Teachers' Perceptions and Practices regarding Co-teaching:
A Case Study in a Chinese-English International Kindergarten

by

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated teachers' perceptions and practices of co-teaching in a Chinese-English international kindergarten in China that serves children who are not Chinese citizens. The kindergarten employs teachers who work side by side in the same classrooms, in an arrangement known as co-teaching. In each classroom, two fully qualified teachers, one Western and one Chinese, work as partners and share responsibilities.

Co-teaching has been researched mainly in the context of special education (Cook & Friend, 2004), English as a Second Language (ESL) (Feng, 2012; Carless & Walker, 2006), and national early childhood education (Gibson & Pelletier, 2012). However, limited research has investigated co-teaching in an international early childhood education context. Moreover, few studies of co-teaching have focused on both co-teachers' individual experiences (Kim, 2010; Shim, Hestenes, & Cassidy, 2004; Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). Thus, this inquiry examined both Chinese and Western teachers' perspectives on co-teaching perceptions and pedagogies in an international kindergarten context.

This qualitative case study drew on sociocultural historical theory, ecological systems theory, and culture and third space theory and used methods such as classroom observations, field notes, and interviews with teachers and school administrators. Six teachers and two coordinators at an international kindergarten in China participated in the study. The investigation was guided by four questions: How do culturally diverse teachers perceive co-teaching in the international school context? How does co-teaching influence teachers' pedagogical practices? How do culturally diverse teachers experience

cross-cultural teaching in co-teaching? What factors do teachers identify as determining the quality of their co-teaching experience?

The results of this study indicate that teachers perceived co-teaching as a process of learning. The co-teaching relationships developed into friendly, collegial relationships through inside and outside school interactions. Co-teachers collaboratively supported each other and eventually reached a high level of mutual understanding. To ensure workplace harmony, co-teachers were guided by three Cs: communication, collaboration, and compromise. They perceived some aspects of their co-teaching relationships as equal and other aspects as unequal. In terms of co-teaching practices, flexible ways of planning, as well as bilingual and monolingual circles were examined. The study found there were cultural differences and conflicts among three co-teaching teams. The quality of the co-teaching experience was influenced by various internal and external factors.

The cultural differences had both negative and positive effects on the co-teaching quality. Co-teaching proposes high professional requirements. A professional identity shared between co-teachers requires co-learning and co-assessment. Suggestions for teachers, administrators, schools, and teacher education are presented.

## PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Hongliang Fu. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Co-teaching in Bilingual Kindergarten", No. Pro00059393, December 11, 2015.

have been so blessed to know you and am forever grateful.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family for your love and support throughout these years. I am grateful to my brother, my sister, my parents-in-law, my brother-in-law, especially to my beloved parents, Liwen Fu and Ruifan Ma. Father, with your life, you raised me up to be an intelligent and a brave person, as the best role model you taught me how to be a great parent. With your death, you made me strong whenever I thought about you. Mother, thank you for your unconditional love and silent support. I love you so much and I am proud to be your child.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## My Research Journey

Before pursuing a doctoral program in Canada, I worked as an early childhood educator in an international school in China for several years. The school offered a bilingual Chinese-English curriculum to children from preschool to high school. According to school admission requirements, students in this school are non-Chinese citizens including children of foreign citizens, children of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau residents, and overseas-born children of citizens of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Some of them are the children or dependents of employees of international businesses and organizations. At the school, I worked alongside native English speakers from North America and Europe in early childhood education classes with children from 1 to 5 years of age. As a Chinese teacher, my responsibility was to work collaboratively with Western teachers to implement a bilingual program.

In the first year of my career, I worked with a Western teacher from Canada. She was a relatively experienced teacher as she had been working in the school for several years. The school's principals assigned us as a team so that I would have a leader to teach me how to implement co-teaching. As a newcomer with no experience in co-teaching, and speaking English as a second language, I was not confident enough to make classroom decisions. At the very beginning, I acted more like a listener and follower and respected my co-teaching partner's authority, exhibiting great obedience. I still remember how nervous I was the day my co-teaching partner was absent due to sickness and I had to lead the whole class with a supply teacher. However, as time went by, my confidence grew. The decision-making became more balanced between us as my teaching skills

developed and the concept of co-teaching became clearer to me. I became much braver about expressing my thoughts in English and communicating to my partner my feelings, agreement, objections, and suggestions. In the year-end self-evaluation report, I wrote that the most important thing I had learned during the first year of co-teaching was that I was able to express myself in English and that I was more confident in making teaching decisions instead of completely following my partner's directions.

In my second year of co-teaching, I worked with a Western teacher from Europe who had been working in that school for three years. We had a great "marriage year," as she always said. As more experienced co-teachers, we were able to communicate about the children's development, daily activities, reflections on our pedagogies, and ways to improve our practices. Even when we were not sure who was right or whose idea was better, we always negotiated and encouraged each other to try. We shared our opinions about each other's teaching and discussed the influence of our cultural differences on our teaching pedagogy and children's education. For example, she would lead all the children outside to experience snow when it was snowing, while I desperately worried about some Chinese parents complaining about the children getting sick. Having grown up and been educated in Europe, she valued the outdoor environment, and I became more aware of the importance of nature in children's development. In co-teaching with her, I had the opportunity to learn other educational philosophies. I always felt our similar personalities were an important element in our partnership as we were both easy-going person who were willing to listen to different ideas and try different things and consider that year to have been a high-quality co-teaching experience.

However, I found the co-teaching experience could change dramatically. Another year, when I worked with a teacher from the United States who had had a long career as an early childhood educator, the experience was not that easy. I had already learned a great deal from working with different teachers, and I had gradually become more skilled and mature. Nonetheless, my co-teacher from the United States and I constantly disagreed and, we had to seek help from school coordinators when the conflicts grew worse. I think both of us tried to be the dominant teacher and we argued a lot about who was right, which created tension. It was only as the end of the school year approached that we were able to get to know each other better. We then came to agree that our arguments and negotiations were for the purpose of providing a good education for the children.

My experiences in this international kindergarten with Western teachers from various countries helped me recognize the challenges of co-teaching, including implication of international curriculum, communication, different ways of teaching and interacting with children, and cultural differences. Tensions caused by either differing ideas about educational pedagogies, leadership dynamics, or by cultural values, though unavoidable, were largely unexamined. This was true both in my own experience and in the research literature.

Meanwhile, teachers are more likely to be aware of the collaborative benefits of co-teaching. For one, co-teaching helps children develop as global citizens. This goal, shared by most international schools, is accomplished by providing education in a culturally diverse context. Though my three co-teaching experiences tell different stories, as teachers, we all witnessed how the children developed during the school year and how

we advanced our professional skills. These experiences prompted me to want to learn more about co-teaching in an international school setting, including both Chinese and Western teachers' views. How do they see co-teaching from their own perspective? How do they deal with different co-teachers and resolve conflicts when they arise? In particular, I wanted to learn how teachers perceive co-teaching and the possible impacts of co-teaching on pedagogical practices.

My background as a teacher of young children in an international school led me to focus on the cultural and social contexts of pedagogical practices in early childhood education (ECE). Two studies of comparative ECE were especially influential on my thinking: *Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China, and the United States* (1989) by Joseph Tobin and colleagues David Wu and Dana Davidson, and his follow-up study, *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited: China, Japan, and the United States* (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). The original study compared the structures and experiences of preschools in three countries, discussing how these schools both reflected and affected philosophies of child rearing and early childhood education and larger social patterns and beliefs held in each society. In the follow-up study, 20 years later, the researchers noticed significant changes in education philosophy, teaching resources, curriculum, and funding, especially in China. Tobin argued that, "Over the past 20 years Chinese preschools changed a lot, Japanese preschools not very much, and U.S. preschools are somewhere in between, with dramatic changes in provision and funding but relatively little change in teacher beliefs and in classroom practices" (Tobin, Hseuh, & Karasawa, 2009, p. 262).

