foreigners. In addition, the English major only focused on one language, but Chinese as a foreign language focused on Chinese and English. I may have more

career opportunities and possibilities in the future. So, I finally chose the major of Chinese as a foreign language.

However, the history of Chinese as a foreign language was too short. All our courses were pieced together, and there was no system developed according to its own discipline. Our courses drew on many Western theories of second language acquisition, part of the Chinese language and literature content, and part of the English courses to form our professional courses. Our English courses had more professional English content than the general college English courses, but not as detailed as the actual professional English courses. Generally speaking, our program was not very good, but I got a lot of different experiences during my studies. For example, I was admitted to a master's program in Chinese as a foreign language and had the opportunity to teach Mandarin in South Korea for a year. After I went to South Korea, I became more confident about going to the outside world. The teaching abroad experience laid the foundation for me to study in the United States.

Another important reason I chose to study in the United States was that I crazily fell in love with American dramas. At that time, the plots of domestic TV dramas were generally lovely and ideal. But American dramas, such as Desperate Housewives, made me feel that foreign cultures were more realistic, and their descriptions of many social issues were honest. "好像这个文化是没有穿着那种所有东西都是美好和平的外衣的，是比较现实，敢说真话的。他们追求的精神上的东西会很多，让我看到了另外一种对内心，对精神上的追求，就跟我当时周围宣传的不一样。他们的文化感觉要更加的开放和自由" (It seems that this culture does not wear the coat of that everything is beautiful and peaceful. It is more realistic, and people dare to tell the truth. People can pursue a lot of spiritual things. It let me see another inner and spiritual pursuit, which was different from the propaganda around me at that time. Their culture feels to

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be more open and freer). That might be another model after the Country's economy and society have developed to a certain level. At the time, I was attracted by this special model and cultural difference. And because I had been watching American dramas for a long time and felt that my English was good enough to study abroad, I chose to go to the United States to get another graduate degree in TESOL after I got my master's degree in Chinese as a foreign language.

Before I went to the United States, I had never taught English, so I didn't have any insights into English teaching. But I had a lot of experience in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Before going to Korea, I taught foreigners Chinese one on one. After going to Korea, I taught Chinese in large classes at school. I believed the way of teaching Chinese and teaching English were interlinked. For me, language teaching must teach structure first. I thought that the structure was a perfect thing for language learning! Because after students learn the structure, they only need to fill in the vocabulary, and then the sentence will come out. Students will feel that learning the language is so easy. "其实学英语就是 4 个字：简单重复。" (Actually, the secret of learning English is: keep it simple and repeat again and again). Because it is simple, you gain happiness, and you are willing to repeat it. If it is not simple, you will suffer, and it won't be easy to persist. This is human nature, and it should be the underlying logic of learning everything: we have to find a way to make it simple and interesting to learning any skills, and then you can naturally repeat it, which is what we often call "时间的积累，时间的复利" (the accumulation of time and the compound interest of time). But how can we achieve this goal? No one wants to grit their teeth and persist in doing something that is struggling. Most people are relatively prone to inertia. So, we must find some ingenuity, rather than just relying on perseverance. I am the type of person who doesn't have the determination and endurance to insist on trying things, and I may easily to succumb to the weak side of my humanity. And I represent

most ordinary people. So, if there are feasible learning strategies for me, they should be suitable for most people.

Watching American TV was also one of these easy and happy ways of learning. American TV dramas improved my listening skills. So, even though I had never taken a foreign teacher's class before, I had no problem with English in class after I went to the United States. Although I was very nervous when talking to others and couldn't come up with the appropriate words at the beginning, I quickly adapted to the English-only environment. I think it was benefited from watching American TV dramas when I was in college and my classmates were studying hard preparing for the postgraduate entrance examination. Watching English movies gave me a happy life and helped my English study at the same time. Many people say that the effect of learning English through watching American dramas is not significant, especially when there are Chinese subtitles. Most people only pay attention to the plot, and their English scores will not improve. This is a misunderstanding of the benefit of watching American dramas. I don't think that American TV dramas have greatly improved my vocabulary and grammar. And I have never intended to use it as a learning material to improve my English. But watching these original English movies improved my listening and speaking ability subconsciously. As a result, my transition from domestic university to studying abroad was smooth. Enough input of authentic American drama pronunciations changed my understanding of the English phonetic system, including voice, intonation, and flow. It corrected my pronunciation of English syllables.

Some people believe that watching American dramas can comprehensively improve English, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. "那真的是网上一些所谓的英语大咖, 或者是想售卖英语的课程的人制造出来的商业效果" (It is a commercial effect created by some so -called English genius and people who want to sell their English courses). It isn't easy to

improve students' English scores solely on American dramas unless transcribing the lines sentence by sentence and practicing on purpose. In this case, the dramas are turned into learning materials. With enough time and practice, students may achieve their desired effect on the test score.

There are some tips in learning English, but there are no shortcuts. For me, American dramas allowed me to get a lot of English input while relaxing. Whether it was deliberately or unintentionally, I was soaked in the English environment. There are two critical factors in language learning: quantity and time. We have to get enough input and then spend plenty of time repeating, practicing, and overcoming forgetting. Nobody can just sit there and figure out the meaning of a new word by guessing, inferring, or calculating. Language is a fact. "这些东西你知道就是知道，不知道就是不知道" (If you know it, you know. If you don't know it, you don't know). The challenging part of language learning is that it's too fragmented and too much, so it can only be accumulated by time, and there is no shortcut.

I summarized these truths gradually in the process of learning and teaching languages. And when some adults come to ask me how to learn English well, I always tell them the same tips. Before discussing specific learning methods with them, I often ask them if they have at lEast 2 to 3 hours every day for English learning. If not, I would suggest they not waste time on this. Passion and enthusiasm fade quickly. Many people learn English for a day or two, recite some words, check in on some English learning applications, and read one or two articles. 99.99% of people can do it. But as the gym effect, it is tough to persist. That's also why many businesses dare to say, "I will refund your tuition after you check in for X days." This is human nature, and we are all fighting against human nature.

The Grass Is Not Always Greener on the Other Side of the Fence

I planned to study in the United States in my freshman year. But when I prepared for the TOEFL and GRE tests, I found these exams very challenging, making me feel unconfident. In addition, I had never been abroad before, and I was a little confused about the future, so I finally gave up. At that time, I enjoyed teaching Chinese as a foreign language and never thought about teaching English. Until I went to South Korea, my confidence increased, and I felt that the experience of living and studying in a different country was rewarding. Officially teaching Chinese as a foreign language also deepened my understanding of second language acquisition. When applying for the graduate program in the United States, I found that TESOL was the foundation of second language acquisition. The two had the same roots. This made me feel that TESOL is closely related to my future career. That was when I thought that I was ready to go to the United States.

I have been followed my heart along the way, and I have never been forced to do anything. I wanted to experience American culture, become a good language teacher, and learn more about the second language acquisition theories. So, I chose to study in the United States. These were all my decisions, and I had never regretted them. But after I came to the U.S., I felt a little bit disappointed. Maybe it was the school's problem since the TESOL program in my school was too policy oriented. Our class was all Chinese, but the courses offered to us did not take into account that we were English teachers of English as a second language. We were all treated as native English speakers, and nothing was taught about how to teach English better in the non-English language environment. Before I came to the program, I wanted to learn more advanced teaching methods, teaching steps, ways of explaining specific language points to students, students' diverse learning needs and styles, and communication strategies for dealing

with different students. Nevertheless, we learned a lot of vague and useless things. For example, we spent a lot of time learning American history, educational history, and American English teaching policy. These things should have been briefly introduced at the beginning so that students could have their own thinking. But we spent almost 80% of the time learning these kinds of stuff. In addition, I haven't learned a lot from these courses. The teacher who taught us American history would only raise questions in class for a group of Chinese students to discuss with each other. After the discussion, the teacher did not give any feedback to guide us to learn something new. "难道她以为我们是付钱来学校给教授讲段子的吗？这样的课让我觉得很没意思" (Did she think we paid so much money to come to the U.S. university to broaden the professor's horizon? This type of class made me feel like wasting time).

I used to have high expectations for Western education. After all, "外面的月亮比家里的圆" (the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence). I thought that Western education was more inspiring while cramming education was prevalent in China. I thought American classrooms might explore social issues and topics, and teachers would facilitate and guide students. I thought all American teachers would design teaching according to different students' needs and interests. In China, many teachers did not care about each individual student, let alone adjusted the teaching based on students' interests. Education is a very personal matter. I read an article before. It said that there was a time when teachers went on strike in Canada because they should have 15 students in each class, but the school expanded their classes to 25 students. So, all the teachers went on strike to protest. The teachers felt that they could not pay enough attention to every student if there were too many students in each class. "如果教育不是关注到每一个学生自己的需求，那教育的意义何在？" (If education does not pay attention to the needs of each student, what is the meaning of education?) Every individual is different, including

background, experiences, starting point, and entry point. How can a teacher teach the same thing to everyone and expect students to give the same answer? However, this phenomenon is common in China. This "unified" education is more like marriage, a product for maintaining social stability.

Did the United States do an excellent job on education? The answer is no. After I came to the U.S. and had the opportunity to observe and teach in schools, I found that many teachers were exasperated and exhausted, which was the same as many schools in China. A good education needs enough qualified teachers and school resources and requires teachers to spend a lot of energy and time. However, resources can never be distributed in a balanced manner. So, after studying abroad, I could look objectively at Western education and their ideology instead of believing everything I saw on TV. Education is closely linked to the economy, but even the developed Country, such as the United States, does not have perfect education.

All schools in the world face the same problems. If an institution has enough qualified teachers and abundant educational resources, there is a high possibility of getting good results. Education is linked to the economy and resources no matter which Country it is. So, it seems narrow-minded to compare the East and the West. Many people think that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, but I feel that China is great after studying abroad. Now, I no longer blindly worship Western Countries. Any country has its trouble, and it also applies to education.

Although there were things far less than I expected, I learned a lot in the United States. The study of educational theory and the readings recommended by the professors were beneficial. After studying abroad, I began to pay more attention to teaching and learning methods that can inspire students. For example, I let students participate more when designing my lessons

and tried to create a student-centered classroom. During my classes, I changed my role from a teacher to a facilitator; my role was not to teach knowledge but to teach students what to learn and how to learn step by step. I gave them feedback in time when they were practicing. I am not only a teacher but also a coach and a counselor. I will continue to diagnose the students' problems and provide suggestions. I will stimulate students' thinking and then build on this basis. Finally, I will create a safe learning and interactive environment.

In addition, regarding oral English ability, I realized that environmental factor is not the only one aspect conducive to improving oral English after I went to the United States. Many people can speak English in a stumbling way when they arrive in the United States. But if they want to express richer sentences, they still need to practice consciously and take the initiative to establish relationships with native English speakers. It is far more than living in an English-speaking country.

Finally, studying in the U.S. allowed me to see more of the school education in the U.S. As an educator, I need to keep improving the depth of my thinking. This increase in the depth of thinking comes not from the understanding of professional knowledge and the understanding of the world: what is happening around us, the people, and the whole world. So, the more I experience, the more I gain. During my graduate school years, the opportunity to practice allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and broaden my horizon. These experiences also provided me with new insights into English education.

Whether it is Eastern or Western, Pick the One Suits Students Best

After I went back to China, I planned to get a doctoral degree and take a post in a university in the future. But then I gave up this idea since I was not very keen on academics. To get a job with a TESOL master's degree in China, I could get a domestic teacher qualification

certificate and teach in a public school. If I choose this path, I must teach according to the standard curriculum syllabus, catering to the examination system. Another choice for me could be to go to a big city and teach in a private international school that teaches children preparing to go abroad. I was not fond of either path, so I ended up as an English teacher at an English tutor institution.

I chose this career path not because of how good the job is. In fact, the work in the tutor institution was very tiring and stressful. To make money, the institution would let the teacher teach ten classes every day. Moreover, the institution was profitable, and the tuition fee for students was costly. After the parents paid a large amount of money, their expectations for teachers had reached an unrealistic level. They felt that since they spent the money, they would see results in a short time. It was impossible! Making changes requires quantity and time, but after parents paid the money, they only regarded teachers as commodities. We need to generate high value under limited conditions. These were all awkward problems that I faced when working in a tutor institution. However, teachers in public schools need to prepare lesson plans, fill in forms, finish the chores, and give open classes all the time. I hated those things even more. So, I preferred to work at a tutor institution and have more freedom in teaching.

The tutor institution I went to specifically targeted K-12 English exams in China. Teachers were all Chinese, and we aimed to help students improve their test scores. Teachers who had studied abroad were more popular in the institution. "毕竟机构是商业的运作，需要包装，没有很多情怀可言" (After all, institutions are commercial operations and need packaging, and people don't have sympathy). If the teacher has studied abroad, they can be sold at a higher price, which is beneficial to the institution. In addition, everyone feels that teachers who studied abroad had a higher English listening and speaking level.

I am the only English teacher who has studied abroad. All the other teachers were highly educated, but I felt confident in my teaching strategies and educational beliefs in English teaching after the two years of systematic TESOL learning.

Currently, I am mainly responsible for teaching junior and senior high students, and sometimes I teach some students preparing for the IELTS or TOEFL test. Most students like me very much after taking my class. Not because I have been studied abroad, but because of my attitude towards them: I like them from my heart, and I want to help them. Maybe because I am a new teacher, and I have this kind of enthusiasm. But if my students don't learn anything from me, it will make me feel ashamed. Some people said to me, "It's just a job! Don't take it personally!" But I don't think so. If I just want to make some money, why should I choose to be a teacher? I have a lot of options other than a teacher. I decided to be a teacher because I hope that what I do is meaningful and valuable. What a teacher needs most is to be responsible for the students and care about their feelings. Children are very good at capturing these subtle things. When I have confidence in my students, believe that they will all make progress, and try my best to help them, these things will be conveyed to them. I think that's why my students like to be with me: they feel happy and safe to learn. Emotional connection is very important, and this kind of emotion is sometimes not easy to tell. Teachers feel that what they are teaching is knowledge, but it is more energy flowing. One of my pursuit goals is to "润物细无声" (influence my students subtly). Many children do not learn well because they have some internal and emotional problems. Therefore, we must treat every child as a human, which we call humanistic education. Teachers should understand that students are not machines: the machine receives instructions and outputs results, but humans are different. That's why we teach students 100% of the knowledge, but they only can absorb twenty percent of it.

Of course, teaching methods are also important. My students love me because their grades are improved because of my teaching. Teachers must keep reflecting and adjusting their teaching based on a sense of responsibility since there is no teaching suitable for all students. This adjustment comes from the teacher's grasp and deployment of the knowledge and is needs a deep digging and in-depth understanding of the professional field.

I often think about how to help my students better and explore new teaching methods. But the experience of studying abroad gave me a peaceful mind. During the past two years, I have seen one of the busiest and most wonderful places in the world. I have also experienced various things in the top big cities in the world. But I didn't feel that these experiences were so different from my previous life. Many things may be painted with some fantasy colors. But after calming down, I found that many things still need to be treated with a sense of peace. In the end, "一分耕耘, 一分收获" (no pain, no gain): you have to pay time, money, and hard work to get anything you want. There is no miracle and magic. Everything has to be steadfast, especially in learning. All knowledge needs to be learned step by step, and there are no shortcuts.

However, it is not easy for Chinese students to achieve this in China. The overall learning atmosphere in the Country is very reckless, and many English tutoring institutions exaggerate the effect of their courses in the advertisements, such as "几天成为英语大神"(you will become an English expert in a few days) and"一小时搞定英语阅读"(master English reading in one hour). Of course, these are impossible! Actually, it collects people's "智商税"(stupid tax: it means the price paid for one's foolish behavior). Many adult learners come to ask me how to learn English well. I always ask them to take a few hours a day to learn English for at lEast half a year. If they can, I will teach them some learning methods. But if they can't do it, I will persuade them not to waste time. Because I know that 99.9% of people will end up like this: enthusiastically check in

on an English learning application for about ten days, and then give it up. This is a common phenomenon of many adults learning English. In many cases, it is for their momentary psychological satisfaction. It seems that learning English will significantly improve their quality of life, happiness, and overall ability. But in fact, most people are just trying to satisfy their vanity.

Students in schools are even more anxious for good results. Although the English test-oriented system has been reforming in China, there are still many drawbacks. If students want to get good scores, they must learn to analyze and figure out the meaning of the person who sets the questions based on the knowledge of English in the syllabus. Therefore, many students in China are eager to find various English learning tips and shortcuts. Take the case of memorizing vocabulary as an example: many students were very anxious to forget the English words they learned yesterday. So, they came to me and asked for a tip on how to remember vocabulary quickly. Why can't they remember the vocabulary? After I learned the forgetting curve in TESOL, I knew that the most important thing for language learning and memory is the accumulation of time. It is impossible to learn well if the amount of learning time is not up to a point. For some vocabulary, students only read them once or twice during a semester. There is no doubt that they can't remember them. So, when students came to me, I would explain to them: " 这是正常的呀，你一个单词没有在不同的地方重复 7 次的话，它都不会属于你。你就重复 7 次，如果还不知道的话，你再来问我怎么回事，怎么记不住。" (This is normal. If you don't repeat a word seven times in different contexts, it will not belong to you. Just repeat it seven times. Then come and ask me if you still cannot remember it).

In general, the trip of studying abroad is very beneficial to my current teaching. I had the opportunity to learn some very classic second language acquisition theories. For example, the

cognitive development theory has taught me that students will make certain types of mistakes at a certain stage. No matter how you correct them, they still make mistakes over and over again. So, after I understand this theory, I am no longer anxious when teaching students since I know that their performances follow the stages of cognitive development. Another example is the i+1 principle. After learning this theory, I realized that many popular English learning and teaching methods in China are wrong, such as blind listening. Some students used this method for 5 to 10 years and still couldn't improve their English. Why? Because the students have no foundation at all: what they hear is meaningless sound, which is not meaningful input.

If we can summarize and put these classic theories together as a complete knowledge system, it could be very helpful for English teachers. However, people often ignore these theories because of the examination-oriented educational system in China. Everyone is still pursuing immediate results: if people spend time and effort, they expect to see the results immediately. So, although English has become more and more popular in China, and the input and resources, including cartoons, books, music, and movies, have increased, but the nature of English education has not changed. The problems we encountered before are still the problems faced by students now. It is the situation in many countries where people learn English as a foreign language.

Therefore, applying these classic theories to China needs to consider China's social and educational conditions. In China, people pay more attention to test scores. Students have to memorize vocabulary and answer test questions when learning English. After returning to China, I adjusted some of the theories I learned abroad and some traditional learning methods and combined them. For example, I used "题海战术" (question sea tactic, which means to immerse students with thousands of books and practices) in a way different from the traditional rote

learning. I tried to use these test questions as learning materials and immerse students in English

corpus rather than individual words and grammar points. Looking back on my own English

learning experiences, I never had a good English class or met a good teacher. But when I was

preparing for the English exams, I did a lot of reading, and these readings were also derived from

good and authentic English materials. Chinese students lack the English learning environment

and the amount of time to invest in English learning. So, I provided students with these things by

letting them do test questions, the most familiar thing they do every day in school.

Figure 4.5. Handout for English Learning Tips

总结：

对我们中国学生来说：

1. 语法不但要学，还要系统地学

2. 卷子不但要做，还要大量地做

3. 词典不但要用，还要时时刻刻都用

4. 单词不要通过单词书"学得"，而是阅读材料"习得"

Figure 4.1. This was a screenshot of the handout for English learning tips written by Xiao and her colleagues. It emphasized the importance of grammar learning, reading practice, and dictionary.

I asked students to make good use of these reading materials so that every sentence was

understood, rather than just give the correct answer through some test skills. I always quickly

went over the important vocabulary and grammar, and then let the students digest the knowledge

points in the reading material. After that, it is the accumulation of quantity, that is, the question

sea tactic.

