

University of Alberta

**Towards a New Intercultural Methodology in Response to
Teachers' Challenges from the New Curriculum Innovation in China**

by

Wenhua Wu

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Abstract

The new English Curriculum Standard reform in China is 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 with the emphasis on a teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented, and textbook-based instruction. The ideas underlying the top-down curriculum change represent important cultural shifts from a transmission model of education to an experiential model. These shifts challenge traditional practice with respect to the notion of education, teaching and learning, the role of teachers and learners, and textbooks, and pose drastic changes for teachers.

The study adopts the notion of the third space to investigate teachers' challenges in implementing the new curriculum change. The main focus is on the tension brought about by shifts in the concept of teaching and learning, teachers' identities and their understandings of their roles as teachers within the new curriculum framework. This is understood within the context of the tension between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, as well as the tension between Western curriculum theories and those based on China's Confucian heritage culture.

Drawing on data collected from classroom observations, and in-depth interviews with three teachers, the study reveals the teachers' adjustments towards the student-centered teaching methods, the communication-

oriented textbooks, the democratic relationship between the students and teachers, and the teachers' new identity. It draws on the third space but also focuses on need for something new that is specific to English language teaching in China. The findings point to the importance of balance between learning that is both active and receptive without being passive. The study suggests the need for an intercultural pedagogy grounded in understandings of Taoist philosophy and yin to counterbalance yang. It discusses teacher identity and undertakes an examination of particular issues related to this new hybrid way. Finally, the study considers resistance and change among curriculum, pedagogy and methodology in order to explore an intercultural dialogue that draws on both Eastern and Western ideas and shows resonances between East and West, rather than seeing them as polar opposites.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Since China carried out its reform and open policy in the late 1970s, the importance of English has been recognized as a key to its economic, social, technological, and scientific development (He, 2005). China has the largest enterprise of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the world (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a, b; Wang & Wang, 2000; Hu, 2005a). Among all the foreign languages taught in middle schools, English has the largest number of learners, an estimated 60 million junior high school students and 15 million senior high school students in the formal education sector with a total number of 470,000 full time Chinese teachers of English (Wang, 2007). In order to better respond to its socioeconomic shift from a centrally-planned economy to a market-oriented one, China has carried out a series of top-down education reforms, among which the new English Curriculum Standard reform (the new curriculum reform) is creating a fundamental change in terms of curriculum purpose and objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum contents, learning and teaching processes, development of instructional materials, and evaluation.

The English Curriculum Standard, issued by China's Ministry of Education, was adopted on an experimental basis in 2001 and has been fully implemented throughout the country since 2004. The new curriculum reform is 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, and its emphasis on a teacher-centered,

knowledge-oriented, and textbook-based instruction. This curriculum reform involves not only a change in English language teaching and learning but also a fundamental cultural shift. It raises several crucial questions such as: What are the implications of replacing traditional practices with Western curriculum theories? Is it possible to combine Western curriculum theories with the traditional Confucian heritage culture of learning? Even if teachers have an interest in Western curriculum theories, will they be able to change their own intrinsic values of learning and teaching, which they have formed over the long term?

This shift to Western curriculum theories in English language teaching in China poses drastic changes for teachers, who are required to make many professional and sociocultural adjustments. During the transitional period between tradition and innovation, pedagogical changes may play a positive role in improving English language teaching in China, but they will also cause teachers to experience many challenges. In short, the transition is unfolding, opening up opportunities as well as challenges. Helping teachers meet the challenges is essential to the successful implementation of curriculum reform. With this in mind, my research will use the metaphor of “the third space” (Bhabha, 1990; Aoki, 1992, 1996; Wang 2004) to create possibilities of dialogue between curriculum practice based on Confucian heritage culture, on the one hand, and Western curriculum theories, on the other hand, and to seek a dynamic relationship between the two for resolving teachers’ difficulties in the English Curriculum Standard reform.

The notion of the third space will be used to refer to a metaphorical hybrid between Western curriculum theories and traditional Confucian heritage culture practices, between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, and between Western and Eastern cultures. The idea is that dwelling within this metaphorical space involves three processes: listening to the teachers' unheard voices for the new curriculum reform; inspiring teachers to develop their own voices between tradition and innovation and between theory and practice; and finally, searching for cultural continuity and cultural creativity in order to explore a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western teaching and learning philosophies and fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching. Therefore, teachers may successfully encounter differences, difficulties, and uncertainties that accompany the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard, though not necessarily overcome or eliminate the differences and tensions. The research will focus on the challenges in classroom teaching on a day-to-day basis, including dwelling in the tensions between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, traversing the differences between Western curriculum theories and Confucian-based practice, and recreating teachers' identity and a new intercultural English methodology between tradition and innovation.

Coming to the research

In this section, I will reflect on my own lived experiences and how they have led me to undertake research using the metaphor of the third space to explore

challenges encountered by teachers in the English Curriculum Standard reform in China. My reflections will be guided by three questions – How are you? Where are you? and Why are you? (Smith, 2006). I will engage in a kind of meditative practice on each of these questions, and in a particular way relevant to myself. The first question, “How are you?” is understood as an inquiry into how I have come to be an educational researcher. Inevitably, this is responded to in a limited sense insofar as I am not completely in charge of my self-understanding. At the same time, I will reflect on what I regard as the most significant influences that have brought me to this point. The second question, “Where are you?” raises the question of my location, and this is understood temporally and spatially as well as intellectually. The final question, “Why are you?” deals with the motivation of my scholarly practice. This motivation is perhaps the reason why I am passionate about choosing the notion of the third space in order to investigate the issues that are relevant to what is currently taking place in the English curriculum reform in China.

My interest in educational research has arisen from my experiences in second language education as a teacher. First, during my teaching at Suihua Teachers College, the close co-operation between my department and several large corporations allowed me to participate in a program to develop *The Chinese-English Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms*. The most challenging work was the practice of collecting and analyzing large quantities of written and spoken English. All the entries contained in the dictionary are based on examinations of the Chinese and English languages in use, as represented in the bank of Chinese

and English. This work experience not only provided me with the opportunity to encounter a large number of specialized terms, but also sharpened my insight into the procedure of dictionary editing. This research experience was very important because it gave me the chance to do research with other professionals and the self-confidence to undergo hardships in accomplishing difficult work.

The most significant influence on my research was my supervisor, Professor Chen Youlin, of Central China Normal University. With his guidance, I accomplished a thesis entitled, “How to Evaluate Non-English Majors in Teacher Training School.” This experience provided the foundation for my future academic research. After my graduation, I devoted a significant amount of time and energy to teaching reform in the English Department of Suihua Teachers College. My fruitful research experience started with the project of reforming teaching and curriculum development for the needs of the 21st century. The reform started with changes in both the content and the teaching approach of the courses in the department with an aim to combine language skill training with students’ intellectual development. This involved efforts to cultivate students’ intellectual curiosity and ability for independent learning and thinking through such courses as extensive reading, advanced speaking, and advanced writing. Other efforts sought to broaden the students’ knowledge structure and created conditions for cooperative learning and critical thinking.

In 2002, I was a visiting scholar at Beijing Normal University. During my research as a visiting scholar, I realized that curriculum theory and development in China was lagging behind that of many developed countries in many aspects,

such as curriculum design, implementation, and management. While there have been many self-evident attainments, the development of English language teaching in China is not without problems, among which its generally low effectiveness has aroused experts' attention and concern, along with calls for improvement. How to further improve the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning and how to implement English curriculum change are questions that urgently demand both our retrospective and insightful analysis and constructive and painstaking efforts.

In 2003, my participation in the summer institute for English Learning Strategy Training and Research in the Foreign Language Department of Nanjing University provided with me numerous fond memories. Not only was this my first real-life English Learning Strategy Management research work, where I gained significant knowledge of modern research techniques and theories, but this experience also provided me with the opportunity to meet and exchange views with professors at the forefront of their fields, in China, in the United States, and in Singapore. Based on these experiences, I am involved in English education research and hope that China's English education system will benefit from more collaboration between East and West.

I now feel that I am dwelling in the metaphorical third space between East and West. There is a proverb that says, "East or west, home is best." Although I puzzle over the location of my home – "Where is my home?" – I am more certain about the location of my research area – adopting the notion of the third space to explore teachers' challenges in English curriculum reform. In China, curriculum

reform is seen as on-going as China seeks to maintain national competitiveness in a rapidly changing global market place with the technological and economic effects of globalization. The present top-down model of English curriculum reform is posing many challenges to English language teachers in China. Understanding how to help teachers successfully meet the challenges is essential to the success of curriculum reform.

Behind English curriculum reform programs in China, there is an underlying desire for changes in teaching practice and behavior. In particular, some programs aim to bring about large-scale changes in teaching approaches and styles resulting from a major overhaul of the English curriculum. These changes are usually imposed by an outside body, such as an education department and teacher trainers, and the changes are, therefore, obligatory. When I reflect on my previous experience in teacher education programs in China, I realize that some attempts to bring about change will not meet with success unless steps are taken to facilitate the change process, because teachers have difficulties in bridging the gap between tradition and innovation, and the gap between mandated policies and contextual practice.

I recall being responsible for a program that focused on the introduction of communicative language teaching into English classroom teaching. In a course that I taught, I attempted to combine various aspects of communicative language teaching with some theoretical background underpinning the new ideas and intended to introduce teachers to ways of applying the methodology to classroom teaching. Of course, I assumed that the new theories would be welcomed and

adapted by teachers in their classroom. On the contrary, there were many complaints about the course from teachers. They felt that the course was not at all useful in telling them, in a practical way, how to behave in the classroom; it did not reflect their interests, and was not specific enough to be applied in individual situations, such as overcrowded classes, poor resources, and a rigid, exam-oriented teaching tradition. Furthermore, in the student-centered communicative language teaching method, two parallel processes were at work: the role of the learners was being steadily upgraded, and that of the teacher was moving in the opposite direction so that teachers were going through a crisis of alienation and frustration about their roles and identity.

Through the problems encountered in the course, I became sensitized to issues I had never thought about before, and I began to establish a critical attitude towards what happened with this in-service course and what subsequently happened in the classroom. I realized that coming to grips with the reality of the teacher's situation was crucial. However, in my programs, I had often been in danger of forgetting that teachers existed, that they had intelligence, beliefs, and opinions, along with deficiencies, and above all, that they carried out their work in specific contexts. In addition, the top-down teacher education programs allowed me little opportunity to help teachers explore the implications that new theories would have on their previously established classroom routines and behaviors and to adapt these to their particular circumstances. As a result, the full benefit of the programs was not attained. This helped me realize the gap between theory and practice, between tradition and innovation, and between East and West, given that

many reforms such as communicative language teaching are based on Western educational practices.

In January 2005, I began a doctoral program at the University of Alberta in order to seek new perspectives on the transformations taking place in China. During my studies, I read a book entitled, *Curriculum in a New Key: The Collected Works of Ted T. Aoki* (2005), which made a profound difference to my academic and personal life, and has made my past and present experiences come together in an elegant and transformative way. This book offered me insights into the in-depth analysis of curriculum, culture, and identity from a new perspective, and provided a new academic space for me to take on the role of student, teacher, researcher, and educator. The notion of “the third space,” as described by Aoki, opened up the possibility of reaching deeply inside to memorize what is not recognized, and made me travel out and come back to English curriculum reform in China with new eyes. The dramatic changes implied by the English Curriculum Standard make great demands on teachers, and finding a balance between tradition and innovation is quite difficult to achieve in the midst of such demands.

With this in mind, I hope to adopt the notion of the third space to contribute to the creation of dialogue between Western theory and Chinese Confucian practice, between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience, and between Western and Eastern culture, to help form dynamic relationships between these. My doctoral coursework has increased my knowledge and expertise in my research area, and my research project will link this new knowledge with my previous knowledge and professional lived

experience in China, to engage between Eastern and Western culture, to understand the integration of Western curriculum theories into English curriculum reform, and to connect teachers' voices to current curriculum reform in China.

It is precisely due to my experience in Canada that I am able to see English curriculum reform in China from a new angle. My encounter with Western curriculum theories and culture enables my deeper understanding of curriculum reform in China and sets me on a path in search of a third space in which curriculum, culture, and identity can interact creatively to promote teachers' professional and sociocultural adjustments and transformation. Situated in the framework of education reflection and my personal cross-cultural experiences, I ask myself: What questions can I ask, and how can I invite Chinese English language teachers to participate in dialogues, reflections, and conversation related to the issues of English curriculum reform in China?

Research objectives

As mentioned above, the drastic changes in the new English Curriculum Standard reform require teachers to make many professional and sociocultural adjustments in English language teaching. The goal of my research is to investigate teachers' challenges during the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard. The main research focus will be the tension brought about by shifts in teachers' identities and their understandings of themselves and their roles as teachers within the new curriculum framework. The secondary aim of the research is to identify what supports need to be provided for teachers to meet

these challenges, and to provide guidelines for resolving issues in implementing the English Curriculum Standard. Thus, the research aims to answer the following questions.

- 1) What professional and sociocultural adjustments did Chinese teachers of English make during the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard, and how did these adjustments affect their identities as teachers?
- 2) What challenges did Chinese teachers of English encounter during their transition to the English Curriculum Standard?
- 3) How did the teachers make a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western approaches to fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching?

I will address these questions using interviews and observational data that describe teachers' experiences and challenges in the English Standard Curriculum reform. I will focus on teachers' transitional processes in terms of their awareness and sensitivity to the challenges, tension, and difficulties related to implementing change in their classrooms. I will consider the dialectical relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and the officially promoted methodology. Serving as a bridge between theory and practice and between Western and Eastern culture, the metaphor of the third space provides a framework for considering teachers' contextual realities and how they are experiencing dramatic changes brought about by top-down curriculum reforms taking place within broader transformations of China's role in the world.

Rationale for the research

Implementing curriculum reform is not effective or possible without some concomitant changes in the teacher because it is the teacher who is responsible for enacting the curriculum at the classroom level. What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these things have powerful implications for the curriculum change process and for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into practice. For teachers, change is not radical, but incremental; it consists of expanding their repertoire rather than rejecting previous approaches. Teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of proposed changes in order to achieve successful implementation. More importantly, teachers need to realize how the innovation can be applied within their classrooms. In the adoption of the new curriculum in China, limited consideration has been given to the challenges encountered by teachers in the daily classroom teaching. This situation can have negative consequences for the success of curriculum implementation.

This research is significant because it will provide a space for understanding teachers' voices, perspectives, and identities within the context of top-down curriculum reform. While examining the teacher in relation to curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) point out that “the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms” (p. 363). Wang and Cheng (2005) indicate that teachers are important stakeholders in their institutions so that the significant role that teachers play in curriculum reform must not be overlooked if successful implementation and sustainability are to be

achieved. Teachers are the most important factors to affect the success and failure of implementing curriculum reform. They make the link between the English Curriculum Standard and the actual circumstances in which language learning will take place or fail to take place.

Obviously, external factors have brought teachers in China to the point of having to change, whether they want to or not. Adopting the English Curriculum Standard requires teachers to make significant professional adjustments, which puts pressures on teachers and poses many challenges. It is necessary to consider how teachers may be supported in making changes that affect not only their classroom practices but also their identity and understanding of their role as a teacher. How to assist teachers in facing the challenges of curriculum reform is an important area that has not always received sufficient attention in China.

It is also important to take into account the cultural transition between the existing language teaching culture and the demands of the new curriculum. Wedell (2003) indicates that the English curriculum reform represents a significant cultural shift, and the embedding of new practices in teachers' existing professional culture will not be accomplished easily. The notion of the third space will provide insights into the space beyond the dualism of tradition and innovation and will allow for a dialogic negotiation of difference. The third space provides a means of respecting cultural continuity (Holliday, 1997) by drawing from the tradition that existed and from the new curriculum in a way that seeks harmony.

In summary, this research seeks a balanced outlook on tradition and innovation by focusing on teachers' perspectives through the lens of the third

space. It will result in a greater understanding of the challenges of teachers and will offer suggestions for working through them. It is important to give curriculum change a chance and support key stakeholders in the curriculum change process. By critically examining factors that facilitate and deter teacher development in curriculum implementation, the study will be able to inform programs and services for teacher education. Furthermore, it will be possible to suggest how to further implement curriculum reform in China.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

A brief history of English curriculum reforms in China

In China, English language teachers for basic education have experienced a couple of waves of top-down curriculum reforms since the late 1970s. However, teachers have rarely faced greater changes than they do in the latest round of English Curriculum Standard reform. This recent reform is more than an incremental change to a traditional model of curriculum, which is often no more than an effort to put new wine in old bottles (Zhou, 2003). The reform represents a cultural shift from a transmission-based educational culture to an interpretation-based educational culture. It constitutes a fundamental change in terms of purpose and objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum content, learning and teaching processes, development of instructional materials, and means of evaluation (MOE, 2001). The following section presents a historical overview of curriculum change by tracing the major trends in English curriculum reforms in China from the 1970s to the present.

In 1978, a new national English syllabus and a set of English textbooks were produced based on audiolingualism and the grammar translation method (MOE, 1978). The textbooks were characterized by oral and written drills of sentence patterns together with some literary texts for explanation and translation. This series of textbooks was used for a few years and was then criticized because the learning load was considered to be too heavy for the students.

In 1986, the English syllabus and the textbooks were revised. The difficulty level was reduced and texts were made more interesting and informative.

However, English teaching and the textbooks adopted a similar pedagogical approach as in 1978. In the 1978 and 1986 reforms, both the syllabus and the textbooks had a feature typical of the centralized education system in China. This feature can be summarized as “one syllabus and one set of textbooks,” which means that the content of the syllabus and the publisher were under the direct control of the MOE. The People’s Education Press produced a set of textbooks to match the syllabus. As a result, all schools in China used the same set of textbooks guided by one syllabus.

With China’s rapid social and economic development, the feature of “one syllabus and one set of textbooks” was gradually replaced by the feature of “one syllabus and several sets of textbooks.” Therefore, in 1993, a new English syllabus (MOE, 1993) was designed together with a few new sets of textbooks. With the appearance of these textbooks, teachers at the classroom level began to feel the pressure of change because the notion of communicative language teaching, which differed greatly from traditional approaches, was the main concept underpinning the textbooks.

In order to better respond to China’s socioeconomic changes from a centrally-planned economy to a market-oriented one, a new English Curriculum Standard was issued in 2001 (MOE, 2001). It was piloted in 2001 and was implemented fully in 2004. The English Curriculum Standard reform shifts from the knowledge-oriented, teacher-centered, and textbook-based model to the communication-oriented, student-centered and activity-based model. The reform attempts to introduce Western curriculum theories into China’s traditional

curriculum values. It is also a decentralizing reform that gives more freedom to local authorities.

The rationale underlying the English Curriculum Standard

In order to change the over-emphasis on the delivery of knowledge about language structure and vocabulary, and the neglect of the development of students' competence in using language for communication (English Curriculum Standard, 2001, p.1), the English Curriculum Standard attaches great importance to developing students' interest in learning, confidence, good learning habits and effective learning strategies, relating the course content to the students' life experiences and cognitive development, and promoting learning through students' active involvement in the process of experiencing, participating and collaborating in activities, and communicating with the language. The new basic principles are adopted in the new curriculum change. They are as follows (English Curriculum Standard, 2001, pp. 2-3).

1) The curriculum promotes whole-person education and the all-round development of the students.

To promote whole-person education, English curriculum should satisfy students' affective demands, care for their interests and motivation in learning, build up their confidence, and help them gain a sense of achievement. In addition, the curriculum should develop students' communicative competence by participating and collaborating in activities and using English for communication, and foster their creativity.

2) The curriculum objectives are holistic and flexible.

The overall objective of English curriculum is to develop students' competence in using English for communication. Then it sets up the following five-dimension objective, including language skills, language knowledge, affect and attitude, learning strategies, and cross-cultural awareness. Furthermore, each objective is then divided into nine competence-based levels as stated in the objective descriptors. Detailed performance objectives for each competence-based level are described in terms of what the students should be able to do with the language rather than what the teachers should teach.

3) The curriculum is learner-centered and caters for students' individual differences.

The students are put at the center of education process, including the process of planning curriculum objectives, teaching and learning process, assessment process, and the process of developing teaching and learning resources. Students construct knowledge, improve competence and develop individually under the teachers' guidance.

4) The curriculum promotes the activity-based method with the focus on experiential, discovering, exploring, cooperative, and participatory learning.

To help students achieve the objectives, task-based teaching is recommended. Under the teachers' guidance, the students complete activities and tasks and gain a sense of achievement through experiential, discovering, exploring, cooperative, and participatory learning.

5) Both formative assessment and summative assessment are to be used in evaluating students' achievement.

The assessment system should combine formative with summative assessment. It encourages teachers to use formative assessment to assess students' achievement. It is important to use the formative assessment to encourage students' active participation in learning and improve their self-confidence. Summative assessment should focus on examine their integrated language skills and their ability to use language.

6) The curriculum should make good use of modern educational resources and expand the use of multimedia technology in teaching.

The curriculum should use and develop the resources that are authentic, close to the students' lives, contemporary, healthy, rich and varied. It should take advantage of modern educational technology, such as TV and radio programs, English magazines, computer, Internet, and multimedia resource to create optimal conditions for students' learning.

The Western philosophy underpinning the English Curriculum Standard has strong links with the constructivism, the sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. First, constructivism, a theory of learning, views that learners construct new knowledge from their experience (Glaserfeld, 1989; Fosnot, 1996; Duffy & Cunningham, 1996). Dewey, Piaget and Bruner are some of the influential pioneers in this school of thought. Knowledge is constructed by learners through an active, mental process of development; learners are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge (Piaget, 1977; Kelly, 1991). Constructivism encourages learners to initiatively involve themselves in learning activities, to discover, inquire and do hands-on work so that they will develop

abilities to collect and handle information, gain new knowledge, analyze and solve problems, and communicate and cooperate with others. It is often related to language pedagogy that promotes learning by doing or other forms of activities-based approaches with the implication that discovery is an important element. The learner-centeredness as commitment by the learner to knowledge construction can be seen as part of a rejection of teacher-centered, transmission teaching.

Second, Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that new knowledge is constructed with an interaction between social, cultural and institutional settings (Wertsch, 1991). It includes Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994) with the emphasis on learning as a process of legitimate peripheral participation and Lave and Wenger's emphasis on the social nature of learning through participation. It conceptualizes learning as participation rather than acquisition (Donato, 2000). Van Lier (2004) emphasizes that learners participate in "the interactional processes in which social meanings become internalized" (p. 12). Knowledge of the target language is co-constructed through instructional conversations between the teacher and the learners. In other words, in order to make possible instructed language learning, teachers need to use their teacher talk to act upon learner contributions in classroom interaction. The collaborative learning is an instruction method in which students work in groups toward a common academic goal. Through collaborative learning, the active exchange of ideas within small groups not only increases interest among the participants but also promotes critical thinking.

Finally, it is related to three hypotheses about second language acquisition: the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), the Interactionist Hypothesis (Long, 1983, 1996) and Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982) showed that the process of second language acquisition was similar to first language acquisition. If the conditions for second language acquisition were more similar to those of first language acquisition, second language acquisition would be more successful. He proposed that the way to accomplish this is to expose learners to meaningful and motivating input that is just slightly beyond their current level of linguistic competence but sufficiently comprehensible for learner to understand (Krashen, 1985). In this way, second language learners would integrate the input into their developing interlanguage systems and successfully acquire their second language in much the same way as children acquire their first language. Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis focused on the linguistic input to which learners are exposed and how the input becomes comprehensible to the learners.

Long (1983, 1996) hypothesized that conversational modifications that learners make when they negotiate meaning create comprehensible input and that this in turn promotes acquisition. Second language learners, like first language learners, need to participate in conversational interactions, and it is through this process that they learn the grammar. Creating opportunities for the learners to engage in conversational interaction in the classroom would be sufficient for second language acquisition. The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis and the

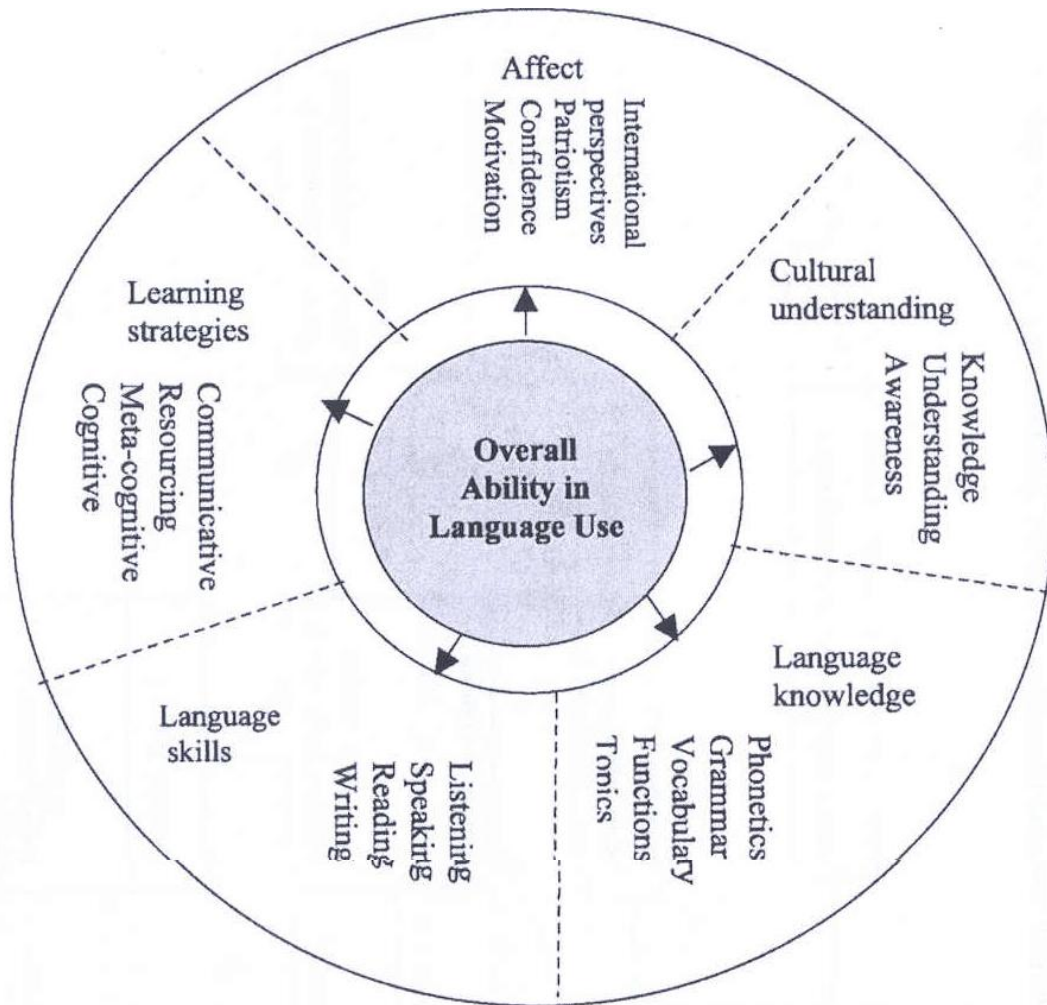
Interactionist Hypothesis emphasize meaning-based instruction without attention to language form and corrective feedback.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis describes how affective factors relate to the second language acquisition process (Krashen, 1982). Affective factors are outside the language acquisition device itself, and may aid, impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device. If the filter is low or weak, i.e. the learner's attitude is more conducive to second language learning, more input will become intake. And if the filter is high or strong, less input will become intake. The Affective Filter Hypothesis implies that our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter. Therefore, the effective teacher is one who can provide understandable input and at the same time reduce the affective filter so as to help make it understood in a low anxiety situation and eventually acquire the linguistic competence. In teaching practice, emphasis is put on students' positive attitudes towards learning rather than the teacher imbuing them with knowledge. They are expected to increase their interest and build up their confidence in learning English as well as develop their capacity of using it in a comprehensive way. As for the teaching method, task-based language teaching is promoted. Formative assessment is introduced to be integrated into the new assessment practices. The new curriculum is student centered, emphasizes learning to learn and learning in an active and lively way, and promotes the active participation of students, a willingness to explore, and an eagerness to get to work.

The content of the English Curriculum Standard

In the new English Curriculum Standard, the ultimate goal of English teaching is to foster the students' overall ability to use the English language, which is based on the comprehensive development of their language skills, language knowledge, attitude, learning strategies, and cultural awareness. Among these elements, language knowledge and language skill are considered to be the foundation of the ability of comprehensive use of English language; cultural awareness ensures the appropriate use of language; attitude is seen as an important factor that affects students' learning and development; learning strategies are necessary to improve learning efficiency and students' development of self-regulated learning ability. These five dimensions should be combined together to foster students' ability to use English. Table 1 illustrates the framework of the overall objectives of the curriculum.