The *Preschool in Three Cultures* studies compared preschools across country contexts, as shown in Figure 1.1. In contrast, this research considered co-teaching in the

context of an international school, where many cultures convene in a single multicultural

ECE setting. The unique model, depicted in Figure 1.2, wherein co-teachers from China

and native English-speaking countries such as Canada, the USA, and England worked

together to implement a Chinese-English bilingual program, is the focus of my study.
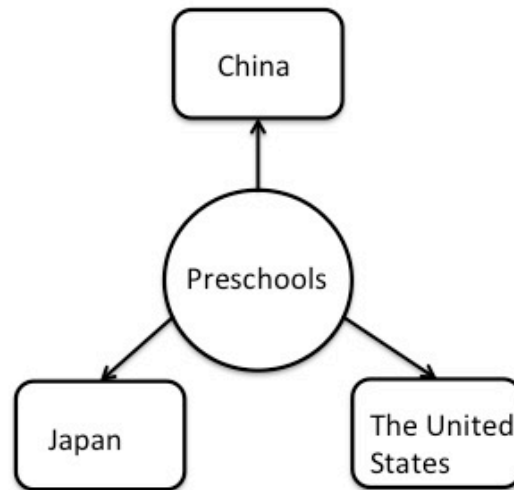


*Figure 1.1:* Preschools in three cultures.
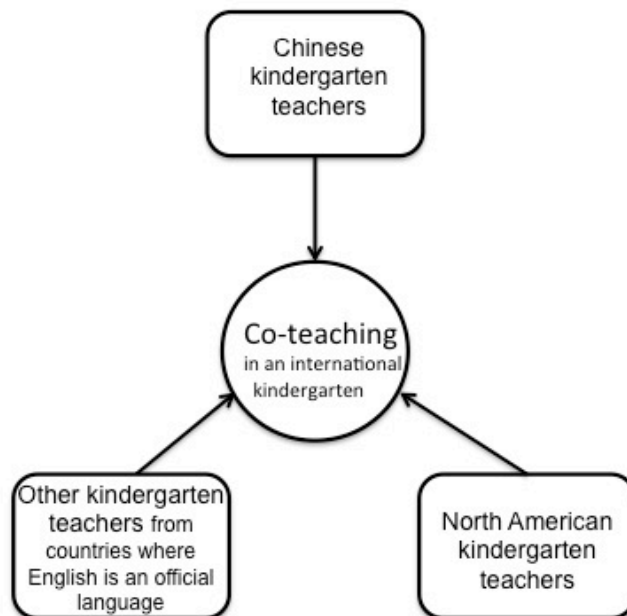


*Figure 1.2:* Co-teaching in an international kindergarten setting.

**English-Language Learning and Globalization in China**

As Tobin, Hseuh, and Karasawa (2009) observed, preschools in China have changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Global economic integration has had significant effect on the field of education, such as the popularity among local parents of English-language education and the presence of foreign-born workers who prefer English-language education for their children. With globalization, China is becoming more connected with the world and English-language education has become increasingly prevalent in recent years.

Globalization is described as a contested trend towards more interdependent and transnational economies, societies, and cultures (Wiseman, 1995). With an emphasis on worldwide social relationships, globalization is also defined as a dialectical process in which local happenings are shaped by global contexts and vice versa (Giddens, 1990). No matter from which perspective globalization is viewed, English has become the most commonly used language for global political, cultural, and economic exchanges (Xue & Zuo, 2013). It has been the dominant foreign language in the curricula of educational institutions and in foreign language learning in Chinese society for more than three decades, following its introduction as the main foreign language in secondary education in 1982. The most significant change in English-language education in China is the rise in the number of teachers and learners. In the 1990s, it was estimated there were around 200 million learners of English in China (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). More recently, a national survey estimated that the number of English learners in China was around 400 million in 2010, approximately one third of China's population (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). According to Bolton and Graddol (2012), the value of the English-language education

market in China was estimated to be around 30 billion yuan (US$ 4.7 billion) that same year.

Wang (2007) discussed the relationship between English and the globalization of China. He asserts that the rapid development of English-language teaching in China is closely related to the continued economic reformation and increasing international exchanges and cooperation. Meanwhile, teaching English has become a new industry in modern Chinese society, where English is not only seen as a compulsory subject in Chinese educational institutions, but it is also taught in numerous off-campus English-language teaching programs. Learning English is considered means to a more successful career.

The emergence of English in China has led to a learning phenomenon called *yingyure* [English fever]. This phenomenon is prevalent in other Asian countries as well, including South Korea and Japan (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006; Lam, 2002; Park, 2007). The social pursuit of English- which some have criticized as parents' overwhelming ambition to ensure their children acquire English as second language (Park, 2007)- has led to more Chinese parents sending their young children to English-language preschools or international schools to learn English.

An additional effect of globalization is the English-language education needed by foreign-born workers who prefer English-language education for their children. With the rapid development of global trade and international economic cooperation, more foreign workers have been sent to China by their employers for business or have come to China seeking employment. In some cases, children accompany their parents to live in China. Parents can send their children to a Chinese public school or a private international

school. In public school, all the lessons except English are taught entirely in Chinese. Considering the language and cultural barriers, most foreign-born parents prefer English-language education for their children, aiming to foster global competence and lay the foundation for further education. Therefore, international schools that provide internationally recognized curricula (e.g., International Baccalaureate, International Primary, Cambridge International Examinations, etc.), are considered to be the optimal choice of foreign-born working parents in China.

In 1985, the Chinese government launched a *study abroad* policy (Liu, 1985) which encouraged students to study outside China. Students returning to China afterward were given various advantages, such as employment priority and higher pay. It has subsequently become a trend to pursue an academic degree abroad. With the boom in studying abroad, learning English is seen as a key to success. An increase in the number of international schools or Chinese-English bilingual schools followed the 1985 policy changes. The schools appeared in many major cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, as well as in smaller cities in recent years, to meet the demands of economic and educational globalization. According to Nicholas Brummitt (Pearce, 2013), managing director of the International School Consultancy, based in Britain, the number of international schools registered in Mainland China has soared from 22 to 338 between 2001 and 2013. Enrollment multiplied 25 times in the same period to 184,073 students (Hornby, 2013). China had 480 international schools by January 2015 (The International School Consultancy, 2016). This increase, in turn, triggered enormous demand for qualified native-English-speaking teachers (NESTs). A large number of foreign-born native-English speakers work as English as a second language (ESL) teachers in Asian

countries, particularly South Korea, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan (Jeon & Lee, 2006). The number of ESL teachers working in China is estimated to have increased from 100,000 in 2004 to 150,000 in 2009 (Minsheng, 2006; Wolff & Qiang, 2009). The most recent report shows that there are about 400,000 foreign English educators working in Mainland China (Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, 2018).

International schools in China typically employ teachers from English-speaking countries (e.g., United States, Canada, Australia) or teachers from other English-as-official-language countries and areas (e.g., Singapore, Hong Kong) along with local teachers from China. The resulting mix creates a unique cross-cultural teaching and learning environment.

The impact of accelerating globalization, the rise of global English (Bolton & Graddol, 2012; Pan, 2015), the adjustment of China's English language policy, and the growth of the English language education needs of foreign-born parents have all shaped the background context for this study.