There are not many skills to learn English. Accumulation of quantity is necessary. But how to accumulate quantity? Ask the students to memorize vocabulary with the vocabulary book? Then these vocabularies are always meaningless symbols for students. Recite the grammar structures? In recent years, the college entrance examination does not include grammar questions anymore. "我发现我的学生大多都会把一篇英语文章看成是一个洪水猛兽。他们会觉得自己的单词量不够，还不够资格去看文章，所以每当看文章的时候会非常害怕，会把自己的注意力就放在一个单词一个单词上" (I found that most of my students would see an English article as a scary monster. They felt that they hadn't acquired an extensive vocabulary and were not qualified to read an article. So, whenever they began to read an article, they felt scared and focused on each word). Although reciting vocabulary is very important, repeating a vocabulary book out of context is an inefficient learning method. After studying abroad, I understand that vocabulary must be accumulated in reading. So, I asked my students to remember vocabulary while they were doing test practice questions.

Therefore, if students want to make great progress in their English scores, they need to do enough readings. The best timing for learning new words is when students feel the impulse to understand unfamiliar words in the context of a sentence or a paragraph and are willing to find out the meaning. There is no need to use various skills to guess or reason these new words. Students can look up the dictionary and then continue to read. After reading enough readings, their self-confidence is built up, and they naturally acquire an extensive vocabulary. When they see unfamiliar words, they can either look up the dictionary or not since they can almost guess the meaning of the word based on the context. But if they force themselves not to look up the dictionary when they need to do it, it will just like dieting: "在特别想吃东西的时候强迫自己不

吃，这样往往后面会暴饮暴食适得其反" (If you force yourself not to eat when you really

want to eat, it may turn out to be just the opposite effect).

Figure 4.6. An Example of Reading Material and Questions

八、阅读下面短文，根据短文内容判断句子正误。正确的涂"A", 错误的涂"B"。（共5小题;每小题2分, 计10分）

Following the rule of "social distancing" is probably well-known to us all now. It refers to staying away from crowded places to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some companies are taking ad-vantage of this by changing their logos.

Coca-Cola, for example, placed the letters of its famous brand further away from each other to show social distancing. The encouraging sentence "Today, being apart is the best way of being together. "is printed below the logo. McDonald's Brazil has separated its famous arches(拱门)in a picture posted on its Facebook page. Other global companies, including Audi and Nike, have also posted similar logo changes online.

Although many people think this idea is creative, some believe it makes "social distancing "seem less serious. What do you think of it?

61. Some companies think changing logos can prevent the spread of COVID-19.

62. The following logo change of Coca-Cola is to show social distancing.

63. So far, more than three global companies have posted their logo changes online.

64. In some people's eyes, we're supposed to take "social distancing" seriously.

65. The logo of McDonald's has been changed worldwide like this picture to show social distancing.

Figure 4.1. This photo was an example of a reading material and questions in a test practice paper. Xiao provided these readings and questions for students to improve their English skills, vocabulary, and knowledge of sentence structures.

In addition to the question sea tactic, I also asked my students to translate a paragraph of

English into Chinese, translate it back into English, and compare their translation with the

original English. This translation method has been very helpful to me before. It is a training

method that combines English input and output. As people grow up, they cognitive skills are

developed. So, a good way to learn English is to train themselves to switch between two

languages. The translation must be slow at the beginning, but when it reaches a certain amount,

the translation will be instantaneous. It is impossible for us to abandon the process of translation

when we speak a second language. That's why we can practice this skill and speed up this process.

In recent years, the learning methods advocated by several English masters have been the same. For example, Zhong Ping, the famous English teacher who first teach English with rational thinking. His course "逻辑英语" (Logical English) uses mathematical formulas to teach English sentences. He regards English as a formula, and learning English is as simple as learning a formula. I very much agree with this view. I think that learning a language is nothing more than learning the words and the arrangement of words. You only need to know the words, understand the correct usage, and then know how to arrange the words in a sentence. Isn't this language? Zhong Ping uses formulas as a tool for learning English and uses it to help students thoroughly analyze the logical structure of the English language, which speeds up their English learning. When I studied in the TESOL program, I learned that adults could learn a second language faster than children because adults have a higher level of cognition. They can understand rules and learn by analogy. So, Zhong Ping's method is more effective for older children and adults.

However, many people are too naïve. They think that Zhong Ping's Logic English is just a gimmick, not as magical as it is said in the advertisement. After following his method, their performance in school was not improved. This is just because they want to take shortcuts. As long as the advertisements promise the ability to be prettier, healthier, smarter, and better in a short period, many people will pay their IQ tax. Businesspeople use these propagandas to sell courses and earn money, but we must be soberly aware that learning a language can never be a matter of one or two days. "神仙大力丸和万能药是不存在的" (Magic and panacea do not exist).

For me, the difficulty of teaching English is not teaching structure. The most challenging part is that I don't know how to put words into students' brains. To put it bluntly, the rule is the skeleton, and it needs flesh. Moreover, the flesh is not just the vocabulary but the understanding and application of words in different contexts. The "flesh" must take a lot of time to accumulate, and it is the most difficult part of language learning. If you don't have enough time to invest in language learning, you will not learn well. But now the children have too much schoolwork, and there is little time to study English. Inevitably, the learning effect cannot be guaranteed.

That is why I have felt fatigued in the past year. Domestic students have great study pressure, and I don't know how to grab their time and stuff them with English words. Even when they have time, they may not learn effectively because their brain is already very exhausted. So, I clearly know what knowledge they need to remember, but I still can't make them remember, and these are the things that bother them in the end. Before the exams, many students take shortcuts to improve their scores. For example, they use some obscure and high-flown language to make their writing looks advanced. This is a big problem in learning English in China.

All I can do is find ways to help students strengthen their memory. I will use the phonetic spelling strategy to help students associate each English letter with its pronunciation. This strategy can build students' confidence: although some students still cannot spell the whole word correctly, they can get plenty of parts correct if they just spell what they hear. Many students who didn't dare to speak English at all started to realize that speaking English was quite simple. And after they started to spell, they remembered more words. I learned this strategy while studying abroad. At that time, I was an intern at an elementary school, and I saw the teacher use tapping word strategy. Children pointed the word with their fingers and pronounce each letter in the word. For example, "c-a-p, cap". This method is also very beneficial to me. In the past, I

have been struggled reading long English words and tended to pronounce them ambiguously. For example, I would read the word "impossible" as "im-po-ble". I just wanted to muddle through the schoolwork since I did not know how to read it correctly. So, I totally understand my students' experience. After I learned this method, spelling has become super easy. "im-po-si-ble," which sound is difficult? All students can read and spell the word through this method whether they know the meaning or not.

In addition, I tried to make my lectures simple and easy so that students could comprehend. In my memory, my TOEFL teachers were my favorite teachers. Even though they did not speak English when they taught English and only taught test-taking skills, they were amazing at "化繁为简" (making complex things simple). They always taught in a way that was easy for students to understand. "讲的东西要让别人听得懂，这就是好的老师最重要的从师素质之一" (One of the essential qualities of a good teacher is to make sure that students can understand what you are teaching). When I was a graduate student, my favorite teacher was my teacher of Chinese as a foreign language. "因为他上课说人话" (Because he speaks the plain language). The criterion he set for his class was: "我讲的课，三岁的孩子来听也听得懂，80岁的老人来听也听得明白！" (Everyone can understand my lessons, including three-year-old children and 80-year-old people). And he did it.

So, when I teach my students, I also want to make the knowledge easy to understand. I hope all students can understand my teaching and this is my goal. But I know it is challenging for a teacher. I have to think about making my students understand all the time, paying attention to their reactions, and making sure they can apply what they learned. Students often suddenly lose interest in learning, and the connection with the teacher is disconnected because they get confused with something. If the teacher does not notice it, students' confusion points will

accumulate, and eventually they may lose interest and give up. It is common in the classroom. However, if the teacher can always meet the students' current level and add one level of difficulty each time, students will be willing to learn. This is the i+1 principle that I learned in the TESOL program. In my class, I let my students make progress step by step.

The i+1 theory also applies to teaching grammatical structures. Many people put on a bitter face when they think of grammar and consider grammar teaching as a traditional and outdated English teaching method in China. They believe grammar teaching is contrary to the advanced teaching methods and is not compatible with "interesting." This is a fallacy. First of all, learning grammar allows students to understand the framework of the English language quickly. It makes complex things simple and easier for students to practice, which is the key to language learning. Secondly, teaching grammar structures can be fun as well. But sometimes the teacher makes it boring. English grammar is the foundation of English that can be mastered within two weeks. However, the grammar taught in the school breaks down this system into pieces and teaches it in six years or longer. As a result, students always feel that it is piecemeal.

Good teachers will teach grammar at the very beginning and teach in a way that all students can understand. Students don't have to memorize grammatical rules like math formulas. Students don't even think of these grammatical rules when they apply them. For example, a nonfinite verb is a grammatical point that many Chinese students feel is challenging. So, what is the nonfinite verb? When I teach my students, I tell them: "非谓语之所以存在，就是为了满足英语中的霸王条款：一句话里面只能有一个动词。那出现别的动词的时候该怎么办呢？他就必须要进行一个变化。那它有三种变化形式，第1种就是变成非谓语，第2种就变成从句，第3种就变成介词加名词形式。这就好像今天来了个大哥，大哥当老大，一山不能容二虎。那这个时候别人就要穿小弟的衣服，要变个装。英语中动词就是老大的样子，让它

变个装，就变成了 to do, 变成 doing, 变成 done。要不他就找个保护伞，找一个关系词，比如 that, which，直接变成个从句了" (Nonfinite verb follows a general English principle: there can only be one verb in a sentence. So, what will happen if there is another verb appearing in a sentence? It has three variations: a nonfinite verb, a clause, or a preposition plus noun. Just imagine that there is a big brother coming today, and he is the boss. One country cannot have two queens. So, the other guys need to be younger brothers and wear younger brothers' clothes. In English, the verb is like the boss in a sentence. The other verbs need to change into the form of to-do, doing, or done. They can also find a protective umbrella: a relative word, such as that, which. This makes the sentence a clause). When I taught my students in this way, all of them could understand and at the same time found it very interesting. But most teachers only write the grammatical structure on the blackboard and ask the students to take notes and then do rote exercises. After all, the teachers themselves did not understand the grammar they were teaching. So, their students were more confused. It is not the grammar's fault, but the teacher's fault.

So, a good teacher needs to speak plain language, not to read textbooks. Many people think that it is easy to be a teacher since teachers only need to follow the instructions in the books. However, good teachers have independent thinking. What they teach is the essence of knowledge that they already chewed and summed up. These things can make students enjoyable and satisfied. They will peel off the clothes of knowledge for students and let them see the nature of things. These are things that students cannot learn from books, and therefore we need teachers. But few teachers can do this. Most of them still follow the books. After all, this is the easiest way to save time and effort. It does not require too much thinking or preparation.

In general, teachers must think from the perspective of students. This is what my graduate teachers taught me. He said: "before you teach something, you should think about what the

students can get from this class at the end. You can't teach everything with a book, which is just a teaching tool. Think from the students' perspective: how they think about a question, what they need, and what you can teach." At this time, there is no distinction between East and West teaching strategies. I will use whatever suit my students, and I will not blindly resist or follow any advanced or latest teaching methods. Many TESOL theories are not very useful in China. Such as the silent method: the teacher keeps quiet and lets the students speak as much as possible. This kind of teaching method is inherently difficult to implement in the context of exam-oriented education. Other examples like the direct method and the immersive method can be effective, but the requirements for the teacher are high. Currently, many English teachers in China can't reach this standard. Even teachers who have studied abroad feel that these methods are too ideal, and they still have to consider the actual teaching context.

As for listening and speaking, although I have always felt that the standard for learning English well is speaking fluent English and interacting with native speakers. Nevertheless, students in China have no time to practice listening and speaking since they have to prepare for the tests. Many junior high school students cannot pronounce English words correctly, and some students dare not speak at all. Students who can practice oral English are those preparing for studying abroad. They do not need to take the college entrance exam, but they need to take the oral exam. So, I spend two hours in class teaching them English speaking. However, I do not chat with them in English, but I will help them summarize a list of discussion topics for speaking practice. I ask them to share their ideas in Chinese first and then translate them into English. Later, I will correct their translation. This method takes advantage of students' native language to help them learn the foreign language. It helps students build confidence and feel free to express

themselves. Since most Chinese children have good memories, they can quickly memorize the authentic way to express their ideas in English after I correct them.

Nowadays, English education in China has focused more on speaking and listening. But it still cannot meet the standard of native English countries. After all, it is the real language environment of foreign countries that greatly influences the improvement of spoken English. It is challenging for many Chinese students to communicate with native speakers with the current English listening and listening practicing intensity in China. 70% to 80% of people in China do not use English after graduating from college. Many people learn English just for passing the college entrance examination and the university English exams. Some people get an English certificate and write it on their resume to get a good job. Some adults learn English when they occasionally feel anxious and feel that their life needs improvement. They begin to exercise, read books, and learn English to improve their quality of life. But later, they realize that these are not necessarily things for survival, so they give up soon. China's requirements for English will never be the same as the countries that use English as a second language. So, although the government encourages people to speak English, English education does not change much from before.

In addition to speaking and listening, Western TESOL teaching also emphasizes the role of culture in language learning. But in China, culture in English learning is not mentioned at all. English learning in school only takes English as knowledge, not a language tool in life. So, the things behind the language are not important. Under the test-taking system, teachers need to understand the tips for answering test questions to improve students' scores. Our exam papers are all written by Chinese teachers, and these teachers always integrate the test questions with China's events and hotspots. For example, this year's college entrance examination questions may be related to the epidemic, and the English teachers will predict related vocabulary and

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composition topics. In addition, most domestic English teachers do not have the quality to teach students the culture behind the language. Even teachers with such qualities and abilities are not necessarily recognized by students and parents. A junior high school English teacher that I knew has lived abroad for many years. He often taught a lot in class, explained an English word thoroughly, and told many stories behind the vocabulary. From a professional point of view, he is an outstanding teacher. However, his students and their parents felt that he did not help improve test scores. This is the utilitarian nature of English education in domestic schools. Students have limited time to learn English every day, and they must achieve the most efficient results in a short time. The easiest and fastest way is to learn the language and the test-taking tips directly. Teachers summarized everything important and fed their students. Just like cooking: sometimes you don't have time to cook and steam slowly, but you have to stir fry.

Moreover, Western English education pays attention to every students' needs. The student-oriented teaching was put forward by Confucius thousand years ago, but it is almost impossible to achieve in English teaching in China. First, it set high standard for teachers. Second, it requires abundant teaching resources. These requirements are too much for most public schools. Even in private tutor institutions, most children only come for two hours a week and teachers can do limited things for students. Furthermore, these children are very anxious because of the pressure of exams. According to the affective filter theory, students' ability to absorb knowledge is limited in a state of anxiety.

However, the tutor institutions pay more attention to the students' needs compared to public schools. This is what I am constantly trying to do. In addition, network resources are becoming more and more abundant, and our institution has a professional teaching and research team. Whenever we don't have classes, we have team meetings and training sessions. These are

all good resources that allow me to continue to grow. I believe that our English education will be better in the future!

Yang: An English Teacher in an International High School

Yang, like most Chinese children who were born and raised in China, received a complete nine-year compulsory education. After graduating from high school, Yang was admitted to an English program in a "211" project university (Project 211 is the Chinese government's new endeavor aimed at strengthening about 100 institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the 21st century. There are 112 universities in the project 211) and received systematic English training. Yang decided to study abroad at an early time, and with her efforts, she was admitted to the TESOL program at one of the top universities in the Eastern United States. After two years of graduate school, Yang did not choose to get a job in the United States but returned to China to teach English in an international high school. The school where she taught was very similar to the schools in Western Countries. So, Yang could apply as much as she learned into her teaching practice. She is very popular among students in the school, and she maintains a close relationship with her students. She was very kind and patient. Whenever her students had any concerns, they would come to her and seek help.

I Was an Obedient Child Since I Was Little

I started to learn English since the school officially opened English classes in third grade. I gradually discovered that I was good at the English subject, and I liked to learn languages. My English test score was always high. One of the reasons was that I attached great importance to examinations when I was a student, and examinations were the most important thing that motivated me to study. Another reason was that I was very obedient since I was little. So, I

followed whatever the teacher said. When I was in school, I didn't have an overall understanding of English, and I had never thought about the meaning of learning English well. So, I studied whatever the teacher taught and did what he asked me to do. If the teacher liked kids who could read well, I would practice reading English every day; if they liked kids who could recite English compositions, I would memorize them hard. Since all teachers attached great importance to the English test scores, I tried hard to get high scores. Although none of these can prove how well a person learns English, I was one of the popular kids in class, and the English teacher loved me, which made me think my English was pretty well.

In the first year of high school, I remembered that my English teacher was a very gentle female teacher. She was very responsible, patient, and always treated everyone equally. She never judged students based on test scores or ignored any student who got poor grades. In the third year of high school, my English teacher was also a teacher with a gentle personality and often encouraged students. He always asked me to recite compositions in class since I did a great job on that. It became a very positive thing for me and motivated me to learn English. These two teachers all subtly made me love English more and become more confident. I felt very comfortable and relaxed during the whole learning process. Therefore, when I applied for university, I chose the English major as my first choice and wished to become an English teacher in the future.

Ever since I was a child, I have learned English for good grades. This has not changed even after I went to university. Although English learning in university was not as stressful as in the middle and high schools, and the teacher would not talk to parents because of students' test scores, I still care about my GPA since I planned to study abroad after graduation. GPA is an important indicator of applying for foreign universities. So, at the end of each semester, I took

each exam seriously. English was just one of the subjects that needed to be tested, and I have never thought about becoming a person who can speak perfect English. But at that time, I felt that grades were no longer the only criterion for judging a person's English learning. I participated in various activities, such as English speech contests and English debate contests during the university. I felt that English ability was more reflected through performance in various activities. People who learn English well should be able to express their ideas clearly.

My program divided English finely: in addition to basic English, we also had speaking (phonetics, linguistics), listening, reading, writing (different types of writing), and translation courses. These were my professional compulsory courses. My teachers were excellent in their professions, and all had high academic qualifications. But what impressed me the most was the responsible teachers, who had a good attitude towards students, reserved many office hours to help the students, and kept in touch even after the students had finished their studies.

When I was in college, there were no more than three options for the future: to work directly after graduation, take the postgraduate entrance examination, or go abroad. I didn't want to take a postgraduate entrance examination and wanted to get a better job in the future, so I chose to go abroad. When choosing a major, I chose TESOL because I only learned the English language itself during the university and did not learn the theory and methods of teaching English. I hoped to become an English teacher in the future, so I chose to learn more theories and knowledge related to English education. At that time, I didn't have a systematic understanding of teaching methods at all.

From a Newbie to a Young Professional

After studying abroad, I found that Western education and Chinese education are pretty similar. For example, the content covered by the syllabus, the teaching methods, and the teaching

concepts are almost the same. Some people in China believed Western education was much better than Education in China. However, Western education also attaches great importance to grades, and students also need to study for higher test scores.

In the past two years of studying abroad, what I have gained the most was the teaching experience. I had the opportunity to observe and teach at American elementary schools, junior high schools, and high schools. I learned English pedagogies in the TESOL program courses, such as the forgetting curve, bloom taxonomy, and the ed TPA lesson plan, and I applied them in schools. This process has benefited me a lot: I learned what to expect, what I should do, what I should expect from the students, and how to interact with students. By contacting students, I learned to think from students' perspectives, know their background, learning needs, and even the kind of interaction they preferred.

I felt that the teaching I received in my undergraduate year was not systematic: the teacher only taught knowledge. But after I studied abroad, I understood how to teach after I got the content. The first thing for an experienced teacher is to know the students' current level and the orientation and goals of the course. Then, the teacher needs to build up students' skills to meet the goal, which is called scaffolding, and this process is systematic teaching, not just throwing knowledge at students. In the TESOL program, I learned how to adapt to students' preferences and better help them complete their learning goals instead of asking them to follow my instructions.