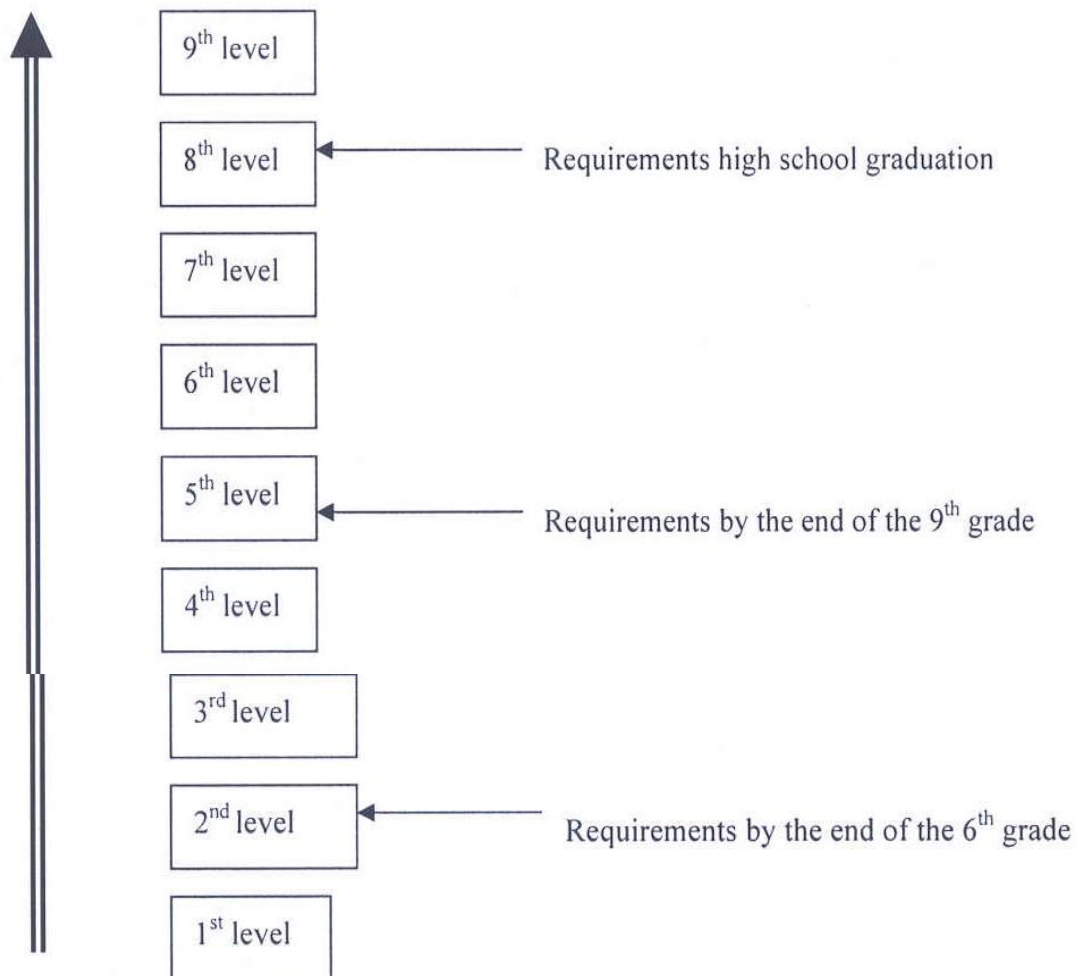
Table 1: Framework of objectives in the new English curriculum (English Curriculum Standard, 2001, p. 6)



There are 9 levels of attainment in English curriculum of grade schools. (See Figure 2): Level 1 & 2 for primary school, Level 3-5 for junior high, and Level 6-9 for senior high. All of these levels are described according to the above 5 dimensions. In each level, the curriculum sets specific content standards for the 5 dimensions. As far as vocabulary is concerned, the new curriculum requires that

students demonstrate an ability to use 600-700 words and 50 phrases at Level 2; 1,500-1,600 words and 200-300 phrases at Level 5; about 2,500 words and 300-400 phrases at Level 7; 3,300 words at Level 8; and 4,500-5,000 at Level 9. All teachers are required to teach their lessons and set their test papers and evaluate the students' achievements in accordance with the standards for different levels.

Table 2: English curriculum classification target structure (English Curriculum Standard, 2001, p.4)



The new English curriculum emphasizes a learner-centered approach in the process of setting goals, teaching, evaluating curriculum, and developing

instructional resources. It promotes a task-based teaching model, which helps students achieve the goals of tasks through perceiving, experiencing, practicing, participating, and collaborating with the teachers' guidance. The evaluation system is composed of formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation plays a crucial role in the English teaching process, focusing on inspiring students' positive attitude and confidence in learning. Summative evaluation is employed to assess students' comprehensive language skills and language application competency. English teaching resources include course books and other auxiliary study materials such as exercise books, activity manuals, story books, self-study guidebooks, tape recordings, videos, maps and pictures, cards, visual aids, and computer software. English course books used in basic education are the core of learning and teaching for both students and teachers. English course book development is guided by the course objectives and teaching requirements defined in English course curriculum. Course books may allow diversity to meet the needs of different students, as long as they meet the requirements of the course curriculum.

Compared with previous curriculum reforms, the English Curriculum Standard reform represents a cultural shift that causes dramatic changes in English language teaching in terms of curriculum purpose and objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum contents, learning and teaching processes, the development of instructional materials, and evaluation. These changes require teachers to make significant adjustments regarding their perceptions of language, language teaching

and learning, teachers and learners' roles, classroom management, assessment, and so on. Key to the reform is the following shifts:

- from classroom instruction focused on the transmission of knowledge to a focus on individual learners' development;
- from a focus on grammar and lexicon knowledge to a focus on a comprehensive ability to use English, including language skills, language knowledge, affect and attitude, learning strategies, and cross-cultural awareness;
- from the grammar-translation method to task-based language teaching;
- from a spoon-feeding, memorizing, and reciting mode of learning to a mode of learning based on experiencing, discovering, exploring, and cooperating;
- from the summative assessment emphasized in the past to the combination of formative and summative assessments; and
- from teacher dominance/control to learner-centeredness.

Wang (2007) summarizes the changes expected from teachers in the new curriculum reform as they make the transition to a new student-centered and communication-based curriculum. Teachers are expected to (p. 101):

- change their views about language teaching from a knowledge-based one to a competence-based one;
- change their traditional role as a knowledge transmitter to a multi-role educator;
- develop new teaching skills;

- change their ways of evaluating students;
- develop the ability to adapt the textbooks;
- use modern technology; and
- improve their own language proficiency.

These changes constitute a major transition for teachers working under the English Curriculum Standard reform. The transition is opening up opportunities as well as challenges for teachers to improve English language teaching. Although top-down curriculum reform is of paramount importance in China and speeds up educational development in many respects (Cheng, 2000; Su, 1991), it also has some drawbacks. While the reform is playing a positive role in the effectiveness and improvement of English language teaching in China, it is evident that during this transitional period the reform has placed more demands on teachers and these changes may pose many difficulties for teachers in their English teaching practice. In any attempts to improve education, teachers are central to long-lasting changes (Frymier, 1987; Fullan, 1993). How to assist teachers as the end users of curriculum reform in facing the difficulties, anxiety, and concerns is a crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of the innovation.

Top-down reform in Confucian heritage cultures

Top-down TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) curriculum reform initiatives designed to alter classroom practices remain a frequent feature of educational systems in the Asia Pacific region, such as in China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, where educational systems have been influenced by Confucian heritage culture.

However, these curriculum reforms are often based on discourses and ideas derived from non-Confucian, Western sources. Consequently, they are often unsuccessful in altering what happens in classrooms, and have failed in many cases to take root in classrooms (Chern, 2002; Markee, 1997; Gorsuch, 2000, 2001; Li, 1998; Carless, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2004; Mee, 2002; Morris & Scott, 2003; Hu, 2002a, 2005b). Although numerous factors affect the success or failure of implementing curriculum change, including curriculum planning, design, implementation, and evaluation, Wedell (2003) indicates that one important reason for this situation appears to be a failure to take into account adequately the cultural continuity between the pedagogic discourse underlying curriculum reforms and existing pedagogic realities, which is tied to the extent of the changes that teachers are required to make and how they will experience the changes. In the Asia Pacific region, TESOL curriculum reform discourses develop from the interpretation-based educational culture and reflect an emphasis on experienced-based and student-centered models of learning and teaching, but the contextual curriculum realities are rooted in the transmission-based Confucian heritage culture with its emphasis on knowledge-based, textbook-based, and teacher-centered models of learning and teaching (Carless, 1999a). With insufficient supports, teachers have been expected to cope with professional and sociocultural adjustments and to alter classroom practices based on reforms derived from a different educational culture.

TESOL curriculum reforms as cultural challenge

Communicative proficiency in English has been widely regarded as a desirable goal within education systems throughout non-English speaking countries, and the instrumental benefits that such proficiency confers on both individuals and the society have provided a rationale for many TESOL curriculum reforms (Wedell, 2003). In general, curriculum planners have looked to Anglo-American countries as a source for educational ideas, and have imported these ideas into different educational contexts (Wedell, 2003). Although importing curriculum theories under some circumstances may be a positive trend and contribute to the improvement of English proficiency, some aspects of the theories may imply cultural challenges or incompatibilities that make them unsuitable for the host culture.

TESOL curriculum reforms in the Asia Pacific region are a case in point. Biggs (1996b) adopts the notion of “Confucian heritage culture” to refer to the educational systems of China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, which have been influenced by the tenets of Confucianism. Confucian heritage cultures usually follow the transmission model of education that regards the function of education as the passing on of a received body of facts, values, and procedures (Nunan, 2001). It emphasizes a knowledge-based, teacher-centered, and textbook-oriented mode of learning and teaching. TESOL curriculum reforms diverge from the teacher-dominated, transmission-oriented pattern, which has been prevalent in classrooms over the centuries. The reform discourses deriving from the interpretation-based culture emphasize an experiential model of learning

and teaching and regard the function of education as creating the conditions in which learners can recreate their own knowledge and skills (Nunan, 2001). This interpretation-based culture focused on an experience-based and student-centered organization of learning and teaching favors communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching.

TESOL curriculum reforms in the Asia Pacific region represent cultural challenges and require teachers to make dramatic changes. To probe the changes to English language teaching practice implied by curriculum change, Table 3 compares some fundamental differences between the transmission-based culture and the interpretation-based culture (Wedell, 2003, p.444).

Table 3: Some fundamental differences between educational cultures

Some fundamental differences between educational cultures Transmission based	Interpretation based
<p><i>Young and Lee (1984)</i> Language proficiency involves knowledge of a stable, finite, body of mostly factual content</p> <p>All learners need the same knowledge. The teacher's role is to be the expert and to transmit knowledge to the learners and test whether they have learned it</p> <p>The learner's role is to learn the knowledge transmitted by the teacher and demonstrate such learning when tested.</p>	<p>Language proficiency represents a learner's ability to appropriately organize their thoughts and their existing language knowledge, to express and understand meanings for their own purposes What people need to learn depends on their purposes for learning. The teacher's role is to devise and manage opportunities for learners to refine and develop their language knowledge and ability to use it through interaction with others The learner's role is to participate in, and contribute to decisions about, the opportunities to develop language knowledge and skill that the teacher makes available</p>
<p><i>Hofstede (1994)</i> Knowledge is clearly defined and there is one right answer to almost any question The purpose of education is to learn how to do things Learners are members of a group and speak only when spoken to.</p> <p>Teachers are the initiators of all classroom activity and should know all the answers</p>	<p>Knowledge has to be constructed and is arrived at through discussion The purpose of education is to learn how to learn Learners are a collection of individuals who are expected to express themselves Teachers are facilitators of learners' participation in the learning process and can admit ignorance.</p>

Thus, the shift from a transmission-based model of education to an interpretation-based model in the Asia Pacific region represents cultural challenges regarding the notion of knowledge, the purpose of education, learners' role and teachers' role. To be able to achieve the expected outcomes, English language teachers will need to make considerable adjustments to their existing professional beliefs and behaviors. In fact, cultural shifts will be required if curriculum changes are to succeed. While investments and efforts aimed at reform have made some progress in improving English language teaching, the literature has revealed many examples of TESOL curriculum reforms being adopted half-heartedly or not at all because the necessary professional and cultural changes were not realized (Carless, 1999a; Cheng & Wang, 2004; Hu, 2002).

The implementation of top-down curriculum reforms

Studies show the complexity of implementing any kind of major educational reforms and the lack of success of most attempts to do so (Bennett et al., 1992; O'Donoghue, 1995; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Fullan, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2001). The difficulties experienced by educational change planners and educational stakeholders remain widespread (Beretta, 1990). The challenges of implementing top-down reforms have been widely acknowledged, including the problematic nature of implementing a proposed curriculum, the complexities of and incongruent relationship between curriculum policy and its practice, and the complexity of interpreting curriculum change.

In general, the process of implementing a curriculum reform consists of two ways of change: top-down and bottom-up. The former involves the imposition of change backed by curriculum planners, and places emphasis on behavioral objectives and the product of curriculum development (Reid et al., 1987). Implementation in such cases can be described as the faithful following of a curriculum as a blueprint. Bottom-up reform, on the other hand, is related to “immanent change which occurs where both the recognition of the need for change and the origins of the ideas for change are internal to the local situation” (Markee, 1997, Cited in Todd, 2006, p. 2). Due to the emphasis of local factors, the implementers are likely to adapt the curriculum as they see fit, resulting in having a sense of ownership and commitment to the reform. This contrasts with top-down curriculum change where curriculum planners seek to alter classroom practices and teachers are required to alter perceptions of language, language learning and teaching, learner and teacher roles, classroom management techniques, assessment, and so on. As will be discussed below, top-down curriculum reforms have often been unsuccessful in significantly altering what happens in classrooms. Many TESOL curriculum reforms in the Asia Pacific region are a typical top-down curriculum change, and I attempt to identify the issues of implementing the top-down curriculum change.

Since the late 1970s, educators and researchers in education have pointed out the problematic nature of implementing top-down curriculum change (Snyder, Bolin&Zumwalt, 1992). The actual process of implementing curriculum change is described as “the black box” (O’Sullivan, 2002), in which challenges of

implementing curriculum change can arise. Many efforts have focused on the curriculum inputs and outputs, and the process of implementing change has been largely ignored. Although internal change is critical to the “black box,” curriculum planners have often focused on planning, which is an external element of change. The planners may have a clear awareness of the magnitude of the paradigm shift in the curriculum reform, but the actual policy directives lack concrete strategies for effective curriculum implementation and detail on how the shift is to be implemented in practice. The attention and energies of planners are focused on the ‘what’ of desired curriculum change, neglecting the ‘how’ of implementing curriculum change. Waters (2007) further indicates that TESOL curriculum reform projects (Li, 1998; Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Carless, 1998, 1999, 2002; Nunan, 2003; Weddell, 2003) are not always as successful as they might be because the primary focus of the reforms has tended to be on the design of the reform rather than the management of the implementation process.

Porter (1980) indicates that in educational change in the USA and Australia, policy planners pay more attention to creating policy and enacting the relevant legislation that seldom looks ahead to the implementation stage. With respect to developing countries, Verspoor (1989) noted in an analysis of 21 large-scale World Bank-supported educational change programs that there was a tendency to emphasize planning and to neglect implementation. More specifically, the World Bank spent 75% of its project time on planning and only 25% on actual implementation. Carson (2006) further suggests that the problematic nature of implementing curriculum change is directly related to the curriculum development

process, which focuses on curriculum outcomes rather than the implementation process. Many efforts are typically put toward developing a new curriculum, while implementing the curriculum change is regarded as an afterthought. Thus, implementing the curriculum change is seen as a lower order activity compared to curriculum planning and evaluation (Dove, 1986). Devoting inadequate efforts to the implementation process causes implementers to be confronted with unpredicted difficulties (Fullan, 1982, 1991, 2001; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

The complexities of and incongruent relationship between curriculum policy and its practice are indicators of implementation problems (Elmore & Sykes, 1992). Curriculum policy is not matched by the reality of what goes on in the classroom. Morris (1995) points out how a number of student-centered and/or discovery learning approaches originating in the West have produced a façade of change but limited actual impact on the classroom. Evans (1996) describes how the communicative approach became the official English syllabus in Hong Kong in 1983 but was never actually implemented on a wide scale in the classroom. Policy planners failed to take into account the unique features of the Hong Kong context with a teacher-centered and knowledge-oriented teaching approach, which worked against the implementation of a learner-centered, process-oriented teaching approach. The difficulties of implementing communicative approaches in other Asian contexts have also been discussed in the literature with respect to South Korea (Hui, 1997; Li, 1998) and Singapore (Cheah, 1998).

The studies regarding educational policy and practice (Nunan, 2003; Ho, 2004; Holiday, 1994; Li, 1998) point out that many educational systems there

have officially subscribed to some form of communicative language teaching in their top-down efforts to improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

However, there is almost invariably a gap between policy imperatives and classroom realities in those places. This gap prevents official methodological prescriptions and other policy directives from being implemented in many the local classrooms.

Thus, it is evident that implementing curriculum change is more complex than has often been anticipated (Brindley & Hood, 1990; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). This complexity can be understood from a multidirectional interpretation of language policy, as stakeholders at different levels interpret the curriculum change differently than was originally intended. First, policymakers may produce policies with good intentions, but these can result in negative reactions as the policies are implemented within the specific contexts of local institutions. Second, because policy translators and middle-level administrators may have their own interpretation of the policies, they are likely to encounter institutional or contextual constraints. Therefore, their attempt at implementing the policies from the top may not be realized. Finally, the complexity of implementing curriculum change may also be confounded by resistance from the main stakeholders, i.e., the teachers (Morris, 1985, 2002; Nisbet & Collins, 1978; Williams et al., 1994). Teachers may view the revised curriculum negatively or differently than intended (Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 1998), or they may appear to view change favorably but not incorporate curriculum changes into their actual classroom teaching for various reasons (Beretta, 1990; Gahin & Myhill, 2001). Carless (2004) also

mentions that teachers reinterpret the reform in light of their own knowledge and experience, resulting in curriculum change that is not likely to be immediately recognizable as the change originally conceived. But while classroom teachers are responsible for the successful implementation of curriculum change, they are often a neglected factor in the process of implementing curriculum change.

Difficulties encountered by teachers in top-down curriculum change

As mentioned above, due to such factors as the problematic nature of implementing top-down curriculum change, the complex relationship between curriculum policy and its practice, and the complexities of implementing curriculum change, teachers have encountered many problems in implementing top-down curriculum change. These problems have arisen at the level of the teachers' interpretations of the curriculum, both in terms of the content to be taught and learned, and the methods or procedures for teaching and learning. The teacher plays a major role in shaping the nature and extent of implementation, and in determining the classroom learning experiences that learners undergo.

Teachers are the most important stakeholders to affect the successful implementation and sustainability of curriculum reforms. There has recently been extensive discussion of the various difficulties encountered by teachers involved in top-down reforms (Ham & Sewing, 1987, 1988; Stevenson, 1987, 1993; Gough 1997) Collectively, these discussions point to such challenges as the lack of a sense of ownership, teachers' beliefs and attitudes, insufficient long-term teacher

education, the lack of materials and resources, the low language proficiency of teachers and students, and exam-centered assessment. These challenges are discussed in the sections that follow.

Lack of a sense of ownership

The definition of ownership refers to “the degree to which the participants feel that the innovation ‘belongs’ to them” (Kennedy, 1988, p. 338). If successful curriculum implementation is to take place, it is necessary to “engender a feeling of ownership among the teachers who will be involved in putting innovatory ideas into classroom practice” (Carless, 1997, p.358). The absence of teachers’ ownership of the reforms prevents teachers from being interested and involved in implementing curriculum change (Buchanan & Boddy, 1992; Carless, 1999b; Forsyth et al., 1999; Goh, 1999; Markee, 1997; Todd, 2006). One important part of ownership is a feeling that teachers play a role in policy-making decisions. However, in top-down curriculum reforms, teachers are often excluded from the decision-making process of the reform (Hirvela & Law, 1991). For example, Carless (1997) noted that the decision-makers in Hong Kong’s educational system have not adequately taken into account the feelings of teachers when making language policy decisions. The lack of such ownership is likely to result in teachers’ resistance to change. In these circumstances, teachers may become poor implementers of “other people’s ideas,” thus hindering curriculum change.

Also investigating the context of Hong Kong, Morris (2002) found that teachers did not develop any feeling of ownership towards a reform known as the

Target Oriented Curriculum. Many teachers did not perceive a need for change. In addition, curriculum change seemed to create a perception of being imported rather than based on research and experience specific to Hong Kong. Thus, the involvement of teachers was found to be at a low level, and the ensuing lack of commitment to the Target Oriented Curriculum from teachers resulted in a “wait and see” stance, with very few schools willing to commit themselves to the new curriculum (Morris, 2002). In discussing the Chinese context, Cheng & Wang (2004) point out that in a project in China the teachers could not reconcile their real needs with a newly mandated curriculum, and followed an alternative hidden curriculum because of the absence of teachers’ ownership of the curriculum change. Although they were supposedly adopting the new curriculum, the teachers subversively continued to do what they had been doing before.

Teachers’ beliefs and attitudes

Attitudes are defined as “the interplay of feelings, beliefs and thoughts about actions” (Rusch & Perry, 1999, p. 291). Teachers are the most local agents of curriculum change, and their attitudes and beliefs play a significant role in adopting, reinventing, or rejecting a new curriculum (Cuban, 1993; Doyle, 1992; Fang, 1996; Freeman, 1989, 1998; Reynolds & Saunders, 1987). Cuban (1993) shows the importance of transforming teachers’ attitudes towards teaching. In order to change teachers’ instructional approaches, teachers’ attitudes must be transformed. When insufficient consideration is given to transforming teachers’ attitudes towards the nature of teaching and learning, teachers’ roles, etc.,

resistance to change is likely to occur (Brown & McIntyre, 1987; Young & Lee, 1987).

In China, there has often been an incompatibility between teachers' attitudes and the principles of curriculum change. This is due in part to curriculum reforms that have been described as top-down with changes being imposed by high-level bureaucrats and teachers merely expected to implement the decisions that are handed down to them (Markee, 1997). Thus, curriculum reforms have often encountered teachers' entrenched traditional attitudes towards language, teaching and learning, the role of teacher and learner, and classroom management. Research into teachers' attitudes (Morris, 1985, 1988; Young & Lee, 1985, 1987; Richards et al. 1992) and observations of local classrooms (Morris, 1988) indicate that teachers believe their main role is to transmit knowledge and information to students. Morris (1988) addresses that more learner-centered or discovery-oriented approaches are considered to be dysfunctional for the examination-oriented approaches in Hong Kong. Karavas-Doukas (1995) discusses teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the learning process are, to a large extent, incompatible with the principles of curriculum change. Not surprisingly, this reduces the extent of implementing communicative teaching in the classroom. On the other hand, in a Hong Kong survey, Clark et al. (1999) mention that teachers expressed tentatively positive views towards task-based language teaching and that they developed more positive sentiments after trying it out. This finding suggests that positive attitudes can create the conditions for change.

Related to attitudes is what Prabhu (1987) termed “plausibility.” Prabhu defines a teacher’s sense of plausibility as his or her own understanding of what results in students’ learning. Research indicates that teachers’ sense of plausibility to a new teaching method promoted by curriculum reform is crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of reform (Kelly, 1980; Markee, 1997; Li, 1998). Prabhu (1987, 1990) points out that two factors are often neglected by teachers carrying out the recommended teaching method in curriculum implementation: one is that teachers must have a sense of plausibility about the method they adopt, and the other is that each teacher's sense of plausibility is active during the process of implementing curriculum change. Teachers often lack a sense of plausibility to a new method because there is an apparent contradiction between the teaching method and the contextual reality, including large classes, whole-class teaching, examination-driven teaching, focusing on content rather than process, and emphasizing memorization.

Research conducted in the Asia Pacific region suggests that a number of attempts to introduce communicative or task-based approaches to language teaching have often proven problematic because of teachers’ sense of plausibility: in South Korea (Li, 1998); in Hong Kong (Carless, 1999a; Evans, 1996); in Japan (Browne & Wada, 1998; Gorsuch, 2001); in China (Hui, 1997; Liao, 2000); in Vietnam (Ellis, 1996; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996); and in Indonesia (Tomlinson, 1990). For example, Li (1998) shows the difficulties of implementing a new teaching method from Western countries and indicates that the teachers’ perceptions of the feasibility of a new teaching method within their particular

context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of the innovation. This suggests that change agents must study teachers' perceptions of an innovation to ensure its success.

Insufficient long-term teacher education

In-service training is an essential preparation for a new curriculum, and long-term training is a critical factor for the sustainability of implementing curriculum changes. Teachers need ongoing professional development to gain new skills and knowledge, particularly when the required methodology is highly different from the existing one. Gross et al. (1971) indicated that when teachers are not equipped to deal with the implications of a new curriculum, they are likely to revert to the security of their previous behavior and the desired change may not take place. With insufficient professional development, even teachers initially enthusiastic about an innovation can become frustrated by problems in implementation and eventually turn against the project. Teacher education, therefore, needs to be ongoing and developmental (Brindley & Hood, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). A similar view has also been expressed in the more general educational and organizational change literature (Fullan, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2001; Hatch, 1997; Hayes, 2002). Key aspects of ongoing teacher education include the need for fundamental concepts and principles of the new curriculum to be introduced, clarified, modified, and then localized so that they become more connected to actual classroom practice.

The lack of materials and resources

Curriculum reforms require adequate materials and resources in order to be implemented successfully. Research shows that teachers have difficulties in finding appropriate textbooks, materials and equipment that correspond to new educational approaches (Hurst, 1983; Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989). Curriculum reforms are often rejected because of the lack of resources. Fullan and Miles (1992) point out that change demands additional resources for training, new materials, new space, and, above all, time. To some extent, “change is ‘resource-hungry’ because of what it represents – developing solutions to complex problems, learning new skills, arriving at new insights, all carried out in a social setting already overloaded with demands. Such serious personal and collective development necessarily demands resources” (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 750). In non-English speaking environments such as China, there is often a lack of authentic materials that are well suited to experience-based and task-based language teaching.

The low language proficiency of teachers and learners

Li (1998) shows that the lack of teacher English language proficiency is another factor which might inhibit the implementation of communicative approaches. Moreover, in her survey, Korean teachers perceived that the low language proficiency of their students was a further barrier to the implementation of the communicative approach. Similarly, Greek teachers perceived that young, inexperienced, beginning students were not capable of responding to the demands of a communicative approach (Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 1998). Carless (2003)

suggests that both in Hong Kong and in other EFL contexts, a lack of English language confidence or proficiency can sometimes inhibit teachers from attempting more open-ended task-based activities.

Exam-centered assessment

In centralized educational systems such as those in China, Japan, and Korea, there is often an emphasis on large-scale standardized assessments of student achievement. Within these circumstances, the perceived risk of an adverse impact on learning achievement is an important source of resistance to change. This seems particularly relevant in contexts where teachers perceive themselves to be under pressure to prepare students for internal or external examinations. Many teachers resist reforms because they fear that students might receive lower exam scores since communicative and experiential approaches to language learning do not seem to correspond well to the types of language knowledge that are assessed in most large-scale exams. For example, Li (1998) analyzed perceptions of barriers to the implementation of communicative approaches in South Korea and found that because of the need to prepare students for grammar-based tests, teachers devoted considerable time to teaching test-taking skills or drilling students on multiple choice grammar items.

In the Korean context, it was perceived that teachers had little time available to carry out communicative tasks. Similarly, in the Hong Kong context, there also appeared to be a perception amongst Hong Kong English teachers that there was pressure to complete the syllabus or textbook according to the exam requirements, which impacted on the time available to carry out activities and

tasks (Carless & Gordon, 1997). Assessment influences what is taught and how much time is devoted to which language aspects. In the Asia Pacific region, national standardized tests are an instructional focus and clearly determine classroom content. In addition, assessment influences how teachers teach. When assessments are not closely aligned with syllabus guidelines, they constrain curriculum reforms in a negative way. Lin (2003) indicates that the biggest concern with respect to implementing a new English curriculum reform in Singapore had to do with testing. The national test there continues to have a heavy emphasis on testing discrete-sentence-or word-level linguistic knowledge in fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice questions. Teachers remain anxious as to whether teaching according to the new curriculum would be practical.

The English Curriculum Standard reform as cultural shift

The ideas underlying the English Curriculum Standard represent important cultural shifts: from a transmission model of education to an experiential model and from a centralized education system to a more decentralized one. English language teaching in China will need to shift from a knowledge-based, teacher-centered, and textbook-oriented mode of learning and teaching to an experience-based and student-centered one. These cultural shifts challenge traditional practice with respect to the notion of education, teaching and learning, the role of teachers and learners, and textbooks.

First and foremost, the English Curriculum Standard challenges the very notion of education in China. The Chinese conceptualization of education has

long been influenced by Confucian heritage culture (Biggs, 1996b; Lee, 1996; Scollon, 1999). Within this cultural framework, education is regarded as “a process of knowledge accumulation rather than as a process of using knowledge for immediate purposes,” and adopts “a mimetic or epistemic model of teaching” that focuses on knowledge transmission (Hu, 2005b, p.653). In China, learning is viewed as a knowledge-accumulating process. Knowledge has been popularly held to reside in written texts, especially classics and authoritative works (Scollon, 1999; Wang, 2001; Hu, 2005b). In contrast, the English Curriculum Standard emphasizes that students are negotiators, discoverers, and contributors of knowledge and information. The main principle of the English Curriculum Standard advocates a learner-centered teaching approach such as task-based language teaching and plays down the acquisition of authoritative knowledge.

Second, the English Curriculum Standard transforms the notion of teachers and teaching. It seeks to make teaching interactive rather than teacher-dominated and characterized by the traditional Chinese epistemic model based on the transmission of knowledge principally through an imitative and repetitive process (Paine, 1992; Tang & Absalom, 1998; Hu, 2005b). Under the traditional model, the teacher selects points of knowledge, presents, analyses, and elaborates on these points for the students, and delivers the knowledge for the students to memorize, repeat, and understand. The immediate application of the knowledge taught may not be transparent to the students, and to master the knowledge is essential for laying a foundation to use it in future. Thus, the focus of teaching is not on how students can create, construct, and apply knowledge in an experiential

approach, but on how extant authoritative knowledge can be transmitted and internalized in a most effective and efficient way (Brick, 1991; Jin & Cortazzi, 1995, 2006; Hu, 2005b). The ‘learn by using/doing’ approach promoted by the interactive model in the English Curriculum Standard challenges the traditional ‘learn to use’ philosophy.