## Statement of the Problem

A number of studies have investigated co-teaching in different contexts. Co-teaching is often implemented with general and special education teachers paired together as part of an initiative to create a more inclusive classroom. In the field of ECE, some researches have focused on early childhood classrooms where an additional teacher supports children requiring specialized assistance or programming (File & Kontos, 1992; Lieber et al., 1997; Tobin, 2005). An increasing body of research has focused on the early childhood teacher's experience when a teaching partnership involves a primary teacher and an early childhood educator in the context of implementing full-day kindergarten

programs in Ontario (Lam, 2015; Tozer, 2012; Walton, 2014). Other research has been conducted to study the Reggio Emilia school system in Italy, in which collaboration among teachers has resulted in what is considered to be a successful co-teacher structure (Filippini, 2001; Malaguzzi, 2011; Rankin, 1997). There is also an emerging literature on co-teaching outside special education contexts and including general educational subjects, such as language arts, math, science, and ESL learning (Feng, 2012; Tobin, 2005; Wilks, 2011), where co-teaching is seen as an advantage for learners. For example, according to Wilks (2011), co-teaching can accelerate comprehension for English-language learners (ELLs).

However, there is limited research on co-teaching in a international early childhood context, and even though there is a long tradition of co-teaching in the Reggio Emilia schools, there is limited research on how teachers experience co-teaching. An exception is Shim, Hestenes, and Cassidy (2004), who studied co-teaching in preschool by looking at the relationship between childcare quality and teaching structure. The results indicated that a co-teacher approach (referred to as *team teaching*, which will be discussed later) was associated with higher quality childcare and more positive teacher behaviours than a hierarchical two-teacher structure (referred to as *supportive teaching*, with one teacher leading and another supporting) or a single-teacher structure. In terms of bilingual language learning, there is limited research investigating co-teachers' perceptions and experiences. In addition, few studies of co-teaching in early childhood education focus on teachers' personal experiences (Kim, 2010; Shim et al., 2004), and co-teaching in a bilingual international school has not been studied.

It is important to note that the intent of co-teaching is not to make teaching easier. On the contrary, working alongside another teacher can be more difficult than teaching alone. Carless and Walker (2006) note the importance for teachers of

> acknowledging that one is different but accepting that partners have their
> own beliefs, culture and reasoning; or to put it succinctly, "to agree to
> differ." These differences may well occur with team teachers from the
> same culture, but are even more likely to arise with teachers from different
> countries (p. 473).

The potential for tension increases in an early childhood education setting, where schooling is new for students, where children may not share the language of instruction or the language of any of their peers, and where teachers, from diverse nationalities, have their own culture, values, beliefs, and ways of teaching. It is not difficult to imagine the challenges for co-teachers working with very young children in such a cross-cultural context.

## Purpose of the Study

I investigated early childhood teachers' co-teaching experiences to gain insights into how they understood and implemented co-teaching. The study was based on the perceptions and experiences of six early childhood co-teachers in China (three teaching teams) and informed by my own experiences as a co-teacher in an early childhood education setting. First, it was necessary to explore the partnership between two teachers in the process of co-teaching. Second, I sought to investigate what was actually happening in the co-teaching classroom in a kindergarten setting at an international school. Third, I explored whether teachers' perceptions of co-teaching and the way

cultural differences are embedded in their work would be beneficial to implementing high-quality co-teaching in other bilingual education environments, such as English-Japanese programs.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

1.     How do culturally diverse teachers perceive co-teaching in the international school context?

2.     How does co-teaching influence teachers' pedagogical practices?

3.     How do culturally diverse teachers experience cross-cultural teaching in co-teaching?

4.     What factors do teachers identify as determining the quality of their co-teaching experience?

## Significance of the Study

Researchers have examined co-teaching in special education (Cook & Friend, 2004), national ECE (Malaguzzi, 2011; Lam, 2015), and ESL settings (Carless & Walker, 2006) in elementary school, high school, and college, and in university in China (Bo & Mu, 2009; Yin & Lin, 2012). However, there is a gap in the literature regarding co-teaching in international early childhood education settings, and no research has been done on the experiences of both local teachers and native English-speaking teachers who are implementing such programs.

This research aims to fill the gap. The findings reveal more about co-teaching from both local teachers' and NESTs' perspectives, providing insights into what might enhance the effectiveness of co-teaching in international kindergarten. The study

identifies challenges and concerns about co-teaching in a cross-cultural context. More specifically, the results provide a deeper understanding of the practices of cross-cultural co-teachers by exploring co-teaching and their perceptions, their intercultural communication, their professional development in ECE, and the way these practices are integrated into their day-to-day teaching. The results are useful to educators in other contexts who are grappling with similar issues. The research is also timely and important in consideration of the phenomenal growth of international schools worldwide and the popularity of the co-teaching model in these schools.

## Context

### The Golden International School

Schools adopting the descriptor *international* have some common characteristics. They promote international education (described below), in an international environment, either by adopting a curriculum based on the school's country of origin, which is different from its country of residence, or by following a curriculum specially designed for international schools. Many international schools use the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, Cambridge Curriculum, or International Primary Curriculum, which are all committed to a set of standards. The International Association of School Librarianship (2009) identified eight characteristics of international schools:

- transferability of the student's education to other international schools
- frequent changes in school population (higher than in state schools or public schools)
- a multinational and multilingual student body
- an international curriculum

- international accreditation

- a transient and multinational teacher population

- non-selective student enrollment in terms of academic ability

- usually English or French as the language of instruction, plus the obligation to take at least one additional language.

According to the International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF), English-medium international schools have become a global industry due to increased demand from parents who want their children enrolled in English-language schools (ICEF Monitor, 2013). The latest forecasts for the number of students attending English international schools in China predict growth from 475,000 in September 2017 to 881,000 in 2022 (The American Chamber of Commerce in South China, 2019).

There are several types of international schools in China (Center for China and Globalization, 2016). Some are foreign-owned international schools which enroll the children of foreign workers and children of Chinese families who have a foreign passport. Chinese nationals are not allowed to attend these schools. There are also Chinese-owned and run private international schools that cater to mostly local Chinese students and deliver Chinese-English bilingual learning with internationally recognized examinations and diplomas. Some public schools in China now offer International Division[1] as another option to local Chinese and foreign students. These International Divisions offer an international curriculum in addition to a Chinese one and are funded by the government.

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[1] The International Divisions of Public Schools are departments with Western teachers and curricula at Chinese public schools. Foreign nationals and local students can attend.

Golden International School (GIS)[2] is the focus of this study. It is foreign-owned

and enrolls expatriate children, children of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau residents, as

well as the children of Chinese families who have a foreign passport[3]. Chinese nationals

are not allowed to attend.  It provides an international curriculum to students aged 2-16,

through kindergarten, primary, junior high school, and high schools. This study focuses

particularly on the kindergarten section.

ICEF has reported that approximately 30% of all international schools provide

bilingual education, with English as the main language of learning combined with the

local language (ICEF Monitor, 2013). The school in this study is a Chinese-English

bilingual school, meaning Chinese[4] and English are both official languages of instruction

and communication. The students represent more than 50 nationalities. In the

kindergarten, each class has children who speak English as their first language while

learning Chinese as a second language (CSL), as well as ESL Chinese-speaking children,

and children who speak neither English nor Chinese but are learning both as additional

languages (EAL/CAL). Children who speak primarily other dialects of Chinese, such as

Cantonese, are considered ESL, CSL or EAL/CAL learners depending on the first

language of the children.

As described in school documents, both languages are used equally. For example,

all documents and letters sent home, such as weekly newsletters and children's reports,

are in both English and Chinese. Western teachers are required to speak English at all

times even when some of the Western teachers (e.g., Western teachers from Singapore)

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[2] A pseudonym is used for the international school.

[3] Some of these are PRC citizens' children born overseas, such as American-born Chinese, while some are children of Chinese immigrants.