In addition, I learned how to write lesson plans and do lesson planning. The first step is to set the learning objectives. I got a comprehensive understanding of learning objectives when I became a student teacher in schools. I understood how to make the abstract syllabus concrete and scaffold my students. These skills helped me a lot in my teaching after returning to China. It

made me a young professional who has learned and practiced systematic teaching methodologies from a novice who had not received teacher training. I am very grateful to TESOL Program, which has taught me a lot in the past two years.

Teaching and Educating People With What I Have Learned

After graduating and returning to China, I went to an international high school to teach English. International high schools were different from ordinary public high schools, and the working environment was more diversified. Half of the teachers in the office were foreigners, and the office language was English. In class, English was basically used for teaching. Students in international high schools were all preparing to go abroad and did not take the college entrance examination in China. As a result, they did not have the pressure of taking domestic examinations. Our teaching content was very flexible and did not need to follow the college entrance examination syllabus. There were no mandatory teaching tasks. This gave me the energy to consider students' needs, and to the greatest extent, to implement student-centered teaching.

Our school implemented differentiated instructions and put students into different classes according to their English proficiency as soon as they entered the school. English teachers had meetings every week and prepared for lessons together. We did not need to use the designated textbooks, and most teachers chose the appropriate learning materials for their students and printed out their handouts. I often used an application called NEWSELA: there were many reading articles in it, and the same article had several versions for different language difficulties. So, all my students with different language proficiency could read the same article at their language levels. After the students finished reading, they could answer questions and discuss the theme together.

Figure 4.7. **NEWSLEA Articles in Various Difficulty Levels**

Max level:

Katie Murphy is a plant biologist. She researches corn and tobacco plants at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Missouri. She's also the host of "Real Time Science," a series of videos that she uploads to TikTok and Instagram. She shows kids examples of her experiments in the field and the lab, along with other tidbits about her life as a scientist - such as how to make a hair tie out of a disposable glove when you forget your hair tie at home. We interviewed Murphy about her work, what she loves about science and other fun things she likes to do.

890L:

Katie Murphy researches corn and tobacco plants at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Murphy is a plant biologist. A biologist is someone who studies living things.

Murphy is also the host of "Real Time Science," a series of videos that she uploads to TikTok and Instagram. She shows kids examples of her experiments in the field and in the lab. She also shares other tidbits about her life as a scientist, such as how to make a hair tie out of a disposable glove when you forget yours at home.

Keep reading to learn more about Murphy's work, what she loves about science and other fun things she likes to do.

730L:

Katie Murphy researches corn and tobacco plants. She works at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Murphy is a plant biologist. A biologist is someone who studies living things.

Murphy is also the host of "Real Time Science." This is a series of videos that she uploads to TikTok and Instagram. In her videos, Murphy shows her experiments in the field and in the lab. She also shares tidbits about life as a scientist.

Keep reading to learn more about Murphy's work and her passion for science.

Figure 4.1. These photos showed an example of a paragraph of NEWSLEA article in various difficulty levels.

In addition, I tried my best to manage the classroom and take care of all my students. For instance, I had some naughty students and had a short attention span. These students would distract other students during class. For these students, I would first figure out why they had such behaviors. Some students felt that the knowledge was too hard for them, and they were not motivated. They couldn't understand what the teacher said, so they chose to do something they were good at: making mischief. For these children, I would take extra care of them and help them understand what they don't understand. Some children might just be bored. Then I would

give them some leadership roles. After all, the children who could distract other children were generally had more leadership temperament. Otherwise, they would sleep or wander. So, I would let them be class representatives and then tell them, "我觉得你哪儿做得特别好，特别能带动气氛，而且你观察力特别强，那我上课的时候，你能不能帮我一起管理班级，帮助那些有问题的同学？" (I think you do an outstanding job, especially to warm up the class! Your also very good at observing the class. Would you help me manage the class together and help your peers who have questions?). Then, these students would feel that they were valued, happily accept this "重任" (important task), and stop interfering with others.

At the same time, I also observed students' learning habits and chose teaching methods that suit them. For example, there were many knowledge points under some grammar items, such as clauses, tenses, and subjunctive mood. I would use the observation approach for students with strong learning abilities, high learning initiative, and outstanding grades. I would directly give these students a paragraph or an article, let them discuss in groups, and summarize the language points they found relevant to the material. Then, I classify these grammar points for them and explain them in detail. In this way, the top students would find the class challenging, rewarding, and fun enough.

In addition to differentiated instructions, I did many things to be a good English teacher. First of all, in terms of course content, "除了因材施教，还要循序渐进" (in addition to tailoring the teaching method to each student's aptitude, personality, and interest, I also made sure that my students proceed in an orderly way and advance step by step in their studies). I understood that good English teachers must be familiar with their students and know the students' outcomes. Then, set the short-term and long-term goals for students to achieve step by step. It is not good for students to learn too fast or too slowly.

Secondly, a good teacher needs to inspire students and facilitate students to learn. My teaching tasks were designed according to the students' zone of proximal development, which refers to the difference between what learners can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from the teacher. So, what I presented in my class was possible for most students to understand with appropriate assistance.

Thirdly, good teachers can engage and motivate students instead of only leading them to learn and taking notes. I hoped that I could give the pressure to every student during my class so that each of them could participate. A good classroom is definitely a lively and active classroom. Teachers can inspire students to have more self-confidence. In other words, every child sitting in the classroom feels that "I am the best!" and "I am not inferior." Therefore, teachers have to take part in the responsibility of establishing self-confidence for students. I did not want my students to sit in class and be afraid of being called to answer questions. At the same time, I did not want them to feel frustrated because of giving the wrong answers. Each student is unique and is good at something. So, I always tried to discover what my students are good at and use their advantages to stimulate their self-confidence. For example, I let one of my students be the instructor for a part of a reading, even though the student's test score was not exemplary.

Many model English teachers have all these good qualities around me, and they all have rich teaching experience. I am still learning, and there is still a long way to go from theory to practice. The TESOL program taught me a lot that I already internalized into my practice. Some teaching theories had a great influence on my teaching methods and attitude. For example, I have studied Dewey's theory, and he pays special attention to the influence of the environment on learning. So, I believed that learning from peers could be very helpful for my students, and I did many group activities during my class. In addition, the lesson plan template I learned in the

TESOL program gave me ideas on what to consider when doing lesson planning. Even though the template was designed for schools in the United States, I still considered my lesson design according to some of the elements and perspectives mentioned in the template after I came to China.

Moreover, I learned Piaget's constructivism and the scaffolding theory. So, I always did a pre-assessment before class, especially before bringing up a new topic or concept. For example, I asked three or five questions to students. Then I would know the students' current level. The pre-assessment was part of the scaffolding. After all, I tried to figure out what my students already knew and what they didn't. Then, I could scaffold them step by step to help them improve on this basis.

Now, I still often read these academic books and think about better applying them in my teaching. I believe that there is no theory that is only applicable to foreign or domestic countries. But some teachers lack professional training and teaching experience and use these theories incorrectly or poorly.

I mainly teach English reading, including intensive reading and extensive reading. Extensive reading is primarily used to improve students' scanning and skimming skills. For the Scanning part, I often asked my students to locate keywords while reading. A game I often played with them was "read for keywords": I would first pick out all the keywords in the article and show them on the PowerPoint. Then, I let the students find out these words in the text. The fast one would be the winner. This activity engaged all my students, and at the same time, allowed them to go over the text. My students got very excited when they participated in this competition. All students concentrated on reading since they wanted to earn points and beat their classmates. This prepared them for the following phrase: reading for the gist.

Another activity I particularly like is reading pictures. I am a visual person, and I believe that most people are visual learners. So, before I taught a new article, I often showed the students a few pictures. I would ask them some easy questions and let them make a prediction from the pictures. This is good training for students to learn actively so that they can become active readers.

When we began to analyze an article in detail, I often used an activity called "three-level questions" to involve students, especially those who were not very good at learning. I would divide the students into groups, and each group needed to design three questions of different difficulties. Firstly, I showed them what the three levels of questions look like. Then, I let students discuss in groups and come up with questions. Each group needs to answer other groups' questions and receive points based on the difficulty level. The harder the questions, the higher the score. However, if a group couldn't answer the question, the group that gave the question can get a double score. As a result, students are very motivated and actively using their brain: they have to thoroughly understand the article, study the details of the article, ask questions, control the difficulty, and find a way to avoid other groups giving the correct answer easily.

These are some activities that I often do in class, and I often reflect and innovate my teaching methods. Of course, as an English teacher, I also have some requirements and expectations for my students. First of all, I hope my students have their learning goals. They could learn for scores or rewards, but they are definitely not just forced by their parents. Secondly, students should have their own learning methodology. Some people watched some YouTube videos such as "How to learn English in 5 minutes". Students with learning methodology and systems would not believe in these "shortcuts."

Finally, I want my students to be tenacious. When they experience a period of burnout, they can overcome it. Many students may feel that their scores have not improved after studying for a long time because they are still accumulating. It is normal for students to feel tired and upset. But they cannot indulge in such mood swings. Whether by actively seeking help or using other learning methods, students should be able to overcome it.

I have a very kind and soft personality, and I always patiently communicate with students on these expectations. However, when encountering naughty students, it was a little bit hard for me to manage them. Experienced teachers are good at both managing students and being friends with them.

In general, I like my job very much. The students respected me, and my colleagues helped me a lot. The experienced teachers helped me to get familiar with the teaching environment in a very short time. They often listen to my lessons and give me suggestions and advice: where I need to speed up, where I need to teach in detail, and how I can recognize the diversity of students' personalities and interact with all of them. All these feedbacks allowed me to reflect on my teaching. Without their help, it was difficult for me to see my strengths and weaknesses.

Our school also has academic analysis meetings held by teachers of all subjects every month. We discussed students' learning conditions and exchange information about the situation of each class and each subject. So, I could get to know my students more, not just their performance in the English subject. I could also better understand the pressure students are facing now. For example, some teachers feel that students should complete the homework in half an hour, but students always complain that they have no time. If we see that all teachers have assigned students half an hour of homework, we can better understand students' difficulties.

In short, this school provides many useful resources and opportunities for me to improve my teaching skills and ability. I believe that I can do better in the future, "以我所学，教书育人" (teaching and educating people with what I have learned).

Zhan: An English Teacher in a Private International High School

Zhan, a 28-year-old English teacher, was born in a small village in China and spent her first 18 years there. After graduating from high school, she was admitted to a normal university in a megacity in northern China and got a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature four years later. To become a well-prepared English teacher, she went abroad and joined grad school at a university in the Eastern U.S. to continue her English educational training. Zhan got her master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) in 2 years and went straight back to China after the commencement. She returned and settled down in the city where she attended university and was recruited by a newly established private international high school to be an English teacher. It has been almost two years since then. When she first got there, the school was still in the preparatory stage. So, she did not directly start teaching but was mainly responsible for its administration, publicity, enrollment, and communication with foreign teachers. She began teaching in the second year. The school was divided into two kinds of classes: the studying abroad class and the Gaokao class. Foreign teachers taught the students in the studying abroad courses in preparation for overseas studying; Zhan was responsible for the Gaokao class and taught those students who were preparing for the college entrance examination, which we called *Gaokao* in China.

From a Slacker in English to an English Teacher

I went to a primary school in my home village. At that time, the school didn't teach English seriously. Although there were English courses, the English teacher just brought over a

tape recorder and let us listen to the text recording and read along with it. And that is it. Those English words did not even retain in my brain for one second and slipped my mind right away. I also enrolled in a cram school, which taught phonetic symbols and roots, with other schoolmates at the time. But the teacher absconded with our tuition after two lessons. I can't remember what happened after that, but in short, I failed to learn English. I have always believed that early education for English is crucial for one's English learning. My early education for English had not started yet during my elementary schooling. But my younger brother had a different experience. He attended an elementary school in the city, so he could learn advanced vocabulary like "crocodile" when he was very young. In terms of knowledge and English vocabulary accumulation, he was much better than me. Although their spoken English was not very good either, children like my younger brother had a decisive advantage in English during junior and senior high schools since China paid more attention to written tests at this stage.

My English education started in junior high school, a semi-militarized boarding school in the county town. The school had rigorous life management to develop self-discipline. All students were required to make the bed every morning and fold the quilt into a perfectly smooth cuboid. The washbasin and toothbrush must be placed at a specific angle. Correspondingly, the teaching was very traditional and strict. English learning emphasized indoctrination and rote memorization. Facing the drilling of knowledge, I found no enjoyment in it and couldn't keep up my motivation. English learning was dull and bland. Besides, I had much more fun things to do at that time: I was a member of both the school basketball team and the student union. When other students read English in the morning, I was either training on the basketball team or doing chores for the student union. So not surprisingly, my English was weak. I don't have any impression of the English teacher who taught me at that time, even his/her name. And I do not

remember how I muddled through the three years and passed the high school entrance examination.

Because of my unsolid? English foundation background, my English performance in senior high school continued to be mediocre. The first-year English teacher was also my headteacher, with a round and chubby face. As a rule of thumb, the subject taught by the headteacher should be the class's strength because the headteacher always pays extra attention to his or her students. But in my impression, my headteacher was just like other English teachers: their teaching tended to be "tightly scripted" and "highly standardized," which left no room for students' initiative, curiosity, and critical thinking. Without the passion for learning English, my English scores had not improved at all. In the second year of senior high school, I learned relatively well in all other subjects, but English. The second-year English teacher reviewed my transcripts and thought I need to spend most of my spare time learning English. She talked to me and carefully analyzed my English problems. She found that I had a poor grasp of English phrases. So, she asked me to memorize English phrases all day long; if I could not recite those phrases at the end of the day, I could not leave. It was like pulling teeth, however, there was no alternative but to bite the bullet. I learned by rote every day, without my thoughts. The only thing I expected was that I would be able to get higher scores in the tests by remembering all these phrases. And then, world peace!

After I stepped into the third year, the new English teacher also came to talk to me. She said aggressively: "An, you will never score above 90 (out of 150) on the college entrance examination at your level!" Not surprisingly, in my aspirant 18, with tons of self-esteem, her words irritated me. To show my diligence and determination, in the next English class, I raised my hand immediately when I had a question:

"Teacher, I don't understand it!"

But the teacher scolded me on the spot: "你把手给我放下！你不许问！你不要把别人的思路都给带偏了！ (Put your hand down! You are not allowed to ask! Don't confuse others!)"

"那我有问题也不能问吗？ (But I have a question!)" I felt a little bit frustrated.

"你下课单独找我问!(Come talk to me after class!)"

I went to her office alone and asked my question without disturbing other students, and it was over. I never resented her for this. If the flow of her lesson were interrupted, the course progress would be affected, and the learning objectives might not be met. I understand that she tried to save precious time for every student since the third year of senior high is extremely critical. In traditional domestic senior high, the class size is large. It is common for teachers to prioritize most students' interests as much as possible and "sacrifice" students like me who was struggling to keep up. What disappointed me was that even though I, with no intelligence problem, was eager to learn, highly motivated, and studied diligently, she did not help me with my learning. During that year, I neither received a dissection of my English problem or a suitable learning method that worked for me. If a teacher motivates students but does not show them the way, he/she is not a qualified English teacher.

Throughout my senior high, learning English was too painful for me. I felt that what I learned did not go into my mind, and the language itself did not go into my heart. The knowledge was piecemeal, and there was not a system to connect them. I spent a lot of time in "苦背" (rote memorizing vocabularies and phrases) and "题海战术" (question sea tactic, which means to immerse students with thousands of books and practices). It was unexpected that finally, I got 120 in English in the college entrance examination. Anyone would be happy with the result, but I was not satisfied. I knew I could do better if I were into something.

Like I got 140, a score to be proud of, in the Chinese exam since I was fascinated by Chinese literature and writing.

Typically, everyone thought that I should apply for a major related to Chinese literature to make the best use of my strength. I could also get rid of "my nightmare": English. Nevertheless, I put English major as my first choice on my college application form. Why? My thoughts were willful and assertive: "既然我英语学的不好，那我就非要报考英语专业，非把它学好不可；既然我语文都已经学得这么好了，还有什么好学的呢？"(since I was always weak in English, I must prove I can learn it well; I had already known Chinese so well, what else was I going to learn in that field?) This decision was reckless and headstrong, but I just made it at the time. I thought if one day I became an English teacher, I could tell my students "我是怎么样一步步从英语学渣走过来的" (how I grew from a slacker in English to an English teacher bit by bit). My experiences may give me a better idea of how to help students who have difficulty learning English. Soon after, I was admitted to the English department, and I never regretted going down this route.

When I was in school, the only purpose I had for learning English was taking exams. But after I reached college, I started to fall in love with English. College English course started teaching from scratch. It gave me a great chance to systematically learn the basic knowledge of pronunciation, grammar, and English language culture. Most English teachers had either study abroad experiences or had doctorate degrees with excellent teaching capabilities, which was quite different from high school teachers. By that time, I believed that good English teachers must have a firm grasp of the area and content they are teaching, be fantastic at understanding and engaging their target students, and let students feel the joy of meaningful learning. All of my English teachers in K-12 schools shoved students through the one-size-fits-all, teach-to-tests,

conveyor belt education. In contrast, the college teachers taught students exciting things

pertaining to different topics for each lesson and encouraged students to explore and think. There

were many opportunities for interactions, discussion, and sharing in class. I am the kind of

person who will muddle through somehow when I find things boring, but once I find a task

rewarding and appeals to me, I will accomplish it in my best endeavor. For example, in my

college business English class, the teacher asked us to do a business case analysis: we had to find

out the company's problems from a dozen pages of English materials, which explained the

company's detailed development situation. Then, we had to propose solutions and present them

in class. This task was meaningful, engaging, and challenging at the same time. So, I was highly

motivated to do it and put effort into it.

Another example was the translation class. The teacher taught us how to translate an

English sentence into Chinese while retaining the essence and beauty of the two languages.

During the training, the teacher showed us a "memory method": first, translate a paragraph from

English into Chinese, then translate it back into English. The last step was to compare it with the

original English paragraph and analyze how to express the meaning better. I was very motivated

when I did this exercise. It was helpful for improving English and Chinese-English translation

ability. I felt the charm of the English and the love of language itself more than just a tool for

acquiring knowledge. These class exercises and tasks were far more rewarding than exams and

drills practice.

Besides the classes, various activities organized in the university also made me driven to

learn English. I remembered once the school organized an English prose recitation contest. With

curiosity and less pressure from schoolwork, I signed up to give it a try. It was not tricky to

recite, but it was hard to read like a native. I downloaded the original English videos and audios

and exposed myself to real English pronunciation and speaking styles. I studied the native English speakers' mouth and lip movement and their English flow and imitated them. I took a voice recorder and recorded myself to assess my progress until I was satisfied with my pronunciation. After a while, my college English teacher was surprised by my improvement. "如果隔着门我都不知道是你在说话！(I wouldn't know you were the one speaking English if I were the other side of the door!)" he said. Now when I think about it, my accent was still heavy at the time. But I won an award in the contest, which inspired me so much in English learning.

At the same period, I also participated in a work and travel Sino-US exchange program. I spent more than half a month working at a McDonald's in California and then traveling around. During that time, I hanged out with my foreign colleagues and communicated with them in English every day. At the beginning, I could not understand their slang, nor could I keep up with their speaking. I didn't know much about American culture, and I didn't understand what they were saying. Yet, after the first two weeks, I started to understand them gradually as we were getting familiar with each other. Before I left, they told me that they didn't understand my English for the first two weeks at all, and everyone just pretended that they understand me. I snickered. It turned out that we all pretended to understand each other for so long. However, my English improved rapidly in such a short time just because I tried hard to join their conversation and blend into the new environment; this fast and high-frequency interaction made the giant leap happen.