Third, the conceptualization of learners and learning will be altered. In the Confucian heritage culture, learning is a process of reception, repetition, review, and reproduction (Hu, 2005b). Learners are considered to be in class to receive language rather than to construct it. They are expected to receive and retain the knowledge imparted by their teachers and textbooks (Paine, 1991). To acquire knowledge and understanding, learners need to study repeatedly what they do not understand (Marton et al., 1996). The belief in the role of repetition in helping to bring out understanding is reflected in the Chinese saying, ‘read one hundred times, and the meaning will emerge’. Furthermore, learners review what they have received and repeated not only to consolidate learning but also to gain new knowledge and to deepen understanding. Finally, learners are able to reproduce accurately the transmitted textual knowledge on demand for the teacher or on tests (Paine, 1992; Rao, 1996). Clearly, there are tensions between these culturally-rooted perceptions of learning and the English Curriculum Standard that promotes student-centeredness, constant exposure to large quantities of new material, and a critical transformation of knowledge.

Further related to the role of learners in the traditional culture is an emphasis on pursuing ever more knowledge, because a precondition for being a

good learner is to know more (Paine, 1990). In line with the transmission model of teaching, students maintain a high level of receptiveness, wholeheartedly embracing the knowledge from their teacher or books. They are expected to respect and cooperate with their teacher (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996b) and not to challenge the transmitted knowledge or present their own ideas until they have mastered sufficient knowledge to make informed judgments (Brick, 1991). In addition, students are required to be mentally active (rather than verbally active), intolerant of ambiguity, and to strive for precision in understanding. Because of these expectations and the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, Chinese students may feel uneasy in a more egalitarian communicative learning environment and find it difficult to suspend their beliefs to engage in light-hearted learning activities on the one hand and critical self-expression on the other.

Finally, the English Curriculum Standard represents a cultural shift from a centralized education system to a more decentralized one. Generally speaking, educational systems in China, where the collective takes precedence over the individual, have traditionally taken a centralized approach with central governments developing, designing, and executing policies and standards for school finance, curriculum, textbooks, assessment, and teacher preparation. With the move of China's economy towards a market-oriented model, Chinese governments are finding a centralized approach to education failing to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse population. The educational decentralization measures in China are a consequence of the market-oriented economic reform that started in the late 1970s. With a shift away from the centrally planned economy,

there were some accompanying measures of decentralization within the educational system. These include devolution of authority in the areas of management and financing for education.

One cannot decentralize the operation of schools without a certain amount of decentralization in the curriculum; hence, another area of educational decentralization in China is that of the curriculum and the textbooks. The new curriculum reform is a decentralization reform, and gives more freedom to the local authority. According to teaching hours, the national curriculum occupies 80%, provincial curricula account for 15%, and the local school curriculum occupies the remaining 5%. The Ministry of Education (MOE) sets guidelines for curriculum design by the provinces, but otherwise does not interfere in their autonomy. Likewise, each school may set its own school-based curriculum.

In addition, with the adoption of the English Curriculum Standard, the right to publish school course books is no longer monopolized by the state-owned People's Education Press. In the past, no other publishing houses were allowed to publish school course books. At present, any publishing house can publish school course books provided that they are of good quality and thus approved by the MOE. Schools all over the country have the freedom to choose from those course books approved by the Ministry of Education for the different courses. So far, there are about 10 sets of textbooks being used in the country. Each province may also organize and examine textbooks according to its provincial curriculum. But if the textbooks go beyond the provincial boundary, the provinces have to apply for approval from the MOE.

Retaining aspects of Confucian heritage culture in the face of curriculum reform

The English Curriculum Standard reform encompasses a broad vision based on the principles of learner-centered education and related changes to the curriculum, modes and focus of instruction, and assessment. The reform clearly acknowledges a desire to shift from the transmission of knowledge to learning how to learn, i.e., establishing a new culture of learning and teaching. This is a significant shift in thinking regarding the role of education and a preferred mode of instruction – task-based language teaching. However, questions must be raised about the cultural relevance of the reform and cultural continuity in the face of the reform. It is important to consider whether there might be aspects of Confucian heritage that one may wish to retain in the face of curriculum reform.

With respect to teaching and the role of the teacher in the traditional Confucian heritage culture, teachers are expected to act as moral models and relate students' intellectual development to their moral and personal development. A good teacher should not only perform well in teaching and learning, but also perform well in other aspects of life, the so-called *Wei Ren Shi Biao* (a set phrase in Chinese, which means teaching as well as cultivating good persons). Thus, teachers should have deep knowledge, be able to answer questions, and be good moral models.

Western curriculum theories believe in exploring first, then in the development of skill; Confucian heritage culture believes in skill development first, which typically involves repetitive learning (as opposed to rote learning), after which there is something to be creative with. Teachers in Confucian heritage

culture regard their task as posing provocative questions, allowing reflection time, and varying techniques to suit individual students: Confucius' "elicitation" mode.

Regarding learning and the role of learner, Confucian heritage culture views learning as increasing one's knowledge, as memorizing and reproducing, as applying, as understanding, as seeing something in a different way, and as changing a person (Hu, 2002b). A particular aspect of the paradox of Confucian heritage culture is the relationship between memorizing and understanding. It is a commonly held opinion that Confucianism emphasizes rote-learning, and, in fact, memorization is considered a significant part of learning in the Confucian tradition. However, memorization should not be equated with rote learning, since it is never regarded as an end in itself but as a prelude to deeper understanding. In situations such as preparing for an examination or a performance, memorizing lines or already understood facts may be required to ensure success and is considered to be a deep-learning approach (Hu, 2002b).

In addition, Confucian heritage culture does not see memorizing and understanding as separate but rather as interlocking processes, and high quality learning outcomes usually require both processes. Confucian heritage culture draws a clearer distinction between the rote learning process (mechanical learning without meaning) and repetition for deep memorizing of content. Whereas memorization in Western countries is associated with rote learning and a lack of understanding, memorization in Asian countries is seen as an integral component of understanding (Hu, 2002b).

Finally, with respect to promoting reflection and enquiry, Confucian traditions of learning and teaching emphasize deep as opposed to superficial knowledge. As education in the Confucian tradition is considered important for its intrinsic value, it is by nature inclined towards a deep approach rather than a surface approach to learning. There is emphasis on the significance of reflective thinking in the process of learning in the Confucian tradition. Apart from suggesting that seeking knowledge and thinking are two sides of the same coin, the Confucian conception of learning is, indeed, a process of “studying extensively, enquiring carefully, pondering thoroughly, sifting clearly, and practicing earnestly” (The Mean, XX.19). The emphasis on reflective thinking in learning requires a spirit of enquiry and open-mindedness.

Although the Confucian values of collectivism and conformity are often stressed in education, it should be noted that Confucius also emphasized individuality in learning, “learning for the sake of the self.” Education is only meaningful if it leads to the perfection of the self, and the purpose of learning is, therefore, to cultivate oneself as an intelligent, creative, independent, autonomous, and an authentic being. Confucius also “promoted reflection and inquiry” in the learning process. The Chinese term “knowledge” is made up of two characters: “One is ‘*xue*’ (to learn) and the other is ‘*wen*’ (to ask). This means that the action of enquiring and questioning is central to the quest for knowledge. Confucius himself saw learning as involving deep thought: “seeing knowledge without thinking is labor lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous” (Analects II. 15).

Insufficient consideration of helping teachers adjust to dramatic changes

The discussion above shows that the new English Curriculum Standard and the traditional curriculum based on Confucian heritage culture are in potential misalignment in several respects. Successful implementation of the curriculum change will involve teachers engaging in transformative work in several areas – changes to the nature of teaching and learning, assumptions about the respective roles of teachers and students, the different classroom organization, and so on. These changes constitute major transitions for teachers, and these transitions are opening up opportunities as well as challenges for English language teaching. While the reform is playing a positive role in the effectiveness and improvement of English language teaching in China, it is evident that during this transitional period the reform has placed more demands on teachers, and these changes may pose many difficulties for teachers in their practice. In any attempts to improve education, teachers are central to long-lasting changes (Frymier, 1987; Fullan, 1993). How to assist teachers as the end users of curriculum reform in facing the difficulties, anxiety, and concerns is a crucial factor in the ultimate success or failure of the innovation.

Enormous investments of time and money have been, and continue to be, made in trying to implement English language curriculum change throughout all of China. And yet, the question of how to help teachers face the challenges of implementing curriculum change is an important area which has not received sufficient attention. One important reason is policy planners' tendency to focus on curriculum design while failing to adequately consider what support classroom

teachers will need, when they will need them and for how long, if they are to be helped to make the adjustments.

Neglect of the change process is at the heart of the lack of success of most social reforms. The change process means how people experience change as distinct from how it might have been intended (Fullan, 1991, p. 4). Riley (2000) indicates that although teachers are the key stakeholders in the curriculum change process, the planning of curriculum change in English language teaching has usually taken insufficient note of the need to support the key stakeholder. There is little doubt that English curriculum reform is playing a positive role in China's English language teaching effectiveness and improvement. However, it is also clear that anxiety, difficulties, and uncertainties are accompanying the progress of this reform. It is necessary to bear in mind that a teacher is a person, not a machine, and that it is possible for teachers to be weighed down by excessive expectations and workloads. How to negotiate educational change at site level is an inevitable challenge for school teachers. Understanding teachers' experiences is crucial if adequate practical solutions are to be found to the problems that stand in the way of the effective implementation of a top-down curriculum.

Previous research has identified a number of challenges in curriculum reform in China, including teaching resources, teaching methods, teacher education, and the evaluation system, which may account for the failure or success of curriculum implementation. While identifying such factors has

contributed to English education, previous research has not adequately taken into account the significance of teachers' anxiety, difficulties, and uncertainties in curriculum implementation from the perspectives of cultural factors and teachers' identities. The metaphor of the third space is a useful framework for exploring the relationships among curriculum, culture, and identity; thus, my research will investigate the challenges of teachers from these perspectives, and will consider how the perspectives are interrelated.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

The discussion above shows that the new English Curriculum Standard reform and traditional English language teaching practice are in potential conflict in several respects, including the different philosophies about the nature of teaching and learning, the contrary assumptions about the respective roles of teachers and students, the different classroom organization, and so on. Given these fundamental sociocultural differences, it appears that reform attempts aim to sweep away traditional English language teaching practices and to implant the new English Curriculum Standard in their place. When Western curriculum theories are integrated and fused into curriculum reform in China, they give rise to significant challenges within Confucian heritage culture. Zhang (2007) explains that there are three typical views on the importation of Western curriculum theories in China: one that includes a Chinese cultural standard, one involving total and uncritical westernization, and one that seeks the reconciliation between Eastern and Western culture and curriculum theory. Negotiating a path between innovation and tradition involves the need to study carefully the opposing directions and wisely realize their limits and their scopes. Zhang (2007) further points out that a possible way out of this predicament is to have continuous intercultural conversations within platforms of curriculum studies. It is important to take cultural continuity into account in the process of implementing the new English Curriculum Standard based on Western curriculum theories into the practice of Confucian heritage culture.

The notion of the third space is a bridge between tradition and innovation. It provides an opportunity to explore how teachers have adopted, adapted, and integrated the English Curriculum Standard to suit their own situation, and takes into account teachers' previous experience and their adjustments to learning and teaching in classrooms. It not only focuses on how teachers experience these dramatic changes, but also provides an opportunity to hear teachers' voices. Without teachers' willingness, understanding, cooperation, and participation, there can be no changes. English language teaching and learning in China cannot be changed overnight. Teachers need to have more supports to shape the nature and extent of implementation between tradition and innovation, between theory and practice, and between the traditional Confucian heritage cultural practices and Western curriculum theories. In this section, I will begin by providing a detailed presentation and discussion of the notion of the third space that informs my research. I will then provide insight into how the notion of the third space is valuable in seeking a greater understanding of my topic.

The notion of the third space

In this section, I will describe the development of the notion of the third space. I will begin by briefly introducing the post-colonial concept of the third space conceived by Homi K. Bhabha (1990, 1994, 1995). Second, I will introduce the concept as further developed by Ted. T. Aoki. Finally, I will explain the third space as constructed by Hongyu Wang.

The notion of the third space, conceived by Homi K. Bhabha (1995), refers to the zone in which cultural translation and cultural hybridity give birth to “something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (p. 211). The concept of hybridity means a transformation into a positive condition of cultural change and creativity, which challenges fixed or essentialist accounts of identity and culture (Bhabha, 1995). Identity is formed through an encounter with cultural differences.

Within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion, the third space opens up a space for transferring cultures and negotiating difference. The third space is a mode of articulation, and a way of describing a productive space that engenders new possibility (Bhabha, 1995,). It is also an interruptive and interrogative space of new forms of cultural production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity (Bhabha, 1994). According to Bhabha (1994), this hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no primordial unity or fixity. The third space is an interstitial space and a time for conflict and negotiation, and thus supports the emergence of new positions, structures, and activities.

The notion of the third space, as further developed by T. T. Aoki (1986/1991, 1992, & 1996), makes curriculum implementation traverse the theory-practice divide and dwell within the space between theory and practice. It reconceptualizes curriculum, moves away from the curriculum-as-plan to the curriculum-as-lived, and dwells between the two. It moves away from the

identity-centered “East and West” and into the space of *between* East and West. Aoki’s third space is the space of difference, the space of meeting, and the space of tension. Aoki (1996) regards the third space as a bridge where “we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges lure us to linger” (p. 316).

In the past, there was a dichotomizing of theory and practice, accompanied by the assumption that people should know theory first and then apply it to practice. In the traditional field, “implementation” was the moment of the “application” of theory to practice, and practice came to resemble theory. Aoki critiques the concept of curriculum implementation as instrumental action and proposes an alternative view of implementation as situational praxis. Praxis means “reflection (thought) and action (practice) upon the world in order to transform it” (Aoki, 1983, p. 119). The view of implementation as situational praxis is based on human experience within the classroom situation. Aoki (1983) points out that the instrumental view of curriculum implementation neglects the interpretive activities the teacher is engaged in when he or she encounters curriculum, and emphasizes the producer-consumer paradigm (a business metaphor). In this process, theory and practice are in a linear relationship. Aoki traverses theory and practice, understanding that praxis requires an estrangement from the dichotomized view of “theory and practice,” and sees them as twin moments of the same reality. Rather than seeing theory as leading into practice, we need to see it as a reflective moment in praxis. In action-oriented language, praxis is action done reflectively, and reflection on what is being done.

Aoki's third space reconceptualizes curriculum, and provides an opportunity to understand the lived situation of teachers as dwelling in the difference between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. On the one hand, Aoki (1986/1991) describes the relationship that teachers have with curriculum as being the "curriculum as planned." The planned curriculum refers to the responsibility that teachers pay attention to objectives, textbooks and other forms of instructional support, and evaluation according to the curriculum. The implementation of classroom activities is represented as a rationally planned action. On the other hand, Aoki (1986/1991) describes the relationship that teachers have with curriculum as being the "curriculum as lived." The lived curriculum refers to the responsibility that teachers have for taking account of the planned curriculum, but also for how it is received in the context of the history, the community, and the character of the students in their actual classrooms. Aoki (1992) suggests teaching is "an embodied doing and being – thought and soul in oneness of the lived moment" (p. 196). The lived curriculum provides an opportunity for teachers to understand what is happening to them and their students. To be a teacher is to live in the uncomfortable space of tension between the curriculum-as-plan, and the curriculum-as-lived. Either only following the plan or ignoring the plan fundamentally violates what it means to be a teacher. A teacher must live in both worlds. This is the tension within which he or she inevitably dwells as a teacher. In the third space, the essential characteristic of teaching is teaching as watchfulness and teaching as thoughtfulness. Aoki (1996) considers what teaching might mean in tensioned spaces of both "and/not-and,"

which he calls “a space of conjoining and disrupting, indeed, a generative space of possibilities, a space wherein in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges” (p. 318). It explores the living “in-between,” and senses the challenges of teachers who are caught between what they feel they must do and what they think they ought to do.

Aoki’s third space moves away from the identity-centered “East and West” and into the space between East and West, and thereby proposes a lived space of both conjunction and disjunction. He suggests that in these “third spaces” the notion of “identity” is no mere depiction of the vertical, but more so “identification,” a becoming in the space of difference (Aoki, 1996). This is a generative space of possibilities and a space where the newness emerges. Aoki argues that the term “East and West” connotes “separate preexisting entities” and focuses instead on the “image” of “crossing” between East and West, an image suggesting the “cross-cultural, emphasizing movement in getting across from one culture to another” by the transportation infrastructure of a bridge (Aoki, 1996, p. 316). The third space is the space of difference, a space of meeting, and a space of tension.

When speaking of his identity as a Japanese-Canadian, Aoki prefers to dwell on the hyphen, on the space between being Japanese and Canadian. He articulates the possibility of identity “in-between” two nouns. This position of the subject suggests dwelling in tensions in the realm of between, in the tensions of difference. Thus, it is “not so much the elimination of differences, but, more so, the attunement of the quality of the tensions of differences that makes a difference” (Aoki, 1987, p. 354). In dwelling in this space, the question is not to get rid of

tension, but to seek appropriately attuned tension. The notion of identity is seen as a becoming in the space of difference.

Wang (2004) further adopts the notion of the third space to provide a cross-cultural study of both identity and curriculum. Through initiating conversations among Michel Foucault, Confucius, and Julia Kristeva, and interweaving her own biography, memories, cultural stories and identity, Wang meditates on the notions of self, home, and difference, and searches for a creative third space for transformation and creativity of curriculum and identity. During the interactive dialogue between Chinese and Western culture, she points out a creative third space, in which “both parts of a conflicting double... interact with and transform each other, especially through the multiplicity of the self, giving rise to new realms of inter/subjectivity” (Wang, 2004, p.16). It is a transformative space that can create a conversation between both cultures, and the aim is not to achieve consensus, but to achieve a richer and deeper understanding of both and still keep their unique qualities.

Wang conceptualizes the third space as dynamic and fluid, ever-changing, open-ended, and unpredictable, playing with the unknown—psychic, social, and cosmic. She emphasizes the opening to creativity through interaction between conflicting doubles in a third space (2007). She states that the notion of a third space reflects her struggle to convey the complexity of intercultural understanding and the intercultural dynamic moves through gendered identity. The double between two cultures and between different identities makes her search for a third space in which “multiplicity, relationality, and creativity are in motion to

regenerate one another” (Wang, 2007, p.390). In the third space, it enables differences to mutually transform each other without reaching any final fusion. She emphasizes the openness and multiplicity of the third space. It moves between, beyond, and with the dual forces simultaneously and indicates “the continual birth of a certain newness along the way in a never-ending process which is circular rather than linear” (Wang, 2007, p. 390).

Wang sets out her research as a “‘journey of creating home, in a third space” (Wang, 2004, p. 1) and presents an elegant and insightful journey into cross-cultural self formation. Wang chooses Foucault’s creativity and Confucius’ relationality and proposes a third space between Chinese and Western cultures. The notion of the third comes from the need for building some sort of bridge-- between these two thinkers across time and space to form a conflicting double for her.

Wang’s experiences of walking into the West make her look for a third space beyond self and other, especially if both stay at the level of ideal. She shows that the cross-cultural and intercultural contacts and conversations both within the self and with others have given her “a new eye, a ‘third eye’ ... enabling me to see both worlds differently ... in order to create new spaces of individuality, subjectivity, and relationality” (Wang, 2004, p. 73). This space is in constant motion, being constantly reformed and transformed by new experiences. The third space embodies Wang’s struggles with Chinese and American identities: Wang is a Chinese citizen who moved to America to study, and after spending a significant time in America, developed an American identity that cannot be reconciled with

her Chinese identity. The two are not opposed, but neither are they able to be integrated into a hyphenated, blended identity.

Studying and teaching in America as an alien, Wang positions herself in “a creative third space” (Wang, 2004) which embraces contradictions and ambiguity to address the complicated issue of identity across the conflicting doubles of culture and gender so that new subjectivities can be generated. Situated on the margin of two cultures, going back and forth between different worlds, and struggling with an in-between realm, she is in a constant search for a cross-cultural identity which is neither confined within one space nor trapped between two spaces. No longer trapped within, or between, Wang searches for a new realm in which an either-or dichotomy, an in-between clash, and a both-and parallel are challenged to make possible mutual transformation and creation of different cultures.

In her opinion, the third space is both an “inter” space and a “trans” space since it values an ever-changing in-between space and the necessity to go beyond the boundary. Wang explains that the moment of going across leads to the birth of the new but this newness is co-creative as it comes from the interaction between doubles to enable other positions and new sites. In a third space, identity, self, and subjectivity are not universal concepts but are destabilized in an ongoing process of becoming and emergence. The post-colonial and post-structural subject does not stay within one place, but travels in between and across different terrains. In such a space, contradictions are not only acknowledged and accepted but also put into movement to enable new layers of the self. Trapped between two very

different cultures with the shadows of their own gender stories, Wang (2004) points out that she is forever lost until she realizes she needs to go beyond the “in-between” into a new space. The process of coming to terms with her own strangeness brought forth by “the other” gradually leads her into a third space, which gives birth to a new sense of self, a self neither confined by national or cultural identity nor losing its own spiritual roots, a self hosting and transforming ambiguity.

In this space, the dual forces open to each other and transform each other, thus the identity is no longer fixed. The self in the third space is fluid and continues to grow and develop as a person experiences new things in different contexts. Wang provides many insights on education. The real purpose of education should be to better understand/create the self/others and better relate to the self/society. It redefines the role for both the teacher and the student, discusses a new relationship between the students and the teacher, offers a new level of understanding of teaching and learning, and provides a new approach towards curriculum. Most importantly, it gives us guidance on how we can live and learn from each other in harmony despite all the differences of race, ethnicity, gender, nation, language, background, or experience.

The third space in the context of methodology

The technological and economic effects of globalization involve a great cross-fertilization of ideas between countries and cultures. Adopting ideas from

other educational contexts may be a positive trend under certain circumstances, but the imported curricula may contain aspects that render them unsuitable for the host culture (Pennycook, 1989; Holliday, 1994, 1997; Carless, 1998, 1999a, 2004). Dimmock (1998) mentions that policy cloning enables the process of policy formulation to be completed speedily, but pays little attention to the receptivity of the host culture to the imported policy. Holliday (1994) adopts a medical analogy of tissue rejection to describe the failure of a transplanted educational innovation. The innovation does not become an effectively functioning part of the system to which it is implanted, due to a failure to mesh the respective characteristics of donor and receiver.

This kind of failure to import curricula successfully has been common within the East Asian context. Curriculum-makers have often looked to Anglo-American countries as a source of educational ideas but curriculum reforms have frequently failed to take root in Asia (Morris, 1984, 1992, 1997, 2002; Evans, 1996; Hui, 1997; Li, 1998; Cheah, 1998; Morris & Lo, 2000). Although the lack of resources, insufficient long-term teacher training, entrenched teacher attitudes, and lack of ownership of change result in the failure of curriculum innovations to achieve long-lasting change, cultural aspects have been acknowledged to play a crucial part in the curriculum implementation process (Carless, 1999a; Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994, 1997; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). Top-down curriculum changes fail to provide the support for the transition of the differences between transmission-based culture and interpretation-based culture.

Wedell (2009) shows that educational change is complex change involving a degree of ‘reculturing’ (Fullan, 2007). Education systems have a culture with a longstanding and widely agreed way of thinking about the meaning of terms like *education, knowledge, teaching, or learning*. An educational culture is situated at a particular point along one or more continua. Four possible characteristics of any educational culture are adapted from Hofstede (1994) and shown in Table 4. Although Wedell (2009) labels the two ends of each continuum transmission based and interpretation based, he points out that “few educational cultures are consistently situated at either extreme” (p.39).

Table 4: Four possible characteristics of educational culture (Wedell, 2009, p. 40)

Transmission based		Interpretation based
Knowledge is clearly defined and there is one right answer to almost any question.	What knowledge is _____	Knowledge is dynamic and is arrived at through discussion
The purpose of education is to learn knowledge	The purpose of education _____	The purpose of education is to learn how to learn
Learners are members of a group and speak only when spoken to	Learners _____	Learners are a collection of individuals who are expected to express themselves
Teachers are the initiators of classroom activity and should know all the answers	Teachers _____	Teachers are there to support learners’ participation in the learning process and can admit ignorance

Curriculum changes often involve teachers altering aspects of their familiar professional practice. It is important to support teachers who move from the practices and beliefs typical of a transmission-based culture towards those of an

interpretation based culture. The use of such new practices would hopefully result in changes to beliefs and practice.

The third space offers a framework for exploring English language teachers' experiences in the new curriculum change, and provides opportunities to explore how English language teachers traverse the space between tradition and innovation, between curriculum and pedagogy, and between theory and practice. The English Curriculum Standard reform represents a cultural shift from a transmission-based culture to an interpretation-based culture and from educational centralization to greater decentralization. English language teachers in secondary schools in China are facing many changes as a result of this reform.

Frankl (2006) mentions that between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. Between the top-down new curriculum change and the teachers' daily practice, there is a space. In that space is teachers' power to choose their response. In their response lies their growth and their development. In my research, the notion of the third space refers to the possibilities of a "new" hybrid space, in which teachers have the freedom to choose. In this hybrid space, it is possible to explore teachers' unheard voice about the new curriculum change, inspire teachers to develop their own voice, and search for a third alternative. The third alternative is not a Western way, or an Eastern way, or not a compromise between a Western way and an Eastern way, but a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western approaches to fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching. For a situation

that people are no longer able to change, when they change the way they look at things, the things they look at change (Dyer, 2007). The third alternative emphasizes the importance of helping teachers to find their own voice, make their decision and seek the appropriate teaching method in their practice and thus to teach at their fullest potential. The goal is not to get rid of or overcome the differences or challenges, but to dwell in the third space, and take opportunities to improve English language teaching.

The notion of the third space will be used to refer to a metaphorical hybrid between Western curriculum theories and traditional Confucian heritage culture practices, between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, and between Western and Eastern cultures. Dwelling within this metaphorical space starts with listening to the teachers' unheard voice for the new curriculum change; then it involves inspiring teachers to develop their own voice between tradition and innovation; and finally it means searching for cultural continuity and cultural creativity, that is, to explore a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western approaches and fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching. Therefore, teachers may encounter differences, difficulties, and uncertainties that accompany the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard, though not necessarily overcome or eliminate the differences and tensions. The research will focus on the challenges in classroom teaching on a day-to-day basis, including dwelling in the tensions between the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum, traversing the

conflicts between tradition and innovation, and recreating teachers' identity and a new intercultural English methodology between tradition and innovation.

The value of the third space for understanding curriculum reform in China

In the face of the English Curriculum Standard reform and the cultural shifts that it represents, the third space provides opportunities for considering teachers' contextual realities and how they experience change. When top-down planned curriculum is carried out, it is interpreted by teachers in specific contexts according to their underlying beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. Thus, the lived curriculum – what happens to the learners in the classroom – is different from the planned and intended curriculum. The notion of the third space can encompass the two horizons and provide the chance to investigate teachers' experience related to running the classroom on a day-to-day basis.

This study not only focuses on the “what” of a new curriculum and how this curriculum is implemented as a plan but also emphasizes hearing the voices of teachers. It will explore teachers' understanding of the principles of curriculum reform, and their evaluations of the theoretical underpinnings. At the same time, it will investigate teachers' own local rationale for why they do what they do, and their feeling of a sense of personal investment in what they have previously been doing. A very important but often neglected aspect of curriculum implementation is the need for teachers to connect their previous experience with the current principles of curriculum reforms.

It is likely that the extent to which success is achieved in implementing a curriculum will directly relate to the extent to which local interpretation and variation of the curriculum is permitted and teachers are encouraged to become personally involved. Local application does not mean doing whatever the curriculum requires, but rather, using the curriculum to look at students' particular needs, and to inspire their development in the school's particular practice. Teachers are in a position to make judgments for themselves and to apply the optimal approaches to meet the different needs of the students so that the curriculum-as-plan gives an overall guideline to teaching, and the curriculum-as-lived requires teaching creativity in the classroom.

Teachers' previous experience in teacher education may influence their perceptions and concepts of English language teaching. This will include an understanding of individual students and their learning needs, wants, styles, and learning strategies. It also includes the textbooks, local conditions, classroom culture, and so on, as far as is possible at the time of teaching. The learning context, including learner variables, is a key factor in successful language learning (Bax, 2003). However, the dominance of the planned curriculum generally means that teachers' attention to context becomes secondary, and is often haphazard. In the lived curriculum, English language teaching can become dynamic and creative, and not totally bound by teachers' previous beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, or by the examination system and the mandated curriculum.

The third space also offers the potential to gain a better understanding of the causes of resistance and uncertainty, which teachers typically have when

involved in attempting to put a new teaching approach into practice. Using the third space, I explore teachers' experiences of traversing the space between theory and practice. English language teachers in China are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with Western pedagogical theories; they are individuals who teach English with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms. The third space provides opportunities for reflection on teachers' previous teaching experiences and their integration of tradition and innovation. Thus, the third space is not to get rid of the differences, but to become attuned to the differences that make a new creation in the third space.