[4] *Chinese* in this paper represents the standard Chinese, often called Mandarin, that  was used in the school.

speak Chinese. The Chinese teachers strive to speak Chinese in front of the children all the time except when communicating with Western teachers. Children learn and sing bilingual songs during circle time. While English is the only language used for professional development and meetings that involve both Chinese and Western teachers, Chinese is used for any meetings or professional development training that do not involve Western teachers. According to school documents, the school is

>committed to educate the whole person from infancy through secondary education. It strives to unite the best elements of Eastern and Western traditions and practices, the growth of the individual and the inquiring mind as well as develop a sense of personal responsibility and social welfare of all.

The diverse culture and language the teachers bring into the kindergarten forms a part of the cross-cultural learning environment.

**The Golden International Kindergarten**

The Golden International Kindergarten (GIK), one section of the GIS, aims to provide a nurturing environment for children 2 to 5 years old. A whole-day program, five days a week, is provided for K2 (2-year-old kindergartners), K3 (3-year-old kindergartners), and K4 (4-year-old kindergartners). The kindergarten program is based on *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (Government of United Kingdom, 2008), which describes children as the heart of the early childhood program. The GIK program aims to provide a play-based learning environment. To better understand what co-teaching looks like in the school, an example of a K2 classroom

timetable is displayed in Figure 1.3. It lists daily activities and shows how teachers

interact with their teaching partners, the children, and the parents in general.

K2 Class Timetable    K2 作息时间表

| TIME 时间 | Monday 星期一 | Tuesday 星期二 | Wednesday 星期三 | Thursday 星期四 | Friday 星期五 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8:00 | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Outdoor play 户外活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） Music specialist in class 音乐老师进教室(8:30 - 10:00) | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Outdoor play 户外活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） |
| 9:30 | Tidy Up / Bathroom Routine /Snack 整理/盥洗/点心时间 | | | | |
| 10:00 | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Library 图书馆阅读 (10:30-11:00) Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Outdoor play 户外活动 Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Outdoor play 户外活动 Music & movement 音乐律动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Developmental Learning Activities 发展性学习活动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） | Outdoor play 户外活动 Music & movement 音乐律动 Circle time (Chinese / English) 语言体验（中/英文活动） |
| 11:30 | Lunch 午饭 | | | | |
| 12:00 | Bathroom Routine /Body Rest /Afternoon Snack 盥洗/午休准备/午休时间 /点心时间 | | | | |
| 2:30 | Developmental Learning Activities / Stories / Songs 发展性学习活动 / 故事 / 歌曲 | | | | |
| 3:15 | Dismissal 小朋友放学 | | | | |

*Figure 1.3*: An example of a K2 classroom timetable.

Teachers arrive at school at 7:30 a.m. and prepare the classroom prior to the

children's arrival. There is not much time to communicate with one another in the

morning because the children and parents arrive soon after. Developmental learning

activities are provided when children have free play in different learning areas, and

teachers interact with the children based on need. In general, co-teachers have bilingual

circle times, which means both teachers lead the circle using two languages at the same

time. Sometimes teachers have monolingual circle times, which may be in either

language. During monolingual circle time, one teacher leads the class while the other sits

with the children and assists.

After the children go home, the teachers use the time from 3:30 to 4:00 p.m. to write together their observations as well as to record what they did during the day, their reflections, and the activities for the next day. This is called *co-planning time*. There is another block of time set aside for co-planning during children's body rest time. Different classes are combined in one big room during afternoon rest. The teachers take turns being on duty, which means that when both co-teachers in a team are not on duty, they can use the time for co-planning. The arrangement of teachers' duty during rest time is intended to guarantee that each co-teaching team has at least one hour every day for co-planning.

**Chinese Teachers and Western Teachers**

At GIK, Chinese teachers are local and have ECE-related academic background and work experience. Western teachers are NESTs. The term 'Western teacher' was used by administrators and teachers in the school to refer to teachers from countries in which English is an official language and for whom English is their first language. In most cases, they are from countries such as Australia, Canada, the USA, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. Further, Western was commonly used to refer to culture as well as language. The term is used in the thesis to be consistent with the views of the participants. Western teachers are required to have teaching certificates or degrees from their respective countries as well as relevant teaching experience.

**The Concept of Co-teaching**

Co-teaching is not a new concept in early childhood education. Nevertheless, definitions vary. The authors of *A Guide to Co-teaching* (3rd edition) state that co-teaching is "two or more people sharing responsibility for teaching all of the students assigned to a classroom" (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2013, p. 3). They also suggest that

"co-teaching can be likened to a marriage" in which "partners must establish trust, develop and work on communication, share the chores, celebrate, work together to overcome the inevitable challenges and problems, and anticipate conflict and handle it in a constructive way" (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2013, p. 3).

A similar and widely used definition is offered by Friend and Cook (2007): "Co-teaching occurs when two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, blended group of students in a single physical space" (p. 113). For Friend and Cook, co-teaching is an option for providing education or related services to students with disabilities or other special needs while they remain in their general classes. In the United States, implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) created supplementary aid and service to general education for students with disabilities. Thus co-teaching, by having one general educator and one special educator, is considered by Friend and Cook (2007) as

> the best known of the service delivery options, and [one which] is being
>
> implemented to support many different groups of students, from those
>
> with learning, communication, and behavior disabilities, to those who
>
> have sensory impairments, to those with other significant special needs
>
> (p.113).

While the common definitions of co-teaching have been deeply rooted in the inclusive education context, co-teaching is being increasingly applied in other contexts for diverse purposes. For example, co-teaching has been used to benefit English language learners in an ESL setting (Neely, 2016). Co-teaching partnerships are no longer limited

to one general educator and one special educator. Therefore, questions arise such as: How is co-teaching defined in other educational settings? More specifically, what is meant by co-teaching in an international kindergarten? In the absence of a definition in the literature, I developed the following definition based on the ECE Procedure Guidelines at GIS. The school states the kindergarten's bilingual program uses a co-teaching model in which two qualified teachers, one Western and one Chinese, serve as co-teachers. The two teachers share all responsibilities for the care and education of students in their class. They plan and work together to provide students with a variety of learning experiences and to help them develop both English and Chinese skills through a play-based learning curriculum. Co-teaching is portrayed as a way to value Chinese and English languages and cultures equally, thereby facilitating learning and teaching in a true bilingual environment. Stated another way, co-teaching is a way to reinforce students' social and cultural competence, giving equal status to the two world languages and cultures within the school context.

Co-teaching has the potential to offer benefits to both teachers and students. However, when not done well, it can be confusing and frustrating. It is helpful to define good quality co-teaching or successful co-teaching. In this cross-cultural context, successful co-teaching should address two aspects: partnership and outcomes. Concerning the former, co-teachers should collaborate to achieve a harmonious relationship. They should learn from each other in professional and cultural matters by scaffolding ideas and practices, and also by acknowledging and understanding different views, disagreements, conflicts, and tensions. Their relationship should be based on mutual understanding and respect. Concerning the latter, co-teaching has the potential to

create good outcomes for both teachers and students. It can help teachers' professional development as well as children's learning and development. Teachers develop knowledge and skills on early learning and teaching. When working with a partner, teachers can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural influence on co-teaching. They can acquire techniques in working in a cross-cultural context. On the other hand, students are offered various meaningful learning opportunities that can support their development through co-constructed themes and activities.