Soon after entered the university, I set myself the career goal of being an English teacher. As far as I could see, a teacher must have a wide range of knowledge instead of just a depth of expertise in a specific subject. So, I did not study English teaching wholeheartedly but enrolled in various courses that were not quite relevant to my major during my freshman and sophomore

years. Such as gardening, painting, dancing, tour guide, calligraphy, and martial arts. Besides, I often audited classes at the college of arts. I participated in the TCSOL (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages) training and got a certificate during summer vacation. And in the winter vacation, I applied to be a volunteer for left-behind children in rural areas. I kept myself " 不务正业"(busy to experience more and learn more in different fields). But my energy, after all, was limited. Inevitably, I had an insufficient commitment in my core courses, such as linguistic. I didn't see the value of it, and the teacher's lecture was rather dull. I only set a low requirement for myself on these courses and was satisfied as long as I passed the final examinations.

Therefore, when I was about to graduate from university and realized that my English and the knowledge of teaching were not well-prepared enough to become an English teacher, this brought me to the idea of studying abroad. My professor also encouraged me to apply for a graduate school in the United States and continue my study in English education before I came back to teach. After spending some time to think it over, I strengthened my determination to go abroad and see the education in the United States with my own eyes. I was curious about how native English teachers taught language acquisition. I also needed more time to plan for my future and broaden my horizons. Finally, in the last year of university, I began to prepare for applying to schools and embarked on the road of studying abroad.

Western Education is Not Paradise, and Teachers are Not Magicians

At the beginning of 2015, when the weather was getting warmer, I got accepted to a TESOL Master's program in a university in the Eastern U.S. I felt enormously excited, at the same time a trace of concern. What excited me was that I finally had the opportunity to study abroad and learn the most advanced teaching methods in the U.S. At that point, I believed that Western teaching was complete and systematic, and among these Western countries, education in

the U.S. was one of the highest qualities. I was eager to know how American elites, such as those Nobel Prize winners, were cultivated. Maybe their educational philosophy was advanced; perhaps they did not emphasize memorization and drills and did not put so many constraints on students; perhaps their education was more student-centered, flexible, tolerant, and freer; maybe their classrooms could cultivate students' creativity. I had many assumptions about education in Western countries. But I knew that these imaginations might not be accurate, which was what I worried about. I had seen the news on TV and the Internet that many students in the U.S. did not have the opportunity or simply give up the option of attending university. I faintly felt that American education might be far from what I imagined.

I came to the United States with all these doubts. As my understanding of American culture and education got deepened in and outside the school, I found that my previous guesses were superficial and one-sided. I gradually realized that not only education, but educational issues had no borders. While studying abroad, we had many opportunities to go to the local K-12 schools to observe and do student teaching. I found education in the United States is incredibly divided. I had been to some top private schools and also more ordinary public schools. The quality of students and teachers in different schools was very different. For instance, some public schools had many new immigrant students, and the overall quality of education and students' performance was poor. Teachers were more laissez-faire to students and neglected to class management. Their teaching progress was slow, the choice of teaching content and materials was relatively casual, and the examinations were also easy. These schools had high dropout rate and many students in these schools eventually missed the chance to enter the university. Nevertheless, in some elite private schools, the quality of students was very high. Many children's family education, behavioral performance, and intellectual development level had a

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clear gap with the kids in ordinary public school from an early age. They were on different tracks. Therefore, classes in these good schools paid more attention to students' knowledge accumulation and skills cultivation. Teachers had high teaching ability, abundant teaching resources, and authentic teaching designs. Students were strictly assessed before they went to college. Not surprisingly, these students might become competitive in the job market.

Witnessing this social reality, I started to have a strong desire for family education. I wanted to know why there were such significant gaps among children in the same area, even the same school and class. What was the starting point of such a difference? To answer these questions, I observed the local schools daily, reviewed literature, analyzed the data, and then discussed my confusions with professors who researched this field. Over time, I found that children's habits, personality, and intellectual development levels were strongly related to family education. Some disadvantages of the primary family and the way parents accompanying their children in the early stage would significantly affect the children's learning habits and intellectual development. The educational environment that parents could provide to their children later was also critical since different educational settings had various teacher quality and teaching resources. For example, if a child had superior intelligence but lacked family support and care, the child might form bad learning habits since childhood. If their early education teachers did not correct them in time, these bad habits might be challenging to get rid of when they grew older. It was about that point that I realized what teachers could do may indeed be very limited. Parents of guardians played a pivotal role in the children's pursuit of education. An English teacher alone could neither change the world nor make every students' English level soar, like a magician.

Whereas in the face of diverse students in the classroom and the huge disparity in academic performance between groups of students, was teachers supposed to sit back? Of course not! What benefited me the most during the school observation was the layered curriculum approach, which required teachers to match different students to numerous instructions and activities that suit their various abilities, intelligence, learning styles, and learning needs. For example, teachers assigned students the same text at different reading levels. Students were set reasonable but challenging goals for how they could advance and expected to gradually improve on their original basis. This was a lifesaver for a mainstream class that includes multi-level English language learners. Later, when I returned to China and became a high school English teacher, I used this approach in my classroom instead of demanding all students to achieve a unified goal. I also grouped these fast learners with students who need support and encouraged the parents of my struggling students to involve more in their kids' learning in terms of both time and money. I just accepted the reality that my ability was minimal: "我单单作为一个英语老师不可能像魔法师一样让每个学生都脱胎换骨，成绩飞升" (I couldn't be the "magician" at this phase).

Overall, in the two years of studying abroad, my professional and teaching abilities had greatly improved. Besides the practical teaching methods that I observed and learned in local schools, I also learned systematic second language acquisition theories in the TESOL program. But what I felt more rewarding was the transition in my way of thinking. Through various class assignments and activities, I learned how to collect information independently, listen to different viewpoints, and develop a comprehensible understanding of a topic. I also learned how to build a good teaching plan, choose the appropriate teaching content, and decide what to teach to my target students. These gains were of great value to my teaching after returning to China.

Learn the New Ones and Keep the Old, I Can Have the Cake and Eat It

When I returned to China, I was in pain at first. I dreamed of being a senior high school teacher, and that means with all the passion and ideals, I eventually had to face the cruel exam-oriented education system, in which almost every student endures years of rote practices and test training preparing for the *Gaokao*. I could not change the system. "毕竟千军万马都要挤独木桥，一个竞争性的考试在所难免" (After all, a formidable and competitive examination was inevitable since the huge number of troops of high school graduates sought to squeeze on the narrow log bridge). For me, "要想在短短的 45 分钟英语课堂上既调动学生的兴趣，又让他们觉得收获颇丰，是一件很有难度的事" (it was tough to motivate students' interests and enact meaningful learning in 45-minute class periods when students were under heavy examination pressure). The various teaching approaches I learned abroad might not be applicable under such system restrictions.

During that time, a new international school was established in my hometown. I got an offer and went to take a look. The school had beautiful scenery: the buildings were all archaic Chinese architecture, with many lakes and plantings. The school envisioned itself as a place where every student would develop a solid understanding of Chinese culture, extensive knowledge, and a global perspective for contributing to the civic well-being of the community. It sounded like a slogan, but it was yet fascinating for me. Compared with ordinary public schools, this school was more student-centered. It had small class size with seven or eight students in each class so that every student could be taken care of to the greatest extent. The principal valued teachers' teaching experience and seconded diverse teaching philosophies. After getting in touch with him, I found that he was very supportive and inclusive. Teachers worked here had a lot of

initiative to practice new teaching methods, and would not be confined by course schedule, students' performance, and the pressure of *Gaokao*. I decided to accept the offer on the spot.

Since it was a brand-new school, there were few teachers. All English teachers were native English speakers except me. I, on my own, was responsible for the two Gaokao classes under enormous pressure. As a novice teacher, I did not have enough confidence in myself at the beginning. Fortunately, my colleagues were very supportive and willing to collaborate on teaching. The students also showed great respect for me and willing to participate in my class.

However, students at this age still need to be supervised all the time, especially for my students, who were the first batch of students enrolled in this new school and had relatively low performance. Many students had little initiative to learn. During the class, I found that some students even showed an aversion to learning English. I was not the type of teacher who forced and pushed students to learn. Instead, I chatted with them. I helped them analyze the pros and cons of learning English and let them be aware of their self-expectation with a clear blueprint for the future. I listened to what they wanted and made sure they were aware of their own needs and goals and how to achieve them. We also planned on tracking and assessing their progress, applying the knowledge they have learned in their life, and making sense of the standardized test. What amazed me was that these students were enthusiastic after talking about these things. And to my relief, a few students started to pay attention to their learning without my supervision. It made me feel like I was doing the right thing. Students should learn to be responsible for their decisions and actions, although they sometimes did not understand what the right decision and responsibility were at this age.

I always believe that students must first learn to think before learning knowledge. Nowadays, when students are asked why they learn English, eight or nine out of ten may answer,

"Because I have to take exams!". Test scores still dominate most Chinese students' lives. "我希望引导学生自己去思考，激发学生学习的原动力，而不是像个机器一样木讷地接收信息，照单全收" (I hope to guide my students to think for themselves and stimulate their motivation for learning, instead of receiving information dumbly like a machine). Students need more training on critical thinking and understand how to learn efficiently. For students with a poor knowledge foundation, I will first teach them how to take notes, think dialectically, discover the rules of language, and use these rules. There are still few discussions on these topics in today's China. More attention has been paid on implementing the latest teaching approaches and import fun teaching resources. Many teachers imitated Western teaching methods and tried to make classroom activities novel and exciting, but they just learned the surface. Take content-based learning as an example, it was difficult to achieve the real content-based learning in China since the scenes created by teachers could not relate to students' daily life. For example, students would not ask for directions in English in China, so such role-playing was just a game in class for students but nothing more than it.

Hence, teachers should first clarify why they use a particular teaching method or class activity and whether it is useful for their students. After returning from studying abroad, I was also excited to apply what I learned abroad in my teaching. Some practices were effective, such as the layered curriculum approach. When I first used it, I assigned different reading materials to each group of students. But my students did not like it, especially those with relatively low foundations; they felt inferior and despised by others. "We don't want to use different reading materials!" they said. Although I repeatedly emphasized to them that "you need to learn knowledge that is slightly above your current level" and "just make a little progress on your basis," most of them still felt uncomfortable and losing face. But if I slow down my lecture to

take care of every student, those top ones might soon feel bored. Differentiated instruction was necessary, but it must be used in a way that students could accept. Thus, I decided to give the same content materials to all students but allowed them to master to different degrees. I provided extra readings and assignments for the top students after class and let them play a little teacher's role during the class, teaching what they had learned to the students who had not yet followed. All students felt satisfied when I took good care of their self-esteem, vanity, and learning needs.

Another successful example was the practice of i+1 theory, which means the next increment of new knowledge should be within students' capacity to acquire. In many cases, the students could not understand the new knowledge since it was not comprehensible enough. For example, when I taught grammar, my students were all nodded to show that they understood. But when I asked them, questions based on what I taught, they couldn't answer. The students did not comprehend the knowledge: "耳朵听懂了，脑子还没接收" (their ears got it, but their brains did not). It was just like when we were reading the cooking recipe, our eyes learned it, but our hands had not kept up. What I had to do was presenting the new knowledge in a comprehensible way that could enable learning to happen. For example, when I taught vocabulary phrases like "to do", "doing", and "against", I did not let my students memorize by rote but draw pictures to help them understand. I explained the original meaning and usage of these phrases in the language that students could comprehend. Although unlike the teaching of foreign teachers which focused on language acquisition, my teaching was still lectures and focused on language learning, I tried to add examples related to real life context. For instance, when I taught the topic of supermarket, I showed students some pictures of myself in American supermarkets and told them real experiences and stories of myself. I also tried to integrate other subjects, such as

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Chinese literature and biology. Students' feedbacks were good. They commented my class was interesting, lively, and understandable.

There were successes and there were failures. Such as task-based teaching. Because of the epidemic, online schooling had started. I thought it was the right time for students to do task-based assignments: search information, analyze data, and do a project. To reduce the difficulty of the tasks and increase students' interests, I asked my students to collect information about the epidemic virus and then make a picture book for children in English. I initially thought that this task was interesting, close to students' lives, and has practical significance. Students must enjoy doing it. But unexpectedly, "他们并不领我的情，反而偷工减料的糊弄我" (they were ungrateful and cut corners to fool me). Their works submitted were not as good as I expected. You never know what your students like. I guessed that this task is too naive for them, or their English practical ability was not enough to complete this task. Maybe many of them were used to doing multiple-choice questions or were just indolent and unsteady during the online schooling. In response to these problems, I could do nothing but nagged and preached at them to treat the next assignment seriously.

By and large, the most significant difference between Chinese and United States English education lies in the admission standards and assessment methods when students are admitted to universities. Domestically, the dominant way of assessment is Gaokao, which focuses more on fact-based knowledge, while the primary assessment is SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) in the U.S., which has been structured to test students' communication and reasoning ability. Additionally, students have only one chance to take Gaokao every year and their final score of Gaokao solely determine the university admissions in China, whereas students can take SAT multiple times per year and the test results make up only part of the college application process

in the U.S. No surprise, then, the way of students' English learning is so different between the two countries. Besides, the language environment is also an important factor. Students learning English in a native English-speaking country aims to become more socially integrated. English is a vital tool of daily life. Conversely, English is a foreign language for most Chinese students. Students learn English to improve their personal knowledge and competitiveness in the job market. The social environment primarily affects the purpose and methods of English learning.

Therefore, while we continue introducing the latest Western teaching models and approaches, the traditional English teaching methods in China still need to be retained. Students still need to take exams and study grammar seriously. In the domestic environment, exams are required as a threshold for university and a means to assess language proficiency. Around the world today, the importance of English is beyond doubt. Examination plays a critical role in alleviating the discrepancies in education and society: "没有了语言考试这个动力，很多孩子无形中失去了学英语的机会" (when there is no testing, many children will lose the opportunity of learning English).

However, the format and content of the examinations can be changed. After so many years of teaching reforms, the domestic English test has been refined and enriched, and the system has been continuously improved. In the past two years, China has paid more attention to English pragmatics. It was reported that impacted by the traditional English language teaching and learning, which focused more on grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, many Chinese people are 'mute' and 'deaf' English language learners. Nevertheless, I did not see the problem. If a person cannot effectively use English when he or she is abroad, it may because that this person has not learned English well or taken English seriously. If one did not master the vocabulary and grammar, they might be unsure about whether they say it right once they use it in a real context.

There are English learners who have high performance in English linguistics and low pragmatic awareness. But such learners just lack an opportunity to apply what they learned. They are just not very skilled and need some practice. As long as they are given an English-speaking environment and a little time, they can adapt quickly. It is not the examinations nor traditional grammar teaching that lead to "mute" and "deaf" English learners. People will start to speak English only in English speaking environment. English is still a foreign language for Chinese people. Unless children have grown up in an English-speaking environment since childhood, they must systematically learn grammar and language rules in a foreign language learning method and repeatedly practice it. Teachers' supervision is also necessary because students before college lack self-control and easy to become corrupt without being aware of it, even though some of them know the importance of learning English.

The more urgent challenge in China is the polarized education system and the imbalanced distribution of educational resources. Take high schools as an example. Many top schools in big cities receive abundant teaching resources every year. Some schools have their farm for raising animals, and some have experimental workshops, theaters for performances and rehearsals, and cooperation programs between various disciplines. These schools have pricey tuition fees, and they recruited the top students from the student pool. These students have a good English foundation, and they can learn very well no matter what teaching methods the teacher uses. Nevertheless, most ordinary schools cannot reach this level. Full classrooms of students compliantly taking notes and only breaking their silence for a prompted chorus of repetition is common in those schools. Teachers are still delivering information-packed lessons to students who passively receive information, allowing for little to no student engagement and practice. The boundaries of different disciplines are relatively clear, especially in areas with insufficient

educational resources. Students do not have enough knowledge accumulation. Many students have not even mastered the most basic vocabulary that needs to be memorized. They cannot perform well no matter what teaching methods teachers are using.

Generally speaking, all students who have to attend *Gaokao* take high test scores as their ultimate goal. Domestic English teachers tend to be the authority in the class and emphasize more on class efficiency. But on this basis, students in areas and schools with better resources have better language skills and knowledge foundation. As a result, they are more capable of expressing their opinions, think critically, and interact with one another in English. Under such conditions, the class can be more student-centered. Teachers can cultivate students' practical language skills and expand students' knowledge. On the contrary, students generally have a weaker foundation and weak learning habits in areas and schools with relatively inadequate resources. So, they need more language drills practice and get more language input. In this case, the students cannot speak out even teachers let them speak. Most teachers still use cramming as their major way of teaching.

To sum up, English education in China and the West cannot be generalized. Many English teachers in China have studying abroad experiences and equipped with systematic second language acquisition knowledge. They follow scientific teaching structures when they are teaching based on students' cognitive development and language ability. This does not mean absorbing and utilizing all progressive Western teaching methods and abandon all traditional instructional strategies. There is a very scientific and complete English teaching system that fits in the Chinese context, which countless experts and scholars have studied for years. Many English textbooks in China are well designed, which critically reflected the application of Western pedagogies to better meet students' English learning needs. For example, the textbook I

am using now gives teachers many useful tips on pronunciation teaching, increasing students'

interests, mobilizing students" enthusiasm, and highlighting the key language skills students

need to master. The entire textbook guides teachers to complete teaching tasks step by step.

There are diverse versions of textbooks on the market, and schools are free to choose the ones

that suit local students. Everything is improving and developing on the right track.

Chapter 5 - Results and Analysis

In Chapter four, the background of each of the participants were introduced and the

narrative stories of each participants were presented. Stories were re-told in first-person to

present vivid pictures of CTEFLs' English learning, Western training, and English teaching

experiences. In this Chapter, findings of the phenomenological case study undertake an in-depth

analysis by presenting the emerging themes. A cross-case analysis is conducted to compare and

contrast the four teachers' narrative stories. Common themes are presented in tables and

described in detail.

Analysis for RQ1: How Do CTEFLs Make Sense of Their Experiences in the MATESOL Program in the United States?

The first research question is "How do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the

MATESOL program in the United States?" Two major themes and five sub-themes were

extracted from the first research question and a table with themes is as follows (see Table 4.1).

Table 5.1. Themes for RQ1

Major Themes	Sub-themes
An experience of developing a critical eye	• Expectations vs. reality • Theory vs. reality

An experience of learning to teach as an EFL teacher candidate	• Empowering TESOL knowledge • First-hand experiences as master students and student teachers • Personal growth and confidence

Theme: An Experience of Developing a Critical Eye

Participants in this study all felt that their perspectives broadened gradually as they were constantly exposed to different culture, values, new language teaching knowledge, and classroom activities. Through these experiences, teachers learned the importance of critical thinking and gained new perspectives on viewing the world. This theme presented the participants common descriptions on how and why they view their U.S. MATESOL training experiences as a journey of developing critical eye. Their transition of understanding on the education in Western countries and China, and the idea on implementation of Western-based pedagogies in China were discussed.

Expectations vs. reality. This theme revealed the participants' transition of understanding on education in the United States and in China through their learning and teaching experiences in the MATESOL program and interactions with different people. The Western learning experience helped them develop a critical and objective eye on Western education and culture.

The four teachers all had high expectations of Western education before they came to the United States. They had many pre-assumptions of how Western classrooms look like and how Western teacher training program was structured. As Xiao and Yang shared, they assumed that the education in the United states could be as good as what they had seen in the movie or news

even though they never experienced by themselves. Many people believed that "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" before studying abroad, but their views changed after studying and living abroad for a few years. People became more critical and peaceful when they commented things and judged on social issues.

When asked about how they perceived Western education before studying abroad, all participants mentioned that Western education might be more inspiring compared to the prevalent cramming education in China like how it was reported in books and news. They believed that the education in the United States paid more attention to students' needs and interests, and adjust their lessons based on students' current level. In contrast, many teachers in China did not care much about each individual student and provided standard and unified education to everyone. According to Zhan, one of the reasons she chose to study in the United States was because Western teaching was almost perfect in her imagination. She believed that the country which could cultivate many elites and Nobel Prize winners should have complete and systematic education and advanced teaching philosophy.