The English Curriculum Standard reform shifts the focus from language form to language use, from accuracy to fluency, from language exercises to communication tasks, from teacher centered to student initiative, and from passive participation to active participation. These shifts between teaching methods require teachers to make many adjustments. To adopt the relatively new task-based language teaching in China inevitably involves transforming the traditional Chinese epistemic model, which is not an easy task. Using the third space, I will explore contextual factors that interact with the English language teaching reform policies to facilitate or inhibit the adoption of the officially espoused task-based language teaching. The perspective of the third space stresses that a methodology, no matter how logical the underlying principles are, "offers a potential but does not in itself guarantee that a given result will be obtained" (Tudor, 2001, pp. 7-8). The effectiveness of a methodology depends crucially on its appropriateness for

the situated, local, and dynamic realities of teaching and learning. This also entails encouraging pedagogical practices that are “sensitive to a particular set of goals within a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.538). I will explore how teachers draw on practices associated with different methodologies in light of student needs, contextual constraints, and instructional resources, and how they draw from the traditional and contemporary theories.

There are Chinese ways to teach English. One central contribution of the third space to my research will be to open up thinking about different viewpoints and the opportunities for dialogues between traditional Chinese curriculum and Western curriculum theory. The implementation of change in English language teaching in an intercultural setting is a complicated endeavor, subject to influences from a wide range of contextually-based and interpersonal factors. A key impact on teachers working in an intercultural context is the development of an appreciation of cross-cultural differences and a critical awareness of culturally appropriate pedagogy. The third space can offer an appreciation of cross-cultural differences and a critical awareness of culturally appropriate pedagogy. The third space may be taken as a lens to problematize cross-cultural issues, re-interpret Western language teaching and learning, and generate new understandings of the paramount importance of the local context in the implementation of English curriculum reform.

Finally, the third space will contribute to the creation of dialogue about teacher identity between tradition and innovation, and help gain insights into a dialogic negotiation of difference. The traditional social image of the teacher as ‘gardeners’ in China embodies a sense of ‘caring’, ‘looking after’, and ‘responsibility’ in the nature of teaching. Such a representation of teachers is in some way associated with the teacher-centered Chinese educational culture, in contrast to the focus on student-centeredness and self-exploration in the Western educational tradition where the teacher is often perceived as a facilitator. Thus, in addition to professional adjustments towards a more rational understanding of teaching, a teacher’s professional adjustment also involves personal change as a result of re-examination, reflection and re-exploration of their own self-identity as teachers.

In the old curriculum, a teacher’s primary role is as knowledge transmitter. Learning is a process of acquiring and accumulating knowledge and skills, and the teacher is considered to be responsible for delivering these to students. The teacher dominates the teaching and learning process. The teacher decides what to teach, how to teach, how to support the students, how to control the pace. Thus, the students are passive recipients. In the new curriculum, however, a teacher must be an organizer, controller, and helper in order to get students involved in teacher-student and student-student interactions. The third space will allow me to gain a substantial understanding of the interrelationship of the roles of the teacher, the roles of the students, the content and focus, the interaction, the learning process, and the use of materials.

Conflicts and tensions in the implementation of the English Curriculum Standard reform, resulting mainly from clashes of different views and beliefs between Western culture and traditional Chinese culture, are having an enormous effect on teachers' identity. Curriculum planners cannot simply take an idea from one place and drop it to another. It has to be naturalized. It has to be absorbed and taken in by the people themselves and made their own. And in doing so, it becomes very different from what the curriculum planners started with. To some extent, encountering resistance to change from Chinese teachers in the face of curriculum reform has motivated me to reconsider the practice of language teaching and learning from a new perspective, the perspective of the third space.

Chapter 4 Research Method

The purpose of this research was to investigate teachers' challenges during the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard in China. The main research focus was the differences and tension brought about by shifts in the notion of teaching and learning, teachers' identities and their understandings of themselves and their roles as teachers within the new curriculum framework. It sought to explore the pedagogical implications of a new intercultural teaching method for supporting the teachers to make professional and cultural adjustments during the process of implementing the new curriculum, and to gain insights into resolving these issues in the Chinese context. Methodologically, the investigation employed a qualitative case study method in order to "interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation" (Mack, et.al. 2005, p.2).

According to Yin (2003), a qualitative case study is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). Merriam (1988) views a case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit" (p.21). This research methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts and ensures that these phenomena are not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses to be revealed and understood. Patton (2002) points out that the strength of a well-constructed case study is that it is holistic, context sensitive, comprehensive and systematic. The case study provides a holistic interpretation and always refers to a social context.

Some researchers also indicate that its strength is to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Mack, et.al. 2005, p.1). Thus, a case study offers larger details about a particular phenomenon, and at the same time does not involve any treatments, experiments or manipulated social settings. Consequently, the data will be considered as natural phenomena in people's real lives

There are several essential characteristics of a case study (Hatch, 2002; Yin, 2003; Richards, 2011; Stake, 1995). First, case studies are bounded and focus on individual representatives of a group, an organization or a phenomenon. Second, the phenomenon being researched is studied in its natural context, bounded by space and time. The data collection methods chosen should do justice to the richness and complexity of the natural context. The data collection should also consider the ethical issues involved. Third, case study research draws on multiple data sources, and develops rich description and interpretation. The data is grounded in deep and varied sources of information and emphasizes exploration rather than prescription or prediction so that researchers are comparatively freer to discover and address issues as they arise in the contexts. By seeking to understand as much as possible about a single subject or small group of subjects, case studies specialize in the description based on the particular contexts. Finally, case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory. According to Stake (1995), the case study is highly personal research in which persons are studied in depth and researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation. Therefore, the quality and utility of the case study is not

based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated are valued.

Ontologically, qualitative research assumes that there are various states of mind and feelings. According to Carspecken (1996), subjective ontology is concerned with “existing subjective states (I/you are feeling such and such; I/you think such and such; I/you are being honest, etc.)” (p.20). Meanwhile, qualitative research favors epistemology which has been described as hermeneutic-interpretative (Scott & Usher, 1996) and focuses on the meaningfulness of human actions, trying to interpret and understand how meaning constructs and is constructed by behaviors.

In my research, a case study method provided a particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive way of answering my research questions and attaining my research goals. It offered a means of investigating the new curriculum reform while bringing discovery of new relationships, new meanings and understanding of the phenomenon under the study. Case studies rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources. This method also allowed me to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the new curriculum reform, and to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the teachers under study. In sum, case studies helped me understand teachers’ experience and discover context characteristics that shed light on the multifaceted nature of teachers’ responses to the new curriculum reform.

Research questions

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What professional and sociocultural adjustments did Chinese teachers of English make during the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard, and how did these adjustments affect their identities as teachers?
2. What challenges did Chinese teachers of English encounter during their transition to the English Curriculum Standard?
3. How did the teachers make a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western approaches to fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching?

To respond to these questions, data consisting of classroom observations, and in-depth interviews was collected from 3 English language teachers in China. The data was analyzed qualitatively to provide rich, context-bound information about individual experiences related to curriculum reform.

Participants

The 3 teachers of English language who took part in the study were selected from the junior high schools from Heilongjiang Province in China. This group of the junior-high-school English language teachers comprised the participant categories because task-based language teaching was introduced and firmly recommended in junior high schools, but was not fully adopted in elementary and senior high schools. As China is a huge country, the scale of

English language teaching is extensive. It was impossible to give a full description of English language teaching by just studying the experiences of three teachers. Any attempt to do so would risk oversimplification of the Chinese context. Based on the assumption that there would be important differences in the process of curriculum implementation between major cities and small cities, between rural towns and countryside, between coastal and inland areas, between north and south, and between key and ordinary schools, I focused on three individual experiences within a variety of school contexts. The three types of schools I chose represented a range of schools in terms of achievements in English teaching. The first was a key point school with distinguished achievements in English teaching. The second was an ordinary junior secondary school with average academic results. The third was a junior secondary school near the countryside with below average results. One participant was selected from each school. Detailed information about each participant will be presented later in the case studies.

Participating teachers were informed about the nature of the research, why it was being conducted and what would happen to the results of the research. They were also given an opportunity to ask questions and to offer suggestions. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was emphasized. Also, the choice to participate in the study and the right to opt out of the study at any time was provided. Consent forms restating this information were signed before the study began. Data collection began after the research had been approved by a Research Ethics Board.

Sources of Data

Observations

According to Wajnryb (1992), observation is defined as a focused activity to work on while observing a lesson in progress which focuses on one or a small number of aspects of teaching or learning and requires the observer to collect data or information from the actual lesson (p.7). In this study, the primary purpose of the observations was to provide a contextual background for understanding the particularities of the context in which each teacher worked. They also provided a basis for developing interview topics and ideas to be explored in greater depth with the teachers. Classroom observations gave the opportunity to gather “live” data from “live” situations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) based on what was actually happening in the classroom. Robson (2002) also points out that while many forms of data, such as interviews and journals, often fail to capture discrepancies between what people say that they did and what they actually did, data from direct observation could usefully complement information obtained through other techniques. Observation provided a different angle from which to study and understand the teachers at work. In particular, it made it possible to guide me toward the considerations of the social and cultural contexts that influence the teachers’ experience in classroom. This helped me to understand the changes that teachers underwent in the face of curriculum reform.

It is important to emphasize, however, that classrooms are complex and dynamic social settings; observations only provide a glimpse of the teachers’ teaching behind the observable behaviors. In addition, Phillips (1993) indicates that “observation is always theory-laden” (p.62), that is, observations cannot be

objective but are influenced by the researcher's background theories or personal hopes and desires. Consequently, I have included an autobiographical statement in Chapter 1 and a discussion in the present chapter of my positionality as a researcher. Carr & Kemmis (1986) further indicate that "intervention" characterizes the practice of observation, which means that the act of observation changes in some way the object being observed or the context in which it is understood.

Classroom observations were conducted for approximately four to five English lessons for each teacher. These were consecutive lessons whenever possible in order to gain an understanding of the day to day life in the classroom and to minimize the likelihood of observing one-off lessons that were not typical of regular teaching. The times for the observations were negotiated in advance with each teacher. Prior to beginning the observations, I sought to build a professional and trustful relationship. Field notes were collected during each classroom visit.

The observational notes were largely open-ended and included information such as the following: how the teacher deals with the textbook, how the teacher uses the class time in terms of Teacher Talk Time and Student Talk Time, procedures for bringing about learning, types of activities and what role the teacher/the learner is playing in each activity.

Interviews

Interviews were used in this research to gain insight into the teachers' personal understandings of their experiences. The interview questions were aimed at exploring the teachers' professional and cultural adjustments, as well as the changes and difficulties they faced as a result of curriculum reforms. I conducted at least two interviews with each teacher. All interviews were audiotaped, and conducted in Chinese.

Among the different forms of interview (Berg, 2001; Robson, 2002), this research adopted the semi-structured interview, which avoided the two extremes of structured or unstructured interviews. This type of semi-structured interview is conducted in "a systematic and consistent order, but allows the interviewers sufficient freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions" (Berg, 2001, p. 17). Although structured interviews could ensure greater consistency and perhaps facilitate data analysis and comparison, their standardization makes it difficult to pursue unpredicted responses from the teachers that might reveal more about the teachers' perceptions and experiences. As the researcher, I had a clear research purpose and expected to gain specific information within the framework of the new curriculum change rather than a broad picture of the teachers' situations, which would be the usual outcome of unstructured interviews. Therefore, interviews in this study were for the most part prepared with open and to-the point questions. I conducted at least 2 interviews with each teacher. The first took place

shortly after the observational period. The other interviews took place when the teachers were available.

Positionality: Insider and Outsider Research

According to Stake (1995), the case researcher plays different roles and has options as to how they will be played. Role choices have implications for the meaning of the case and the questions that will be developed. However, it is seldom clear which role choices are better and perhaps one role may work much better for certain people, certain situations. In this section, I will discuss my personal experiences both as an insider in relation to my role as a teacher and education specialist in China and as an outsider in relation to pursuing my doctoral studies in Canada.

As an insider, my role is related to working as a teacher and education specialist in China. With more than ten years working as a teacher and educational specialist in China, the case studies caused me to reflect on my own lived experience as a teacher. In the past, I had been responsible for some programs that focused on the introduction of a new teaching method and altered classroom practice. However, the top down educational change did not completely alter classroom practice and there were many complaints about the course from teachers, including overcrowded classes, poor resources, and a rigid, exam-oriented teaching tradition. The teachers were going through a crisis of alienation and frustration about their roles assigned by the new teaching method. Through their problems, I became sensitized to the issues of teachers' lived experiences, and began to establish a critical attitude towards what happened with

this in-service course and what subsequently happened in the classroom. I realized that coming to grips with the reality of the teachers' lived experiences and situations was very urgent.

Being an insider made me engage in much self-reflection on the research topic and gain insight into the teachers' experience and hear their voices. As I did each interview and observation, I not only tried to understand the teachers' experience, puzzlement and struggles, but also to learn from them and their experience in order to gain insight onto their daily life. As an insider-researcher, I made an effort to minimize the power differential between myself and those participating in the research (Harklau & Norwood, 2005). Teachers were keen to voice their experiences to me in the sense that I was someone who would listen to them.

As an outsider, I was pursuing my doctoral studies in Canada. Studying in Canada resulted to my distance from what is currently happening in China. I tried to explore intercultural competence and cultural continuity during the process of implementing the top-down curriculum reform. The case study made me explore which factors would influence how teachers experience the proposed changes, and how these might be used to support the change process. From the intercultural perspective, I became an outsider with different theories and wisdom traditions. I was a stranger to the teachers in the sense that I held a different teaching philosophy and was coming from the Western world. As an outsider, I was pursuing my own research interests, seeking the agreement of a teacher to participate, and conducting some research in a school in which I was a complete

stranger for the local situation after the top-down curriculum reform. From my mixed experience, I enhanced the depth and breadth of understanding the teachers' experiences within the intercultural framework, and questioned the objectivity, reflectivity, and authenticity of my research. At the beginning of observations and interviews, my role within this research had been an outsider entering a school in order to investigate the new curriculum change within the setting by engaging with teachers.

My position as outsider made me first establish trust and rapport with the teachers. Through the interviews and observations, I began to grasping a sense of only scratching the surface of the classroom complexities. This was a consequence of my unfamiliarity with the setting within which I found myself. This sense of unfamiliarity meant that I felt myself at this point in the research process as an outsider looking in. Sometimes, teachers first asked me to clarify why I wanted to interview them and observe their classroom.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative analysis is more concerned with meaning and is a systematic search for meaning. Organizing, analyzing and interpreting data allow researchers to “see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (Hatch, 2002, p.148). It involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern findings.

Both sources of data - obtained from classroom observations and from interviews - were analyzed. The classroom observation analysis was related to the teacher's and students' behaviors and the content covered in the lesson and the materials used. Interview data analysis involved reading, translating, reviewing, coding, categorizing, synthesizing and interpreting the information attained from the data sources. The analysis produced themes (such as teachers' variety of adopting and adapting to the new curriculum change and the difficulties related to the curriculum change) both within each teacher's situation as well as across the teachers' situations.

The responses were analyzed for content using a framework of polyvocal analysis to "allow many voices represent many truths" through the lenses of different participants (Hatch, 2002). The strength of polyvocal analysis was that polyvocal texts speak with multiple voices, telling multiple stories. In this research, polyvocal text represented the stories of each of three Chinese teachers of English. The data were analyzed using the following process:

- Reading the data for a sense of the whole and finding similarities in relationship;
- Identifying the voices contributing to the data, including the research;
- Identifying data and particular perceptions;
- Studying the data and deciding on the written narrative;
- Searching data for clarity of perceptions;
- Reviewing narratives and refining changes; and
- Writing revisions that represent each voice.

The data was read for a sense of the whole. I started the analysis process by listening to the tapes, transcribing interviews from tape to paper, translating the transcripts into English, and reading over the written transcripts. Most importantly of all, reading allowed me to gain an overall feeling for what was in the data. Then, all of the voices were identified to contribute to the data, including my own. The data was structured around the objective to capture particular voices, and the objective of this step was to identify all possible voices – those of the three teachers as well as my own.

After reading the data and identifying voices, I began to make preliminary judgments about what themes would be important to the study. This process of data reduction allowed me to appropriately narrow the focus of the analysis. Once salient themes were identified, it was easy to set up an outline format for reporting the research. Powerful or meaningful quotes were identified in the data and in the reporting outline. Identifying potential quotes in the data was an important step in making final preparations to write up the research.

Chapter 5 Mrs. Sui

This chapter focuses on describing and interpreting Mrs. Sui's professional and sociocultural adjustments and the challenges during the process of implementing English curriculum changes. It begins with providing Mrs. Sui's biographical profile in terms of her education background, teaching experience, professional development, and so on. Second, it describes her eclectic teaching method. Third, it describes her adjustments toward the diversity of textbooks. Fourthly, it identifies her difficulty in balancing between the focus on fluency and the focus on accuracy. Fifthly, it addresses the absence of clear guidance in translating the new curriculum into practice. Sixthly, it describes her experience in establishing mutual understanding between the students and the teacher. Finally, it identifies to what extent these adjustments and challenges affected her role as a teacher.

Mrs. Sui's biographical profile

Mrs. Sui was a teacher with 20 years of experience. She completed a two-year diploma from a teacher college in 1989. I met her at a local one-day teacher-training program where she gave a two-hour lecture to all the teachers on how to improve further English language teaching for the 2009 senior high school entrance examination. After the program, I approached Mrs. Sui and talked for half an hour. I invited her to have formal interviews, journal writing, and observation of her teaching. Besides her academic title as a junior teacher, Mrs. Sui was also the head of an English teaching and research group in her school

from 2000 to 2008. She often participated in different teaching and research conferences and seminars, attended a one-month English teacher training program by Heilongjiang Education Department in collaboration with a North American teacher education facility in December 2006, and became involved in the editing of the *Project English* textbook in 2007. She participated in constructing the Heilongjiang provincial senior high school entrance examination for 2007 and 2008. Her teaching resources included one teaching package, more than ten dictionaries, grammar books, the New English Curriculum Standard, different series of course books, and exercise books.

Her position as a teacher, to some extent, revealed the changing nature of English language teaching over the past two decades. Her school was organized into a four-year junior schooling system from grades 6 through 9, and a teacher often taught the same group of students for 4 years, assuming full responsibility for the results of their senior high school entrance examination. Her school was located in the inner-city area of Suihua and was a famous school in terms of teacher qualifications and student achievement. There were 10 classes in every grade. Every classroom was equipped only with a cassette recorder and tapes; there was no overhead projector, no computer and language teaching software, and no internet access. In general, the school offered two terms in a year with eighteen weeks in each term, inclusive of assessment. Mrs. Sui was assigned two classes each term and taught 12 teaching periods each week, with each teaching period lasting 45 minutes. There were between 55 and 65 students in each class.

The interviews with Mrs. Sui and observations of her work revealed that she made some professional and sociocultural adjustments, and encountered some challenges in terms of an eclectic teaching method, the diversity of course books, and establishing mutual understanding between the students and the teacher. The extent of her adjustments was not the same as what the curriculum planners expected of teachers. The adjustments were reported as follows.

An eclectic teaching method

In the interviews, Mrs. Sui showed that attending academic conferences and the teachers' training programs had influenced and benefited her teaching performance. From 2000 to 2008, as the head of an English teaching and research group in her school, Mrs. Sui often attended teaching and research conferences related to teaching methods and the new curriculum reform. She came into contact with some localized teaching approaches, and also gave a demonstration class by adopting Wang Wenfu's teaching method in her school. Furthermore, she was exposed to a Western teaching method. In 2006, Heilongjiang Provincial Education Department organized a training program to help teachers understand the new curriculum change. This program introduced Mrs. Sui to the new rationale of English language teaching. Studying with the foreign specialists had enabled her to discover another way of teaching – communicative language teaching, which emphasized that students learn the language through engaging in a variety of communicative activities. Communicative language teaching stressed the need to allow students opportunities for authentic and creative use of language,

and focused on meaning rather than form. A teacher provided the opportunities for the students to make meaningful communication, such as using language appropriately in different types of situations, and learning language by using language to perform different kinds of activities and tasks.

The training program had empowered her with an approach that allowed her to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of her teaching in a new rational way. During this process, Mrs. Sui made some changes about her teaching beliefs. Before this program, she viewed learning as an additive process with new information that was imparted to the students. New information was simply added on top of existing knowledge and every student was forced to progress at the same pace. After the training program, she gained a new insight on English learning.

Mrs. Sui indicated,

Previously, learning is regarded as a passive process and a teacher is responsible for transmitting the knowledge to the students. Now, learning is viewed as an active process and the focus of teaching is on the students' participation. A good teacher is responsible for getting students involved in the activities and using English language in pair or group work.

Therefore, Mrs. Sui used more activities in her teaching. For example, when she taught Grade 8 students who had some English vocabulary and English language ability to communicate, she adopted the speech work in her teaching. At the beginning, her students were nervous and only recited or read the content of a speech. She taught them some speech strategies, such as speaking not reading, eye contact, and body language. For another example, the English teaching content at

the Grade 6 was simple, and she adopted pair, group, or team work to do some activities.

Mrs. Sui said that she tried to leave more time for her students to practice. The students' active participation was not only observed in giving performances, but also seen throughout the whole lesson process in terms of doing other activities, such as reading a dialogue aloud, asking and answering questions about the text, and doing translation work. Previously, she revised every student's composition sentence by sentence. At her current teaching practice, she required her students to write the composition after the class. She put one student's writing on the blackboard, and she and her students corrected and revised it together. This technique improved the students' writing skills. In addition, she required her students to recite the good compositions and some other materials. Although the communicative language teaching contributed to developing students' interests in learning English and providing more opportunities in using English, she still remained some traditional techniques. She adopted an eclectic teaching method. She said,

In teaching practice, I just adopt some techniques from two teaching methods according to teaching content and students' language levels. I think each method has its advantages and limitations. Sometimes, after the students complete the activities in group work, I will explain and summarize the grammar items. The students will write down the grammar items in their grammar notebooks.

Mrs. Sui did not just retain her old approaches, and did not entirely adopt the new communicative language teaching either. Her eclectic method accepted the appropriate teaching techniques from her old approaches and communicative language teaching according to the actual situation and the local context. Mrs. Sui adopted an eclectic teaching method, drew on different techniques, and tried to linger on the bridge between traditional Chinese methods and communicative language teaching to meet the demands of student needs, contextual constraints, and instructional resources.

Diversity of course books

In the interview data, Mrs. Sui mentioned that the diversity of course books was one noticeable trend after the new curriculum change. Many series of new course books had been adopted in line with the new curriculum change. She said that,

I already used these series of course books, including *New Standard English*, *Go for it*, and *Project English*. I was also contacted with many other series of course books adopted by other schools when I participated in constructing the provincial senior high school entrance examination for 2007 and 2008. The diversity of course books made a high requirement for teachers to adopt the course books.

Mrs. Sui noted that these new series of course books were different from the old ones. The previous course books were used for many years with a regular model and worked as a knowledge framework. By adopting the old course books,

it was helpful for students to master knowledge and to organize learning both inside and outside the classroom. It was also easy to find grammar items and language structures and understand the content of materials. As for the new course books, they looked easy with a few pictures and some activities, but it was difficult for students to find the appropriate way to use the course books to learn English. The activities and dialogues in the topic-centered course books of *Project English* allowed the students to master only some shallow knowledge, which was inadequate in terms of preparing for the exams. However, language materials in new course books were more communicative than those of old previous books, and contributed to cultivating listening and speaking competence. In addition, the materials provided some contexts and gave an opportunity to use English naturally. These contexts enabled students to learn better, faster, and easier in listening and speaking. As a teacher, Mrs. Sui looked at the advantages and disadvantages of the course books, and adapted the content to cater to the students' needs, rather than completely follow them without any change.

In December 2007, the one-month experience of editing and developing the seven-grade course book of *Project English* made her further understand how to adapt the course books. As Mrs. Sui noted,

I consult some editors about my concerns and puzzles in terms of adopting this series of course books in teaching practice and gain insight into the course book editing. For example, I ask why my current teaching content often contains one or two grammatical items that are slightly beyond my present grammar teaching. The major editor says that this is Shanxian

(advanced comprehensible language input), gives the students comprehensible input for the future learning, and you don't need to teach these items at present. From the editor's perspective, I can use the course books flexibly and creatively to suit my teaching context and adjust the content of teaching.

This one-month experience of editing the course books made Mrs. Sui further understand her new responsibility of adapting the materials to cultivate the students' language abilities according to the local context. As a result of the new curriculum change, Mrs. Sui gradually took on this new role in her teaching practice.

In her teaching practice, Mrs. Sui felt that a series of course books could not be recommended and adopted with the notion that it was universally appropriate for all teachers and all situations. Every series of course books had its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, the *Project English* series was suitable to some teachers who were good at communicative language teaching. As a teacher, Mrs. Sui had to exploit and adapt existing materials in the course books so that they became more suitable for her students and her local situation. She said that,

In preparation for a lesson, sometimes I add or delete some activities or use some activities from other course books. In practice, due to time pressure, I cannot cover all the planned content in a lesson and thus I have to shorten one activity so as to go to the next one.

In the observation of her teaching, she made on-the-spot changes in response to the students' reactions in the two same-grade classes she taught. She used her personal beliefs, experience, and intuition in adapting the teaching content because no published course books could possibly cater for every student or learning situation. Thus, she made some adjustments on the content of the course books in order to ensure an optimal match between the content and the practical teaching context. As a result of the new curriculum change, there was a new role for Mrs. Sui to work as an adapter of the course books in addition to her previous role as a knowledge transmitter. This was a new role that Mrs. Sui took on.

Mrs. Sui also further gained in-depth understanding in the role as a course book adapter by participating in constructing the senior high school entrance examination of Heilongjiang Province for 2007 and 2008. All exams came from the course books. Mrs. Sui thought that teachers should attach a great deal of importance to the course books. Because the students had little or no access to English outside the classroom, the course books should be mastered carefully. However, it was impossible to learn and master all the series of course books because there were too much language materials. Besides the course books, the students did some exercises to review and master what they learned from the course books. During many years of teaching practice, she found that what the students learned in the course books could not completely be mastered without doing the exercises. Without a lot of exercises of the items, the scores would not be high in the exams. The focusing on texts reflected her beliefs of the centrality of texts and textual knowledge. Course books comprised the center of learning

because knowledge resided in texts and was best learnt through the study of the texts. She said,

I adopt the course books to teach, but I do not completely follow it. I adapt them according to teaching contexts, but I try to retain the systematic nature of course books. Furthermore, I am against using a lot of worksheets and mock examination papers to replace the course books so as to get high marks in the examinations.

As mentioned above, Mrs. Sui's new roles as a teacher and as an adapter and developer of the content of course books were related to curriculum changes. In the past, she followed the content of the textbooks as the planned curriculum that focused on imparting knowledge of language structure, grammar, and vocabulary. After the curriculum change, Mrs. Sui interfaced the planned and lived curriculum. On the one hand, she viewed the course books as a planned curriculum. The implementation of classroom activities was represented as a rationally planned action. On the other hand, she viewed the course books as a lived curriculum. She accounted for how it was received in the local context, as well as the character and needs of the students in her actual classrooms. The new role as an adapter and developer of the course books led Mrs. Sui to respond to the diverse needs in the classroom, and gave her a chance to decide, shape, modify, and adapt the curriculum to fit her students based on her classroom reality.

Difficulty in balancing between the focus on fluency and the focus on accuracy

Mrs. Sui said that balancing fluency and accuracy was one challenge in her teaching practice. In adopting an eclectic approach, Mrs. Sui had to adopt appropriate techniques to ensure a smooth progression of classroom activities in which both form and meaning are properly dealt with. It was not easy to balance communicative components with the explicit instruction of form and structure.

Mrs. Sui said that,

I think we cannot adopt everything from the West. After all, we have our own successful experience. For example, the tradition method has laid a solid foundation of grammar and language structures. English is a foreign language and students need to master grammar, vocabulary and language structures before they use English for communication. In fact, students make a lot of mistakes in speaking. When the mistakes are fossilized, it is very difficult to correct them.

With an eclectic method, Mrs. Sui accepted the value of grammatical explanation, error correction, and drill. At the same time, she provided the students the opportunities to engage in communicative interaction. She continued to emphasize the importance of accuracy and form. Despite the influence of communicative language teaching and other language teaching approaches from outside the country, she retained some of its essentially Chinese characteristics.

From the data, Mrs. Sui's belief was that learning has much to do with memorization and recitation, which she strongly believed was deeply embedded in Chinese culture. At the same time, by attending some academic conferences, by

participating in the editing of textbooks, by attending the training program, and by making the senior high school entrance examination, Mrs. Sui also believed that language learning was a communicative process as well, in which a teacher made every effort to support students and the students were fully engaged in the interactions.

Mrs. Sui had a strong belief in the need to encourage students' involvement in class, while she was also concerned with getting the linguistic accuracy correct. Students needed a solid foundation of language structures before being fluent in English. If accuracy was overlooked at the beginning, students might speak with many mistakes, which could be very difficult to correct. Her belief was related to the impact of the training program on her attitude towards language teaching. Below are Mrs. Sui's descriptions of her view on the application of the new method in her classroom. In the interview data, Mrs. Sui emphasized the importance of interaction and learner-centeredness in language teaching and learning. There was an apparent desire to try a variety of activities to motivate students and keep them actively involved in the learning process. Mrs. Sui noted,

In teaching practice, I do not directly impart knowledge to them, but try to conduct them to discover something. During this process, students can have fun. This can also promote their interests so that they learn English step by step.

Communication could not take place in the absence of structure or grammar and it was important to pay adequate attention to form in English

language teaching. In the notion of the third space, the traditional methods and the communicative language teaching were mutually exclusive. Wedell (2003) indicates that the English curriculum reform represents a significant cultural shift, and the embedding of new practices in teachers' existing professional culture will not be accomplished easily. The notion of the third space is to provide insights into the space beyond the dualism of tradition and innovation and allow for a dialogic negotiation of difference. The third space is also to provide a means of respecting cultural continuity (Holliday, 1997) by drawing from the existing tradition and from the new curriculum in a way that seeks harmony.