For Villa, Thousand, and Nevin (2013), a co-teaching team requires one general educator who demonstrates competence in the subject area he or she teaches, and one special educator who has complementary expertise in specialized content (e.g., teaching students with special needs, teaching English as a foreign language, or teaching gifted and talented students). Villa, Thousand, and Nevin distinguish four approaches when the purpose is inclusive education: *supportive co-teaching, parallel co-teaching, complementary co-teaching,* and *team-teaching co-teaching*. With supportive co-teaching, one teacher leads and the other supports. Parallel co-teaching occurs when co-teachers teach the same or different content to different groups of students at the same time. Complementary co-teaching occurs when one teacher takes primary responsibility for teaching while the other supplements the instruction. In team-teaching co-teaching, teachers equally share responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessing the progress of students in the class. Among these four approaches, the latter is most similar to what is used in the international school in this study.

The team teaching described in Villa, Thousand, and Nevin's book (2013) occurs in a special education context, whereas the co-teaching in this study is implemented in a

regular kindergarten. Despite these different contexts, co-teachers in both settings share equal instructional and educational responsibilities. Technically, the co-teaching used in the GIK can be seen as Villa, Thousand, & Nevin's team-teaching approach in a broad sense. In other research, team teaching is also referred to as collaborative or cooperative teaching.  In this study, to prevent any confusion, the definition developed using the school's ECE Procedure Guidelines and described earlier in this section is used consistently to represent the unique partnership.

Several researchers have explored the specifics of co-teaching beyond the definitions. How is co-teaching implemented? What does co-teaching look like in practice? In daily classroom activities, co-teaching has different forms. There are a variety of names for the co-teaching models used in inclusive schools, but they all share certain essentials. Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997) are critical of what they consider the typical approaches to co-teaching in special education classrooms, two of which are *grazing* and *tag-team teaching* (p. 5). Grazing is when one teacher stands at the front giving instruction and the other teacher moves among the students to supervise. In tag-team teaching, teachers take turns to provide a lesson. As alternatives, Vaughn et al. outline five additional intentional co-teaching models: one group, with one lead teacher and one teacher "teaching on purpose" (p. 5); two groups, where two teachers teach the same content (p.5); two groups, where one teacher is a re-teacher and one teaches alternative information (p. 5); multiple groups, in which two teachers monitor/teach (p. 9); and one group, where two teachers teach the same content (p. 9).

The GIK uses four of the models described by Vaughn, Schumm, and Arguelles (1997):  one group, with two teachers teaching the same content at the same time; one

group, with one teacher leading and one assisting; two groups, with one teacher leading one group and the other teacher leading the other group with the same or alternative activities; and, multiple groups, with two teachers leading groups randomly and independently. These models are illustrated in Figure 1.4.

In this research, circle time is used to describe group learning time. Circle time is commonly used for large groups at the start and/or end of the day. It refers to teaching in which children and teachers are arranged in a circle or semi-circle formation on the floor or in chairs. The GIK uses both bilingual and monolingual circle times. In Figure 1.4, at the top left is bilingual circle time, with two teachers leading the group together, while at the down left is monolingual circle time[5], either Chinese or English, with one teacher, at the front, as primary instructor, and the other sitting with the students and assisting their learning. During developmental learning activities, the co-teachers interact with children based on need. There are two main forms of teaching and learning presented at the right side of Figure 1.4. Sometimes children are divided into two groups, each led by one teacher (see No. 3 in the figure). For example, during outdoor play time, one teacher may lead a group playing with balls, while the other assists a group on the monkey bars. As an alternative form of co-teaching, during activity time, teachers supervise children's free play by circulating in the classroom and interacting with multiple groups (see No. 4 in the figure). This form of co-teaching happens during morning free play and outdoor play time. In this study, I focused on teachers' interactions with one another and the children in the four forms of co-teaching illustrated in Figure 1.4.

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[5] Monolingual circle time refers to the circle time led by one teacher using primarily one language, which is either Chinese or English.
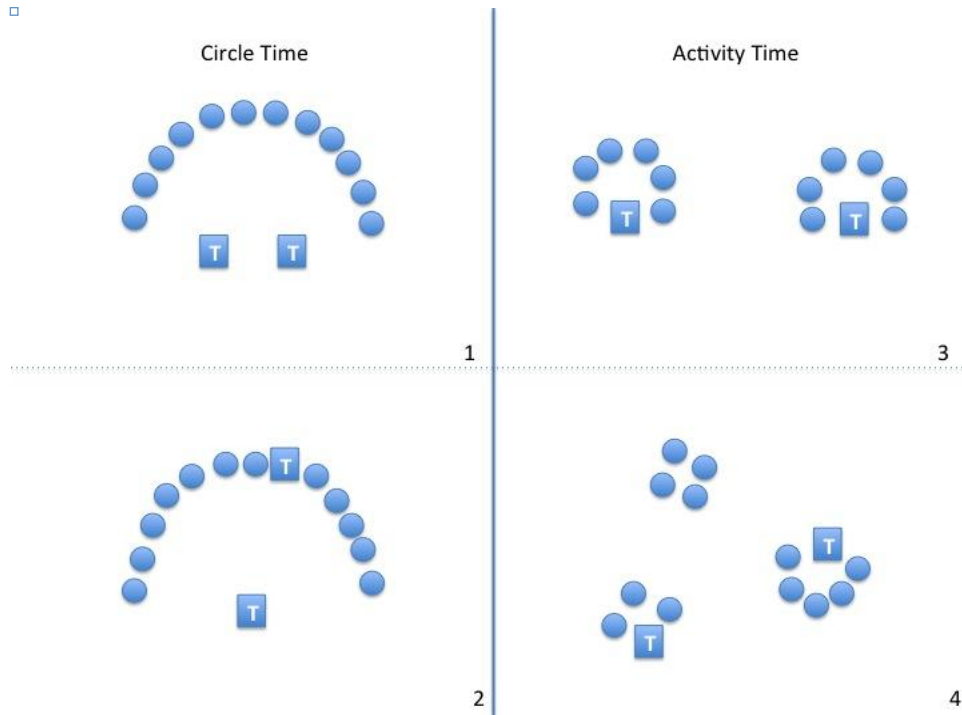
*Figure 1.4*: Four forms of co-teaching used in the international kindergarten.

Besides, the 'co-'model is not only used among teachers but also at the administrative level. For example, the school uses a co-principal model in which one Western and one Chinese principal work in partnership. In the kindergarten section, co-coordinators, one Western and one Chinese, have equal authority and work collaboratively to support teachers. In sum, this cooperative model is applied from principal to coordinator to teacher.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Sociocultural historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978) was used for understanding the complex interrelationships between co-teachers and the social and cultural settings in which they were situated. I also used concepts from the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to understand the influence of specific sociocultural-historical contexts on teachers' co-teaching perceptions and pedagogies, combined with the concepts of culture (Rogoff, 2003) and third space theory (Bhabha, 1994) to understand the cultural influence and the hybridity that teachers experienced in this study's context.

## Sociocultural Historical Theory

The study is framed by a sociocultural historical theory which describes how individuals actively construct knowledge as a result of their social interactions in meaningful activities (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, individual development cannot be understood without considering the social and cultural context within which it is embedded. In the sociocultural approach, understanding human action cannot "begin with the environment or the individual human agent in isolation" (Wertsch, 1993, p. 9), because it cannot be separated from the cultural, historical, and institutional context. In this study, teachers' perceptions and practices of co-teaching are constructed in cultural and historical ways. Every teacher forms ideas about what teaching should be like, based on many implicit values and beliefs. Chinese and Western teachers' previous knowledge, shaped by cultural and social contexts, has influence on their co-teaching. To understand co-teaching perceptions and practices, one must examine specific sociocultural contexts. In this research, as Chinese and Western teachers were paired to implement co-teaching

in an international school in China, it is necessary to understand the classroom, the school setting, and the specific social and cultural context in China. This inquiry probes teachers' everyday co-teaching practices and cultural beliefs and social norms within the larger sociocultural context.