International students' often have unrealistic and ideal pre-assumptions of the Western world, which was rarely mentioned in the past literature (Andrade, 2006). Nevertheless, as their understanding of Western culture and education got deepened during their study in the U.S., they started to realize that English education in China and the West could not be generalized. Even though there were differences between Western and Eastern teaching model, and there were many advanced teaching approaches in Western classrooms, participants recognized that no country had perfect education, including well developed country like the U.S. As the participants shared, Western education also attaches great importance to test scores and many teaching content and concepts were quite similar to Chinese education. In addition, teachers found that

education was closely related to economy and resources, and in the schools where lack of enough good resources, there were also many educational issues and problems. After observed in local K-12 schools in the U.S., teachers found that education in the United States was divided, and the gap among top private schools and ordinary public schools was huge. Their Western training enabled them to see that Western classes were not all inspiring and student-centered. They also had lectures, rote learning, and test preparation practice.

More importantly, when their understanding of Western culture got deepened, participants realized the judgment without considering social context was sloppy. Since the economic, politics, and culture contexts were all different, it was irresponsible to give the conclusion that one education was better than another one. This finding needs to be highlighted since it expands the literature on the benefits of graduate TESOL program on teacher development (Z. Huang, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Micek, 2017; Stapleton & Shao, 2018; Tekin, 2019). After years of studying abroad, participants seemed to have a peaceful mind on critiquing things and were more willing to consider issues from different angles. For Xiao and Zhan, they shared that the Western learning experiences developed their critical thinking ability and intercultural awareness. They started to be more objective and no longer blindly worshiped the Western world.

Theory vs. reality. After being exposed to various theoretical and experiential knowledge and gained cultural understanding in both the U.S. and China, the four teachers were able to think critically on English teaching pedagogies. Through gradually being aware of the relationship between culture and language, their broadened perspectives certainly became part of their new beliefs about teaching and learning.

According to their comments, none of them chose to be a passive learner to learn and accept all the teaching knowledge they were taught in the TESOL program. Instead, all of them expressed uncertainty about the applicability of some teaching theories and strategies introduced in the program considering barriers in China, such as class size, students' motivation, and English level. Some participants commented that the program did not took the EEL situation more into consideration and were not necessarily familiar with the problems that many EEL teachers have to cope with. These concerns coincide with the problems about TESOL programs in North America raised by many scholars, who claimed the discrepancy between Western training and Eastern classrooms and criticized the ethnocentrism in the Western-based theories and approaches in TESOL (Carrier, 2003; Govardhan et al., 1999; Liu, 1998; Lo, 2005; Nuske, 2018). In this sense, all four teachers were aware of this discrepancy and felt that some of the TESOL knowledge they learned was not very helpful for them. For example, some teaching strategies they learned were used to teach a small group of ESL students who had been living in the U.S. for a long time and could speak fluency English. These strategies may not fit some large Chinese classrooms where students had limited English proficiency level.

In addition, all four teachers emphasized that their Western educational experience provided them the opportunity to compare and contrast the Eastern and Western English teaching and learning and take an interpretative and critical stance towards the similarities and differences. As previous literature demonstrated, although teachers generally accepted that Western-based theories and pedagogies were well-founded, convincing, and modern, they did not treat all the knowledge they learned in the West as prescriptive knowledge that they have to use in their contexts (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Carrier, 2003; Govardhan et al., 1999). Instead, the comprehensive understanding of these teaching knowledge helped teachers to develop critical

attitudes towards the Western-based pedagogy and the traditional language teaching pedagogy. They mentioned that the learning experience in the MATESOL program offered them great opportunity to reevaluate and rethink their own knowledge as EFL teachers and let them understand the reason that Western-based pedagogy were not always the best choice.

Participants in this study all emphasized that after studying abroad, they realized the importance of localizing what they learned in the West to their teaching contexts. Xiao started to criticize the idea that the West is the best. After she returned to China and teach, she did not simply transplant the Western way of teaching into her classroom but taught according to her students' reality and situations. As Xiao indicated, she realized that there was no absolute clear-cut contradiction between Western-based pedagogy and Eastern-based pedagogy. What she did was to use the strategies that were effective and suit her students in her classroom, whether it was Western-based or Eastern-based. Other teachers also agreed that even though many Western-based TESOL strategies seemed completely contradict to the traditional teaching approaches in China, they could merge and combine different approaches with adaptions and carefully considering of the teaching context. These comments added more evidence to Spack (1997) and Watkins and Biggs's (1996) studies which advocated the idea that Chinese culture is connected to the Western teaching philosophies in certain aspects and one should not interpret culture with bias and prejudice. The development of this critical capacity enabled CTEFLs to reflect on what they learned, how they could apply and modify, and how they could create their own possible teaching methods by eliminating pre-assumptions on the West and East. It was also only through establishing this critical ability could the CTEFLs empower their pedagogy.

In brief, the teachers' Western training experiences provided them the opportunity to gain a critical view on Western-based pedagogy as they compared it to the traditional Chinese

pedagogy. This critical stance made it possible for Chinese EFL teachers to create a new space and construct the particular teaching methods which belonged particularly to them, to their particular students, and to their particular local contexts.

Theme: An Experience of Learning to Teach as an EFL Teacher Candidate

The current study provided in depth understanding of teachers' gain from learning to teach in the MATESOL program. Even though there was a discrepancy between Western TESOL programs and Eastern EFL classrooms, the positive impact of the programs on CTEFLs teacher development could not be ignored. The current study demonstrated that the experience of studying at the program equipped the four participants with various teaching methods and techniques, culture, and second language acquisition theories. The program courses and student-teaching opportunities greatly impacted the participants teaching beliefs and prepared them to become EFL professionals. Participants perceived their learning experience as a rewarding experience of learning to teach as an EFL teacher candidate. During the two years, they learned TESOL theoretical knowledge and first-hand experiential knowledge. They also talked about their personal growth and self-confidence.

Empowering TESOL knowledge. All four teachers commented that their Western training experiences changed them dramatically on their later teaching beliefs and practices in China. One aspect they found beneficial was the TESOL knowledge they acquired. All participants took several main courses on the basic second language acquisition theories during their study in the TESOL program. During these courses, participants felt that their theoretical knowledge was empowered from learning about these theories in the field of second language acquisition.

The finding fits with Hong and Pawan's (2013) study. In their book, Hong and Pawan found that Western-trained CTEFLs benefit from theoretical knowledge of teaching after returning to their home countries, which was further proved in this study (Hong & Pawan, 2013). Although all four participants had taken various English courses when they were undergraduate students in China, their comments on these courses indicated that none of them learned sufficient knowledge of second language acquisition theories at that time. One of their motivations to study abroad was to systematically learn how to teach English, and they all achieved their goals during the two years and were more capable to assist their students. All of them mentioned that acquiring knowledge about theories and research on the second language learning process and on learner factors involved in the process had affected their views on language learning and teaching. According to Xiao, she emphasized that learning about theories and principles significantly guided her teaching and equipped her with richer teaching beliefs and principles than before.

Participants commented that their understandings of language learners' learning difficulties and behavior were expanded after learning some second language acquisition theories, such as forgetting curve model (e.g., N. C. Ellis, 2012), affective filter hypothesis (e.g., Krashen, 1985; Tricomi, 1986), cognitive development theories (e.g., Cummins, 2000), i+1 principle (e.g., Krashen, 1985), bloom taxonomy (e.g., Chamot, 1981), Dewey's environmental philosophy (e.g., J. Palmer et al., 2002), and Piaget's constructivism and the scaffolding theory (e.g., Felix, 1981), to name a few. For example, the learning about forgetting curve hypothesis was very meaningful for Xiao because after learning about this, she started to understand why many students could not remember new vocabularies. She realized that it was normal for students to forget what they learned if the amount of learning time was not up to a point. In

addition, Xiao believed that the knowledge about cognitive development theories changed her view on students' mistakes in a positive way. Learning about the stages of cognitive development heightened her awareness of the language acquisition process as dynamic and continuous; making mistakes is an inevitable process of learning. Yang also internalized many TESOL theories into her practice. For example, she started to pay attention to the influence of the environment on learning after she learned Dewey's theory. As a result, she implemented many group activities to increase peers' interactions among students, which proved to be very effective.

What the participants found most helpful was that some widely used teaching practices in China were proved to be ineffective after they learned the TESOL theories. For example, for all of them, learning about the notion of comprehensive input was very beneficial since the i+1 principle impacted their ways of teaching and facilitating students. It also altered Xiao's view on English blind listening practice. Until then, teaching practice to her was always mean what the teacher chooses to do and how the teacher teaches. It was the first time she started to think about the effective English listening practice from the students' perspective, and she learned that there were a lot of factors on the learner's part that needs to be considered.

According to the participants' narratives, all of them mentioned that they felt the impact of learning about various TESOL theories. Although each of them mentioned different aspects of second language acquisition theories, the impact they felt from learning about these theories seemed to have a common theme. Prior to learning about these theories, they viewed language learning more or less from the teacher's perspective and thought that the learner should aim at perfection. Through this learning experience, however, all of them learned to pay more attention to learners, and to look more closely at what happens in the learning process. As Xiao shared,

she started to create a student-centered classroom and changed her role from a teacher to a facilitator. All of them focused more on inspiring students instead of simply teaching knowledge.

First-hand experiences as master's students and student teachers. What made an even greater impact on the participants than the knowledge they gained were their first-hand experiences as master students and student teachers. The experiential knowledge includes classroom activities, interactions with their teachers and classmates, student teaching experiences in several K-12 schools in the United States, lesson planning ability, and understanding students with different cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and educational backgrounds, to name a few.

One effective way for CTEEFLs to learn to teach was through consistently and repeatedly modeling the others' ways of teaching. Na was the only one taught college level English after returning to China and she felt that the classroom model in the United States greatly impacted her teaching. As she said, she taught her students as to how she was taught. The classroom activities that she participated in and observed in the K-12 schools in the U.S. taught her more practical knowledge compared to the theories written in the textbooks. Na found many common activities in the U.S. classrooms, such as process writing, group discussion, presentation, poster, critical reading, and video review and critique were easily to be implemented in her classroom if she gave students enough time to get used to them. She also received positive feedback for most of these activities from her students.

In addition, the studying experience in TESOL program provided the four teachers with the opportunity to teach at several K-12 schools as student teachers in the United States, observe how Western-based TESOL pedagogies were implemented in classrooms, interact with English language learners with diverse backgrounds, and practice what they learned in the TESOL courses. With respect to the impact of observing and teaching in the real Western ESL

classrooms, the four teachers in the current study all reported an immense change in their beliefs and practice. By immersing in the Western classroom context, teachers gained deeper understanding of the teaching theories and approaches and had the motivation to apply them. This finding demonstrated that teachers' teaching beliefs were closely related to the teaching contexts and were subjective to change. It is in line with Freeman and Johnson's (1998) sociocultural framework in which teachers' transition in teaching belief was possibility stimulated by context change.

In Chinese schools, especially in middle and high schools, the teacher-led lecture style is more common than a student-centered interactive style (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Dzau, 1990). Even though Yang, Xiao, and Zhan all found that what they learned in TESOL courses in the U.S. was very beneficial, they still need to adjust these teaching strategies to their middle and high school teaching contexts. The activities and the different teaching philosophies the participants were exposed to while student teaching in k-12 schools seemed to have more impact on their teaching practice back in China.

The student teaching experience allowed Yang to interact with students and practice how to plan a lesson based on students' background, learning preferences, and learning needs. She also learned how to write lesson plans and had a deeper concrete understanding of each section of a lesson plan, especially the learning objectives. Yang realize it is important for teachers to be aware of the alignment of teaching goals, curriculum design, classroom practices, and course assessment. Each step in the teaching should have a clear goal. This was something she never thought about in the past, and this experience also helped Yang to be well prepared as a young professional. In the case of Xiao, she learned many practical teaching strategies in the school she

observed. For instance, the tapping word strategy was very beneficial to her own English learning, and also proved to be an effective strategy for her students.

Zhan also indicated that the student teaching experience facilitated her teaching in various ways. For example, the layered curriculum approach she observed in schools provided her new insights on how to better accommodate different students' learning needs and set reasonable goals for each student. Later, after she went back to China, even though under the pressure of examinations, she still insisted on facilitating each individual student according to their current English level instead of demanding all students to achieve a unified goal. In addition, she began to realize the importance of family education and study children development, which gave her a better understanding of what English teachers could do to help students' grow and learn.

More importantly, the teaching experiences in the real U.S. classrooms caused a radical change on all participants' teaching attitude toward teacher's role and the concept of respecting students. As participants reported, after experiencing Western education, they realized that the teacher is not the only source of knowledge. In classrooms, teacher is a facilitator, a helper, not a knowledge transmitter. This indicated an equal relationship rather than one of knowledge transmitting and supervising. At the same time, their student teaching experience provided them with an opportunity to reflect on what this concept of "respecting students" really means to them and changed them most in giving students more humanistic care, to consider students' needs and interests.

Personal growth and confidence. Besides the changes to their English teaching knowledge and beliefs, another big transition that the participants' overseas experience has brought to them was their self-confidence and personal growth. Since their English proficiency

was improved, professional knowledge was expanded, and their teaching methods were enriched, their confidence was also reinforced as an EFL teacher. In addition, the Western experience influenced their ways of thinking, the understanding of the world, and their attitudes towards their lives.

The four teachers all mentioned that their experiences in the U.S. gave them positive benefits in areas such as proficiency in English, as identified by some researchers (e.g., Carrier, 2003; Govardhan et al., 1999; A. J. Miller, 2020), This increased their confidence in speaking English in public and using English to teach and share their ideas. As Xiao shared, she had a strong feeling that she felt confident when using English in front of his colleagues and experts in the field and she could express her ideas freely. Compared to her colleagues, her English speaking and listening ability was much better.

In addition, with the MATESOL degrees, their experience of living and studying in English speaking countries provided them with a valuable opportunity to improve their professional abilities as EFL teachers. Throughout the interviews they expressed that their Western learning experiences enhanced their confidence and competence in their professional careers as EFL teachers. Na mentioned that she was proud of this experience and it had become part of her identity. For Na, the experience makes her more authoritative than never going to the West. As she said, her Western learning played a crucial role in her teaching career. Her knowledge about American culture helped her to attract her students' interest and become a popular English teacher. She would not have this much expertise and confidence without the Western learning experience.

Furthermore, the study abroad experience provided the participants significant participation in another culture and gives them a special understanding of another part of the

world. Through this experience, they achieved greater maturity, independence, self- confidence, and deeper understanding of themselves. Xiao shared that she became more objective, peaceful, and clear-minded after returning to teach in China. Similarly, Zhan felt herself more tended to consider things from alternative angles and think critically about her ideas after studying abroad. She was better able to embrace students' differences and accept and adapt to cultural differences. The Western learning experience gave her the opportunity to really understand people from different culture backgrounds and helped her gain a lot of new perspectives of the world.

In summary, the Western learning experiences brought the teachers many changes. They looked at the world differently, they have different views on their roles and different attitudes towards their students, and they developed and followed different teaching principles and beliefs. They viewed themselves as different from the other locally trained Chinese teachers, more importantly; they were different from the "former-themselves" before going abroad. All these differences and changes build their identities as Western-trained Chinese EFL teachers. In this sense, their Western education background, which made them feel confident in EFL teaching profession, entails the significance of empowerment.

Analysis for RQ2: How Do CTEFLs Describe Their English Teaching Experiences in China After Studying in the MATESOL Program in the United States?

The second research question is "How do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States?" This question was also analyzed from the sociocultural lens and the findings were consistent with Freeman and Johnson's (1998) framework of reconceptualization of teacher knowledge. The

result showed that teacher knowledge was greatly influenced by their past experiences as learners, the social contexts, and their interactions with language teaching activities. The outcomes of their teaching practice that are unique to each teacher were also illustrated. Three major themes and eight sub-themes were extracted from the second research question and a table with themes is as follows (see Table 4.2).

Table 5.2. Themes for RQ1

Major Themes	Sub-themes
Past English learning beliefs and experiences shape CTEFLs' ways of teaching	• Positive learning experiences • Negative learning experiences
Contextual factors in EFL teaching	• The situation of English education in China • Institutional support and requirements • Time, class size, and resources • Students' learning preferences, motivations, and English proficiency levels
Efforts to combine personal love and professional skills	• Personality and passion for teaching • Effective teaching practices

Theme: Past English Learning Experience Shape CTEFLs' Ways of Teaching

EFL teachers' teaching practice were strongly influenced by their own English learning background. All participants experienced learning English in an EFL context in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities before studying abroad. From the

sociocultural lens of second language teacher education, the findings highlight the dynamic and complexity of teacher learning process. In this point, the stance that the researcher took in this study was consistent with Johnson's (2006) claims, who considered teachers as knowledgeable and knowing person and teacher knowledge as a lifelong process. In the current study, the teachers demonstrated that their perspectives on their learning experiences greatly shaped their English teaching beliefs and practice after they became EFL teachers, corroborating the findings reported by some researchers (Anderson, 2013; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). For example, they tried to transfer their learning experiences to their teaching practice since they fully understood the difficulties of learning English and were aware of the challenges that their students went through. In the following sections, I discussed how participants' positive and negative language learning beliefs and experiences impacted their teaching practice.

Positive learning experiences. All participants had some positive English learning experiences before studying abroad, and their English teaching beliefs and practice after returning to China were influenced by their personal preferences of effective English learning methods. Teachers tended to use the same teaching strategies for their students since they experienced positive results from these strategies as ELLs before. For example, Xiao preferred to learn English in easy and happy ways, and she improved her English listening and pronunciation through watching English movies and TV series. As a result, she still adopted the same strategy to teach her students. She used phonetic spelling strategy to help her students spell difficult English words correctly, build confidence, and realize that speaking English was quite simple. She also tried to make the knowledge easy to understand, and her goal was to let all students understand her teaching. She also taught her students to practice English speaking using translation method since it was helpful to herself when she was learning English.

Zhan enjoyed learning English when she felt the learning tasks were meaningful, engaging, and challenging enough. She felt that she learned effectively only when she was highly motivated and had a clear learning goal. So, she ever forced or pushed her students to learn. Instead, she chatted with them, discussed the purpose of English learning, and facilitated her students to be aware of their self-expectation with a clear blueprint for the future.

For Yang and Na, although their experiences of studying in the U.S. provided them with cultural knowledge of English and affected their attitude toward their students, their English teaching beliefs and practice were still strongly affected by their previous English teachers. This finding indicates the strong impact of teacher factors (Anderson, 2013). Yang's positive experiences depended on the good feedback and encouragement that she received from her high school English teacher, who was very good at discovering students' strength and taking advantage of their strength to motivate students in English learning. The teacher's trust in Yang's reading and recitation ability built her confidence and motivated her to become an English teacher. That's why she also valued her students and tried to motivate her students by observing her students' strength, weaknesses, and preferred learning methods. Na's favorite English teacher often introduced popular Western culture to her students, such as American movies and songs. Na felt in love with these culture things which intrigued her interests in English. Her teachers' teaching style had a great influence on her own teaching practice: Na also recommended American movies, musicals, and songs to her students and tried to spark students' learning interests.

Negative learning experiences. Except for Yang, all the other participants experienced learning English in a negative way during their school years. Their memories of EFL learning were not pleasant due to poor teaching methods, such as poorly qualified teachers, grammar

translation methods, test-oriented and teacher-centered lessons, and lack of quality resources and excitement.

Zhan's negative memories of EFL learning mostly stemmed from grammar translation approach and test-oriented English instructions because those methods and instructions left little room for her initiative, curiosity, and critical thinking. However, like other participants, while her negative experience impeded her English learning process, it motivated her to become an English teacher and innovate her teaching approach when she stepped into her own classroom. Xiao, Na, and Zhan all tried their best to avoid these teaching techniques which let them feel frustrated and demotivated with their students. They all tried to turn their prior negative situation around by finding ways to motivate their students. They used their experiences to encourage their students and to improve students' performance.