In the new curriculum change, the grammar-centered method gave way to communicative language teaching and task-based teaching. Accuracy activities such as drill and grammar practice were replaced by fluency activities based on interactive small-group work. This led to the emphasis of fluency. The students learned English through the process of communicating in it and the communication was meaningful to the students. It provided opportunities to use English for communication.

At the basic stage, the teaching focus is on accuracy and form, and at the advanced stage the teaching focus is shifted to fluency and meaning. ELT is a theoretical as well as practical activity. A teacher will adjust the teaching methods to meet the needs of students and the exigencies of the teaching situation. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. Sometimes, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep the students meaningfully engaged in language use.

The traditional method could work well along with communicative language teaching in the Chinese educational context. For instance, communicative language teaching focuses on meaning and fluency, whereas the traditional methods emphasize form, structure, and accuracy. It is not detrimental to the students if the teacher explains some grammatical points to enhance their understanding of the link of meaning to the structure. Although understanding the grammatical framework of a language is extremely important for foreign language learners, teachers should not completely place undue emphasis on grammar and structure, which could prevent the students from understanding the text material at a holistic level.

The absence of clear guidance in translating the new curriculum into practice

Mrs. Sui confronted some ambiguities concerning translating the new English curriculum into practice. Curriculum planners produced the flexible curriculum with good intentions, but the ambiguities occurred as the curriculum was used by the teachers. For example, it lacked clear guidance in the vocabulary list that consisted of 3300 words and 360 phrases and made no clear distinction between the junior high level (1500-1600 words and 200-300 phrases) and the senior high level (about 2,500 words and 300-400 phrases). Without a clear distinction, there was not a clear option for the teachers. Mrs. Sui had to depend on many years of teaching experience to distinguish whether a word should be taught or not. In addition, when the presses edited the course books, they

translated the new curriculum policy into their course books with different perspectives. She said that,

The People's Education Press chooses these words into its course books of *Go for It*, but Renai's Press focuses those words into its course books of *Project English*. In addition, the course books of *Project English* include some words which do not appear in the course books of *Go for It*. This makes a puzzle on deciding whether a word should be taught or not.

This created the ambiguities in teaching vocabulary size and depth. Vocabulary knowledge could be taught both in terms of how many words the students know (vocabulary size) and how well they know those words (depth of knowledge). In teaching practice, there was no clear guidance in translating the new curriculum into practice and little advice available on how the vocabulary size and depth can be appropriately interpreted. She said that,

If the words outside my teaching are used in the senior high school entrance examination, my students will be disadvantaged. I have to teach more words, and this adds the students' burden.

Mrs. Sui felt the absence of clear guidance in the new curriculum implementation. There was a discrepancy between curriculum planners' expectations and teachers' implementation. Curriculum planners designed one general and open-ended curriculum and offered the teachers some flexibility in their teaching. However, teachers as individuals interpreted the open-endedness of the curriculum in a different way than the curriculum planners had intended. Instead of using the flexible curriculum to help students to gain proficiency, they

placed their emphasis on teaching more words and getting higher scores in the exams. Teachers played a critical role in translating the new curriculum into practice. According to Mrs. Sui, a discrepancy existed between what was intended and what was implemented. This discrepancy posed challenges for teachers.

Establishing mutual understanding between the students and the teacher

After the new curriculum change, Mrs. Sui paid more attention to emotional education in her teaching. The new curriculum change emphasized the cultivation of interest and motivation and regarded them as important factors that had influence on students' learning and development. In Mrs. Sui's teaching experience, establishing mutual understanding between the students and the teacher contributed to cultivating the students' interest, motivation, and confidence and led to more effective language learning. Mrs. Sui referred to an old saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." During her teaching, she emphasized that it was critical to communicate effectively with students and find the right ways to get across the understanding. For example, she used different ways to praise positive results appropriately and identify weaknesses without sounding overly negative. For another example, she dealt with occasional discipline problems or inattentive students by adopting gentle reminder techniques. Students would sometimes forget to listen to the lesson, or something would distract their attention. It was not effective to scream, yell, or belittle students to control a class. It was better to use gentle reminders.

These were the new ways of teaching that emerged in relation to the curriculum change. She said that,

Every student appreciates being treated as an individual human being.

The more I respond to their interests, and the more responsive they will be.

Inviting students to share their interests and experiences with other classmates encourages important qualities of interpersonal regard.

Mrs. Sui learned about her students, and her students learned about one another. Establishing mutual understanding between students and teachers contributed to the creation of classrooms that were warm, humane, and inviting. She achieved more effective language learning by building an encouraging atmosphere, establishing a good and supportive relationship with the students, and cultivating interests and motivations.

In the present practice, the new curriculum change did not encourage a teacher to blame or criticize students in hostile way; this kind of hostile situation would only deteriorate until the students completely lost their confidence and finally stayed away from the classroom. However, there is a Chinese saying “A strict teacher produces outstanding students.” The traditional social image of a teacher as a strict master in China embodied a sense of responsibility in the nature of teaching. Such a representation of teachers was in some way associated with the authority of teacher, in contrast to the focus on student-centeredness in the new curriculum change where the teacher was often perceived as a facilitator.

These new ways of teaching that emerged were in relation to the curriculum change. Also, these ideas again pointed to very significant changes in

teachers' roles in the classroom. The teacher's role was a shift away from an authority figure to a facilitator and mentor. There was a democratic relationship between the teacher and the students. This relationship inspires the students' interests, leads to more communication in and out of the classroom teaching, and the students feel comfortable and have confidence in learning English.

As she developed the activities that were relevant to getting to know each other, she found that the boundaries between her and her students became less fixed and the classroom atmosphere became more open and responsive. Encouraging students to tell their own life further opened and invigorated the class. She said,

Within the 50 minutes on the first class of each new term, I will discuss their dream, their expectation and their life with my students. While in the past my classrooms were based on fear, my classrooms at present are based on trust. As a teacher, I strive to give students a positive experience in my classroom. At times, I offer a warm smile or a bended ear. It is opening conversations regarding their concerns.

A very significant change was from the relationship based on fear to the relationship based on trust. The trust created a communication channel between the teacher and students. The learning atmosphere of the lessons observed was good and relaxed. Students showed interest in the activities and the levels of participation were high. The trust between the teacher and students made it easy to inspire students' interest in learning, and build the students' confidence and motivation to surmount difficulties. The trust made it easy to help the students

understand their strengths and weaknesses in learning, foster their willingness to learn English, and nurture a positive character. Focusing attention on trust rather than fear led to more effective language learning.

Based on the observation data, Mrs. Sui gained the students' love, trust, respect, and acceptance. For example, after one monthly exam, the students ran to her office and asked her for the answers to the test questions. They surrounded her. If they had answered correctly, they would happily jump. If they had answered incorrectly, they would stamp. After the class, the students would gather around her and asked a lot of questions. The acceptance and trust from the students was based on love and understanding. There was a lot of communication between the teacher and the students outside of the class. The trust and love allowed her to get along with her students. She said that,

In the past, I only blamed my students' shortcoming and was very strict with them. Now, after I criticize my students, I will continue to communicate with them and get their understanding. We will work together and think out many ways to correct these shortcomings. If I only criticize him, he will not understand the meaning and purposes of criticizing and will get away from me. Perhaps sometimes my criticizing is hard in the class, and after the class I quickly communicate a lot with my students and let them understand although I am not a homeroom teacher. If one student has serious shortcomings, I must point them out and help him correct them. Sometimes some small problems can be dealt lately and indirectly after the class.

Based on the data, if Mrs. Sui wanted to be a good teacher in the Chinese context, she had to incorporate the best of both worlds between the authority and the mentor. She had to discipline her students, while at the same time communicate effectively with students and find the right ways to get across the understanding. Once the path was laid, a teacher had an expectation that the students could succeed in learning English. The most important thing was that the teacher had to be there at all times guiding the way. In a word, Mrs. Sui established a flexible and democratic learning atmosphere by respecting individual students, enhancing their self-esteem, and developing a positive attitude. She linked English education with emotional education, and designed the activities to allow for mutual understanding.

The transition of teacher's roles

From the data, Mrs. Sui mentioned that before the new curriculum change, her main roles were as a transmitter of knowledge, an authority, and a parent. After the new curriculum change, besides these traditional roles, she had some new roles, such as an adapter of materials, an organizer, a facilitator, a mentor, and a friend. In her present English language teaching practice, Mrs. Sui played multiple roles. During the lessons, she talked, explained, provided the information, and adopted communicative activities to provide the opportunities for language use. She said,

Although the focus of teaching is not on grammar after new curriculum reform, I still insist on transmitting grammatical knowledge to the students because English is a foreign language in our country. In teaching practice,

I develop students' communicative competence. I also teach grammar and directly explain grammatical rules. Sometimes I integrate grammar learning into the activities and students learn grammar by participating in the activities. After the activities, I summarize the grammar rules and the students write down them on their grammar notebooks.

Mrs. Sui regarded her primary role as a transmitter of knowledge because she thought learning was a process of acquiring and accumulating knowledge and skills. As a teacher, she was responsible for delivering knowledge to her students. She dominated the teaching and learning process, decided what to teach, how to teach, how to control the pace, and so on, but she did not think the students should be passive recipients. Instead, she increasingly believed that they should be active in thinking and participating in activities and tasks, and asking questions, and that the teacher must also be an organizer, controller and facilitator in order to get students involved in teacher-student and student-student interactions. In fact, there is some tension between these new ways of thinking about students' roles and the old way of understanding her primary role as a transmitter of knowledge.

Mrs. Sui thought that it is both important to give an explicit explanation of teaching materials and to adopt the activities and tasks to foster students' abilities of comprehensive use of English language. These activities and tasks include a presentation, a speech, free talk, questions and answers, acting out situational dialogues, retelling stories, group work, pair work, and so on. The types of activities chosen are determined by the teaching materials and contexts. The teacher is the facilitator while the students are the performers.

Mrs. Sui attached importance to recitation and memorization. This was related to the acquisition of Chinese poetry learning, whereby it was believed if one kept reading the *Three Hundred Selected Poems of the Tang Dynasty*, one would eventually learn how to compose poems oneself:

In general, I require the students to recite the dialogues and short texts in the course books. When they speak and write in English, they can directly use these phrases and sentences. In addition, recitation gives them a chance to practice speaking in English. They can also use these sentences in their speaking and writing.

Mrs. Sui played multiple roles in the classroom. In teaching practice, she talked, explained, and provided information. At the same time, she tried to provide more opportunities for her students to use English for communication. English was the chief medium in the lessons but sometimes when specialized grammatical terms and difficult words arose, she used Chinese to help the students understand the meanings. Mrs. Sui checked the exercises, arranged a vocabulary competition, organized the students to act out the dialogue, and let students role play some reading passages. She encouraged the students to speak English as much as they could. She tried to help students to understand grammar and vocabulary, but also cultivate their abilities to use English for communication. In teaching grammar, she combined the teacher-centered presentation with the students' participation and involvement. When she discussed the text, she provided more opportunities for the students' participation and involvement.

Mrs. Sui encountered the greatest constraints with time available and the senior high school entrance examination. The school only timetabled four English periods for each class every week, but teaching content was more. It was not easy to adapt the contents of the course book. She was not sure what would appear in the senior high school entrance examination. She said,

Project English is a very demanding course book, and includes a lot of good materials related to the cultivation of speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. Due to the limited teaching time, it is impossible to include everything. Furthermore, the senior high school entrance examinations in our city do not check speaking and listening abilities due to the poor facilities. The expectation of the students' parents is a high score in the examinations. I have more pressure on adopting the activities to foster the students' listening and speaking abilities.

Mrs. Sui worked as a facilitator to assist students in the learning processes in every way she could. She also guided students in learning activities that utilized her learning experiences, knowledge, and abilities of analysis and organization. At the same time, she was flexible in the way she taught English. She evaluated students' learning results in testing and individual guidance in office hours. She would provide a vital compensation for the inadequate emphasis on listening and speaking when students received their four-year English education in junior high schools. She learned to adjust herself to communicative language teaching, and learned to accept new ideas and methods in teaching and learning English. At the same time, she continued to keep some traditional roles as a teacher.

Chapter 6 Mrs. Qi

This chapter focuses on describing and interpreting Mrs. Qi's professional and sociocultural adjustments and the challenges during the process of implementing the new English curriculum change. First, it provides Mrs. Qi's biographical profile in terms of her background information, teaching experience, professional development, and so on. Second, it describes her adjustments towards the adoption of communication-oriented course books. Third, it addresses her teaching shift from an exclusive teacher-centered class instruction to small group learning. Fourthly, it describes her adjustment towards the combination of criticism, understandings and praise. Finally, it identifies to what extent these adjustments and challenges affected her role as a teacher.

Mrs. Qi's biographical profile

Mrs. Qi (a pseudonym) graduated in 2000 with a bachelor degree in English Language and Literature from a teachers' university, and had taught English for nine years in a junior high school in Qiqihar City, a big city in the Heilongjiang Province. In this study, her school was the only one that was organized into a three-year junior schooling system from Grade Seven through to Grade Nine (the other two schools were organized into a four-year junior schooling system from Grade Six to Grade Nine, and a teacher often taught one subject to the same group of students (called one class) for 3 years, assuming full responsibility for the results of their senior high school entrance examination. In general, the school offered two terms in a year with eighteen weeks in each term,

inclusive of assessment. Her school was near a rural area, and most of the students came from the countryside. There were 6 classes in every grade. Every classroom was equipped only with a cassette recorder and tapes; there was no overhead projector, no computer and language teaching software, and no internet access. Her school's teaching resources were very limited and there were no auxiliary study materials such as story books, self-study guidebooks, videos, maps and pictures, cards, visual aids, and computer software. Mrs. Qi's teaching resources only included one student course book, one teacher course book, two exercise books compiled according to the student course book and a set of tapes and some teaching facilitating pictures and cards made on her own. She remembered she only received a one-week short lecture-based teacher training program for the implementation of the new curriculum change during the summer break.

Mrs. Qi was assigned two classes each term and taught 10 English lessons each week, with each lesson lasting 45 minutes. There were between 45 and 55 students in each class. In addition to teaching English, Mrs. Qi was a classroom teacher for one class she taught and was responsible for managing and educating all the students in this classroom. In general, a classroom teacher was appointed on the basis of proven records in teaching and organizational ability. The position was normally assigned to teachers of math, Chinese, and English.

In order to implement further the new curriculum change, her school was adopting the Dulangkou Method. It was said that this method was a valuable, practical, successful, and effective teaching method for the rural areas to implement the new curriculum change with some constraints on teaching and

learning resources, students' proficiency levels, teachers' quality, and teaching facilitates. This method shifted from the focus on transmitting knowledge in an exclusive teacher-centered instruction to the focus on students' experiencing, discovering, exploring, and cooperating in learning in small groups. It encouraged students' active participation and the students learned in a group, interacted with one another, and generated the teaching content. In a harmonious learning environment, the students successfully experienced the joy of learning.

The interviews with Mrs. Qi, and observations of her work, revealed that Mrs. Qi made some professional and sociocultural adjustments, including the adoption of communication-oriented course books, a shift from an exclusive teacher-centered class instruction to small group learning, and a transition towards the combination of criticism, understandings and praise. The extent of her adjustments was not the same as what the curriculum planners expected of teachers. They were reported as follows.

The adoption of communication-oriented course books

In the interview data, Mrs. Qi said that one adjustment she made was related to how to use the new series of communication-oriented course books to teach English after the new curriculum change. Previously, she used to adopt an assigned course book every term, and taught and covered this course book from the beginning to the end. A course book played a dominant role in providing language input, suggesting what and how to teach, and guiding the course of learning. In addition, a course book was essential for English language teaching

and learning in rural schools because it was the only source of English language input for most of the students. After the new curriculum change, Mrs. Qi came into contact with two new series of course books: one series of *Go For It* and the other of *New Standard English* that were assigned as a course book. The new course books differed from the traditional ones. She said,

A new course book contains dialogues, activities and tasks, and encourages learning English through using it. A traditional course book focuses on systematic presentation of grammar, vocabulary, and language structures. The traditional one requires a teacher to have a good English knowledge, but the new one requires a teacher to have high communicative competence and strong classroom management skill.

Mrs. Qi felt that the traditional course books reflected a linear grammatical progression and focused on the delivery of systematic knowledge. This delivery followed a sequence from simplicity to complexity. The new knowledge presentation was connected to students' prior knowledge. The traditional ones provided language input, suggested teaching procedures, and guided the course of learning. They provided a ready-made way of what to teach and learn and how to teach and learn. She said,

In general, a lesson begins with presenting new knowledge based on previous knowledge. Then the new knowledge is practiced in the simple exercises. Finally, it is consolidated by practicing in the more difficult exercises. As a teacher, you know what to teach and how to practice.

After the adoption of the new series of course books, Mrs. Qi said that most of the teachers of English in her school felt quite at a loss as to what to teach, were not sure how to teach, and were puzzled about how to facilitate the students during the teaching pace. She said,

The new course books are communication-oriented and emphasize learning English through using English in dialogues or activities. The purpose of learning English is for communication. For example, the new series of *Go for It* course books by the People's Education Press in collaboration with Longman International look easy. A lesson begins with a few pictures, or a few dialogues, then includes listening and some questions, presents the content of listening, and finally has some activities or tasks.

In the new course books, there were no language structures, grammar knowledge, or a vocabulary list like in traditional course books. Great changes between the traditional and new course books required Mrs. Qi to take on a new role as a facilitator. Mrs. Qi had to study carefully and explore the content of the new course book in order to find what to teach, how to teach, and how to facilitate the students' learning.

In the interview data, Mrs. Qi said that the series of the *New Standard English* course books used by her school placed less stress on reading and writing, in favor of listening and speaking. It paid more attention to communication and did not recommend direct grammar teaching. The traditional course books were knowledge-oriented, but the new course books focused on dialogues, activities,

and tasks. In the knowledge-oriented course books, English learning was carried out for a long time before the students were asked to use it. In contrast, English learning in the new course books required the students to use English immediately for communication. It was not easy for Mrs. Qi to support the students during the teaching practice. Mrs. Qi admitted that the adoption of the new course books gave the students more opportunities to use English and improve their speaking abilities and also made English learning more interesting.

By adopting the new series of course books, Mrs. Qi had a tolerant attitude towards the students' language errors as they participated in the activities to use English. She encouraged students to use English in the class as much as possible. She came to understand that the errors were a normal product of learning according to the ideas of the new course books, and she still believed that the goal of learning was to be able to use English both accurately and fluently. By using the new course books, she worked as a facilitator, created a classroom climate conducive to learning, and provided opportunities for students to learn, use, and practice English.

Based on her teaching experience, she was sure that the new series of course books contributed to developing the students' English oral competence. It was obvious that the new books provided more opportunities for the students to participate in the activities and promote their language use ability. However, by adopting the new course books, the students lacked systematic grammar knowledge and language structures. She said,

The problem of the traditional course books is that the students frequently remain deficient in oral competence. By contrary, the new course books of *New Standard English* concentrate on informal English and cultivate students' oral competence at the expense of the formal feature of English language.

Mrs. Qi firmly believed that a good command of grammar, vocabulary, and language structures was of crucial importance to the students. She taught the knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and language structures for communication. In addition, Mrs. Qi was 100 percent sure that the students would not be prepared for the senior high school entrance exams by using the course books of *New Standard English*. Mrs. Qi still added some explanations related to grammar and language structures. Thus, she continued to keep the traditional role as a knowledge transmitter. What is more, the course books were the only materials for the students to use in and out of their classroom. In order to prepare the students for exams, she had to put a little emphasis on mastery of knowledge, the cultivation of students' linguistic competence, and imitation and memorization of dialogues or texts.

As mentioned above, there were some changes in how Mrs. Qi related to students and the course books, but the traditional role of a knowledge transmitter was maintained. For Mrs. Qi, after the new curriculum change, one new role was to facilitate the learning process between all students in the classroom, and between the students and the various dialogues and activities. The other role was to guide learning within the classroom procedures and activities. What is more,

Mrs. Qi continued to keep the traditional role as a knowledge transmitter and tried her new roles as a facilitator and learning guide.

Shift from an exclusive teacher-centered class instruction to small group learning

In the interview and observation data, Mrs. Qi adopted small group learning in her English language teaching to some extent. In order to implement further the curriculum change, her school adopted the Dulangkou Method (recommended as one effective model for rural areas to implement the new curriculum change) to improve educational quality. Mrs. Qi showed that she was willing to adopt this model to improve her teaching practice and had a positive attitude towards its advantage in terms of arousing the students' interests and getting the students actively involved in English language learning. She also firmly believed that a good command of grammar, vocabulary, and language structures was of crucial importance to the students. After all, the students learned English as a foreign language and hardly had any opportunities to come into contact with and use English outside of the classroom. She made a small adjustment from a whole class instruction to small group learning.

Mrs. Qi addressed that at the beginning of her teaching career, she tended to be a transmitter of almost all the knowledge, did most of the talking, and directed the flow of what happened. She gave a description of her previous teaching practice,

Just at the beginning of my teaching practice, I dominate and control the teaching process, and spend 80 or 90 percent of a 45-minutes English lesson explaining grammar, vocabulary and language structures to the students. I organize my lessons in a structured way, and focus on transmitting English knowledge to my students. I believe that the more knowledge I give, the more knowledge my students absorb. However, based on my own teaching experience, I find that my students could not completely absorb all the knowledge.

In an exclusive teacher-centered class instruction, Mrs. Qi imparted knowledge to the students, and the students were controlled by ordered rows of desks and by norms of silent attention. The students sat, received, and followed. This kind of instruction contributed to cultivating students' reading and writing abilities. By adopting the communication-oriented course books, she tried to provide more opportunities let students practice and use English in some dialogues, activities, and tasks. When she adopted the Dulangkou Method, she attempted to let the students experience, discover, explore, and cooperate in learning English in small groups, and the students became active participants.

In the interview data, Mrs. Qi said that the Dulangkou Method was a collection of local teachers' experiences regarding successfully implementing the new curriculum change in a rural junior school in Shandong Province. She said that,

In this teaching method, the students are actively involved in learning in the small groups. Every individual student is treated as a person with

potential in learning. The teaching focus is on students' active participating in learning process rather than teachers' imparting knowledge to them. It encourages experiencing, discovering, exploring, and cooperating learning in small group work. It is to increase the students' learning interests and built up their confidence in learning.

By adopting the method, Mrs. Qi tried to limit her exclusive teacher-centered class instruction time to 15 minutes – one third of a 45-minute lesson. However, according to the Dulangkou Method's requirement, the teacher's instruction should be no more than 10 minutes, and 5 minutes at best. Her teaching practice shifted away from the teacher-centered model to students' exploration in small groups. In student-centered environments, students were given direct access to English language in the course book and worked in small groups to learn English and use English for communication.

In the observation data, in the group learning, the students were seen to take an active part in carrying out the activities arranged by Mrs. Qi. For instance, the students were divided into eight small groups to learn a dialogue or a text, discussed it, and acted it out in different groups. They worked collaboratively in a group to solve a dialogue, an activity, a text, or a task. Another focus in different groups was competitive. After a performance by one group, the students in the other groups made comments and pointed out errors related to grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and so on. She commented later on their performances and gave a score for each performance. The students collaborated in small groups or in pairs to learn English. Group work was one feature of her

teaching that broke away from too much teacher instruction and gave the students a valuable opportunity to learn and use English language. Sometimes, after the students' activities, Mrs. Qi gave a short explanation about grammar, vocabulary, and language structures.

In the observation and interview data, the students just displayed the dialogue or knowledge in English instead of carrying out interactive language activities in the small groups. For example, the students in a small group learned the dialogue in the course book. A student read it aloud, a student explained grammar, vocabulary, or language structures, and a student translated it into Chinese. Sometimes they acted it out. Mrs. Qi felt that by adopting group work, the students could master some shallow knowledge, but lacked systematic grammar knowledge and language structures. She said that the memorization and recitation of the dialogues and texts was important homework for her students outside of the class in order to consolidate what had been learned in the class.

Sometimes, Mrs. Qi gave some explanations to her students before group learning and then let the students to get involved in as many activities as possible in a small group or in pairs. In the observation data, her students had more opportunities to use English with her and with other students. At the same time, Mrs. Qi changed her role from a knowledge transmitter and controller of learning pace to a facilitator and learning guide. All these aspects of her teaching revealed that Mrs. Qi was trying to make her teaching more student centered. Mrs. Qi noted that,

There is a change from my explanation to students' exploration.

Previously, most knowledge only came from me, and there was little students' involvement. Now, the students are located in the center of learning to explore the knowledge in small group works. I reduce my lecture time and allow students more time for speaking English. Since adopting the Dulangkou Method, my students have been more active in class.

According to the interview and observation data, her students acted as active participants in class. Her students benefited from improving their spoken English and were more motivated in learning English. What is more, the students felt more comfortable speaking English either in small groups or in front of the class. For example, after one group students' performance of an activity, if other students wanted to make comments, they did not need to raise their hands, but could speak out directly. The class environment was active, not passive.

As mentioned above, there was a shift in Mrs. Qi's role from a transmitter of knowledge and a controller of learning to a facilitator of knowledge and a learning guide. She tried to negotiate between the exclusive teacher-centered class instruction and small group learning. She drew some ideas from the tradition and from the new method and found a way that sought the harmony.

The combination of criticism, understandings and praise

In the interview data, Mrs. Qi said that after the new curriculum change, a teacher could not physically harm a student any more. However, according to the Chinese tradition, physical harm and criticizing students was a teacher's right and it was believed that corporal punishment was an optimal way to discipline students. Corporal punishment was prohibited within the school system after the new curriculum change, and Mrs. Qi experienced this transition.

Mrs. Qi found that openly criticizing and blaming the students in the class lowered their motivation to learn and sometimes even led to resistance in learning. One of her transitions was related to how to handle students who misbehaved. Mrs. Qi saw these problems from the students' perspectives, talked to them, and listened with the intent to understand them. The students felt themselves to be understood, their defenses were lowered, and the opportunities to open communication came naturally. To the students, she was both a mentor who helped them correct their behaviors and overcome their shortcomings, as well as a parent who took care of their lives. She showed her understanding of and respect for the students as the basis of the teaching process.

Although she openly pointed out misbehaviors, she did not criticize students by name. Previously, Mr. Qi praised the students less, and criticized them more. The criticism made the students feel inferior to others. The students did not feel trust and respect from the teacher. After the new curriculum change, she communicated more with her students and criticized them less. In addition to teaching English, she talked with them individually. She conversed with her

students in order to know them better, was patient with their misbehaviors, and saw things from their perspective. Her students felt affirmed and valued, and open communication came as a result. She and the students analyzed the issues in detail, and then tried to work out a better solution to identify issues. When students made a little progress, she praised them and helped them regain self-confidence. She said that,

There is an open communication between my students and me. Mutual understanding and mutual respect are very helpful to build good relationships between my students and me. In teaching practice, I feel that appropriate praise and encouragement is like sunlight to the students.

Her understanding and praise gave the students the sense of success in learning English. The sense of success promoted their interest in learning. With the teacher's understanding and praise, the students became more confident in themselves. To the top students, she set a higher standard for their learning and made them reach their potential. To the middle level students, she affirmed their achievements and consulted them with their shortcomings. To the low level students, she communicated them more often, helped to analyze their shortcomings and together found out the way to resolve them.

Furthermore, Mrs. Qi tried to cultivate the students' interest, especially sustainable interest in learning English from elementary school to junior high school. As a famous saying goes, "An average teacher tells; a good teacher explains; a better teacher demonstrates; and a great teacher inspires." Interest was the best teacher. If the students lost their interests, they would not learn English.

She tried to arouse the students' interests in learning English and cultivate their love of learning. She said that,

Interest is one important factor to learn English. If the students lose their interest, they will give up learning. Once they keep the right track of learning English they will actively be involved in learning. By adopting group learning and the new course books, her students are interested in learning English and actively participate in learning.

Based on the observation data, students were split into small groups and participated in class contests. The contents of the contests included: word spelling, dialogues, morning reports, reciting the texts, grammar, and role plays and so on. These contests were marked by scores, were summed up at the end of term, and awards were delivered to the winners. This technique helped the students to actively participate in learning.

Mrs. Qi also cultivated their perseverance in the face of difficulties and self-control and willingness to learning. As an old Chinese saying goes, "Success depends on three tenths talent and seven tenths hard work." Talent is not enough, and must be coupled with diligence and willingness to learn. In her teaching, there was a move toward individualizing homework. She found the same homework was not fit for the students with the diverse language levels. She tried to diversify the homework's requirements, strived for a balance of homework and catered for the differences of language proficiency in the class. For example, the below average students had simple homework and the excellent students had more

difficult homework. Therefore, this way helped the students with different language levels make an accomplishment in their learning.

Moreover, Mrs. Qi built up a good relationship with her students. She considered herself a friend to the students and sometimes a parent who helped them with life problems and gave them ongoing support so that they could put more effort into learning English. She gave a hand to students in need, helped them with difficulties, took care of their daily life, and was concerned about their physical and mental health. Students had not only learned English, but they had also learned how to have good learning habits, overcome their difficulties, and get along with others. Mrs. Qi showed her understanding, respect, and concern to her students. She kept a friendly smile in the class, and gave them the sense of achievement. The students felt the respect, trust, and concern from her. She told one story,

One little girl used to be good at every subject. At the Grade 9, her scores suddenly went down and she no longer concentrated on learning.

Gradually, I knew she was disturbed by her parents' divorce. I consulted with her and her parents, helped her recover her learning interests and let her understand their parents' decision. I still remembered this scene. While it was a heavy raining day, she hurried to my home and told me "Teacher, Teacher, I am admitted into the Shiyan senior high school." Both the exciting tears and rain were flowing down from her face.