According to the sociocultural-historical view (Vygotsky, 1978), social interactions that individuals make with people, objects, and the environment occur within a particular cultural-historical context. In this study, teachers actively interacted with co-teachers, children, parents, and colleagues in the context of the school through daily teaching. Co-teaching related interactions primarily occur, though not exclusively, within classroom and school settings. The classroom and school environment play important roles in providing a physical place for co-teaching to take place but they also impact teachers' practices (Allen, 2010).

Sociocultural analysis emphasizes the "relationships between human action, on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts in which this action occurs, on the other" (Wertsch, 1993, p. 24). In this study, the goal is not to simply consider co-teaching practices and the relationships between Chinese and Western teachers. In an effort to understand the impact of the larger social and cultural contexts on co-teaching relationships, perceptions and practices, consideration is also given to elements such as the school social committee activities, teacher and parent communication, local politics and the local education system, and different culture and values.

**Ecological Systems Theory**

This inquiry is situated within sociocultural theory and, more specifically, is shaped by the concepts in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. These understandings provide a comprehensive framework for the study, serving to support and guide my inquiry.

Developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) explains the various influences shaping human development. In it, the individual is placed at the centre, with influences represented in nested circles that surround the individual. Consistent with sociocultural theory, in Bronfenbrenner's view, individuals have an influence over their environment while, at the same time, the environment exerts influence on the individual. "The characteristics of the person are both as producer and a product of development" (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p. 5). Bronfenbrenner specified four nested environmental systems, with bidirectional influences within and between the systems. His theory holds that development reflects the influence of four environmental systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Figure 2.1 depicts Bronfenbrenner's theory as applied to culturally different individuals who, in this case, are co-teachers. Western and Chinese teachers are positioned in the centre: they are the individuals with their own backgrounds who come together in the co-teaching classroom. In using different background colours for the two groups, their differing personal, educational, and cultural backgrounds are emphasized. The same background colour is used for Chinese teachers, exosystem, and macrosystem. It indicates that the dominant social and cultural context is Chinese and less familiar to

Western teachers.
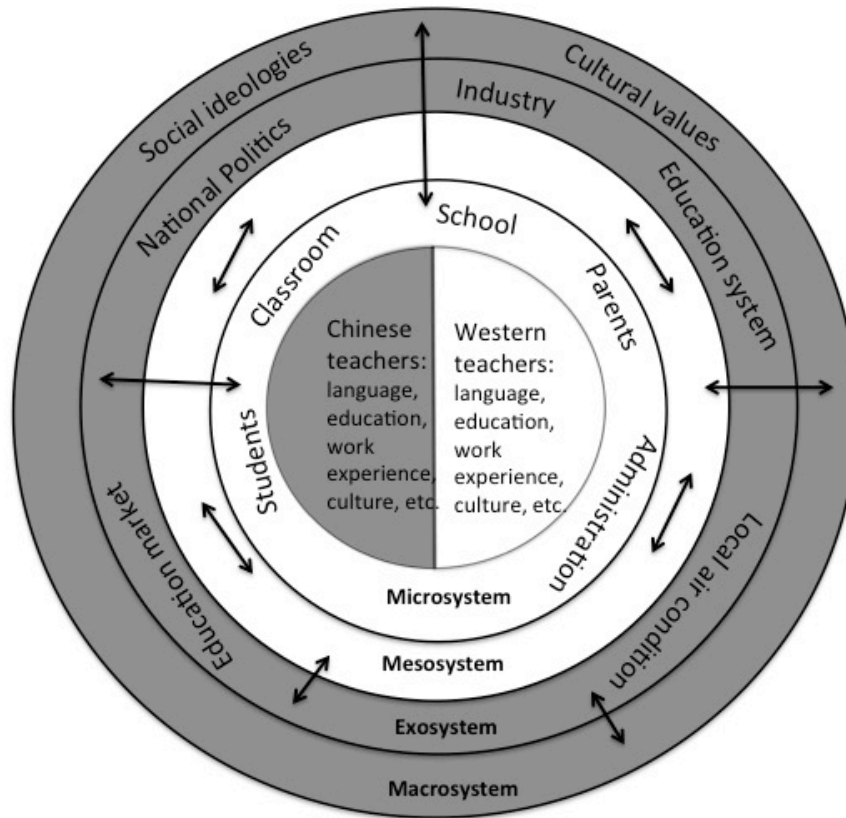


*Figure 2.1*: Ecological system for Western and Chinese teachers in a co-teaching setting.

Each system describes elements that together make up the context of co-teaching. The first three systemic structures are closest to co-teachers' unique circumstances: microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. The innermost level, microsystem, represents the relationship between co-teachers and their immediate surroundings, and includes the most direct interactions with co-teachers, colleagues, students, parents, and administrators. The school plays a prominent role in terms of creating school culture and policy making. It is also where teachers experience on a daily basis their interpersonal relations, teaching activities, and special events.

In the microsystem, the classroom is the main setting. Co-teachers carry out their day-to-day teaching and socialize with other people, including students, parents, and colleagues, to fulfill their mission. There may be considerations such as: How do co-teachers interact with each other and with children in co-teaching circle time and activity time? How do co-teachers respond and adapt while working with culturally different partners, children, and parents? How does the classroom provide a co-teaching context that values the languages and cultures that the co-teachers represent? These questions may be answered by considering each of the relationships. It is worth noting that not all microsystems have an identical influence on co-teaching; some may be more influential than others.

Next in the diagram is the mesosystem, which consists of a network of microsystems. The mesosystem in this study represents the interconnections among two or more microsystems, such as the interactions between parents and the school, the relationships between co-teachers, students, colleagues, and principals, or interactions between co-teachers and the students and their parents or families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the mesosystem, two inner-level ecological settings can jointly influence teachers' perception and ways of co-teaching. For example, where the number of Chinese-speaking students has been increasing in recent years, there may be a corresponding increase in the workload for Western teachers teaching English as a second language. However, this change in enrollment could also increase Chinese teachers' workload if considering communication with Chinese parents. In this example, parents and students combine to have impact on co-teaching practices.

Following the mesosystem is the exosystem. It involves links between social settings in which Western and Chinese teachers do not have active roles but which nonetheless affect co-teaching indirectly. The exosystem includes the English education market in China, the local education system (more specifically, the local kindergarten in this study), local and global industry, national politics in China, and local air quality. One example concerns national policies about citizenship and school admittance. Currently, only foreign students and children of Chinese families who have a foreign passport can attend foreign-owned and -operated schools, which means most Chinese-speaking students are not allowed to attend foreign-owned international schools. As a result, an increasing number of wealthy Chinese parents arrange to give birth abroad (mostly in Hong Kong, USA, and Canada) in order to get foreign passports for their children though they still intend to raise them and send them to international schools in China. The number of foreign-born Chinese students who do not speak English and have an entirely Chinese cultural background is increasing dramatically and it challenges Western teachers' expectations in regard to teaching English language arts not only to native English-speaking children but also to ESL learners. In addition, it could raise challenges for Chinese teachers in terms of communicating with an increasing number of unilingual Chinese parents.

The exosystem also includes the booming English education market in China. More Chinese parents send their children to international schools to receive International education, preparing the children to attend higher education overseas. This impacts the workload of both Western and Chinese teachers, as discussed previously. Certain characteristics of the local kindergarten programs also have an impact on co-teaching.

For example, oversized classes, the teacher-directed curriculum, and the heavy workload all affect Chinese teachers' attitudes about working in international schools.