In addition, participants tended to avoid becoming the type of teacher they hated when they were little. For example, Zhan had a frustrated experience with her high school English teacher, and this experience left her with deep trauma. After Zhan became an English teacher, she never gave up these low achievers in her class even when some of the students made her feel exhausted. She treated all her students equally because she knew the consequence of these negative experiences and the students' feeling and did not want to impact students' willingness to learn. She understood that negative words would hurt students' confidence and self-esteem badly and distract students from learning rather than pushing and encouraging them to keep learning the language. Zhan's negative experience with highly standardized education and indoctrination also helped her understand her students' learning difficulties. Her reflections on these experiences let her change her teaching style by taking her students' needs and levels into consideration.

Theme: Contextual Factors in EFL Teaching

To varying degrees, the participants' teaching and learning beliefs and the extent to which they were able to apply specific teaching approaches into practice were altered by their teaching context. There were many contextual factors, such as the overall English educational situation in China, the instructional support and requirement, teaching resources, and characteristics of the students' learning preferences. In the following sub-sections, I will discuss several key factors that the participants described would affect their English teaching beliefs and practice. These factors confirmed what previous studies identified as common challenges that teachers faced in applying Western-based pedagogies in EFL countries (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Dzau, 1990; Harryba et al., 2012; Ozturgut, 2007; Tang, 2009). At the same time, teachers' comments revealed the changes and improvements that were already made in China to support English teachers.

The situation of English education in China. According to the participants, English education in China was constantly being reformed. Many of their innovated teaching ideas and strategies were able to apply in real classroom settings. Even though the educational institutions where the participants were teaching had different student populations and objectives for English instruction, all teachers shared that they had the freedom to choose their own teaching materials and were not forced to use the unified textbook or PowerPoint. As a result, they all had opportunities to consider their students' learning needs and implemented teaching approaches such as differentiated teaching and culturally relevant teaching.

However, teachers were still challenged by the test-oriented educational situation. As teachers described, the overall learning atmosphere in the Country was still very reckless, and many students and parents were even more anxious for good results. Some of them even paid the

"stupid tax" to try to improve their scores in a very short time. Many teachers taught their students how to predict the test questions and how to figure out the meaning of the person who sets the test questions instead of spending time and effort on practicing the English language itself. Even though the Chinese government had encouraged English education to focus more on speaking and listening, many people still learn English just for passing examinations and applying a good job. Since English was not a necessarily thing for survival, many people did not have the motivation to learn English speaking, listening, or Western culture. As a result, some TESOL pedagogies such as culturally relevant teaching, task-based approaches, and communicative teaching were seemed like not necessary to a large number of students.

Except Na, all participants taught middle school or high school English, and the final goal of teaching was to help students succeed in the national high school entrance examination or national college entrance examination. At the institutions where Zhan and Xiao were teaching, English was one of the school subjects. The main goal for teaching English, as well as other school subjects, was to prepare their students for examinations. Yang taught in an international school and needed to prepare students for TOEFL and GRE tests. These objectives for teaching English affected the applicability of TESOL methods to their teaching practices. Even though the teachers were not required to use certain textbook or teaching approach, they had to spend a lot of time doing exercises such as vocabulary, filling blanks, and translation, to prepare students for the examination questions. Even though Na taught college English and comparatively had less pressure of scores, she still needed to spend one or two lessons every other week using traditional grammar-translation methods to help students passing the exams. Students, especially those in middle and high school, were also very anxious for the examinations and many of them

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only paid attention to the test scores. In such an environment, teachers felt challenging to apply ESL methods they learned in the U.S.

Participants in this study all held critical attitudes towards the text-oriented education. Xiao and Zhan both believed that it would be much easier if they just used the unified textbooks, finished the teaching tasks, and taught the same things to all her students. The hard and time-consuming thing was designing lessons according to students' needs and reality. Teachers need to have strong responsibility, devoted hearts to their career, care for their students, and conscious to reflect on and innovate their teaching. They felt challenging because they tried to took account of the goal of preparing students for the annual national tests and find a balance between the goals of taking tests and having fun in learning. The examinations gave teachers some pressure in putting their student-centered belief into practice and creating some activities according to the students' real needs.

However, none of them gave up what they insisted even though using traditional English teaching methods could be easy for them. Xiao tried hard to apply what she learned into practice and at the same time considering students' learning goals. For example, Xiao also taught grammar rules. But when she taught grammar, she only spent a little time discussed grammar rules with her students at the beginning and tried to explain the rules in simple and engaging ways. Then, she tried to make sure that her students can understand the meaning of complicate sentences in readings after they learned the grammar rules.

In addition, although none of the teachers favored examination-oriented English instruction, they all admitted that no one could change the situation since examinations provided opportunities for many students to learn English in China. As Zhan said, examination plays a critical role in alleviating the discrepancies in education and society. When there is no testing,

many children will not have the motivation to learn English or even lose the opportunity of learning English. Moreover, teachers believed that the format and content of the examinations could be changed, and the educational system could be continuously improved in the future.

  Institutional support and requirements. Although all four participants came to have positive attitudes towards TESOL pedagogies, the extent to which they applied these teaching methods they learned in the U.S. was greatly depended on the teaching context of each of the teachers.

  Na and Yang both worked in well-developed cities where people are very innovative, open, and willing to accept new things. Their schools were not pressured by the domestic examinations, so they had less pressure on preparing students for the tests. Their school gave them enough freedom to teach in their own teaching styles and to the greatest extent, to implement student-centered teaching. As a new teacher, Yang was trying to apply what she had learned in the TESOL program, including class management and lesson planning as much as possible. For Na, using various activities without translation and the contextualization of grammar were also easily applicable. Access to various workshops and conferences also enabled the two teachers to further improve their English teaching skills and ability.

  On the other hand, for the two teachers taught middle and high school English, Xiao and Zhan, the ability to apply TESOL approaches seemed to be quite limited due to teaching conditions and institutional cultures not consistent with many TESOL pedagogies. Hindrances to the implementation of TESOL pedagogies, such as student-centered approaches, culturally responsive teaching, and task-based teaching documented in the literature (e.g., Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008; Liu, 1998), such as limited lesson time, pressure from the institutional profits, limited teaching resources and tools, and the pressure to prepare their students for grammar-

based entrance examinations all applied to their situations. In Xiao's case, her work in the tutor institution was very tiring and stressful. Since the institution was profitable, and the tuition fee for students was costly, the institution required Xiao taught ten classes every day. In addition, parents and students all expected to see results in a short time. These unrealistic expectations made Xiao felt exhausted and awkward.

Fortunately, all teachers appreciated their principals and their colleagues and believed they were very supportive and willing to collaborate on teaching. Research shows that relationships and collaboration among teachers, and their consensus on the teaching goals are important factors in educational contexts (Talbert et al., 1993). With respect to the four participants' interactions and relationships with their colleagues, all of them seemed to have a lot of opportunities to interact with their colleagues.

In Xiao's case, her institution has good professional teaching and research team, and whenever they don't have classes, they have team meetings and training sessions. For Yang, her school also had academic analysis meetings held by teachers of all subjects every month where the teachers discussed students' learning conditions and exchange information about the situation of each class and each subject. All teachers were encouraged to observe each other's classes so that there would be a consensus about their assessment on the students' proficiency levels. And as new teachers, they all received personal support from their colleagues. These supports helped teachers learned a great deal of how to teach in the new environment.

Time, class size, and resources. Coming home from abroad and with systematic TESOL knowledge and newly learned teaching ideas, the participants shared many challenges that they faced in the reality of their workplace which made them rethink those ideas. These contextual

challenges included time management, big class size, traditional classroom arrangement, and lack of teaching resources. These challenges also impacted with one another.

One of the biggest problems with teachers was time constraint. Teachers shared that students had limited time to study English since they had too much schoolwork. Inevitably, without enough time to practice a foreign language, the learning effect could not be guaranteed. In addition, because of students were short of time learning English, they expected the teachers to teach only the most important knowledge that are necessary to achieve high scores in exams. As Xiao shared, her students often came to her for learning tips and shortcuts. Under heavy examination pressure, she felt even hard to engage students in various fun activities and implement student-centered teaching during limited class time.

Big class size was also frequently mentioned challenge in the interviews. Teachers said that most classes they attended abroad were small. How to deal with large classes was a topic they missed in their Western education. After coming back, Xiao was the only teacher who taught one-to-one lessons, and all the other three teachers taught classes with students from 40 to 100, which was quite common for junior and senior high schools in urban areas in China. It seemed that their Western learning empowered them with more student-centered communicative beliefs and techniques to appropriate, but not enough yet to deal with the big classes in Chinese EFL context. The large class size was one of the major obstacles for teachers to pay attention to every students' learning needs in the EEL classrooms discussed in the literature (Burnaby & Sun, 1989). If the teacher's job is simply to lecture and transmit knowledge about grammar or translation and students are not expected to participate in class at all, it would be possible to accommodate 40 or 50 students in a single class. However, if the teacher is trying to teach communicatively and engage all students, class size is often perceived as a crucial factor.

Specifically, the large class prevented them from giving students more meaningful assignments and giving students detailed feedback individually. Xiao was the only teacher that could design specific lesson plans for every student according to their learning goals, English levels, and learning style since she taught one to one lesson. That's also one of the main reasons that she chose this job. All other teachers were struggled to implement student-centered activities, especially when their large classes met with the traditional classroom arrangement. The fixed desks and chairs did not allow teachers to implement various activities or organize group work in a flexible way.

The availability of teaching materials was another problem that teachers frequently mentioned during the interview. In the K-12 schools in the United States, teachers observed various teaching materials and tools that were available for teachers to use in their classrooms, such as ESL reading materials, flash cards, electronic devices, and blank posters and markers. In some K-12 schools the participants visited in the United States, there were all kinds of learning materials, such as slogans and posters, posted in various places around the schools. However, in many highly reputable schools in China, teachers still could find limited teaching materials aside from official textbooks and test-preparation workbooks at their schools. What students can see in ordinary schools in China was still white walls. Teachers had to prepare and purchase their own teaching aids. As Na shared, many teachers chose not to use teaching aids since the school did not provide them for free.

Students' learning preferences, motivations, and English proficiency levels. Data indicated that there was conflict between the teachers' understanding of many student-centered and communicative-based approaches and the Chinese students' condition. This conflict was caused mainly by the students' few experiences of highly interactive classroom activities, lack of

habit of asking questions, inadequate English proficiency, and their traditional expectation and goals of teachers and learning.

Since there was an imbalanced distribution of educational resources in China, the gap of students' English levels among different schools was huge. As the participants shared, students at most ordinary schools still passively receive knowledge, need to master the basic English vocabulary, have comparatively bad learning habits, and are not capable of engaging in interactive activities in English. For example, in Na's classroom, her students were hardly dared to speak English in class and kept silent when they were asked to discuss with each other. It took her some time to get the students gradually familiar with the interactive teaching method. It was common that Chinese students not liking to discuss and ask questions in class (Degen & Absalom, 1998; Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009). Chinese students' traditional learning habit was a big reason why sometimes teachers could not refrain from lecturing and became more teacher-centered than student-centered. Zhan also shared that many students in her school had little initiative to learn, and some even showed an aversion to English. Students did not have strong learning autonomy and they did not show their output in class. As a result, teachers had to give more teacher talk in these circumstances and take a more dominant role in class.

Students' English proficiency level also impacts teachers' teaching practice. As the participants' shared, many Western-based teaching strategies did not take into consideration Chinese students' proficiency in English as a foreign language and not a second language. Students in many middle and high schools in China couldn't talk a lot in English due to their low proficiency. It was a challenge for many students to open their mouth and share their opinions. In Zhan's case, many students have not even mastered the most basic vocabulary that needs to be memorized. So, Zhan believed that these students could not perform well no matter what

teaching methods teachers used. However, those students who had better language skills and knowledge foundation were more capable of expressing their opinions, think critically, and interact with one another in English. Under such conditions, teachers were be able to implement more student-centered and communicative-based teaching approaches instead of lots of language drills practice and teachers' lectures.

Another key factor of teachers teaching practice is students' learning preference and motivation. For many Chinese students, the traditional understanding of teaching and learning deeply rooted in their mind and habit. According to the participants, a majority of students were not used to having various activities in class and thought there was contradiction between doing activities and acquiring knowledge. Before entering the classroom, students already had a fixed thought on many things about a class such as teaching formats, teaching contents, and the stuff they could acquire. As Xiao shared, a Western-trained junior high school English teacher who often thoroughly taught the cultural story behind the English language in his class was considered as a bad teacher that did not help students improve test scores instead of an outstanding teacher. Students were expecting the teachers to explain the key knowledge points to them and learning the test-taking tips directly instead of summarizing and reflecting what they learned after having fun. It was hard for teachers to engage students in various Western-based teaching activities when students were not interested and motivated in participating in them, such as group project and class discussion. As Xiao shared, students and their parents thought that the teacher was wasting time and avoiding their regular teaching responsibility. In Yang's case, her students were not enjoy doing the task-based assignments and were tried to cut corners to fool her. Yang believed that some of her students were used to doing multiple-choice questions or just felt the tasks were too naïve for them. In addition, as she described, many Chinese students had

high self-esteem and believed that teaching approaches such as differentiated strategy made them felt uncomfortable and losing face. Students who were assigned with relatively easy tasks felt inferior and despised by others. It is necessary to consider Chinese students cultural background and traditional learning preference before implementing Western-based TESOL approaches.

Theme: Efforts to Combine Personal Love and Professional Skills

Teachers' love and compassion plays a crucial role in education. This theme revealed how participants' love and compassion in teaching were developed and reinforced through their learning and teaching experiences, and further impact their current English teaching practice and attitude towards their students.

Personality and passion for teaching. Being passionate in the language learning and teaching was a common characteristic among all participants. This characteristic also motivated them to continue their learning in English education after they graduated from college. While the participants were studying TESOL in the United States, they all enjoyed observing and learning theories of language teaching. The experiences and growth during that time led them to become professionals in TESOL after they return to China, and significantly impacted their teaching believes on English learning and teaching.

The narratives of the Xiao and Yang revealed that they were passionate in language in general and language teaching and learning in particular. Xiao dreamed of becoming a teacher since she was very little, and she was longing for being respected by students. She enjoyed explaining things to people and she had a strong compassion for students. As she said, she liked her students from the bottom of her heart and had a strong willingness and enthusiasm to help them. Yang also loved her students and had a very good relationship with her students. As she said, she had a very kind and soft personality, and could always patiently communicate with

students. Na and Zhan both had some negative English learning experiences during their K-12 school years but turned to actively improve their English in college and had clear goal of becoming an English teacher for their future career. They both had a deep understanding of students' learning difficulties and hoped to become a good English teacher that they wished to have when they were in schools. The compassion for students and the hopes to make a difference in students' life motivated them to explore different ways in teaching and be patient enough in dealing with students' issues.

Everyone can become a teacher, but not everyone can be good teacher. After studied TESOL in the United States, a common belief shared among the participants was that students need to be treated as a whole person instead of a machine receiving information. They all aimed to provide holistic learning experience to their students, and they all realized the importance of care for students and had strong motivation to keep reflecting on their teaching. When many English teachers in China treated their job as a way to survive and earn money and only followed the curriculum syllabus to teach and prepared students for exams, participants in this study spent extra time planning for their lessons and having conversations with students, respected all students and fully trusted in their students' potentials, and tried to find better ways to make learning fun, engaging, and meaningful for students under the educational context in China. The importance of universal love and sense of responsibility on teachers' teaching practice were rarely mentioned in previous literature but clearly revealed in this study: teachers' caring and compassionate for students would naturally build a safe community that all student were honored and respected, all wanted to be part of it (J. P. Miller, 2018).

Effective teaching practices. After studied in the TESOL program in the United States, teachers were equipped with new lens of TESOL knowledge through which they could compare

their local pedagogical knowledge. In the process of applying the new acquired English teaching pedagogies and theories in their local contexts, the participants in this study were looking critically at the knowledge and tried to incorporate traditional Chinese approaches with some Western-based approaches. These Chinese approaches included memorization and recitation, translation, grammar teaching, and test-based teaching. Instead of thinking these teaching methods were primitive and old-fashioned, the four teachers demonstrated a strong awareness of the obvious historical, pedagogical, and psychological reasons for using them. This awareness came from a holistic understanding of the viable place of Chinese knowledge when compared to what they learned in the West.

All four teachers in this study demonstrated the complexity of classroom decision-making process that involved their personal preferences and ideology, teaching knowledge and career passion, as well as the social, cultural, and contextual knowledge. They showed a tendency of creating a Chinese way of reconstructing Western-based approaches in Chinese EFL classrooms. Teachers all demonstrated various local knowledge, without which some Western-based practices appears to be problematic, will thus impede rather than improve their EFL teaching. This echoed Shin's (2006) idea that teachers reconstruct their knowledge as creators to fit the needs within a particular context.

There were a number of methods and strategies that participants applied in their classrooms which proved to be effective. Na and Xiao incorporate content-based teaching with question sea tactic to help students memorize vocabularies and grammar rules. Memorization and recitation were common in Chinese classrooms and represented Chinese culture. Usually, these were considered as rote learning and were criticized in the West because they did not encourage the student's thinking and creativity. Nevertheless, Na and Xiao believed

memorization was part of familiar experience that should be capitalized and that works when incorporated well. In addition, they believed that pure grammar lecture was meaningless for students. As a result, in Na and Xiao's classrooms, they made grammar context-based by combining grammar with reading and writing. Students were encouraged to focus on reading and writing materials while acquiring the individual English words and grammar points. Students learned how words and sentences were used in authentic English materials instead of reciting things with a vocabulary or grammar book. In this way, these knowledge points became meaningful for students and students were immersed in the English context at the same time.

Zhan and Xiao both learned that students' first language was a very important steppingstone to learn a second language. They learned in the TESOL program that adults could learn a second language faster than kids because they have higher cognitive ability to switch between languages and analyze language structures. So, translation was another teaching strategy that they kept using after they came back to China. In terms of two-way translation, both Zhan and Xiao gave positive comments on it. They considered it as a great way to take advantage of students' language strength to help them achieve comprehension. Translation could help students be aware of the difference between their native language and the second language in terms of language structure. In this translating process they can compare, and their sense of language can be strengthened in the comparison. In their classrooms, the use of Chinese in this translating process among other classroom activities were treated as a facilitating tool rather than something prohibited. Xiao also asked her students to practice switching between the two languages as a way to improve their writing and speaking ability.

All four of them mentioned the importance of teacher-student relationship and the role of teacher in the classroom. After studying abroad, the four teachers constantly reported their

understanding of roles of teachers as a facilitator in learner-centered classroom due to their Western learning experience. Even though it was hard to change the authoritative role of teacher in China and they still needed to push students to learn due to the test-oriented education, they all tried to build an equal relationship with their students and have conversations with them to help them find their learning motivations other than taking examinations. Zhan tried hard to encourage self-learning in her classroom. So, she tried to generate a supportive environment between students and teachers and among students as well. She trained her students on critical thinking, analyzed the pros and cons of learning English, and hoped them to be aware of their self-expectation and future plans. The students' reactions surprised her that students started to active learn English after discussing about their learning motivations and goals. With her guidance and facilitation, her students started to learn to be responsible for their decisions and actions. Similarly, Yang also paid attention on students' motivation and autonomy. She believed that good teachers could inspire students and increase students' self-confidence and learning autonomy. As a result, she always encouraged her students, gave enough trust to her students, and treated all her students equally. Her students were all willing to share their feelings with her like friends and loved to attend her class.

In addition, all four of them focused on student-centered teaching. Yang truly appreciated differentiated teaching and after she tried using different reading materials for different students and received negative feedback from students, she started to provide same content materials to all students but allowed them to master to different degrees. In this way, all students were satisfied and felt be respected when the teacher took care of their self-esteem, vanity, and learning needs. Zhan, Yang, and Xiao all valued the i+1 theory and believed that making sure students get comprehensible input was critical for student-centered teaching. Zhan and Xiao even

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incorporated this theory into their grammar teaching. They all shared some successful examples of teaching grammar in the way students could comprehend. Zhan drew pictures to help students understand verbal phrases, and Xiao used metaphors to explained complicate grammar rules to her students. They all received positive feedback from students, such as "interesting" and "easy to understand".