During many-year teaching experiences, Mrs. Qi came to know what difficulties her students would meet and what kind of supports they needed. For

example, in Grade Seven, some students would have difficulty in pronunciation, intonation, and spelling. In Grade Eight, some students lost their fresh interest in English and felt it was difficult to learn English. When they wanted to give up learning English, she would lend a hand, give more encouragement and help them keep up with the pace. In Grade Nine, the competitive senior high school entrance examination created great pressure on the students. She would communicate more with her students and reduce their pressure. When the students realized that the teacher knew them and took care of them, they would make an effort to learn English.

Mrs. Qi paid attention to using various ways to conduct her lessons to stimulate students' motivation, knew individual differences, encouraged students as much as possible, and got along well with her students. Sometimes, students' interest may only last a short period of time. She was sympathetic, kind, encouraging and helpful. She gave praise and encouragement and made the students see their progress from day to day. Motivation was the impulse and foundation of learning. Mrs. Qi took motivation into consideration and tried to make her lessons interesting. In addition, she paid attention to individual differences. Some students understood better but wrote worse. Some students had a large vocabulary but poor pronunciation. She found all possible ways to deal with the problems. She placed different demands on all of them: the slower students got easy questions in class for encouragement and the best students got more difficult ones to urge them forward.

The transition of teacher's role

After using the new course books and the Dulangkou Method for implementing curriculum change, Mrs. Qi thought she had a new role as a facilitator of learning and as a learning guide. Her teaching shifted from traditional whole class instruction to small group learning, and her role shifted from a knowledge transmitter, an authority, and a controller of learning to her new role of a facilitator and learning guide. The nature of the new roles became something new and different from the previous ones. From China's traditional culture, learning was a process of acquiring and accumulating knowledge and skills, and a teacher was responsible for teaching the book (delivering knowledge). Before the curriculum change, as a teacher, Mrs. Qi was responsible for delivering English language knowledge to her students, was considered a fountain of knowledge and authority of knowledge, and dominated the teaching and learning process. She decided what to teach, how to teach, and how to control the pace. In the traditional practice, the students were passive receivers, and they sat, received, and followed. After the curriculum change, she made some changes. In the observation data, she adopted small group learning in her teaching, and the students became active participants. The students studied English in small groups, cooperated with others, and used English. During group work, she walked around the classroom acting as a facilitator, counselor, and helped the students solve their problems and answer their questions. Mrs. Qi changed to walking around the classroom from only teaching at the front. She explored her new roles and tried to keep some previous roles. She said that,

Small group learning in the Dulangkou Method requires the teacher's role shift from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator of learning. I think both roles should be strengthened considerably. I have to continuously perform on a tightrope of a continuum between being a transmitter of knowledge and a facilitator of learning.

Outside of the English class, the students seldom had any chance to use English. Small group learning helped the students become more actively involved in their own learning. Group learning aroused the students' interests and led to some gains in oral competence. Mrs. Qi explored how to facilitate students' learning.

Although she was puzzled about the detailed procedures of small group learning, she still adopted small group learning in her English language teaching.

According to the desk location, the students were divided in four big groups.

Sometimes, according to the desk rows, the students were divided in eight small groups and each student was named after a Chinese army officer (Jun, Shi, Lu, Tuan, Ying, Lian, Pai). The students in each small group were fixed; each consisted of six or seven students, including excellent students, average students, and below average students. The group learning encouraged the cooperation within groups and the competition between groups. Small group learning mainly consisted of role-play of the dialogue, searching for new grammar, vocabulary, and language structures, the performance of the text, completing communicative activities and tasks, and translating the text into Chinese, and so on. The good students could help the below average ones. Each group received points based on their group performances. The group work cultivated a sense of responsibility. In

the observation data, the students were actively involved in learning in a small group work. The activities in a small group gave the students the context to use English.

In the observation data, a striking feature was Mrs. Qi's way of handling her teaching with group work, which was a more student-centered teaching orientation. When she handled the lessons, Mrs. Qi acted as a facilitator of learning. Her students learned English in small groups. As a facilitator of learning, she got the students involved in student-student interactions. For Mrs. Qi, one new role was to facilitate the learning process between all students in the classroom, and between the students and the various dialogues, texts, and activities. The other new role was to guide within the classroom procedures and activities. In the interview data, Mrs. Qi said that,

As a facilitator of learning, I create a classroom context conducive to language learning and provide opportunities for students to use English in group work. The students explore language knowledge and use English for communication. They are involved in discovering grammar and language structures. At the same time, they complete the activities.

In the interview data, Mrs. Qi stated that at the beginning of her teaching career, she had verbally dominated the teaching process by spending much time explaining grammar, vocabulary, and teaching content to the students. Although she knew the importance of learning language knowledge for communication by adopting the new course books and the Dulangkou Method, she felt that small group learning still needed to be combined with teacher instruction. Sometimes,

Mrs. Qi gave adequate explanations to her students and then offered them more opportunities to get involved in as many different activities as possible in group learning. Sometimes, after the group learning, she would make a summary about grammar and language structures. Mrs. Qi still remained in her previous role as a knowledge transmitter and controller of learning and added some new roles as a facilitator, and learning guide. All these aspects of her teaching revealed that Mrs. Qi was trying to make her teaching more student-centered by adopting the Dulangkou Method, but was keeping her traditional role as a knowledge transmitter.

In teaching the dialogue, her role was as a facilitator, a guide, and a knowledge transmitter. As a facilitator, Mrs. Qi used some pictures in the book to help her students get some ideas about the dialogue. Then the students studied in eight small groups and learned the dialogue. Observation showed that the students were separated into small groups. Mrs. Qi walked around to monitor the discussion, and at the same time controlled the pace and timing. She encouraged her students to present the knowledge about the dialogue, and give a performance at the front of the class. The observation data showed that, from time to time, Mrs. Qi nodded her head or made comments such as ‘wonderful’ and ‘excellent’ to express her opinions of her students’ performances. After that, Mrs. Qi started to act as a knowledge transmitter, that is, she started to make a summary on some important language points and grammar that occurred in the dialogue.

Handling the language structures and grammatical items, Mrs. Qi only gave very brief and concise explanations. Then she gave out many exercises and

activities for her students to practice in both oral and written forms. In her opinion, she needed to give some explanations, and at the same time she let the students have more practice. Mrs. Qi was merely adding some new roles to her traditional role rather than completely shifting the overall nature of the teacher's role and identity. In other words, the teacher previously had the roles of a knowledge transmitter and a controller of learning, and now she had some new roles of a facilitator of learning and learning guide. Mrs. Qi's role and identity became something new and different. Mrs. Qi stressed learning language knowledge for communication rather than learning about the knowledge for the sake of the knowledge or for passing examinations. She emphasized that group work needed to be combined with the teacher-centered class instruction.

Due to the increasingly great changes in the teaching methods and the course books, she realized her teaching should shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model. Therefore, from Mrs. Qi's pedagogy, it is quite clear that communicative skills and grammatical knowledge are viewed as having the same importance. However, for Mrs. Qi, the change was not radical, but incremental; it consisted of expanding her teaching rather than rejecting previous approaches. Mrs. Qi stressed the importance of memorization and recitation in learning English. She recognized that the environment in which her students lived provided very little opportunity for them to speak English. A possible way to remedy this deficiency was to encourage them to memorize some useful sentence patterns, dialogues, and texts.

Mrs. Qi insisted that reciting good sentences and some texts is helpful for the students to learn English. Observation from the data showed that Mrs. Qi encouraged her students to use their deep memorization both inside and outside class. In addition, recitation was a part of their routine homework every day. Mrs. Qi regularly checked this when they returned to class the next day. This is a good example of changing some aspects of classroom behavior and activity types without an actual substantive change to the main focus on accuracy, memorization, etc. For example, rather than focusing the attention of the whole class on errors by means of explanation, she adopted a new approach in dealing with student errors. By having the students in the other groups find where the errors are and explain why they are considered to be errors, the students pay attention to the performance, understand it much better, and remember it later on. Instead of teaching fundamental English like grammar and sentence structure, the Dulangkou Method emphasizes active and creative learning. Although the exclusive teacher-centered class instruction is old fashioned, Mrs. Qi still used it and found it very helpful.

Based on the observation data, she organized a word competition to help her students learn new words. Eight small groups competed and were asked to say as many words as possible that were related to colors. The students were seen to be active in learning new words by reviewing the old words they had learned previously. During the process, Mrs. Qi acted as a helper and marker. She explained less in order to create more opportunities for her students to get involved in the learning process. As teaching and learning moved to the dialogue,

Mrs. Qi worked as a controller and manager. She first had her students read the dialogue aloud, then she arranged for them to listen to the tape to imitate the pronunciation and intonation, and next she had them work in groups. At this point, Mrs. Qi walked around to supervise their activities and also joined their discussion.

She also felt that it was more difficult to be a teacher after the curriculum change. Curriculum changes posed a lot of new requirements on her. Mrs. Qi adopted the recommended teaching method, used the new course books, aroused students' interests, and searched for suitable teaching methods for her own context. She helped students enjoy studying and drew students' attention and cultivated their interest. The students' creativity was developed. There were so many different requirements for her, but she did not get any professional support to make this transition.

Chapter 7 Mrs. Dai

This chapter focuses on describing and interpreting Mrs. Dai's professional and sociocultural adjustments and her perceived difficulties during the process of implementing the new curriculum change. First, it provides Mrs. Dai's profile in terms of her education background, teaching experience, professional development, and so on. Second, it describes the impact of a four-month teach training program on her teaching. Third, it addresses cultural resistance from students' parents towards Western teaching methods. Fourthly, it indicates her adaptation of the multimedia software. Fifthly, it describes her experiences in cultivating students' interests and emotions. Sixthly, it addresses her adjustment towards getting parents' support and understanding. Finally, it discusses her puzzlement regarding no freedom for teachers under an examination-oriented centralized evaluation system.

Mrs. Dai's biographical profile

Mrs. Dai (a pseudonym) became a junior teacher of English with a two-year diploma of English education, which she received in 1991 from a teachers' college in Heilongjiang Province. She had 18 years of teaching experience at the time of the study. Her present school, located in Daqing City, was famous in terms of school teaching resources and facilities, teacher qualifications, student achievements in senior high school entrance examinations, and national college entrance examinations. This school consisted of one key senior high department, one regular junior high department, one foreign language junior high department,

and three elementary departments. The school teaching year was divided into two semesters and comprised 36 weeks for teaching and testing. Mrs. Dai was teaching in the regular junior high department that was organized into a four-year junior school system from Grade Six to Grade Nine. In general, there were 18 classes in each grade in her department. She was assigned two classes each term and taught 10 regular teaching periods each week, with each regular teaching period lasting 40 minutes. She taught the same group of students in two classes for 4 years, assuming full responsibility for the results of their senior high school entrance examination. Every classroom was fully equipped with a cassette recorder and tapes, an overhead projector, a computer, English teaching software, and internet access. Every teacher had a laptop, the school had a library, and Mrs. Dai had enough teaching resources. The school was using the new series of course books based on the recent version of the new curriculum change. Mrs. Dai was a classroom teacher for one class she taught and was responsible for managing and educating all the students in this classroom. In general, a classroom teacher was appointed on the basis of proven records in teaching and organizational ability. The position was normally assigned to teachers of math, Chinese, and English.

Mrs. Dai had completed a four-month teaching training program in Australia, which had influenced her teaching philosophy and practice. To implement the new curriculum change, the Daqing Education Department sent ten senior high school teachers of English to Canada, and five elementary school teachers and five junior high school teachers of English to Australia for a four-month teacher training program every year between 2001 and 2005. In 2004, Mrs.

Dai and many teachers of English took a series of tests and she was chosen to undertake this program in Australia. Besides the improvement of her English oral competence, Mrs. Dai was informed about the latest trends in teaching methods, observed the teaching practices of the local junior and senior high school teachers, and came into contact with the local culture by travelling. In addition, Mrs. Dai met three memorable teachers who played special roles in guiding and inspiring her to work as a good teacher. Most important of all, she was often chosen to attend many teaching contests of English demonstration classes, which helped her gain insight into the new English curriculum change.

Although she was awarded many prizes for excellent teaching achievements, after her return from the teaching training program in Australia, her professional life did not go smoothly. She was employed in her present school and taught English in the foreign language junior high department. She adopted teaching philosophies and methods learned from the teacher training program, stimulated the students' interests, got more student involvement in the class, and cultivated their communicative competence. Although her students had strong communicative competence, at the end of the second school year, the mean scores of her students in one accelerated class were lower than those of the other general class in a knowledge-based examination. Immediately, some parents expressed their disagreement with her teaching methods, went to the Daqing Education Department, and sued her. The school authorities officially informed Mrs. Dai that for the benefit of the students in the senior high school entrance examination, she would be transferred from the foreign language junior department to the

regular junior high department in 2007. This transfer meant she was incapable of teaching and she found herself confronted with the challenges of applying Western teaching philosophies and methods into the local classroom teaching practice.

The impact of a four-month teacher training program on Mrs. Dai's teaching

In the interview data, Mrs. Dai talked about the impact of the teacher training program in Australia on her teaching philosophy and practice. She described her four-month training experience at a local college on the island of Tasmania. It began with improving English competence and training teaching methodologies, followed by educational practice by observing how the local junior and senior high teachers taught in classrooms. Finally, she experienced Australian culture and customs by travelling.

Mrs. Dai recalled how one native Australian teacher, who had taught English as a foreign language in Indonesia for a few years and was responsible for the methodology training, introduced a lot of methods that were new to her. Mrs. Dai clearly knew that all these methods were effective for small class sizes. In addition, these methods were very useful in fostering students' interest and motivation for learning English and developing communicative competence. However, after her return to China, due to large class-sizes and the pressure from the examinations, there was seldom time, energy, or possibility to try some of these methods in practice. Adopting these methods to teach English was a

cumulative process, which emphasized a gradual build up of a solid foundation and cultivated students' ability in using English for communication step-by-step. In the Chinese context, parents and society had no patience for waiting the required three or four years of the cumulative process to see the optimal teaching results of adopting these methods. Mrs. Dai said that,

... This training program did broaden my perspective. If I were given a suitable situation, I would adopt a lot of methods and activities that I did not know previously. My previous method of teaching English in China was the same as the method that my teachers once used to teach me when I was a student. I knew what method my teachers used to teach me and then I adopted this method to teach my students. I think most of teachers in China taught in this way. After the training program, I knew English lessons could be taught in these ways and there were many different ways and activities to be used in English language teaching.

Furthermore, Mrs. Dai observed the educational practice in a secondary school, including a junior and a senior high department. In the observation process, she felt there were some differences in educational practice between China and Australia. In every class of this junior department, there were no more than 20 students. There was a student-centered approach, emphasizing the active role of students in participating in the learning process, encouraging communication and cooperation, and cultivating students' competence. In contrast, classes in China were obviously much larger; it was common to have between 50 and 70 students in one class. In most cases, the approach was formal and teacher-

centered, and focused on the delivery of knowledge. During the observation process, one teacher worked as her supervisor and gave her a guide on teaching practice. She benefited mostly from learning how to foster students' interests and motivations. In addition, her oral competence improved quickly and she was able to communicate with the local people.

In the interview data, Mrs. Dai described her less than two-year teaching experience of adopting Western teaching methods and ideas in her school's foreign language junior department. This department adopted small class-sizes and had two classes (one accelerated class and one general class) in every grade. Mrs. Dai was assigned to teach the accelerated class. For these students, the new philosophies and methods learned from the training program could be used in her daily teaching practice. Her daily teaching practice shifted from a teacher-centered grammar translation method towards student-centered and communication-oriented teaching. She also fostered students' interest and motivation in learning, adopted a lot of communicative activities, and used a variety of teaching techniques. Mrs. Dai explained sparingly and adopted the activities to develop students' communicative competence. She integrated the training of the four skills, maximized the use of the target language, and used the mother tongue at her discretion. She not only functioned as a facilitator in the learning process but also provided students with a basic knowledge of English. She gave the students a lot of opportunity in class to use English for communication. The students reached their language potential, and spoke in English better than she did. She said,

I know my students' English level. Especially after a short-time period of teaching, I clearly know what level my students can get to and what they can master. Step by step, a lot of communicative activities are used and many students' oral competence is beyond me. We, teachers, need to think and then speak in English, even including one or two mistakes, but they can speak in English naturally, fluently and accurately. Their love to English has inspired me rather than I motivate them to learn.

Mrs. Dai adhered to the Chinese belief that a teacher should always follow a certain way of teaching, but should not stick to it. Mrs. Dai selected the appropriate method and adapted it according to the particular teaching situations. There was no universal teaching method for all the teaching situations and every method had its advantages and limitations. She synthesized Western and Chinese teaching ideas. Her teaching indicated a shift from the teacher-centered grammar translation method toward the student-centered and communication-oriented teaching. A lot of communication-oriented activities could be used. For example, a dialogue could be adapted into a passage orally or in writing, or could be role-played. During the role-play performance, the students could add their own words and actions. She said,

For example, when we learn the Shakespeare drama, I let the students find out their favorite part of the Shakespeare drama and act them out. They use different ways to perform it, including lip-synching, imitating, or acting, and so on. Sometimes, we revise the ending from the tragedy to the comedy. Then we role play this comedy ending. The students' thinking is

beyond my imagination. Their performance about this make-up comedy is creative and funny. Their performance can be evaluated according to their different features, such as the type of pleasing the public with claptrap, an extraordinary type, the most unexpected type, the best creative type, the best drama lines, and the funniest type. The atmosphere is comfortable. All these activities are impetuous without preparation.

During the teaching process, she actively worked as a facilitator. She used a drip of water to elicit a cup of water and used a cup of water to draw out the endless water from the students. She deeply felt that the only limitation was in her teaching ability, but there was no limitation to her students' language competence.

Mrs. Dai's role as a teacher was not only a transmitter of linguistic knowledge but also a facilitator of developing the students' competence to communicate by using English. In a small-sized class, Mrs. Dai encouraged the students to give free rein to their ideas, monitored their activities, and supported them whenever necessary so that the students responded eagerly, initiated talk, and contributed to each other's ideas. The students were not passive recipients of knowledge but actively participated in the proceedings and made meaningful contributions to English communication. Mrs. Dai not only took the traditional role of transmitting knowledge, but also acted as a facilitator in the activities and as a monitor of the classroom interaction. The teacher and students did not completely follow the traditional roles.

After the training program, the focus for Mrs. Dai's teaching shifted from language knowledge to language application. English learning was not just

mastering English form and rule. She adopted communicative activities and provided opportunities for the students to use English in various contexts. Some new techniques were being tried out. In Mrs. Dai's opinion, small-sized classes were ideal for adopting the Western teaching methods in terms of the greater opportunities for student involvement and participation. The training program helped her change her view of the English language and English language teaching. English language was seen as a communication tool and she put more emphasis on the use of the language in different activities. In addition, English language teaching was assessed on how well the students learned rather than on how a teacher taught. Student-centeredness was recognized and accepted. In the third space, Mrs. Dai tried to mediate the new teaching theories and rationale in her own teaching contexts. Meanwhile, she understood that teaching and learning activities would fit in the contexts where teaching and learning took place.

Parents' cultural resistance towards Western teaching methods

In the interview data, Mrs. Dai obviously felt parents' cultural resistance towards Western teaching philosophies and methods. Parents' traditional belief about teaching and learning made it difficult to adopt new methods in teaching. Mrs. Dai struggled with this in her teaching practice. After the teaching training program in Australia, Mrs. Dai attempted to teach English in a communicative way, but she encountered opposition from some parents. The opposition was directly related to parents' traditional concepts about teaching and learning. In China, parents took learning seriously and associated communicative activities in a lesson with entertainment. Thus, parents were skeptical of her use of

communicative activities as learning tools. Mrs. Dai recalled her experience of being sued for adopting a lot of communicative activities and cultivating students' communicative competence when she was a teacher at the foreign language junior high department.

As a teacher, she felt there was only limitation to the activities designed by her regarding how to use English language, but there were no boundaries to the students' potential competence in using English to complete any assigned activity. Mrs. Dai emphasized that communicative competence could not result from doing a lot of grammatical items in exercise books and from tests. Cultivating communicative competence was a cumulative process achieved by students' actively participating in communicative activities. However, parents and school authorities only paid attention to high test scores. She said,

There is a saying – Giving a fish to a man makes him survive a day, but teaching him how to fish makes him survive for all life. Cultivating communicative competence is just like mastering how to fish. After the students have this potential competence by the first three year schooling teaching, I take some exam items and let them practice in the fourth-year schooling teaching. So they will get higher scores in the senior high school entrance examination. In the grammar-based examinations, a perfect score only means mastering a lot of knowledge, but does not mean having communicative competence. However, the parents are skeptical about the communicative activities. Look, you, this teacher, don't let my child do a lot of testing items. You always let my child sing, or role play. You don't

do a useful thing. Then, the parents become angry and ask why our child in your accelerated class only gets 89 scores in a test, but the other children in the general class could get 91 scores.

In fact, the difference of two or three points in test scores did not represent a big gap between students' language levels. However, parents misunderstood the goal of cultivating communicative competence. Mrs. Dai confronted difficulties in adopting the Western teaching methods in her teaching practice. As for parents, their view was that higher test scores were more important than any potential communicative competence, and that the teacher must transmit all knowledge required for the tests so that their children could gain entrance into key senior high schools. Mrs. Dai knew that sticking to the grammar translation teaching method was the best way to satisfy the parents. Most important of all, parents thought that having the students participate in activities and games was a waste of time. However, Mrs. Dai found that sparing some time for students to use English language in activities and games would stimulate their interests and cultivate their communicative competence.

Mrs. Dai recalled her teaching experience of devoting time to stimulating the students' interests, getting them involved in the lesson, and cultivating their communicative competence in the foreign language junior department. The students' strong competence in using English language made her feel achievements in her teaching. The first prize in any kind of English contest in Daqing City belonged to her students. She was proud of her students. However, the mean test scores of her students in her accelerated class were lower than those

of one of the general classes in one mid-term examination in the second year. As a result, some parents went to the Daqing Education Department and sued her. Mrs. Dai was transferred from the foreign language junior department to the regular junior high department.

Mrs. Dai clearly knew there was a great deal of debate on teaching grammar in China. She remembered that in one teaching contest of English teachers from all over the country, Professor BaoTianren (an educator in China) emphasized the importance of teaching grammar in China. He said the current English language teaching in China always emphasized the weakness of grammar teaching. Teaching grammar was not the focus in the new curriculum change. If English were the mother language, grammar teaching could be excluded. He made an analogy. Many Chinese did not know grammar, but they could speak in Chinese fluently. This was because Chinese was their mother language. In foreign language teaching, a teacher should teach some grammatical rules. First, the students mastered these grammatical rules. Then they could speak in English freely and accurately. There was a great deal of debate on teaching grammar in China. The new curriculum change did not require students to learn systematic grammar knowledge, but emphasized learning English by using and doing. The result was that what students remembered was ambiguous. Professor Bao said that teaching grammar was a simple and direct way to learning English. Mrs. Dai thought that perhaps she had strayed far away from Chinese traditional ways of teaching and learning. She knew that teaching grammar was the most effective

way to achieve high test scores. In the examinations, this method obtained the desired result immediately.

Adopting the multimedia software

In the interview data, Mrs. Dai said that in her school every classroom was well-equipped with multimedia technology, including an overhead projector, a computer, English teaching software, and internet access, and a laptop was distributed to every teacher. Her present department adopted a series of *New Standard English* course books based on the new curriculum change and purchased its multimedia-assisted teaching software. This teaching software provided abundant teaching resources, including teaching plans, background information, listening and reading materials, graphics, sketches, slides, audio and video materials, testing materials, and so on. The abundant resources provided sufficient flexibility to the course books and enriched the content of the course books.

Mrs. Dai perceived this multimedia-assisted software as helpful in facilitating English language teaching and learning. The software created a more conducive learning environment and facilitated the teaching process. In addition, it provided enough background information for a variety of activities in teaching and a channel to foster language use in contexts. In the observation data, at the beginning of each lesson, Mrs. Dai let her students sing a song in English and act or move according to the rhythms with the use of the multimedia-assisted

teaching software. The purpose of singing a song was to stimulate the students' interest in learning English, gain their attention, and let them relax. For example, the students were happy to sing an English song, *Two Butterflies*, and acted by using the course book in their hand according to the rhythms. This created a language atmosphere in the class and helped them feel relaxed and ready to learn English. By using the background information provided by the software, the texts and exercises with a great diversity of colors, sounds, and movement made learning enjoyable and easier to understand. The multimedia technology did some English language teaching work for her. Mrs. Dai used it to facilitate formal instruction, stimulating students' interest in learning English, and enriching the teaching content. In addition, the software teaching resources were shared to the maximum degree through the Internet. The Internet provided a number of supplementary sources, which appealed to the students' interests. Thus, better learning environments were provided for language practice and use, especially regarding listening and speaking opportunities. The Internet provided background information and cultural knowledge for further understanding English. In a word, multimedia-assisted teaching was a medium that supported the face-to-face method. It was one extension of the face-to-face method, but could not replace the face-to-face method. The combination of these two methods provided an effective mechanism for English language teaching.

Mrs. Dai said there were some advantages of adopting multimedia software for teaching. The software was very convenient to use. For example, if she wanted to find the background information of a lesson, she pressed the button

for the background information. With such software, she easily found useful and effective teaching resources to enrich the content of the course books and facilitate teaching and learning. However, Mr. Dai still believed that the multimedia-assisted teaching could never replace face-to-face formal instruction by a competent teacher.

In face-to face classroom instruction, Mrs. Dai could focus on addressing the various problems encountered by her students, monitor the learning pace, give advice, and offer help. Mrs. Dai believed that the most important quality in teaching was to be adaptable between actual teaching and lesson planning. Every student differed in strengths and weaknesses. In actual teaching, she would adopt and adapt her teaching according to what results her students achieved. She tried to vary the teaching routine, adjusted her teaching pace according to the students' situation and language levels, and guided and supported them accordingly. This was related the students' errors. In the observation data, Mrs. Dai used the multimedia to review the systematic grammar knowledge. She said,

When I teach the grammar items, I design the items on my own. I know the level of my students and design the items according to the errors that my students make. The same errors are made by the different students day in and day out, year after year. For example, when the present perfect is learned, only the durational verbs can be used with “since” and “for” adverbial phrases. Every year I emphasize this again and again. My students continue to say this: “I have got this book for two days.” They just say that. The third person singular form of a verb is not used and just

this comes out: “He like.” The error is related to the non- finite verb. It always says like this: “I like eat or I like play football.” The error is related to the present progressive. For another example, “I am doing a surgeon.” Be doing, the students only use the word be or doing, or be do. The error is related to the negative of the past tense. I worked hard. The negative sentence will be said like this: “I wasn’t worked hard.

Mrs. Dai mentioned one teacher, Teacher Li (a pseudonym), who was responsible for her teaching practice in college in 1991 and who was an influence on her attitude about multimedia technology. Teacher Li emphasized some basic teaching skills. For example, she required students to master the skill of using stick figures (simplified drawing). Mrs. Dai remembered Teacher Li explaining that, “Although you can use a tape-recorder or some advanced teaching facilities, nothing can replace your hands in the future. You easily draw a picture and this drawing can vividly express the meaning and improve the teaching effect. This is your personal belonging in all your life.” Mrs. Dai mentioned that at the time of her teaching practice, the tape-recorder was an advanced teaching tool and there was not yet any idea about computers and multimedia-assisted teaching. She said,

The teaching software has a lot of advantages in English language teaching. It has the large capacity of teaching materials, and is new, convenient, direct, and quick. However, it was just a technique, a facilitating technique, and a teacher could not let the software completely control the teaching process. From the beginning to the end in a lesson, I can adopt the software to finish my teaching. Who is teaching? The

computer is teaching. A teacher only functions as pressing the button. This function is no meaning. A teacher can use it in one process, or introduce the background information, or demonstrate one picture or something. I use it, but can't let it control my teaching. Indeed, the excellent teaching is adapted according to the characteristics of the students and the actual context. An excellent teacher is teaching without any facilities.

The computer could not understand the students' feelings about and progress in their English learning. It could not, in response, review and possibly change the teaching process to suit the students' needs. In practice, Mrs. Dai could establish the attainable goals for her students and adopt the compatible methodology.

As for Mrs. Dai's experience, her present school favored the embrace of multimedia, expanded technology use, and introduced the teaching of English with multimedia software. With the absolute dependence on the multimedia technology, Mrs. Dai described that a teacher was merely playing the role of pressing the button on a machine. She was against the over-indulgence in multimedia, and multimedia teaching could not replace formal instruction.

Cultivating students' interests and emotions

In the interview data, Mrs. Dai felt it was not easy for a teacher to function in the role of cultivating people. In a different time, there was a different opinion on how to cultivate people. In a previous time, people believed that "strict teachers produce outstanding students." Mrs. Dai recalled Teacher Li, who was responsible for her teaching practice at the college. Teacher Li was strict, did not

accept any errors from her students, and made them feel embarrassed and ashamed of their mistakes. Mrs. Dai and her classmates thought that Teacher Li lashed out at them for the smallest of reasons. She still remembered her tough words for one student: “You have strong local accent, and how can you be a paragon of learning? Look! Look! Look! If your eyes cannot contact with the students’, how can you manage them?” She criticized every issue of their teaching in detail. Although they disliked Teacher Li, she and her 20 classmates had to correct every issue from teaching images to teaching language step-by-step. Teacher Li knew she was hated and said, “I know I am not welcomed by you, but you will come to know my goodness when you become a teacher.” Indeed, Mrs. Dai appreciated Teacher Li’s strict requirements after she became a teacher because what Teacher Li required was useful and practical in practice.