The outer circle in the diagram, called the macrosystem, includes the dominant societal norms and values. The macrosystem has a significant impact on the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. For example, the increased popularity of English learning, now seen as a means to a more successful career in China, has created tremendous job opportunities in the English education market that is part of the exosystem, and subsequently could affect the meso- and microsystems.  Because an increasing number of Chinese parents send their children to international schools, the student demographics in international schools in China has been changing. To meet parents' expectations, schools are hiring more NESTs to teach English and also hiring more local teachers to teach the local language. In the case of NESTs, who are working overseas, the macrosystem of the host country influences how they accommodate the teaching and living environment and could also impact how teachers interact with culturally diverse teachers and students.

The ecological systems theory is valuable for understanding the interactions and influences among different environmental systems. However, considering that the individuals in the centre are two distinct groups of teachers with different cultural backgrounds, it is important to understand that the impacts may or may not be associated with either group. In some cases, the impacts on teachers can vary from person to person, regardless of which group the teacher belongs to. For example, the increased number of Chinese-speaking students in each class could impact one teacher but not another. Furthermore, impacts may be felt more strongly by one group and less by the other. For example, the macrosystem may exert more influence on Western teachers who are

unfamiliar with the social norms, ideologies, and cultures in China. In sum, altogether, the systems shape the organism which determines who a person becomes, or what generations become. The way that Western and Chinese teachers think, behave, and teach is influenced to differing degrees by all these systems.

Souto-Manning (2016) proposed a transcontextual cultural-ecological framework in reconsidering early childhood teacher education. According to Souto-Manning, there is a dramatic demographic shift in today's early childhood classrooms in the USA, where most students are of colour and most early childhood teachers are white. This mismatch keeps growing and it often results in which children of colour are minoritized because "they are foreign to the dominant cultural and linguistic practices of the overwhelming majority of early childhood teachers" (p.13). Teacher education is influenced by culture and history, and, in the transcontextual cultural-ecological approach, multiple components that have significant influence on teacher education and development are listed in concentric circles. Teachers are situated in the middle. From outer to inner circle, there are macro discourses, ideologies and attitudes; politics and policies; social services; and, families, schools, peers, communities, and early childhood education (see Figure 2.2 below). The dotted lines indicate how susceptible each system is to influence, as "each level, or each realm influences the other in such a complex system" (Souto-Manning, 2016, p. 27).
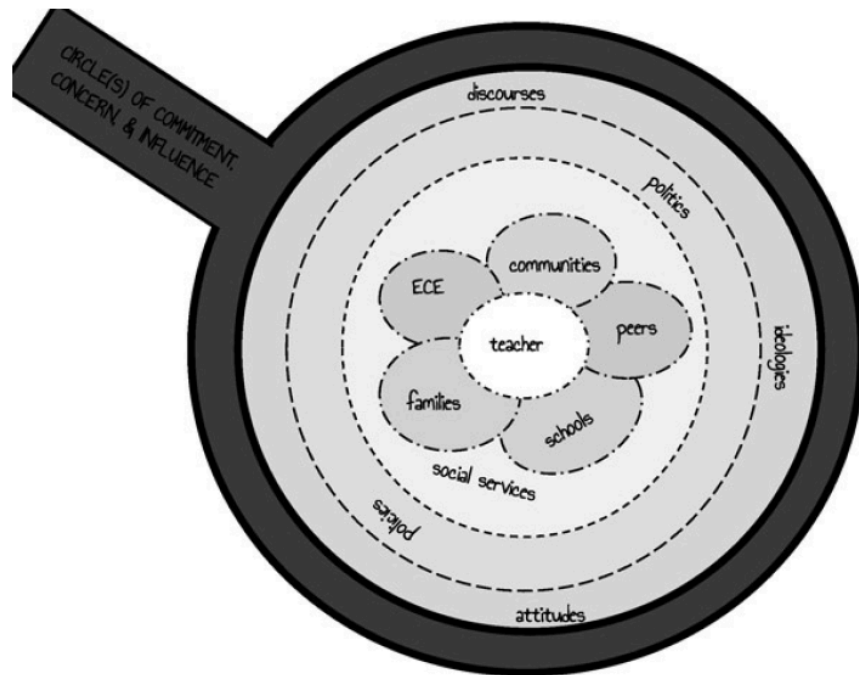
*Figure 2.2:* A transcontextual cultural-ecological approach to ECE teacher development ( Souto-Manning, 2016, p.26)

The biggest similarity between the transcontextual cultural-ecological framework and the co-teaching ecological systems approach is that both acknowledge the micro, meso-, exo- and macro-systems that inevitably influence teacher development. The multiple components indicated in the systems all contribute to teacher development in a direct or indirect way. More importantly, the two-way arrows in the co-teaching ecological system and the dotted lines used in the transcontextual cultural-ecological approach (Souto-Manning, 2016) both emphasize the complexity of how these systems and their components influence one another.

Yet, what makes the co-teaching ecological system different from Souto-Manning's approach is that it places focus not only on external factors such as discourses, policies, communities, peers and schools, but also on the individual teacher. Culture, previous work experience, personality, and language may be quite different between co-teaching partners. And, these individual factors frame and determine the co-teaching experience. Moreover, when considering co-teaching in view of the ecological system, Chinese and Western teachers worked alongside one another in similar micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-systems. Nevertheless, the influence of the systems may have varied from teacher to teacher. For example, the Chinese-speaking children increased dramatically in each kindergarten classroom, it would be interesting to see how the change of student body, instantiated by micro discourse, impact on Chinese and Western teachers' co-teaching experience.

**Culture and Third Space Theory**

Culture plays a significant role in understanding an individual's way of thinking and behaving (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003). To better understand culturally different teachers who practice co-teaching, it is necessary to define the term *culture* and the different dimensions of culture related to the specific context of co-teaching. Furthermore, Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 1996) has also been used to explore the adaptation of international educators teaching in cross-cultural settings.

**Culture.** According to Hong (2009), "culture consists of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world … among a collection of interconnected individuals who are often demarcated by race, ethnicity, or nationality" (p. 4). In social

studies, culture is generally considered as shared values, beliefs, systems of language, communication, and practices that people share and that can be used to define them as a collective. Rather than a static phenomenon, culture is socially constructed and "created, shared, and transformed by people bound by common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion or belief system" (Prochner, Cleghorn, Kirova, & Massing, 2016, p. 5).

Rogoff's (2003) concept of culture provides some basis for this study. Rogoff emphasized that cultural processes exist in everyday human activities and development from a broad view of experience. For example, in the co-teaching context, the practices of teachers are cultural. According to Rogoff (2003), in order to realize and understand one's own and others' culture, it requires "taking the perspective of people of contrasting backgrounds" (p. 11). People are more likely to become aware of the longstanding and customary ways of doing things when experiencing differences. In the context of co-teaching, teachers become exposed to different beliefs, values, traditions, and teaching pedagogies. By experiencing these differences, co-teachers have an opportunity to realize and understand the culture of co-teaching, as well as their own culture. Co-teachers, such as the ones in this study, stand to gain a critical perspective on their home culture (Bailey & Cooker, 2019).

In a co-teaching classroom, there is no need to determine which culture is right or wrong. What is required instead is to suspend "one's own assumptions temporarily to consider others and carefully [separate] efforts to understand cultural phenomena from efforts to judge their value" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 12).

Differences in cultural values and beliefs sometimes lead to conflict (Turner, 2006). According to Avruch (2002), conflicts that occur between individuals or social groups from different cultures are considered *cross-cultural conflicts*. In the co-teaching context, cross-cultural conflicts occur when co-teachers encounter competing or even opposing worldviews, beliefs, and values, particularly related to teaching and learning. In this study, cross-cultural conflict is considered with reference to a co-teacher's experience with values, ideas, and practices that do not align with their learning and teaching beliefs. Culture frames the contexts in which cross-cultural conflict occurs and the experience of cultural conflict can lead to tension. In this study, I sought to understand how co-teachers perceive and experience cultural differences and cross-cultural conflicts and tensions when interacting with diverse students and co-teachers.