Another effective teaching practice for Zhan was to help her students develop critical thinking ability. She felt that encouraging students to be able to think critically was essential for English teaching and learning. As a result, the core of her class was to stimulate students to think, no matter what type of class it was. Na shared similar thoughts on developing critical thinking and she applied this philosophy to the student assignments. In her writing class, she asked her students to discuss on a certain topic, post their comments, or write a reflection after reading. She found that compared to the traditional multiple-choice questions, students started to think and write in English when they were provided the opportunity to share and express themselves.

In addition, Na also used technology in her class, such as an APP called "微助教" (Micro Assistant). She found that besides the benefits of sharing teaching materials with students and assigning homework, using technology also helped to engage students and maintain a connection with students both inside and outside the classroom. Many students preferred to learn through technology, and the discussion board function allowed students to create a safe and active learning community online. It increased the interaction between teachers and students and students and students, and increased students' learning interests.

In summary, participants' personality, their passion and compassion in education, and their previous learning and teaching experience, together with the characteristics of their students

greatly impacted their pedagogical choice in classrooms. The various effective teaching practices that presented above were products that resulted from teachers' efforts and consistently promoted students' academic achievement, classroom engagement, appropriate behavior, and personal development. Their teaching practices expanded the practical database of adapting and blending Western-based and Eastern-based pedagogies in different social contexts.

Chapter Summary

According to the participants' story, This Chapter presented the findings from the cross-case analysis and compared and contrasted participants' experiences. Common themes were emerged to answer the two research questions.

To answer the first research question "How do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States?" Two major themes were summarized as follows: (1) It was an experience of developing a critical eye, in terms of their perceptions change on Western education in general and Western-based TESOL pedagogies that they learned in the United States; (2) It was an experience of learning to teach as an EFL teacher candidate, considering the TESOL knowledge and first-hand knowledge they learned, and their personal growth and confidence gained through this experience.

The findings for answering the second research question "How do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States?" generated three major themes and were summarized as follows: (1) Teachers' past English learning beliefs and experiences shaped their ways of teaching in both positive and negative ways; (2) There were many contextual factors in EFL teaching, including the situation of English education, the institutional support and requirements, time, class size and resources, and students' learning preferences; (3) CTEFLs' teaching practices that were tested to be

effective were the result from both their personal love towards teaching and their professional skills.

In the next chapter, implications, limitations of this study, and future research directions will be discussed.

Chapter 6 - Implications and Conclusion

English teaching has changed significantly in the past few decades all around the world. China is also taking steps to make the approach to teaching English more student-centered, practical, and communicative. Under this background, TESOL programs in English-speaking countries are attracting more and more English teachers and international students who aspire to become English teachers, improve their English proficiency, and learn about systematic and advanced TESOL knowledge. Nevertheless, these trainees bring different values and beliefs to these programs that might be very different from what the TESOL programs in the West assume. These beliefs and values may affect the trainees' learning experience in various ways.

Researchers who are concerned with the suitability of Western-based TESOL programs for their international trainees argue for the need to pay particular attention to their backgrounds and beliefs, and to offer training courses more appropriate for EFL situations to meet the teachers' needs (Govardhan et al., 1999; Liu, 1998). A deeper understanding of international trainees' backgrounds and expectations, therefore, may help the Western-based TESOL programs to better meet the needs of trainees who are seeking to improve their teaching as EFL professionals. To that end, it is necessary to give voice to international trainees and understand how they make sense of their learning experiences in the graduate TESOL programs in the West, and how these experiences are transited into their practices after returning to their educational institutions in their home countries. Thus, this study explored how CTEFLs perceive their teaching training experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States and how do they describe their English teaching experiences after returning to China. To address the research questions, I interviewed four CTEFLs who have studied in a MATESOL program in the U.S. and were teaching English in various schools in China.

In the Chapter 4 and 5, I presented the findings of this study and discussed them in terms of the major themes that emerged during cross-case analysis. The results showed that Western learning had a significant impact on the teachers in terms of broaden their horizon, developing critical perspectives on viewing the world, empowering their TESOL knowledge, practical knowledge, and themselves as EFL teachers. At the same time, their findings discovered the complexity of EFL teaching: teachers' current English teaching was greatly influenced by their previous English learning experiences and various contextual factors, including the local English educational situation and policy, intuitional support and requirements, time, class size, teaching resources, and students' learning preferences, motivations, and English proficiency level. The findings of this study might be useful for considering how teacher educators can better support non-native EFL teachers who are learning to implement various TESOL pedagogies in situations where they are faced with numerous obstacles.

This chapter will focus on the implications of these findings for TESOL programs in English-speaking countries and the practice in China. I will also discuss some of the limitations of this study, offers recommendations for further research, and conclude the study.

Implications of the Study

Implications for graduate TESOL programs in Western countries

The current study has three major implications for TESOL programs in Western countries in terms of better accommodating trainees from non-native English-speaking countries. Firstly, a pre-introduction of the program and education could enable future trainees who never studied abroad a more realistic expectation of what they are going to experience prior to studying abroad. In doing so, trainees may be well prepared for their study and adapt to the new environment faster compared to if they have to figure out everything by themselves from the beginning.

Transition from one's home country to a foreign country can cause concern for many students. One issue is the gap between students' prior expectations and the realities of foreign life, which can cause significant distress (Andrade, 2006). Even though the four participants in the current study shared many positive aspects from studying abroad, their transition period caused them a lot of stress and culture shock. It would be helpful for students to prepared both physically and psychologically if the TESOL program could provide a pre-introduction session and share experience with new students before they start their journey.

Secondly, the courses provided by TESOL programs could consider students' backgrounds and expectations and involve more discussions on applications of TESOL theories and teaching methods in diverse EFL settings. All participants in this study agreed that they received great help from the U.S. MATESOL program not only in learning content and practical knowledge about teaching theories and methodologies, but also in becoming proficient in spoken English and understanding the Western culture. As a result, participants could get ready to teach English with greater confidence. However, it took some time for the participants to apply what they learned in the U.S. to teaching in China because the curricula in the U.S. TESOL programs were largely focused on ESL not EFL learning. As Liu (1998) argues, the second language acquisition theories taught in TESOL programs in North America are largely based on data from immigrants and international students in English speaking countries, and do not have much relevance for trainees from EFL countries. The prevalent practice of TESOL teacher education programs is to teach dominant knowledge about the English language and methods of English teaching in the West. This was also evident according to the four teachers' descriptions on their learning experiences in the MATESOL program. As the participants in this study indicated, some of the Western-based classroom activities introduced in the programs might not be easily

applicable to classrooms in EFL countries due to many contextual factors such as large class size, test-oriented education, and students' low motivation, among others. Therefore, EFL trainees in the U.S. who came back to EFL contexts had to undergo a period of trial and error while adjusting their ESL learning to EFL teaching. It would be helpful for TESOL institutions in the U.S. to acknowledge these problems, consider the needs of EFL trainees who are planning to go back to their countries to teach after their study abroad, and teach practical teaching techniques more related to the trainees' future teaching contexts.

In addition, as the experiences of the four participants in this study show, the applicability of TESOL techniques and activities depends on the situation of each school and each group of students. It would be impossible for teachers to apply any teaching techniques that they learned from the teacher education program in their classrooms without further considerations and adjustment. Therefore, it would be necessary not only to introduce TESOL approaches, but also to offer some guidance as to how to modify them and adapt some Western-based teaching approaches and activities in diverse teaching contexts. For example, TESOL courses could include more conversations and reflections on how to apply communicative-centered approaches in middle and high schools that heavily emphasize preparation for entrance examinations and therefore teachers faced difficulties teaching in a manner congruent with student-centered and communicative-centered pedagogies. The inclusion of discussions of case studies about EFL situations and teaching simulations of EFL classrooms might be also helpful for EFL teacher candidates to equip with the ability to modify what they have learned in TESOL programs and to create their own approaches that function in their individual contexts.

Considering the current situation of English education in China and other Asian countries, TESOL program in Western countries could also offer courses that are related to

various approaches of teaching grammar and reading comprehension to teacher candidates that are going to teaching English in Asian countries. Since these teachers may still need to teach grammar rules, reading comprehension, and help students prepare for examination questions after they returning to their home country, it seems helpful to familiarize them with creative ways to teach grammar rules and reading. As participants in this study shared that they put a lot of efforts on combining the traditional grammar translation methods and reading activities with more communicative and practical activities and received positive feedback from their students, it would be beneficial for teachers to discuss and learn sufficient knowledge about these techniques before they officially start to teach.

Lastly, TESOL programs could add more practical coursework to the curriculum and provide trainees more opportunities to gain first-hand knowledge and experiences. As the findings of this study indicated, the participants' learning in the TESOL program was greatly enhanced by the interaction of the content knowledge they gained and the teaching practices they observed and experienced during their student teaching. They learned about TESOL theories not only by reading and listening to lectures, but also through actual experience. For example, the second language acquisition theories that Na learned in the TESOL program helped her gained more knowledge of English teaching, but not specific and clear enough for her to apply in her teaching. What actually changed her ways of teaching was the exposure to different teaching approaches and engaging in various activities. These experiences helped Na make sense of the second language acquisition theories she learned in the classroom, such as the role of the teacher as the facilitator and not as the authority, the focus on the learning process rather than on the product, and the importance of the learners' active contribution to their own learning would have been very superficial had they not experienced various learning activities such as presentations

and discussions. Thus, modeling and practicing the second language acquisition theories and the methods and techniques they learned in the classrooms were necessary for them to get a deeper understanding of these knowledge. In this way, the theories would become meaningful and powerful enough for trainees to make a change in their future teaching.

Implications for graduate students in TESOL programs

The present study may provide some guidance to both current and prospective graduate students in TESOL programs in Western countries. First, prospective students may get a more realistic expectation on studying abroad and make wise decisions considering their career goals and what they are going to learn. Findings in this study showed that MATESOL training has great impact on teachers' teaching beliefs and practice, and positively influence their career as an EFL teachers in various aspects, such as being more competitive in the job market, popular among students, and equipping with systematic teaching knowledge. These comments could give future trainees better ideas on deciding studying abroad in TESOL programs.

In addition, for current graduate students in TESOL programs, this study could help them understand the diversity in education. Since most graduate students in TESOL programs will eventually working as ESL/EFL educators in a variety of educational settings, Phillion and Connelly (2004) encouraged international trainees who are studying in graduate TESOL program to explore other teachers' experiences to help them get to know diverse educational contexts. Therefore, this study may help broaden international trainees' awareness and consciousness on various issues and topics in various TESOL context through the participants' narratives and enable them to be more aware of teachers with diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds around the world. Moreover, as the participants in this study commented, studying abroad helped them gain critical eyes on viewing the world, broaden their perspectives about the

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relationship between language and culture, and equipped them with "cross-cultural awareness" (Savignon, 1991, p. 270), which is an important asset for second/foreign language teachers.

Another implication for graduate students is to improve their target language proficiency. Participants' experiences in this study indicated that their increased language proficiency level after studying abroad improved their confidence in teaching, which was mentioned by many researchers in past research (Carrier, 2003; Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2008; Hong & Pawan, 2013; Tekin, 2019). Non-native English teachers benefit from improving their target language proficiency, and low proficiency in English prevent many non-native English teachers from effectively implementing various English teaching strategies. Moreover, Horwitz (1996) points out that not only the teachers' actual proficiency of the target language, but also their perceived lack of proficiency becomes a source of anxiety and tends to affect their instructional approach negatively. Undoubtedly, it is necessary for current graduate trainees in TESOL programs to take advantage of all opportunities to practice English, improve their English proficiency, and be well-prepared for future teaching.

Furthermore, the study indicated that learn and reflect on TESOL theories is quite helpful for teachers' teaching practice after returning to their country. As Horwitz (1996) suggests, the participants in this study furthered their understanding of the underlying process involved in language learning by learning about SLA theories. This understanding changed their beliefs about language learning from teacher-centered, grammar-based to more learner-centered and practical ones. Given that the traditional grammar-translation method, which many EFL teachers in Asian countries are familiar with, tends to focus only on the test scores and does not concern the learning process and students' needs, the TESOL knowledge seems to be imperative for

future EFL teacher candidates to innovate their teaching practices in local contexts (J. C.

Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Last but not least, graduate trainees should actively take the opportunity of training in

TESOL program to reflect on their teaching beliefs and practices. As EFL teacher candidates, the

participants in this study learned to see their past learning and teaching experiences from

different perspectives. Teachers who were used to learn and teach English by employing

grammar-translation approach had the opportunity to reexamine their teaching practices from a

different point of view, especially in relation to their own experiences as learners. Critical

reflection was shown as a mean to facilitate teachers' processes of theorizing their knowledge

and practice. Therefore, future teacher candidates could improve their critical thinking ability

and form the habit of reflecting critically on what they did and on what worked or did not work

for them, which may be helpful for them to notice things they have never noticed before. In other

words, engaging in critical reflection on their own teaching could allow teacher candidates to

elaborate, understand, and review their own knowledge and thus make their own knowledge

visible.

Implications for Administrators in China

The present study can provide guidance for Chinese school administrators and public

officials at the Ministry of Education who are in charge of English education in two ways. First,

since findings shows that TESOL training had great impact on teachers' teaching beliefs and

practice, administrators, such as program chairs and academic managers can provide teachers

with more opportunities where they can share various teaching and learning issues by holding

regular faculty meetings at the institutional level. For instance, teachers can share their opinions

on topics, such as teaching philosophies, classroom management, and how to provide feedback.

Additionally, administrators can encourage teachers to attend TESOL conferences by financially supporting them. In doing so, EFL teachers can update themselves with the latest teaching techniques and learning approaches. They can network with other teachers and share teaching experiences.

In addition, according to research findings of the present study, teachers who achieved their degree from MATESOL programs learned English in ESL contexts, which cannot be directly applied to EFL contexts such as China. Therefore, it would be helpful if the local district could provide domestic teacher training programs to better support teachers' needs and provide teaching resources for them. Administrators and policy makers would have a chance to hear from teachers and get to know what obstacles Western-trained teachers have when they try to apply their learning from TESOL programs to their teaching in China, such as test-oriented curricula and educational policies, limited teaching resources, and large class sizes. Information as revealed in this study would allow administrators to put teachers' difficulties into perspective when they make curricula and educational policies. Western-trained teachers could also help narrow the gap between educational policies and teaching practices in the policy-making processes.

Implications for Pedagogical practice

The current study has three main implications for EFL teachers' pedagogical practice. First, the study demonstrates the benefit of critical reflection on teachers teaching beliefs and practices. Through consistently being pushed to think critically during their studying in the West, keeping reflecting on their teaching practices in the East, and being asked to recall, share, and discuss their journey of becoming young TESOL professionals, CTEFLs were empowered as teachers and their understanding of English teaching were deepened. Therefore, encouraging

teachers to question, reflect, share, explain, and theorize their previous experiences, knowledge, and practices is important for them to keep improving their teaching as a teacher learner and researcher.

Second, the findings suggested new standards for good teachers and good English teaching practices in EFL countries. High score on standard tests is not the universal criteria of effective teaching and learning performance. Instead, the present study offered a variety of standards for identify qualified teachers and effective teaching practices. For instance, good teachers should be able to make pedagogical decisions according to their students' needs, interests, and backgrounds. Qualified teachers need to have the ability to negotiate with various social and teaching contexts and solve the difficulties and challenges in their contexts. Good teaching activities in EFL countries should motivate students to learn actively, stimulate students' learning interests, and at the same, ensure the learning outcomes. Good teachers are capable of selecting the meaningful classroom practice for students and blending different of teaching approaches, such as the CLT and GTM.

Finally, the study has an important implication for supporting both Western-trained EFL teachers and the domestic EFL teachers who have never received Western TESOL training. The research findings demonstrated that Western-trained CTEFLs perceived themselves with higher English proficiency, systematic TESOL knowledge and practical experiences, and mature ideas of designing student-centered and communicative-based courses. However, Western-trained teachers often felt short when dealing with tensions in their local teaching context when they returned to their home country. Novice Western-trained teachers found that teacher collaborations, such as class observation, lesson preparation group, and the guidance from experienced domestic teachers were very supportive and should be encouraged. Through these

teacher collaboration activities, the teachers' knowledge can be shared, constructed, and developed. Experienced domestic teachers could help new Western-trained teachers quickly get familiar with the local context, background of the target students, and school setting and be aware of the potential challenges they might encounter when importing Western methods into the specific context. Likewise, Western-trained teachers could share their learnings and understanding of Western-based theories and teaching approaches with domestic teachers. For the purpose of better facilitating EFL students, teacher collaboration may promote richer understanding on both Western-based teaching methods and traditional Chinese ways of teaching. The similarities and variations in their perceptions, ideas, and teaching practices may serve as a motivation for enabling their professional growth via sharing, discussion, mutual learning, and critical reflection.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study has made some contributions to the TESOL programs and EFL/ESL teaching practices, it has some limitations, too. The first limitation concerns my status as a researcher to be both an insider and outsider in this study. As a Chinese student who has been studied in graduate TESOL program like other participants, I got an "insider" perspective that enabled me to be more subjective than objective (Preissle, 2008). At the same time, the lack of English teaching experience in China put me at a "outsider" status that required me to be more aware of my participants' perspectives and backgrounds. To address this concern, I made every attempt to situate myself in the best position throughout data collection and analysis processes by member-checking, data triangulation, and verification of the data with participants.

The second limitation of this research is that there are limitations to the applicability of this research to a wider population and different contexts. On the one hand, there was an

imbalance of gender diversity among the participants because only female teachers participated in the current research. So, findings might not be generalized to male teacher candidates. On another hand, only four CTEFLs were recruited, and their experiences might not be generalized to all other CTEFLs or Western-trained EFL teachers from other Non-English-speaking countries. Although this is a typical problem in qualitative research and this is also an advantage of qualitative study since the data are left for various interpretations, follow-up studies might be needed to explore male teachers' experiences and include more participants.

The third limitation considers that no data was collected while these teachers were studying in the TESOL program and participants' narratives of their English learning and teacher training experiences were all based on their memory, which might impact the accuracy of data. In addition, Due to the time differences and availability constraints, face to face interaction with participants and classroom observation were not possible to implement. As a result, many details, such as the school environment, the classroom arrangement, and the small talk and interactions among students during group discussions may not be included in interpretation of teachers' experiences. Although I spent a lot of efforts on pre-scheduling enough interviews with the participants and involving a divergent of sources, including in-depth interviews, researcher's journal entries, e-mail and WeChat message correspondence, and documents provided by participants such as lesson plans, photos, and students' work, to enrich and triangle the data during the data analysis, I believe that building deeper rapport with participants through face to face communication may provide a better understanding and interpretation of their stories.

Another limitation of the research is that the perspectives of other stakeholders, including the students in CTEFL's classrooms, non-native English teachers who never studied abroad, school leaders, policy makers, and professors in TESOL programs, remain to be explored. Their

descriptions may provide a more comprehensive understanding on Western TESOL training and EFL teaching practices in local area.

Finally, the loss of the power of language is considered as a limitation. Since data for this study was collected in participants' native language (Mandarin), translation was playing an important role in understanding, interpreting, and presenting participants' stories. Research have shown that meaning may get lost in the translation process without adequate thought and attention. Thus, I gave my best effort to reflect to translation the participants' narratives considering the language and culture differences, reflect on the data throughout data analyses process, keep some of their original words, and provide rich descriptions with the use of their quotes. Nevertheless, a professional translator could be helpful for future study to better represent and interpret the participants' experiences and improve the validity of the research.

By addressing the limitations mentioned above, researchers will be able to gain access to more valuable data in terms of Western-trained CTEFLs' English teaching experiences in Chinese EFL classrooms.