Mrs. Dai mentioned that one of her classmates made a big leap in her teaching under Teacher Li’s guidance and criticizing. Teacher Li randomly chose one student to give a public demonstration lesson. This student was privately supervised by Teacher Li for two weeks. In Mrs. Dai’s memory, this student was very ordinary, unknown, and was not good at expressing herself. At the beginning of students’ teaching practice, every student gave a demonstration lesson and this student’s lesson was ordinary with no distinguishing features in her teaching. However, two weeks of private supervision and criticism did create a magic. This student’s teaching made a leap and became perfect. Mrs. Dai did not know what kind of process had occurred, and only remembered this student cried loudly each time after Teacher Li’s supervision. To everyone’s surprise, her final

demonstration lesson was perfect. Under the conditions at that time, her teaching method and teaching philosophy had become perfect. The method was not like the present teaching philosophy, which emphasized the students' active participation. At that time, the method focused on the demonstration of the teachers' competence. Most important of all, this student made phenomenal progress in her teaching in comparison to her previous dull teaching (in just two weeks). This student's achievement made Mrs. Dai and her classmates completely accept Teacher Li's criticism without complaint. However, criticism was not welcome in the new curriculum change. The new curriculum emphasized the cultivation of emotion, interest, and confidence. However, Mrs. Dai still stood firm in some of strict principles, but she changed a few things. She said that effective teachers should have superior classroom management skills. With strong management skills, Mrs. Dai would successfully structure, maintain, and monitor learning activities. There was a minimum of disruption and a maximum degree of student involvement in learning activities.

For many students in her current classes, learning was not a happy experience but a miserable one. In the face of these low language level students, Mrs. Dai felt that emotion and attitude were crucial to English language learning. Some students were not interested in English and reluctant to study English. Mrs. Dai adopted a lot of means to stimulate students' interests in learning. According to the characteristics of these students, they had poor English language foundation, a weak willingness to learn, and were talkative and hyperactive, but they had

strong curiosity and passion for novel and exciting things. Mrs. Dai tried to cultivate their interest in learning English. She said,

I use English songs to cultivate their interest and inclination of learning English. In every lesson, we learn to sing an English song. Sometimes, we insert some tongue twisters and small poems, and they focused on pronunciation. Using this way infiltrates English into the students' mind and cultivates their interest and inclination of learning English. In this lesson, we choose a song –“Two Butterflies.” Every student likes to sing it and is happy in getting involved in doing some actions. Thus, I begin by cultivating their interest. They like singing a song, like learning English, and accept me step-by-step. Under this condition, I can make a strict and high requirement for them.

Furthermore, Mrs. Dai set different requirements for the different students after she cultivated their interest in and inclination for learning English. For example, for some students, Mrs. Dai set a high requirement for them because their English foundation was good and their intelligence was good. In contrast, some students' foundation and intelligence was not good, and she gave them hope and confidence whenever and wherever possible. For example, she would praise one student: “You do very well and make some progress. You get more than 20 scores. Previously, you only got 19 scores.” She developed her students' confidence and encouraged their desire to learn English on their own. She often said to her students,

We don't need to compare with others and to some extent this comparison is not reasonable. This is because you should know who you are, and where your scores are located, and to what extent your English level is. You only need to compare with your past and it is good if you make progress. Don't compare with others, please compare with yourself and your past. No matter of your competence is big or small, under the condition of your competence, you teach your potential.

She created more chances for the students to realize their potential and build up their self-confidence. The students believed that they had the ability to master English under her instruction. For example, only a few students could master the grammar knowledge. In the teaching practice, she did not start with the average or below-average students. The excellent students first answered some items to act as a model for other students because the items were the same. She said,

For example, only less than ten percent of the students could answer the questions after listening to a dialogue. I begin with the best ones, then the average, and finally the below-average. Those excellent students answer immediately and take the lead. This also provides listening opportunities for the other students. Then the average students are asked to answer the questions. Finally, the below-average ones make simple answers. For these students, the process is just like a parrot repeating.

Because some below average students only got 10 scores out of 100 scores in the examinations, she had to use this parroting method to gain their attention. The

below-average students could attend class activities and had confidence in themselves. With confidence, the students would take an active part in class, cooperate with the teacher, and complete the homework. Mrs. Dai invited me to give her students a lecture and encouraged them to learn English.

Getting parents' support and understanding

Mrs. Dai shared some of the new ideas she learned in Australia about educating students with parents and got their support and understanding through parent conferences. The new curriculum change emphasized no spiritual or physical punishment of students. If Mrs. Dai was strict with her students, some parents would understand her good intentions for their children's development, but some parents would go directly to the city's educational department and file a complaint against her because she was not in compliance with the educational rules. In general, if there was a conflict between parents and teachers, parents who sued teachers would win the case. A teacher could not strike or touch students for their misbehaviors. Mrs. Dai told of one case,

As a teacher, you cannot strike a small finger of a student. If you really stroke the hand of a student because of his misbehavior, his parent issued you and you would be laid off. In one school, a teacher pinched a girl student's cheek and lost his half year's award money. The teacher made an apology to her parents and compensated Yuan 20, 000 (one year salary). This was only one pinch. The teacher wanted the student to correct her bad behavior. You cannot blame or strike a student, including spiritual punishment.

Mrs. Dai felt that educating parents was as important as educating students after the new curriculum change. Mrs. Dai used different methods to gain parents' trust, support, and understanding so that she could get rid of their misunderstandings and their negative views of teaching. Mrs. Dai was the third homeroom teacher for Class 18. The students in this class had so many discipline troubles that the first and second homeroom could not manage them and gave up working as a homeroom teacher. Mrs. Dai felt that a child's misbehavior was one difficult thing that a teacher could share with a parent. Behaviors that were acceptable at home may be not acceptable in a classroom. Sometimes, some parents did not agree that a certain behavior was problematic. At the parents' conference, Mrs. Dai said that to all parents,

Please believe me, believe I have a righteous heart ... If I say your child has misbehavior, he must have this. I am 100 percent sure he has this misbehavior and then I will say it to you. I will not falsely wrong to injure your child...

Mrs. Dai said that most of the parents understood her and supported her works. She communicated with the parents and helped them to understand better and become more positive with respect to their children's education. As a teacher, Mrs. Dai found that it was not easy to deal with students' denial of their misbehaviors. As a teacher, honest feedback was necessary to rectify the problem. She said to the parents in the parent conference,

Your child has a lot of misbehaviors. As a teacher, if I lower my teacher moral ethics, I can neglect your child's misbehaviors. Through half-closed

eyes, I can bear all these behaviors in these four years. However, you will worry about your child in the future days. Some days his misbehaviors will cause big troubles and you have to face this situation.

Mrs. Dai said most of the parents could accept her advice and understand her good intentions.

Furthermore, Mrs. Dai had a dialogue with parents about how to educate their children. She encouraged them to discover the talents and strengths of their children. This was related to her intercultural experience in Australia. Mrs. Dai described her contact with her landlord in Australia when she studied there. Her landlord observed his three children and came to different conclusions about the futures of each child. Her landlord said,

Among my three children, the first one is a passive receiver and is fit for being a worker in a working plant. In a plant, he will do well what is required him to do. The second one is an inborn cowboy and is good at caring for cattle. In future, I will buy a pasture and let him care for cattle. He will be happy and do very well. The last one is good at learning and likes to study. I will let her pursue a PhD program.

In contrast, if Chinese parents had three children, and the first and second children succeeded in the national college entrance examination and went to university, even if the third child was not clever or good at learning, he would be forced to follow in his siblings' footsteps to go to university. Everyone was pushed to pass the entrance examinations and go to university. Mrs. Dai felt sympathy for the last student on the public examination list in her class and understood how miserable

this student must have felt. For this student, the most miserable thing every day was to go to school. He completely lost confidence in himself, seemingly knew nothing, and hardly did anything, including singing a song. Mrs. Dai said this situation was beyond her control because the evaluation of students' success and failure was only decided by the examination scores. If the student succeeded in going to Qinhua University (a famous university in China), he was a successful person. In fact, in China, the purpose for most parents in developing their children's strengths was utilitarian. At the parents' conference, she said that,

A child possesses much different intelligence, e.g. language intelligence, communicative intelligence, physical intelligence, and so on. As a parent, no matter what intelligence of your child you cultivate, it is good for your child's development. Liu Xiang (a famous sportsman in running) developed his bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and he was a successful man. You always compare your child's weaknesses with the other children's strengths and cultivate this intelligence and that intelligence. You had better find out your child's strength and focus on cultivating this strength. Education should foster one's strengths and circumvent one's weaknesses; on the contrary, the present education is not the case in point because of unrealistic and competitive comparison and the requirement for a versatile and perfect person. As a person, who is a perfect person?

Mrs. Dai hoped that parents could set up different expectations for their children according to their children's characteristics. Parents and schools needed to change their mindset of overvaluing exam achievement.

No freedom for teachers under an examination-oriented centralized evaluation system

Mrs. Dai felt the puzzlement was related to the fact that she had no freedom to follow her own teaching styles under the centralized examination evaluation system and the intensification of examination competition. She said that every teacher had his or her own strengths and limitations. Maybe one teacher was good at cultivating the students' oral competence, but was not good at teaching grammar. Another teacher might provide a solid foundation of grammar knowledge, but was not good at teaching oral competence. At the current situation, there was not a good system to demonstrate every teacher's strengths and limitations. Mrs. Dai hoped to discover the most suitable method that demonstrated her strengths and her teaching styles and was the most comfortable and the least distressful for her. However, many requirements tightly controlled teaching. For example, the school and parents both expected good or improved examination results. Their expectations were of great concern to the teachers and had influence on the teaching methods they chose. She said that,

I think the least suitable method for me is to carefully and painstakingly focus on teaching grammar, but I have to go this way. If I insist on teaching according to my own strengths and teaching style, I will be embarrassed after the open list regarding the statistics of examination scores. My class has a low mean score or a lower pass percentage in the list on a public notice-board, and it means I am not an efficient teacher. Indeed, by using a lot of communicative activities after the four year schooling teaching process, my students will not only get satisfactory

examination results in the senior school entrance examination, but also have potential language competence. Nobody cares about this potential language competence. The school only requires good examination results of every-year, every-term, every-month, and every-week examinations and the traditional grammar-translation method is congruent with that requirement. I have to follow this way.... I feel I gradually and gradually lose my teaching characteristics. I am assimilated.

After examinations, statistics lists were posted comparing same grade results. First, if there were 1000 students in the seventh grade, the list would show the first student to the last student in terms of scores of all subjects. Students were ranked according to their academic scores. Second, each subject of all classes (from class 1 to class 18) also had a list and there were a lot of statistics. Different teachers taught different classes and this caused pressure for the teachers. A teacher's effectiveness in her job was directly decided by the position she obtained on the list of examination results. Failure on the list resulted in a teacher suffering low self-esteem and prestige. The Chinese saying goes "The face is as important to a person as the bark is to a tree." Every teacher wanted to have a face. Teachers were ranked according to their students' mean scores. She said that,

Although I have excellent teaching competence and wonderful teaching ideas, I have to face that reality. If I insist on cultivating competence, I will be laid off in one year because a mean score of my class is less 10 scores than those of others. The future is beyond my control. I have to care about the present reality and follow other people's steps. Satisfactory

examination results mean an excellent teacher. Every teacher goes this direction and I am assimilated. According my own teaching ideas, my students will get excellent English competence and satisfactory scores after the four years teaching. Nobody has patience to wait for this result.

In the interview data, she said that the current education system went in two extreme directions — one was eager for quick success and instant benefit and the other lacked of a solid foundation. For example, there were many famous writers in ancient China because they absorbed cultural essences and deposits. Dufu, a famous poet in ancient China said, “Thousands of poems are thoroughly memorized in my mind, and I can recite any poem without thinking. Even if I cannot write a poem, I will be able to chant some.”English teaching lacked a solid foundation. She said that,

In the daily teaching, I do not adopt any communicative activity or technique. I only require my student to recite all the texts from this course book. Only one technique, memorization, is used as a basic acquisition technique. In one course book, there are 24 texts in 12 units. When I mention any text, my students can recite it fluently and accurately. Just like Li Yang’s Crazy English method, I am 100 percent sure my students can get the high score in the examinations. In fact, at my current teaching, this technique cannot be carried out.

If Mrs. Dai had adopted this technique to give a solid foundation for English learning, 24 texts would be memorized in students’ minds. When Mrs. Dai mentioned any sentence of these texts, her students would be able to recite it

freely, fluently, and accurately. Mrs. Dai did not need to explain the grammar items again and again, such as the past tense form, the declarative sentence, the general question, the special question, and so on.

Every day, we are busy in completing tasks. This is my understanding of task-based language teaching. I must finish this task, that is, other teachers have already finished the second unit's teaching and I must finish it. When we come together and prepare the collective teaching plan, you have completed the Unit 3 and I must have already completed it. Every day, I just finish this kind of task. Every day's task is not what you want to do but just what you must do and what you must finish.

The current English examinations still focused on grammar and usage, vocabulary and reading comprehension. There was a wide gap between what the top-down new curriculum change expected to happen in English teaching and what actually happened. In Mrs. Dai's opinion, the implementation of the new curriculum change was affected by what types of students, their levels of language proficiency, and the content of examination.

According to Mrs. Dai, what and how to teach was not totally decided by a teacher, but was influenced by the examinations and the students. The new curriculum change emphasized cultivating communicative competence. Most important of all, communicative competence could not be cultivated by doing a lot of examination items. Cultivating communicative competence followed a gradual sequence. The parents focused on the scores of exams and required short-term benefits. What and how to teach was not decided by a teacher. Failure to

satisfy school and parents' expectation could result in undesirable consequences as a teacher's self-esteem and prestige would suffer if she obtained unsatisfactory results.

Chapter 8 Discussion and Implications

The participants, the third space, and towards a new intercultural methodology

As discussed above, the new English curriculum reform required teachers to make many professional and sociocultural adjustments towards the new teaching approach. Although the new curriculum reform did not specify any particular teaching method, it advocated student-centered and task-based teaching and emphasized the use of technology for language teaching (Wang, 2007). Teachers were required to shift from a teacher-centered, knowledge-based approach to a much more learner-centered interactive style of skills development (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011).

The three teachers that I interviewed showed generally positive attitudes towards curriculum reform and some changes were slowly taking place both in the teachers' beliefs and their instructional techniques. Such changes were not completely revolutionary but rather evolutionary in the form of mediating between new teaching ideas and previous teaching ideas. To some extent, the three teachers integrated new teaching ideas into their daily teaching practice, and at the same time they preserved aspects that they believed were valuable for their teaching contexts, such as memorization, repetition, correcting, reciting, and grammar teaching. As I have stated, all three teachers emphasized that reciting was a useful learning strategy in the Chinese context, and it made a solid foundation for using English for communication.

In this section, I examine the three teachers' professional and sociocultural adjustments towards the promoted teaching method in the new curriculum reform.

Then, I address the third space in relation to the participants. Finally, I describe an intercultural methodology that I believe could be productively employed in China.

The participants: Eclectic Mix of Old and New

The three teachers attempted to adopt and adapt the different new techniques in their teaching practice. At the same time, although all three teachers adopted the new teaching ideas in the new curriculum reform, they retained elements of the traditional methods. The first teacher, Mrs. Sui, viewed English learning as an additive process in which new knowledge was imparted to the students and was added on the existing knowledge. By attending teaching and research conferences, teacher training programs, and editing course books after the new curriculum reform, Mrs. Sui gradually accepted that the students should be actively involved in the learning process. In her current teaching practice, the students were actively involved in using language in small groups and pairs, and participated in the activities rather than merely passively accepting knowledge. Mrs. Sui made more time for the students to use English, and made the students actively participate in the learning process. However, she continued to employ traditional elements of grammar teaching, correcting errors and reciting.

The second teacher, Mrs. Qi, showed her willingness to adopt the Dulangkou Method promoted by the local Educational Department, and knew the advantage of this method in terms of arousing the students' interests and getting them actively involved in learning. By using this method, she viewed every individual student as a person with potential in learning, paid more attention to students' active participation in the learning process, focused less on imparting

knowledge, and adopted experiencing, discovering, exploring, and cooperating in learning in small groups. Mrs. Qi made a small adjustment from the exclusive teacher-centered class instruction to small group learning and her teaching shifted from the teacher-centered lecture model to the student-centered discovering and cooperative learning in small groups. She chose to retain traditional elements of explicit explanation on grammar items, error correction, memorization and recitation, believing them to help students master some basic knowledge.

The third teacher, Mrs. Dai, was a transmitter of knowledge and students had been situated in lines and rows facing her at the front before the new curriculum reform. After a four-month teacher training program in Australia, she came into contact with many new methods and clearly knew that all these methods were effective for small class sizes. In addition, these methods were very useful in fostering students' interest and motivation for learning English and developing communicative competence.

Mrs. Dai's daily teaching was student-centered and communication-oriented. She adopted a lot of communicative activities and used a variety of teaching techniques. She explained sparingly and adopted activities to develop students' communicative competence. She put more effort into designing different kinds of activities for the students to use English for communication. Mrs. Dai also continued to use traditional techniques of memorization and short grammar explanation.

In this blending of old and new, I found that there was a tendency for the teachers to follow the way towards eclecticism – which involved not just retaining

some good points from the old method, or just entirely adopting the communicative language teaching methods, haphazardly. Instead the teachers made their decisions based on their actual situations and the local context. They also made decisions on the basis of their comfort levels.

Drawing attention to these teachers' eclecticism is important because it adds to contemporary research on English language teaching and learning. Their eclecticism points to the need to think more deeply about transitions between the transmission-based education and interpretation-based education. As I detail below, the notion of a third space is helpful in this regard because it encourages educators to theorize English language teaching in ways that acknowledge that teaching and curriculum are not either/or. They do not need to be oriented to a single educational model.

The third space in relation to the participants

As several scholars have pointed out, top-down educational change initiatives designed to alter classroom practices are often unsuccessful in significantly altering what happens in classrooms (Chern, 2002; Markee, 1997; Carless, 1998, 2002; Mee, 2002; Hu, 2005b). One important reason for this lack of success is insufficient consideration of contextual realities, and of how teachers experience change. A frequently mentioned obstacle is that teachers are not adequately supported in their attempts to process new ideas and develop their pedagogy in contextually appropriate ways.

According to Aoki, within the context of curriculum reforms, praxis requires an estrangement from the dichotomized view of "theory and practice,"

and sees them as twin moments of the same reality. Rather than seeing theory as leading into practice, we need to see it as a reflective moment in praxis. In action-oriented language, praxis is action done reflectively, and reflection on what is being done. Problems are analyzed from a practical point of view, looking at the real-life frustration and obstacles encountered in the new curriculum reform. I argue that the third space in the context of English language studies in China might be described as a bridge of cultural continuity and creativity to blend the student-centered method with the teacher-centered and maximize support for the classroom teachers upon whom any success ultimately depends. As Nunan (2003) points out in his discussion of English as a global language of education policies and practice, a narrow understanding of what constitutes a proper method and which method is universally effective and appropriate ignores the widely recognized gap between Western theories and classroom realities. Rather than impose any particular methodology on teachers, I would argue that the third space as Aoki describes it offers us a way that takes a rational and productive stance between theory and practice and encourages teachers to draw on various methodological options at their disposal to meet the demands of their specific teaching situations. For a method to be effective, in my view, the third space helps teachers to heighten their awareness of contextual constraints, and to develop sound guidelines for making methodological choices. Teachers make effective pedagogical decisions based on a sound understanding of practical teaching contexts. In what follows, I want to begin to identify a new intercultural methodology that could be productively employed in China.

Toward a new intercultural English methodology

I envision a new intercultural methodology as an intercultural dialogue that draws on both Eastern and Western ideas and shows resonances between East and West rather than seeing them as polar opposites. In my view, the most valuable contribution is to act not as a specific set of practice and ideas but as an intercultural space, that is, as an ideational landscape that provides a location for deepening and extending the conversation between the transmission-based culture and interpretation-based culture. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), who discusses communication across cultures, the conversation resides in how a teaching method fits with the existing culture of learning and relates to the teachers' beliefs about innovation and tradition. A new intercultural methodology would balance the known with the unknown, balance a given element of transmission with a new element of innovation, and reach the "cultural continuity" (Holliday, 1997) between the traditional method and the new teaching method.

Ellis (1996) and Holliday (1994) argue that curriculum change will succeed only if there is cultural continuity between tradition and innovation. They state that the methodology of English language education has been developed mainly in the English-speaking countries of the West and does not always fit the needs of the rest of the world. Cultural factors need be acknowledged in the design and implementation of appropriate methodologies. I agree that curriculum reform requires opportunities for teachers and students to search for the cultural continuity and sustainability between tradition and innovation, and to explore the transition and succession of context-sensitive teaching. Negotiating between

tradition and innovation allows educators to examine some of the issues that arise when two cultures of learning engage with each other and draw on various theories of education.

Scholars such as Carless and Holliday () emphasize the importance of not breaking with the cultural tradition of teaching and learning, but grafting what is new onto what is old. This view emphasizes the harmony and synthesis between tradition and innovation. Grammar teaching, accuracy, and teacher-as-explainer are all strong traditional practices. Pair work, group work, activities and tasks contribute to cultivating the communicative competence. In a new intercultural methodology educators might explore the possible reconciliation of cultural continuity and cultural creativity between the East and the West and between tradition and innovation.

For example, educators might emphasize fluency to counterbalance accuracy, and meaning to counterbalance form. A teacher could adjust the teaching methods to meet the needs of students and the exigencies of the teaching situation. In my view, fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. Sometimes, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep the students meaningfully engaged in language use. At other times, grammar explanation provides a deeper understanding of language structure and its role in communicating meaning.

Changes are gradual and cultural continuity is respected by not losing contact with current practice. It is important that educators analyze the problem from a practical point of view, looking at the real-life frustrations and obstacles

encountered in the new curriculum reform. According to Nunan (2003), a narrow understanding of what constitutes a proper method and which method is universally effective and appropriate ignores the widely recognized gap between the Western theories and classroom realities. Rather than impose any particular methodology on teachers, I would argue that educators should take a rational and productive stance regarding “teachers’ sense of plausibility” and “teachers’ adaptation” and how they draw on various methodological options at their disposal to meet the demands of their specific teaching situations. For a method to be effective, teachers must heighten their awareness of contextual constraints, and develop sound guidelines for making methodological choices. Teachers make effective pedagogical decisions based on a sound understanding of their practical teaching contexts.

Based on teachers’ sense of plausibility and adaptation, an intercultural English methodology is related to the negotiation and engagement of the cultural continuity between tradition and innovation, and between theory and practice. English methodology is not universally applicable without reference to social and other contextual factors.

What really matters in language teaching is the need for teachers to learn “to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning—with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them” (Prabhu, p. 172). The challenge facing the profession is not how to design a new method but how to devise a new way “to help activate and develop teachers’ varied senses of plausibility” (Prabhu, p. 175). Here educators may find one

possible way to be responsive to the lived experiences of learners and teachers, and to the local exigencies of learning and teaching. Block and Cameron (2002) also discuss that educators need to open “up new opportunities for the expertise of language teachers in periphery contexts to be recognized and valued” and make it more feasible for teachers to acknowledge and work with the diversity of the learners in their classrooms, guided by local assessments of students’ strategies for learning rather than by global directives from remote authorities” (p.10).

An intercultural English methodology seeks to address some of the limitations of method. It points to the complexity of teacher beliefs that inform the practice of everyday teaching, and the vitality of the macrostructures—social, cultural, political, and historical—that shape the microstructures of the language classroom. The point is to adapt rather than adopt and to integrate new ideas to suit particular situations. To some extent, no single method or set of procedures will fit all teachers and learners in all contexts (Littlewood, 2007). Teachers draw on the ideas from the new curriculum change and need to trust their own voices and develop a pedagogy suited to their own specific situations. By emphasizing adapting rather than adopting, an intercultural English methodology proposes a culturally sensitive and appropriate way that reconciles the traditional Chinese approach and innovative methods to form a localized methodology that supports the effective teaching and learning of English. The teacher’s role is to be flexible and adaptable.

What the new curriculum change brings to the teaching situation is the opportunity for a more situational and context-appropriate teaching method. A

teacher can negotiate the tension between enabling students to master knowledge and skills while also enhancing their ability to actually use it. That is, a teacher can balance the tension between imparting knowledge of language structure and vocabulary and focusing on meaningful communication through participation, collaboration, and interaction in communicative activities and tasks. In a dialogue between Eastern and Western teaching methods, Eastern pedagogy engages with Western theory and the cross-cultural hybrid provides new perspectives on teaching and learning.

Active and not passive, but receptive learning

In this section, I discuss the teachers' adjustments towards the communication-oriented new course books. I recommend that learning should be active and not passive, but receptive in relation to the new course books.

Adoption and adaptation of the communication-oriented course books

As my research has shown, the three teachers adopted the different series of communication-oriented course books. All three teachers adapted the course books by adding or deleting content and selecting what best fit the actual needs of students. For example, Mrs. Sui emphasized that there was no perfect course book for every teaching context and every series of teaching materials had advantages and limitations. In preparing a lesson, Mrs. Sui used only part of a unit, added or deleted some activities, or replaced or supplemented some activities with ones from other resources. In teaching practice, within the limited teaching time, she shortened some activities and skipped others entirely. Most important of all, she

was against the adaptation of course books for the sake of examination and using a lot of worksheets and mock examination papers replaced the course books to get the high score in the examinations.

Similarly, Mrs. Qi was sure that the course books contributed to promoting students' interest in learning English and cultivating their oral competence.

Students had more opportunities to use English, participated in activities and promoted their oral competence at the expense of the formal features of English language. She used the dialogues, activities, and tasks, and at the same time, she made some explanations related to grammar, vocabulary, and language structures, and delivered systematic grammatical knowledge. Furthermore, she felt that the new course books made high requirements about her oral competence and classroom management techniques.

The third space in relation to the course books

The second significant professional and sociocultural adjustment is related to the adoption and adaption of the communication-oriented course books. In China, as discussed above, course books are not only regarded as a teaching resource, but also represent objectives, values, methods and philosophy in English language teaching and learning (Cheng, 2011). There is a belief that everything in the course books should be taught and learned. Thus, shortening or skipping activities, as Mrs. Sui did, represents an important ideological shift. According to Richards (2001) and Tomlinson (2008), course books are the most powerful tool in spreading new methodological ideas and in shaping language teaching and

learning. Thus, developing the course books is considered the most important part of the curriculum reform.

The new course books integrate the rationale of the new curriculum Standard and new theories of modern foreign language teaching. They stress communicative competence, the cultivation of students' interests in English learning and positive attitude towards English learning. They incorporate an activity approach and task-based learning. Furthermore, in the new curriculum reform, one key feature of adopting a course book is to give teachers' the right to adapt the new course books. The course books suitable for local situations are important for English language teaching. In the new curriculum reform, the course books can be regarded as the lived curriculum.

In China, teachers in classrooms have often been largely unaware of the curriculum itself and more concerned with what appears in course books and examination papers. As a result, teachers rely heavily on the course book editors to translate the objectives, content, and suggested methodology from the curriculum into the course books. The perception of learning as a knowledge-accumulating process is the traditional Chinese conception of the source of knowledge. True knowledge has been popularly held to reside in written texts, especially classics and authoritative works. In the new curriculum reform, learning English means not only knowing the rules and words, but also using the language to obtain information and for communication. In the context of a new intercultural methodology, English language teaching would be recognized as both a process of accumulating knowledge and a practical process of constructing

and using knowledge for immediate purposes. It captures the traditionally understood relationship between the accumulation of knowledge and the use of that knowledge.

Following the new curriculum reform, a teacher can adapt and develop the content of the course books. In the past, the course books were represented as a rationally planned whole entity. A teacher followed the course book content as the planned curriculum and focused on imparting knowledge of language structure, grammar, and vocabulary. In the current practice, a teacher deals with the course books as a lived curriculum. She can teach according to the local context and students' language levels. She has a chance to decide, shape, modify, and adapt the course books on her classroom reality. The lived curriculum provides an opportunity for her to understand what is happening to her students. To be a teacher is to live in the space of tension between the planned and lived curriculum. To either just follow the plan or to ignore the plan fundamentally violates what it means to be a teacher. In a new intercultural method, a teacher can live in the tension between both worlds of the planned and lived curriculum. However, public assessment demands are not compatible with the intentions of the new course books, and still pay attention to knowledge accumulation and literacy competence. Teachers have to balance and negotiate between the cultivation of oral and literacy competence and between the new theories underpinned in the new course books and the traditional practice based on the examination-centered education system. They must inhabit a space of continuous inter-cultural conversations with the planned curriculum and lived curriculum.

Towards active and not passive, but receptive learning

In this section, I explore the complementary functions of active learning and receptive learning. It is important for educators to remember and be aware that both Western and ancient Eastern theories show the importance of balance between activity and receptivity. The important decisions that teachers make are related to the complementary functions of these two modes of learning. With respect to new course books, I emphasize the need to take heed of teachers' voices and explore a cross-cultural dialogue regarding the complementary function of active learning and receptive learning. The perception of learning as a knowledge-accumulating process is the traditional Chinese conception of the source of knowledge. After the new curriculum reform, a teacher is supposed to facilitate the exploration of English learning through dialogues, activities, and tasks. In my view, learning English means not only knowing the rules and words, but also using the language to get information and for communication. It combines a process of accumulating knowledge and a practical process of using knowledge for communication.

Hird (1995) shows that traditional Chinese learning and teaching involves a meticulous analysis of meaning in all its minute detail, leading to a 'painstaking understanding of every language item, in which individual interpretations are not valued (p. 23). Students are considered to be in class to receive language rather than construct. The value is on care and certainty rather than on quantity. Output is expected to be error-free, and memorization is valued. The teacher is at the centre of the process. But in my understanding an intercultural method, there is

the emphasis on linguistic activities regarding grammar, language knowledge, and accuracy is in close association with the emphasis on communicative activities regarding language use, fluency, oral communication and interaction. In practice, this is related to the balance between communicative activities and linguistic activities. On the one hand, the linguistic activities are useful to learn grammar, vocabulary, and language structures. Thus, the students acquire a good command of English language to help improve communication. To some extent, the development of the students' linguistic competence is a central and indispensable aspect of language learning and the ability to organize sentences to convey meaning is clearly central to communicative competence. On the other hand, the communicative activities favor the communicative use of English language, but are not efficient in acquiring linguistic knowledge.

The activities designed for using the materials in the classroom include communicative activities and linguistic activities. In my view, it is not that communicative activities prevail over linguistic activities, or linguistic activities prevail over communicative activities, but both maybe work together and complement each other. Teaching is concerned with both real-life pedagogic experience and complete language mastery. After the new English curriculum change, teaching had to find a balance between cultivating communicative competence and transmitting grammatical knowledge, and between active learning and receptive learning.

With respect to new course books, the intercultural method emphasizes the need to take heed of receptive learning to counterbalance active learning. The

perception of learning as a knowledge-accumulating process is the traditional Chinese conception of the source of knowledge. For the new curriculum change, a teacher is supposed to facilitate the exploration of English learning through dialogues, activities, and tasks. Learning English means not only knowing the rules and words, but also using the language to get information and for communication. I would place value on the old and looks forward to the new and emphasizes both language form and language use. English language teaching has been viewed both as a process of accumulating knowledge and as a practical process of constructing and using knowledge for immediate purposes. It captures the traditionally understood relationship between the accumulation of knowledge and the use of that knowledge.

The methods of teaching English language vary significantly according to the environments in which teachers find themselves working. It is important to develop the ideas and think about possible solutions to particular problems. In teaching practice, grammar is considered important in so far as it enables the students to use language creatively. It is necessary to give the students the linguistic ability to meet their need to express themselves. It is better to set up the activities that encourage the students to use the given structure in communicative situations which are meaningful to them.

Three teachers still incorporate teaching and learning styles, such as the skill of memorization, and the emphasis on accuracy which are traditionally valued in China. Continuing their balance between using activities and transmitting knowledge, the teachers mentioned memorizing and understanding as

being important. Dialogues, in particular, were memorized and then recited individually and in chorus, sometimes successfully. However, as the Chinese teachers show, it is cultural continuity and cultural creativity between fluency and accuracy, between contextualized language use and knowledge about language, and between understanding and memorizing.

Toward a philosophy of giving criticism to counterbalance carrying understanding

In this section, I examine the teachers' transition from being critical toward students to taking on a softer tone of caring and understanding. This third significant professional and sociocultural adjustment involves no less than building up a new type of relationship between students and teachers. The method of cultivating people shifts from corporal punishment, blaming and criticizing to guidance, understanding, and trust. I will discuss this shift in relation to Taoist "softness" (Wang, 2007) and yin-yang philosophy.

A transition between criticism and understanding

As my research has shown, the three teachers built up a new type of relationship between themselves and the students, and came to understand that kindness, trust, support and understanding are just as beneficial to learning as criticism and judgment. The new curriculum reform emphasizes that English language teaching should pay close attention to students' feelings and create a comfortable, democratic and harmonious teaching environment. Teachers are expected to avoid blaming and criticizing students in a hostile way to prevent

them from losing their confidence and motivation to learn English. In the field of English language teaching, this view is closely associated with Krashen's (1982) notion of an Affective Filter, as discussed above in Chapter 2. In the Chinese cultural traditions, however, there is a saying that "A strict teacher produces outstanding students." The traditional social image of a teacher as a strict master in China is seen as the expression of the teacher's sense of responsibility in the nature of teaching and learning.

The first teacher, Mrs. Sui, showed this new relationship based on trust and understanding rather than fear. Trust and understanding between her and the students created a communication channel, contributed to cultivating the students' interest, motivation, and confidence, and led to more effective language learning, in her view. She used different ways to praise positive results appropriately and identify weaknesses without sounding overly negative. Previously, she had directly pointed out the students' shortcomings and was very strict with them. In her current teaching practice, after she criticized them, she would continue to communicate with them, gain their understanding and support, and help them find out ways to correct these shortcomings. Her role was a shift away from an authority figure to offering guidance. This democratic relationship led to more communication between her and her students in and out of the class teaching. Previously, her students had respected her, but they avoided her and were afraid of communicating with her. Currently, she found that the boundaries between her and the students became less fixed and the classroom atmosphere became more open and responsive. Encouraging students to tell their own stories and life

experiences further opened the class. Mrs. Sui established a flexible and democratic learning atmosphere by respecting individual students, enhancing their self-esteem, and developing a positive attitude. She linked English language teaching with emotional education, and designed the activities to allow for mutual understanding and trust.

The second teacher, Mrs. Qi, changed her way to handle students' misbehaviors. According to Chinese tradition, corporal punishment and scolding students was a teacher's right and was an optimal way to discipline students. Following the new curriculum reform, Mrs. Qi made an effort to see these misbehaviors from the students' perspectives by talking to them and listening with the intent of understanding them. The students felt themselves to be understood, their defenses were lowered, and the opportunities to open communication came naturally. To the students, she was both the guidance who helped them correct their misbehaviors and overcome their shortcomings, as well as a parental figure who took care of their lives. She showed her understanding of and respect for the students as the part of the teaching process. When pointing out misbehaviors in the class, she avoided criticizing students by name. In her current teaching, she was patient with their misbehaviors, and saw things from their perspective. Her students felt affirmed and valued, and open communication came as a result. She and the students together analyzed the misbehaviors in detail, and then tried to work out a better solution. When students made a little progress, she praised them and helped them regain self-confidence. She showed her understanding, respect,

and concern to her students. She kept a friendly smile in the class, and sought to give students a sense of achievement.

The third teacher, Mrs. Dai, still believed that the criticism is an effective teaching strategy for improving learning but knew it was not welcome in the new curriculum change. The new curriculum emphasized the cultivation of emotion, interest, and confidence. She stood firm in some of strict principles, but also managed to adapt her practices. For example, Mrs. Dai set different requirements for the different students and gave the below-average students hope and confidence whenever possible. She encouraged her students to compare with their own past rather than with the other students. No matter what kind of progress the below-average students made, she gave encouragement. She created more chances for the students to realize their potential and build up their self-confidence. This confidence impelled them to take an active part in class, to cooperate with the teacher, and finish their assignments.

yin-yang Philosophy: Giving criticism to counterbalance carrying understanding

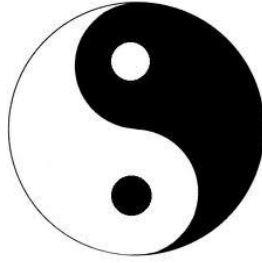
It is important for educators practicing the yin-yang Philosophy to make a balance between criticism and understanding, and between productive praise and constructive criticism. Praise is productive and criticism is constructive. Praise is intended to support the motivational development and highlight skills and behaviors so students can build on them further. Criticism is intended to let the students know their misbehaviors and shortcoming, and consider improvements to their performance. Most important of all, after praise and criticism, there must be effective communication between the students and the teacher. The third space

points to the need to give criticism that also carries praise, understanding and trust. This view reflects Taoist softness and yin to counterbalance yang.

Discipline is a crucial aspect of teachers' and students' classroom lives. Teachers are concerned with students' misbehavior. Teachers express concern about the lack of discipline in the classroom, and have been looking for ways to manage difficult classrooms in positive ways. The roles of teachers as an authority and a mentor are mutually complementary and mutually interdependent. Strategies of hardness (yang), along with softness (yin), are both used in teaching practice.

Wang (2007) discusses the strength of Taoist "softness" – "Nothing is softer than water, but nothing is stronger than water in attacking what is hard, since nothing can change it." (*Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 78). Understanding and criticism in teaching reflect the dynamic between yin and yang. The yin-yang philosophical view of the world is holistic, dynamic, and dialectical (Chen, 2002; Li, 2006, 2008, 2009; Fang, 2012). The yin- yang symbol is denoted by a circle divided into two equal halves by a curvy line, one side of which is black (yin) and the other white (yang). yin represents the negative energy, such as the weakness, darkness, softness, and femininity and so on. yang stands for positive energy, such as strength, brightness, hardness, and masculinity. The white dot in the black area and the black dot in the white area connote coexistence and unity of the opposites to form the whole. As shown in Table 5: yin-yang Map.

Table 5: yin-yang Map



The yin-yang principle can be expressed as follows. First, yin and yang coexist in everything, and everything embraces yin and yang. Second, yin and yang give rise to, complement, and reinforce each other. Finally, yin and yang exist within each other and interplay with each other to form a dynamic and paradoxical unity (Fang, 2012). The yin yang principle embraces contradiction or paradoxes as necessary and desirable in terms of the permanent interdependence, interaction, and interpenetration between yin and yang (Li, 1998, 2008). The contradictions or paradoxes can reach a fine balance of differentiation and integration.

My intercultural methodology would reflect the yin-yang philosophy, and can be used to understand teacher's role as a mentor and an authority. The relationship between a mentor and an authority is unified, dynamic, interdependent and complementary. When a mentor and an authority operate simultaneously, there is a dynamic relationship between them; they are interdependent and support each other.

Like yin and yang, guidance and discipline, or understanding and criticism appear to be opposing each other, but this is merely in a relative sense: guidance contains some elements of discipline, and vice versa. There is a dynamic

relationship between them. Guidance and discipline are interdependent; and one could not exist without the other when teachers manage students' behavior, as they are equal aspects of the oneness, or the seamless whole, of pastoral care. Teachers play two roles in which they need to balance the opposing ways of yin and yang, according to the patterns of interpersonal relationships in the class and other situations.

Teacher identity

In this section, I examine the notion of teacher identity. Traditionally, a teacher in China has been seen as a knowledge transmitter and an authority. The central role of a teacher is to provide knowledge to students. A course book is the source of knowledge, and a teacher is a presenter and transmitter of that knowledge. On the one hand, a good teacher must possess a profound knowledge. On the other hand, a good teacher must have efficient and artful ways to render that knowledge understandable. The teacher's authority is reflected in the answering of questions. It is usually the teacher who gives the standard answer, the only correct answer. Teachers' authority is seldom challenged, and this authoritative role awes the students into being obedient listeners. If students want to contribute in class, they must bid by raising their hands. Only when this is acknowledged and ratified as a claim for a turn at speaking, do they have the opportunity to stand up to express their ideas. In a communicative classroom, Harmer (1983) mentions that the role of the teacher may be as a facilitator, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, and information source, depending, to a large extent, on the function that he or she plays in different teaching activities.

With the implementation of the new curriculum change, according to Wang (2007), teachers are expected to change their traditional role as a knowledge transmitter to a multi-role educator. English language teaching shifts from a knowledge-based one to a competence-based one, cares for students' affective needs, develops their learning strategies, and cultivates their cross-cultural awareness. Teachers are expected to design more task-based, cooperative and problem-solving activities, adapt the course books to meet the requirement of the curriculum and the needs of the students, apply formative assessment to evaluate students in additions to using tests, and use modern technology in teaching.

As my research has shown, the first teacher, Mrs. Sui, showed multiple roles in her teaching practice. Besides the traditional roles as a transmitter of knowledge, an authority, and a parental figure, she had some new roles as an adapter of materials, a facilitator, and a mentor. After the new curriculum change, Mrs. Sui still viewed her primary role as a transmitter of knowledge. In teaching practice, she delivered knowledge, dominated the teaching and learning process, and decided what and how to teach. At the same time, she regarded the students as active participants, adopted activities and tasks, and tried to provide more opportunities for her students to use English for communication. She was a facilitator and the students were the performers. Mrs. Sui worked as a facilitator to assist students in the learning processes in every way she could. She adjusted herself to communicative language teaching, and learned to accept new ideas and methods in teaching and learning English. Due to the limited teaching time, class discipline issues, the language level of the students and the exam requirements,

there was a tension between her roles as a knowledge transmitter and a facilitator of the learning process. Furthermore, she shifted from “teaching the books” to “using the books to teach”. The previous course books worked as a knowledge framework and she taught the books to let the students master grammar items and language structures and understand the content of materials. As for the new course books, the activities and dialogues provided some communicative contexts, gave an opportunity to use English, and contributed to cultivating listening and speaking competence. Mrs. Sui looked at the advantages and disadvantages of the course books, and adapted the content to cater to the students’ needs, rather than completely following them without any change. She used her personal beliefs, experience, and intuition in adapting the teaching content.

The second teacher, Mrs. Qi showed that she, too, took on a new role as a facilitator of learning and a guide. Her teaching shifted from traditional teacher-centered whole class instruction to student-centered small group learning. She tried to facilitate the learning process between the students and the various dialogues, texts, and activities. Mrs. Qi balanced her roles by giving explanations to her students and then afterward offering opportunities for group learning. Sometimes, after the group learning, she would give a summary of grammar and language structures. Mrs. Qi still remained in her previous role as a knowledge transmitter and controller of learning even as she added some new roles as a facilitator, and a guide. Perhaps because of the multiplicity of her roles, she also felt that it was more difficult to be a teacher after the curriculum change.

The third teacher, Mrs. Dai showed that her teaching was a gradual shift from demonstrating a teacher's knowledge and skills to getting more student participation and involvement after the new curriculum change. She gained a preference for more communicative and interactive teaching methods than for grammar-translation teaching methods. Mrs. Dai's perceptions of her roles in the classroom included being a knowledge provider, a guide, an organizer, and a discipline controller.

Cultural continuity in the third space

Facing different kinds of challenges—challenges from old ideas, challenges from old systems, challenges from an examination-oriented education system, and challenges from the change process of the new curriculum—teachers dealt with them seriously. The new English reform is a process of transformation both in educational thought and curriculum paradigm. Such opportunities to build something new can be exciting but also require difficult identity shifts. The intercultural methodology would reconcile the teachers' identity between the West and the East. The teachers adjusted to their new identities as facilitators of learning by using communication-oriented and student-centered teaching methods. At the same time, they drew on the Confucian heritage to teach English so that repetition, recitations, and memorizing continued to play a role even as they were squared with more active and participatory approaches to develop communicative skills.

The wisdom tradition inquiry attempts to portray two familiar traditions in the discourse of identity: the philosophical tradition of identity as a self-reflection

in the mirror of human nature; and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in one's own culture (Bhabha, 1994). Aoki (1987) prefers to dwell on the hyphen. He articulates the possibility of identity "in-between". This position of the subject suggests dwelling in tensions in the realm of between, in the tensions of difference. Thus, it is "not so much the elimination of differences, but, more so, the attunement of the quality of the tensions of differences that makes a difference" (Aoki, 1987, p. 354). In dwelling in this space, the question is not to get rid of tension, but to seek appropriately attuned tension. The notion of identity is seen as a becoming in the spaces of difference. Wang (2004) explores that a creative third space is both an "inter" space and a "trans" space since it values an ever-changing in-between space and the necessity to go beyond the boundary. The moment of going across leads to the birth of the new but this newness is co-creative as it comes from the interaction between doubles to enable other positions and new sites. In a third space, identity, self, and subjectivity are not universal concepts but are destabilized in an ongoing process of becoming and emergence.

Constructing a teacher identity is a continuing and dynamic process, and there are many differing opinions about which factors are more influential in constructing teacher identity, such as a highly personal and ultimately internal influences and larger external influences. On the one hand, Cooper and Olson (1996) suggest that teacher identity is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others. Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) identify multiple influences that shape teacher

identity, ranging from personal experience to media images to pedagogical beliefs supported by pre-service instruction. Gaudelli (1999) also points out that the teacher identity categories include gender, previous occupation, religious background, family history, athletic background and ethnic identity.

Teachers, due in part to their identities, teach differently, specifically with regard to how they select content, the amount of time and emphasis placed on topics and how they characterize course content related to their identity. Moore et al. (2002) and Grosvenor & Lawn (2001) suggest that government policy has been used to determine, manipulate and enforce teacher identity, which ultimately influences curriculum and pedagogy. Britzman (1991, 1998) suggests that teacher identity is formed by the complexity of relationships between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and the subjective.

In the traditional Confucian Chinese culture, teaching is to instill knowledge into the student's mind. Teachers transmit knowledge, answer questions and are a good moral model. The students respect and learn from the authorities and internalize wisdom by emulation. Good teachers are well prepared, keep the students busy, demonstrate mastery of teaching techniques and resources, provide a clear outline of the teaching plan and the material to be covered in each class, maintain strict discipline, praise the diligent students and punish the lazy or ignorant ones, give clear explanations, provide frequent tests and return marked assignment and test papers promptly (Tang & Absalom, 1998).

The new curriculum reform emphasizes a teacher's role as a facilitator of the communication process among all the participants in the classroom and their activities and a guider in the context of classroom activities. Thus, the new curriculum reform challenges the sense of the historical identity of teachers. The intercultural methodology offers a focal point of possible reconciliation of cultural continuity between the East and the West and between tradition and innovation. It focuses on ways of understanding and transforming the tension and the differences rather than trying to eliminate them. Living within the curriculum reform raises teachers' awareness and sensitivity to the roles of a teacher in practice. Among numerous approaches, methods, techniques, types of syllabuses and materials, teachers act as decision makers to determine the content, materials, and instruction for courses. Having these choices enables teachers to adopt a more critical perspective on the traditional teaching approaches as well as on the appropriateness of Western methods. For the teaching experience differs from human to human, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the teaching experience in general but rather the specific teaching experience at a given moment.

Resistance and change in curriculum and pedagogy and methodology

In this section, I examine the resistance to change in curriculum, pedagogy, and methodology in the new curriculum reform. I focus in particular on resistance stemming from the incompatibility with public assessments. Systems of public assessment usually fail to keep pace with other developments in the curriculum

(Littlewood, 2007). The present-day examination system in China still follows the traditional Chinese imperial examination system. In ancient China, a written examination was held to choose candidates for top positions in government, and in subsequent centuries this approach has continued to be taken seriously by the authorities. In current China, success in one's studies is still measured by examinations. Policy makers have failed to adjust the examinations in parallel with the new teaching methods and textbooks. The exam system has not been revolutionized in the way that the curriculum and teaching have, and yet, both the teachers and the students are judged by examination results.

Due to the incompatibility between public assessment demands and the ideas in the new curriculum reforms, the three teachers encountered challenges in their teaching practice. Grammar-focused instruction was seen as a useful method to prepare students for passing examinations. The teachers indicated that students' high scores in the exams were the only criterion used to evaluate their teaching quality. Formal written examinations provided the most important and direct access to higher positions or opportunities at a school or a university. This was particularly the case with middle school education, which had a provincial examination for entrance into senior high schools after junior high middle school. The competition in examinations was very acute. In the senior high school entrance exams, examination items were always multiple-choice, true or false, or fill-in-the-blank, grammar and vocabulary, and reading and writing parts (sometimes including listening test). Closely following the student-centered teaching methods and the communication-oriented course books might result in

lower exam scores since these books and methods did not seem to correspond well to the types of language knowledge that were assessed in most large-scale exams. These exams continued to have a heavy emphasis on testing discrete sentence- or word-level linguistic knowledge. Teachers remained anxious as to whether teaching according to the new curriculum would be practical.

The first teacher, Mrs. Sui, showed that one of the greatest constraints was the senior high school entrance examination, which did not include speaking or listening requirements. The examination paid great attention to the written form, reading, language structures, and grammar. Mrs. Sui wanted to cultivate the students' communicative competence. However, the school leaders and the students' parents were very practical. They expected to see good results on the examinations. Therefore, Mrs. Sui had to adapt to this situation. In other words, she had to reduce the listening and speaking practice in order to make more time for other foci. In addition, grammar was not systematically organized in the new course books, but the examinations focused on grammar. She had to add some materials prepared on her own in order to help the students achieve a high score. Mrs. Qi and Mrs. Dai reported similar challenges.

Correcting errors that students made during class was another major problem for all three teachers. After the new curriculum change, the three teachers accepted that if they wanted to develop the students' listening and speaking skills, and if they wanted students to be fluent, they had to be tolerant of the students' mistakes. If they paid a lot of attention to correction, the students might lose confidence and interest in speaking. This idea led to teachers accepting that

accuracy was not so important. Fluency took a leading role instead. However, the students made a lot of mistakes in English learning. The teachers had difficulty in getting the students to notice their mistakes and adopting the right techniques to correct their mistakes. This situation was incompatible with the accuracy focus of the examinations.

Rethinking resistance to change: In search of the new meaning

In the process of educational transition, it does not deny or repress the tension or difference, but sees it an opportunity to move forward. It sees the tension or difference not as a problem but as an opportunity. It sees the difference as an avenue for learning, not as a brick wall. It is important to explore and capitalize on the differences. A world without difference would be a world of sameness where no progress is possible. Still, instead of valuing these differences, we defend ourselves against them because we believe our identity is under threat. People laboring under the defensive mind-set put up walls around themselves to shore up their position instead of moving forward.

Wang (2007) summarizes the changes expected from teachers in the new English curriculum reform in China, as they make the transition to a new communication-oriented and activity-based curriculum. The expected changes are as follows (p. 158).

- change their views about language teaching from a knowledge-based one to a competence-based one;
- change their traditional role as a knowledge transmitter to a multi-role educators;

- develop new teaching skills;
- change their ways of evaluating students;
- develop the ability to adapt the textbooks;
- use modern technology; and
- improve their own language proficiency.

These changes from the transmission-based model of education to the interpretation-based model of education are regarded as a “Quantum leap” (Chow & Mok-Cheung, 2004). During this process, there is resistance from the teachers.

Schwab (1969) described fundamental aspects shared by all curricula and pointed out four curriculum commonplaces: the subject matter, the role of students, the role of teachers and the milieu. Carson (2006) compared the commonplaces of the new curriculum with the one old curriculum in China.

Table 6: The differences between the old curriculum and the new curriculum
(Adaptation from Carson, 2006, p. 4)

<u>Commonplace</u>	<u>Old Curriculum</u> Transmission-based	<u>New Curriculum</u> Interpretation-based
Subject matter	Knowledge exists as basically universal, agreed upon facts and concepts.	Knowledge is constructed through activity-based discovery learning.
Students	Are the receivers of knowledge.	Are inquirers and co-creators of knowledge.
Teacher	Delivers the curriculum and directs learning.	Acts as a facilitator and is a co-inquirer with students
Milieu	The milieu and the local environment are not that important.	The local community and the school are highly relevant.

As mentioned above, the new curriculum reform involves teacher altering aspects of their familiar professional practice. Such changes often pose a difficult dilemma for teachers: how to manage the implementation of an external change while simultaneously keeping the good points from the tradition. This issue is related to the problematic nature of implementing top-down curriculum change (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992; O'Sullivan, 2002). Attention and energies are focused on the 'what' of desired curriculum change, neglecting the 'how' of implementing curriculum change. Change is a journey, and the third space is a new focal point of possible reconciliation of cultural continuity between the East and the West and between tradition and innovation. The third space offers ways of understanding resistance-“not as a rejection of change-but as necessary for learning” (Carson, 2006, p.1). The process of implementing the new curriculum reform is to build an East and West dialogue and open up the cultural continuity and cultural creativity in the third space.

The third space is a creative space (Wang, 2003, 2007) and cultural creativity results from the interaction of opposites (Li, 2009). In the Taoist tradition (Li, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009), the frame of thinking about opposites is helpful in understanding the encounter of opposites. The opposites are two sides of the same entity. There is yin in the side of yang and yang in the side of yin. The two sides together make a whole. However, people often forget the yin in yang, and vice versa. That may result in extreme polar opposites. Actions upon such extreme opposites may shatter the balance and break the harmony of a system. Therefore, Taoism encourages movement toward the

opposite for a harmonious world. Such movement toward the opposite is not to diminish or conquer the opposite, but to move into the opposite position and view the world from the opposite vantage point. Such a shift in position, or an interplay between opposites, increases mutual understanding, enriches the world as we see it, and brings the world closer to a more holistic and sustainable state.

The Taoist perspective suggests that opposites cannot be avoided, nor overcome, but can be enriched through interplay between opposites. Recognizing and learning from their divergent cultures gives rise to cultural creativity. Cultural creativity is viewed as “a state of continuous interaction between the various potentially opposing elements or components of culture that come into contact with each other through constant reciprocity and tension” (Buber, as cited in Eisenstaedt, 1992, p.10). Taoism views creativity as an ontological experience of the ultimate truth and self-realization (Chang, 1963). The Taoist view of creativity can be characterized as an ongoing process.

In my view, the third space offers a way of balancing between tradition and innovation, between theory and practice, and between East and West culture, while attempting to recognize the strengths and limitations of each. It examines the hybridity as intercultural threads to weave Western-Eastern curriculum theory and teaching practice. Through exploring the teachers’ experience in the new curriculum change, the third space opens up a space for dialogue. It proposes a hybrid space for curriculum change as a way to embrace today's changing and fluid contexts.

Concluding Summary

In order to respond better to its socioeconomic shift from a centrally-planned economy to a market-oriented one, China carried out a series of top-down education reforms, among which the new English curriculum change created a fundamental change in terms of curriculum purpose and objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum contents, learning and teaching processes, development of instructional materials, and evaluation. The drastic changes required teachers to make professional and sociocultural adjustments in English language teaching. The goal of this research was to investigate teachers' challenges during the process of implementing the new English curriculum change. The main research focus was the tension brought about by shifts in teachers' identities and their understandings of themselves and their roles as teachers within the new curriculum framework. This was understood within the context of the tension between Western curriculum theories and the teaching practice based on China's Confucian heritage culture, as well as the tension between the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived-experience. The second aim of the research identified what supports were provided for teachers to meet these challenges, and to provide guidelines for resolving issues in implementing the new curriculum change. Thus, the research answered the following questions.

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What professional and sociocultural adjustments did Chinese teachers of English make during the process of implementing the English

Curriculum Standard, and how did these adjustments affect their identities as teachers?

2. What challenges did Chinese teachers of English encounter during their transition to the English Curriculum Standard?
3. How did the teachers make a possible balancing and intercultural melding of Eastern-Western approaches to fashion a new way of thinking about curriculum practices in English language teaching?

This study addressed these questions using interviews and observational data that described teachers' experiences and challenges in the new curriculum change. It focused on teachers' transitional processes in terms of their awareness and sensitivity to the challenges, tension, and difficulties related to implementing change in their classrooms. The study considered the dialectical relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and the officially promoted methodology. Serving as a bridge between the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived, between theory and practice, and between Western and Eastern culture, the metaphor of the third space provided an ideal framework for considering teachers' contextual realities and how they were experiencing dramatic changes brought about by top-down curriculum reforms taking place within broader transformations of China's role in the world.

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Appendix A:

Information Letter for Participants

Dear teachers,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study entitled, “Towards a New Intercultural Methodology in Response to Teachers’ Challenges from the New Curriculum Innovation in China.” The study will analyze the experiences of English language teachers in the English curriculum reform in China. The purpose of the study is to identify teachers’ challenges during the process of implementing the English Curriculum Standard in China. The main research focus will be the tension brought about by shifts in teachers’ identities and their understandings of themselves and their roles as teachers within the new curriculum framework.

Your participation in the study will involve: 1) participating in 3 or 4 interviews, and 2) being observed during five teaching lessons. The interviews would take place at your convenience near the beginning and end of the observation related to your teaching. The observations would be video recorded with your permission.

The study will be carried out in accordance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, which are available on line at

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>.

Some of these statements are alluded to in the paragraphs that follow.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all, or to participate in only a portion of the study. You may withdraw from participation at any time up until one month after the completion of the data collection, in which case data that you had provided would not be used. (It would be returned to you or destroyed.) If you take part in an interview, you are free to choose not to respond to specific questions. If you choose not to take part in the study or to withdraw your participation, there will be no penalty.

Results of the study would be used in my doctoral dissertation and may be presented at academic and professional conferences and may appear in academic and professional publications. Research reports might include direct quotes made by you, but your name will not be used. Other identifying information will also be omitted whenever the results are made public. This will help to ensure your privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

The data used in the study will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of 5 years following completion of research project and will then be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please will feel free to contact me by email (wenhua@ualberta.ca). You may also contact my research supervisor, Dr. Bill Dunn by e-mail (wdunn@ualberta.ca). Two copies of this letter and consent form are provided for you to sign. Please return one copy to me, and keep the other copy.

Thank you for taking the time to read about this study and for considering the possibility of participating in it.

Sincerely,

Wenhua Wu

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix B:

University of Alberta Research Consent Form

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the “Towards a New Intercultural Methodology in Response to Teachers’ Challenges from the New Curriculum Innovation in China” research study being undertaken by Wenhua Wu under the supervision of Dr. Bill Dunn. My participation involves (please check one, two, or all of the boxes below):

Participating in approximately 3-4 interviews

Permitting video recorded observations of my teaching

I understand that:

- I am under no obligation to take part and I may withdraw from the research without penalty as explained in the letter.
- All raw data gathered will be treated confidentially and discussed only with the researcher’s faculty supervisor. If additional research personnel become involved in the study, they will be required to sign a confidentially agreement.
- Any information that identifies me will be destroyed in five years after completion of this research.
- My name will not be used in reporting the research results in an effort to protect my anonymity. Other information that could make me identifiable will also be omitted from research reports.

I also understand that the results of this research will be used for a doctoral dissertation and will be disseminated at academic and professional conferences and workshops and through academic and professional journals.

Participant’s Print Name

Participant’s Signature

Date