Recommendations for Further Inquiry

According to the research findings and considering the limitations mentioned in the previous section, a few recommendations for future research are suggested below. First, future studies could invite diverse participants and give voice to more teachers about their teaching experiences. For example, male teachers could be included in future studies. More participants from various educational settings, such as primary and secondary schools could be invited to participate and provide more information about different English teaching experiences in different teaching contexts. In addition, while the four teachers in the current study are all novice English teachers with just a few years of teaching experience, future studies could include some

experienced teachers with TESOL training experience in the West since their teaching beliefs might be more stable. A comparative study of teacher practice between experienced and novice teachers may also provide the field with more varied insights. Moreover, While the four teachers all studied TESOL in the United States, future research could investigate the teachers who studied from other English-speaking countries such as the U.K, and Canada. The inclusion of a diverse set of teachers will allow future researchers to explore more and present deeper understanding of CTEFLs' teacher training experiences, the teaching approaches they used after returning to China, the challenges and conflicts they face, and their successful teaching practice.

Second, it is necessary to explore teachers' experiences from varying perspectives in varying contexts. In addition to address CTEFLs' beliefs, data on the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as the students in CTEFL's classrooms, school administrators, English teachers who never studied abroad, and policy makers could be collected to get a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. It would be useful to look at what the other stakeholders identify as effective ways and challenges they perceived in EFL classrooms in various educational settings. Their perspectives may yield more insights on how Western learning impacts teachers' teaching practice. Therefore, conducting in-depth interviews with different stakeholders and including observations of the participants' actual teaching would be necessary to gain more insight into CTEFLs' teaching practices after receiving TESOL training in Western countries.

Third, longitudinal research on Western-trained Chinese EFL teachers should be encouraged. The data collection process for this phenomenological case study lasted around five months and interviews were conducted only after teachers had left the TESOL program and returned to China. Therefore, it would be interesting and insightful for future researchers to

conduct a longitudinal study and explore teachers' changes in the teaching beliefs during and after teacher education programs. These different phases of teachers' journeys of learning to teach would allow researchers to look at the ways in which teachers appropriate both conceptual and pedagogical tools from their Western teacher education and how they implement those once they return to their home school settings. In other words, the impact of time and context on teachers' learning can be better explored. Moreover, the teachers' changes in terms of teaching beliefs and practices between going abroad and after going abroad can be investigated to better understand how teacher education programs impact teachers' process of leaning to teach.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of four CTEFLs who received training in a MATESOL program in the U.S. and subsequently returned to China to teach in different educational contexts. By conducting this study, I hoped to gain insight into how existing teacher education programs could better serve the needs of non-native EEL teachers, and how teachers negotiate with various contextual factors and adjust their teaching practice.

Much was revealed through the life stories told by the participants. Essentially, it revealed that there existed a shared sense of diverse identity constructions and negotiations in relation to issues of language, teacher training, teaching philosophies, non-nativeness in the field of TESOL. The participants' stories offered me and themselves the opportunity to share what it means to be Western-trained TESOL professionals in China. Their sharing greatly contributed to the existing TESOL literature in terms of second language learning and English teaching practice in diverse contexts. In addition, it was fruitful to explore and look into the process of CTEFLs experiences and teaching practices all the way from their early schooling in China to their

current position as a Western-trained TESOL professional in various cities and educational institutions.

Initially, this study was designed to understand the teaching experiences of four CTEFLs. However, it helped me reflect on my experiences and identity by listening to and sympathizing their voices as well. While this study is but one small contribution to the English teaching and teacher development literature, I am honored to have been a part of the construction of the participants' narratives and insights on various topics and issues of the field of TESOL.

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Appendix A - Participant Recruitment Message

We-chat Message/Email Solicitation (With Chinese translation)

Hello,

This is Yifan. I am a doctoral student at Kansas State University in the department of Curriculum and Instruction. I am interested in conducting a study concerning the current teaching experiences of Western-trained Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language (CTEFL). I am looking for teachers who were trained in TESOL program in the Fordham University and went back teaching English in China. I sincerely invite you to participate in this study since as far as I know, you meet these criteria perfectly.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in 2-3 interviews, provide documents related to your teaching experiences such as lesson plans, teaching diary, and sample assignments. I will follow up with you to review data, to check for accuracy of transcription, verification of meanings made, and verification of findings. You will have the opportunity to remove yourself or information provided from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Your conversations will be audio recorded and analysis of your documents will be recorded in the form of written notes. Documents supplied by you will be analyzed for themes and patterns of your instruction. Once your participation in the study is complete, I can offer my expertise to your current teaching practice for free as professional support for your own studies and career advancement. Your sharing of your experiences as a pioneer teacher will greatly help other educators, English teachers, and international students in Western language teacher programs to understand the nature of the experiences of learning to teach, in particular, how to adapt some advanced Western pedagogies in local context.

There is no foreseeable risk for participating in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. By signing this consent form, you attest that you meet the criteria and grant me permission to collect data from you as a participant in this research study. To protect and keep your identity confidential, a pseudonym that is culturally and ethnically appropriate of your choosing, or the researcher's choosing if you have no preference, will be used in place of your real name throughout the study. The results of this study may be published in peer-reviewed journals or may be presented at professional conferences; however, you will not be individually identifiable.

The data that I collect from this study will be kept confidential, and I will follow the American Psychological Association Ethical Standards, including those for Research with Human Participants, and there will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the study. In that case, all the digital files will be deleted and none of your information will be used in any way. The only people who will have access to the interviews and other data are the researcher, and, if requested, the chairperson of the dissertation committee. All the responses documents will be kept in my locked cabinet and on a password-protected computer and will be deleted five years after completion of the research.

1

If you believe you would like to participate in this study, please contact me via email by (date). After hearing from you, we will arrange an initial online meeting through We-chat or Zoom at a mutually convenient time. I will further explain the study, expectations, risks, and benefits. At the initial meeting you will also have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have. Once you are satisfied with all answers and information regarding the study, then you will be asked to review and sign an informed consent form. If you have additional questions regarding this study, please also feel free to contact me (yliao@ksu.edu, 785-770-6516) or major professor Dr. Socorro Herrera (sococo@ksu.edu).

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Yifan Liao

你好，

我是轶凡，我现在堪萨斯州立大学课程与教学系读博士。我正在做我的博士毕业论文，研究接受过西方培训的中国的英语教师在国内的教学经历。我的研究对象是在福特汉姆大学接受过 TESOL 培训以后回国在中国教英语的老师。据我了解，您完全符合这些条件，所以我诚挚地邀请您参加本研究。

如果您同意参加本研究，我会和您进行 2-3 次采访。您还需要提供与您的教学经历有关的资料，例如课程计划，教学日记，和样本作业等。之后，我还会跟您跟核对数据的准确性，研究发现和数据分析也会发送给您，确保我的理解准确传达了您的意思。这时您讲有机会删除任何您提供过的信息，而且不会有任何后果。所有的采访将被录音，我对文件的分析也将以书面形式进行记录，之后进行分析和总结。研究结束后，我可以免费为您当前的教学提供专业性的建议，为您自己的研究和职业发展提供专业指导。您作为这一领域的先驱，您的经验分享将极大地帮助其他学者，英语老师和在读 TESOL 专业的国际学生了解教学培训的经历，以及如何把一些先进的西方教学法适用在特定的本土教学环境中。

参加本研究没有任何可预见的风险。参与这项研究完全是出于您自愿的考量。签署此同意书，即表示您符合标准，并授予我作为本研究参与者从您那里收集数据的权限。为了保护您的身份信息，在整个研究过程中，将让您选择使用一个在文化和种族上适合您的化名，或者如果您没有偏好，将使用研究人员选择的化名来代替您的真实姓名。这项研究的结果可能会发表在同行评审的期刊上，或是在专业会议上发表。但您的个人信息不会被泄露。

我从本研究中收集的数据将被保密，并且我将遵循美国心理学会的道德标准，包括对人类参与者进行研究的标准。并且研究期间如果您选择不参加或退出，将不会有任何负面影响。在这种情况下，所有电子文件将被删除，您的任何信息不会以任何方式被使用。唯一可以接触到访谈和其他数据的人是研究人员，如果需要，还可以是论文委员会的导师。所有答

复文件都将保存在我上锁的橱柜中以及受密码保护的计算机上，并将在研究完成五年后删除。

如果您认为自己想参加这项研究，请在（日期）之前通过电子邮件与我联系。收到您的来信后，我们会找一个互相都方便的时间先安排一次微信或 ZOOM 网络会议。届时我将进一步介绍我的研究，目的，以及风险和收益。这时您可以提出任何问题。一旦您对所有答案和信息感到满意，您需要审查并签署一份参与研究的协议书。在整个研究过程中，您可以随时退出研究而不会受到任何处罚。如果您对本研究还有其他疑问，请随时与我联系（yliao@ksu.edu，785-770-6516）或导师教授 Socorro Herrera 博士（sococo@ksu.edu）。

感谢您的时间和考虑，

廖轶凡

Appendix B - Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter

KANSAS STATE | University Research
U N I V E R S I T Y | Compliance Office

TO: Dr. Socorro Herrera   Proposal Number: 10307
             Curriculum and Instruction
             Bluemont Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
             Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 12/04/2020

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Learners in the West, practitioners in the East: An investigation of the training and teaching experiences of Chinese English language teachers."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for <u>three years</u> from the date of this correspondence.**

APPROVAL DATE: 12/04/2020

EXPIRATION DATE: 12/03/2023

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

    ☒   There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
    ☐   There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Appendix C - Participant Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

[Learners in the West, practitioners in the East: An investigation of the training and teaching

experiences of Chinese English language teachers]

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to
whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study,
there is a one-page consent form at the end of the study that you can sign to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying Western-trained Chinese
English as a foreign language (CTEFL) teachers' teaching experiences in China. The research
attempts to examine how these CTEFLs' perceptions of English teaching are shaped and
reinforced through their transnational experiences, and how they negotiate their teaching believes
and practices in the current local context and thus gain better understanding of the nature of the
process. You were selected to be a possible participant because you successfully graduated from
the TESOL program in Fordham University and went back teaching English in China.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in 2-3 interviews, provide
documents related to your teaching experiences such as lesson plans, teaching diary, and sample
assignments. The researcher will follow up with you to review data, to check for accuracy of
transcription, verification of meanings made, and verification of findings. Your conversations
will be audio recorded and analysis of your documents will be recorded in the form of written
notes. Documents supplied by you would be analyzed for themes and patterns of your
instruction.

What are the risks involved in this study?
There is no foreseeable risk for participating in this study. At any point participants can exit the
study if s/he feels uncomfortable without penalty.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
The researcher can offer expertise to your current teaching practice for free as professional
support for your own studies and career advancement. Your sharing of your experiences as a
pioneer teacher will greatly help other educators, English teachers, and international students in
Western language teacher programs to understand the nature of the experiences of learning to
teach, in particular, how to adapt some advanced Western pedagogies in local context.

Do I have to participate?
Your participation is voluntary. You can exit the study anytime without any penalty or
prejudice.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?
The records of this study will be kept confidential. All data collected from you will be kept anonymous. Research records will be stored securely and the researcher will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Yifan Liao at yliao@ksu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?
This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Kansas State University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections, at comply@ksu.edu or 785-532-3224.

Signature
If you agree to participate in this study, then please read the consent form on the following page, ask any questions you have about the study, and sign at the bottom to demonstrate understanding of your expected role in this study.

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a case study as part of a doctoral dissertation by Yifan Liao chaired by Dr. Socorro Herrera from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University, titled *Learners in the West, practitioners in the East: An investigation of the training and teaching experiences of Chinese English language teachers*. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is designed so that the researcher can gain some understanding of my perspectives as a Western-trained Chinese English as a foreign language (CTEFL) teacher graduated from an TESOL program in the United States.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

1. Attend two to three one-hour interviews with the researcher.
2. Clarify any follow-up questions the interviewer might have when interpreting my words.
3. Share relevant documents with the interviewer such as lesson plans and sample assignments.
4. Check for accuracy in the researchers' transcripts and findings when depicting my information.

I understand that:

- The researcher will audiotape conversations and interviews that occur between the researcher and me.
- The data will be kept by the researcher and maintaining confidentiality.
- The researcher will analyze the data while keeping anonymous. Research records will be stored securely and the researcher will have access to the records.
- There is no direct benefit for me participating in the project.
- No risk is expected but, if I experience some discomfort or stress during observations or conversations, then I can choose to discontinue my participation in the study without any penalty.

No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law. I will be assigned a pseudonym which will be used in interview transcript and all other data documents.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form, to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____   _____
_____
Researcher   Signature   Date

_____   _____
_____
Participant   Signature   Date

Please sign two copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix D - Interview Prompts

Interview Protocol

Personal Information & English Learning/working Background

个人背景及英语学习/工作背景

1. Please tell me some details about yourself, such as your personal information, educational background, and work experiences.

    请你谈谈你自己的一些基本情况（年龄，教育背景，工作经历）

2. Please describe your English learning experience in China.

    请你说说你早期在中国学习英语的经历。

3. What do you think are "good English learners" before you studied abroad?

    你出国前认为一个成功的英语学习者是什么样的？

4. What do you think are "good English teachers" before you studied abroad?

    你出国前认为一个好的英语老师应该是什么样的？

5. Conversely, can you think of a English teacher that disappointed you?

    相反的，你觉得不好的英语老师又是什么样的？

6. What influenced you most on your English learning/teaching before you studied abroad?

    请你说说早期影响你英语学习/教学最深的是什么？

7. Please tell me about your goals of English learning before your studied abroad. What role did English play in your life?

    请你说说早期你作为一个英语学习者的目标是什么？英语在你的生活中扮演什么样的角色？

Studying Abroad Experiences

留学深造经历

1. Why did you study abroad?

    请你介绍一下你的出国留学的原因。

2. How did you understand the western pedagogies? How does your understanding of western pedagogies change after studying abroad?

    你怎么理解西方教学法/教学理念？留学经历怎么影响你对它的理解？

3. What do you think are your biggest benefits of your western education experience to your English teaching?

   你在留学经历中什么对你的英语教学收益最大？

4. What western English pedagogies you did not like?

   你的留学经历中有哪些英语教学法让你最不满意？

5. How does your experiences of studying abroad shaped your English learning method or English teaching belief?

   你的留学经历对你的英语学习方法或教学理念有什么影响？

6. If you were to advise a person who is considering going into English language education in a western country, what would you say?

   你会给准备出国深造的英语教师一些什么建议？

Current Work Experiences in China

回国工作经历

1. Describe your English teaching position in China after studying abroad.

   请你介绍一下你回国从事的英语教学工作

2. How did you apply theory into practice? Any success or failure examples?

   What western pedagogies you applied in your classroom? How about the traditional pedagogies? How did you balance them in your teaching practice?

   What are the factors that support you? How about the factors that challenge you?

   请你描述一下你学以致用的过程 （成功和失败的例子）

   你用了哪些西方教学法？哪些中国教学法？如何结合？

   有哪些因素支持你？哪些因素阻碍你？

3. How do you think you are different from those trained in China?

   和你没有出国学习过的同事相比，你的教学和他们有什么相同和不同之处？

4. What is the difference in your teaching before and after studying abroad?

   留学前后你最大的改变是什么？

5. How do your students view you as a teacher trained in the west?

   你的学生对于你作为一个西方留学回国的英语老师的看法是什么？

6. What are the advantages and disadvantages for you as a Western-trained English teacher in China?

   如果你们学校有机会雇佣一个新老师，中国和西方的，哪个更容易被录取？为什么？

Appendix E - Document Analysis Protocol

Document Analysis Protocol

In qualitative research, it is important to collect documents that will offer additional context to the study in order to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences. In this case, participants will be encouraged to share relevant documents they feel that might further explain their experiences. These documents will not be published in the report if they have identifying information that cannot be concealed. However, if there is no danger to revealing identities of the participant or any other associated people, if appropriate, some documents will be shared with the participant's written permission.

Example of documents could include but not limited to:

- Documents related to CTEFLs' TESOL training experiences abroad such as the courses they took, assignments which reflected their teaching beliefs, and their relevant publications. These material collections may offer a good starting point for the researcher to explore how their training experiences in the United States impact and challenge their current teaching practice in China.
- Documents of those speak to the teachers' own instructions, such as syllabi, lesson plans, term teaching reflective paper, and written feedback on students' assignments. These documents will also offer a new angle of the teachers' thoughts and actions and thus provide other specific details to either confirm or challenge the information collected from other sources.
- Communication e-mails and WeChat messages with the participants. These documents will become appropriate sources of data for this study that may yield valuable information and a deeper look into the lived experiences of the CTEFLs.

Appendix F - NVivo Codebook for the Initial Phase

Nodes

Name	Description
1 Early schooling	Techers' early English learning experiences (before they studied abroad)
English teacher participants preferred	Characteris, teaching styles, teaching strategies that participants' prefeered as EFL learners
English teaching in small city and big city	Described teachers' opinion on the difference of English teaching in different places in China
Meaning of learning English well	Teachers' descriptions on the mearning of learning English well as EFL learners in China
Motivation to learn English	Teachers' motivation to learn English as EFL learners in China
Passion for teaching English	Described teachers' oringinal passion for teaching English
Teaching philosophies	teachers' early teaching beliefs and ideologies
Negative experiences	Teachers' negative experiences that related to their teaching belifs
Personality	Teachers' personality that related to their teaching belifs
Positive experiences	Teachers' positive experiences that related to their teaching belifs
2 TESOL training	Described teachers' experiences during their TESOL training in the U.S.
Compare western and eastern	Teachers' comments on the difference and similarities of western educationa and eastern education

Name	Description
Learning and rewards	What teachers learned from the TESOL program
New knowledge	Teachers' descriptions on the knowledge learning from the program
Understand students' difficulties through theory	Teachers' descriptions on their understanding of EFL students' learning difficulties
motivation for studying abroad	
Negative experiences	Teachers' descriptions on their negative experiences in the TESOL program
Pre-assumptions for Western education	Teachers' perceptions and pre-assumptions for the term "Western-educatoin" before they studied abroad
3 English teaching in China	Described teachers' teaching experiences after they returning to China
Advantages	Described the advantages teachers perceived in their teaching context
Challenges	Described the Challenges teachers perceived in their teaching context
Personal efforts	Described teachers' teaching practices in China
Failures and learnings	Teachers' failed teaching practice
From non-effective to effective	Described teachers' efforts after failure
Personal preference	Described how teachers' personal teaching ideology and personality impacted their teaching practice
Positive result	Described teachers' successful teaching practices

Appendix G - Final NVivo Codebook

Nodes

Name	Description
RQ1	How do CTEFLs make sense of their experiences in the MATESOL program in the United States?
Developing a critical eye	Broaden their horizon, deeper understanding of the world and culture, developing critical thinking ability, gaining new perspectives, etc.
Expectations VS. Reality	Participants' transition of understanding of Western and Eastern education
Theory VS. Reality	Think critically on English teaching pedagogies
Learning to teach	Described teachers' gain from the TESOL program as an EFL teacher candidate
Experiential knowledge	Described teachers' comments on their gains of first-hand knowledge as master's students and student teachers
Personal growth and confidence	Described participants' personal growth and self-confidence
TESOL knowledge	Teachers' comments on the TESOL knowledge they acquired
RQ2	How do CTEFLs describe their English teaching experiences in China after studying in the MATESOL program in the United States?
Contextual factors in EFL teaching	Described the contextual factors that affect teachers' teaching practices
Institutional policy	Described the various insitutional policy that impact teachers' practices

Students factors	Described various students' factors that impact teachers' practices, such as learning preferences, motivations, and English proficiency levels.
The situation of English education in China	Described the overall English educational situation and policy in China
Time, class size, and teaching resources	Described the contextual challenges teachers face in their workplaces
Personality and professional skills	Described the factors of teachers' personality and their professional skills on their successful teaching practices
Effective teaching practices	Described a number of methods and strategies that participants' applied in their classrooms which proved to be effective
Passion for teaching	Described participants' common characteristics
Teachers' past expereinces of English learning	Described how teachers' previous English learning experiences affected their current English teaching practices
Negative learning experiences	Described teachers' negative English learning experiences
Positive learning experiences	Described teachers' positive English learning experiences