**Five dimensions of culture**. Considering the sites and locations of cultures, Barker (2004) believed that cultures are "hybridized products of interactions across space" (p. 45). However, within the context of globalization, culture is "becoming less a matter of locations than of hybrid and creolized cultural meanings and practices that span global space" (Barker, 2004, p. 45). In terms of the Western teachers in this study, most had entered a working and living environment very different from their passport country. Living and working in another culture requires teachers to adjust to and accommodate the host country's culture through the relations and interconnections across space. The Western teachers experience a hybridity of "being in and between two worlds simultaneously" (English, 2003, p. 69). On the other hand, Chinese teachers in this study live within their heritage culture but work in an international setting with teachers of different cultural backgrounds. They are exposed to different values, beliefs, and ways of

thinking and doing in the cross-cultural teaching context (Lai, Gu, & Hu, 2015). Chinese teachers also experience hybridity because of the cross-cultural setting when at work and the local sociocultural context when at home.

In this study, the cultural factors that influence co-teaching are complex. In an attempt to capture this intricacy and with reference to "a model of multi-level cultural influences that impinge on an individual teacher in an international school" (Joslin, 2002, p. 35), I identified five dimensions of culture that impact co-teachers' practices: (a) a teacher's own cultural heritage; (b) the culture of previous organizations where the teacher worked; (c) the culture of the school community (e.g., the expatriate community, Chinese teachers' community, social committee); (d) the international school culture; and, (e) the culture of the host country. It is acknowledged that the interaction of cultural elements from the large sociocultural context is unlimited. However, the five cultural factors are identified as focal factors because they closely relate to co-teaching practices. These multiple dimensions of culture provide a focus for interpreting the research results and also prevent a situation in which data become overwhelming.

In alignment with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ideas, the five cultural dimensions represent the interactions that take place in different environmental systems: the microsystem (school and previous organization), the mesosystem (community culture), and the exosystem and macrosystem (national culture). Because co-teaching is situated within a specific cross-cultural context, which influences practice, the five dimensions extend the ecological system theory by acknowledging the cultural heritage of the teacher and the culture of previous organizations where the teacher worked (Joslin, 2002; Bailey & Cooker, 2019). Moreover, according to Prochner et al. (2016), culture is "socially

constructed and learned through the process of socialization, starting within the family and community, from infancy to adulthood" (p. 5). Culture is not considered an external and fixed factor within a macrosystem, but rather a dynamic changing process merged within all the social activities of a teacher's daily life and as that teacher travels from culture to culture (Rogoff, 2003).

**Third Space Theory.** International educators move from one geographical location to another, living as active members of a new and very different culture and society. Emerging from sociocultural tradition (Lillis, 2003), Third Space theory is widely used in international education studies (English, 2003; Feng, 2012; Saudelli, 2012). Bhabha's (1994) Third Space Theory underpins the nature of hybridity and the accommodation processes that international educators experience. A place for "hybridity [emanates] from cross-cultural interaction that manifests as an internal and external state of being. It is in this hybrid space where opposing or diverse beliefs, lifestyles, ways of knowing and experiences interact and find symmetry" (Saudelli, 2012. p. 103). Bhabha (1994) argued that "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity is the third space which enables other positions to emerge" (p.211).  English (2003) explored the third space as a place "which is neither northern or southern, global or local, left or right" (p. 68). Wang (2007), in discussing the notion of third, stated that its purpose is to "enable differences to mutually transform each other without reaching any final fusion…the third does not reach consensus or synthesis but moves between, beyond and with the dual forces simultaneously" (p. 390).

The notion of third space conveys the complexity of intercultural accommodation. The intercultural dynamic applies equally to nationalities and cultures as well as to the process of co-teaching. In this study, Western teachers as international educators may have lived and taught in several nations and may therefore have a stronger sense of hybridity as occupants of the third space who seek symmetry.

In sum, the theoretical frameworks provide different lenses with which to understand issues of co-teaching. Sociocultural historical theory is the foundation for the study and the other frameworks. The ecological framework guides the study, focusing on elements in the different ecological systems, such as the interactions between co-teachers, as well as those between teacher and child, and between teacher and coordinator. The framework provides a way to understand political, environmental, and social change as factors impacting co-teaching. The theories of culture provide further guidance to aid in understanding and interpreting teachers' cultural experiences and to shed light on teachers' cultural conflicts and tensions, cultural accommodation, and cultural hybridity. The theories of culture also provide support for analyzing the influence of cultural dimensions on teachers' co-teaching experiences.

## Literature Review

It is important to examine the research about co-teaching in different contexts in order to better understand the idea of co-teaching in this study. The following section reviews co-teaching literature in the context of special education, early childhood education, and language education. It provides some background on the history and development of foreign teaching in China, and explores research into cross-cultural teaching experiences from the perspectives of both international and local teachers.

**Co-teaching in Special Education**

Co-teaching is widely used as one of the most common teaching models for students with disabilities. There has been much research in this area, exploring the partnership between specialized and classroom teacher, as schools move to a more inclusive model to accommodate special needs students (Cook & Friend, 2004; Gately & Gately, 2001; Vaughn et al., 1997; Villa et al., 2013). Walther-Thomas (1997) described the emerging benefits and problems that teachers and administrators identified in the development of a co-teaching model that would support students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The co-teachers and school administrators reported many benefits for students with disabilities, general education students, and themselves. For all students, co-teaching, which offers a lower teacher-student ratio, provided an environment where students could get more attention and support. Co-teaching helped students improve not only their academic performance but also their social skills. Co-teachers also benefited from working collaboratively in terms of professional development. However, the problems reported by teachers and administrators persisted and grew more serious over time and eventually there was "more consensus about the problems that participants encountered than there [was] about the benefits they reported" (Walther-Thomas, 1997, p. 402). According to Walther-Thomas, the most obvious problems involved concerns about the need for administrative support and planning time, and inadequate opportunities for staff professional development (1997).

Recent research that has focused on the relationship between co-teachers in special education indicates that the working relationship that develops over time plays a vital role in determining success (Murphy & Beggs, 2005; Sileo, 2011; Smith, 2012;

Tzivinikou, 2015). Murphy and Beggs (2005) argued that the working relationship between co-teachers is a significant factor in determining whether experiences are positive or negative. Other research has shown that the working relationship between co-teachers develops over time through their engagement in co-planning, co-teaching, and co-evaluation of lessons (Murphy, 2016). Implementing a co-teaching model also potentially raises the problem of harmony and authority between co-teachers (Turan & Bayar, 2017). In studies that investigated the complexity of co-teaching relationships in inclusive education (Friend et al., 2010; Graziano & Navarrete, 2012; Sileo, 2011; Walther-Thomas, 1997), some common topics emerge: different teaching philosophy and style; the roles of co-teachers; and, teachers' skills for effective co-teaching, including communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving.

Though there are relatively stable stages in the process of co-teaching, it is suggested that co-teaching is not a simple procedure, but that it moves on a dynamic developmental continuum. Furthermore, there are benefits that parallel the challenges. To make co-teaching more likely to be successful, an equal and respectful relationship between co-teachers and a supportive environment, with leaders to facilitate growth are required. In sum, there are tremendous possibilities when co-teachers work together, and a rich and rewarding experience may emerge if nurtured appropriately (Callaghan, 2012).

**Co-teaching in National ECE Settings**

Co-teaching has been practiced by educators from many different levels of teaching. There are examples of implementing co-teaching within the ECE field. The Reggio Emilia school system in Italy has used a successful co-teacher structure that applies collaboration not only among children and adults (e.g., teachers and parents) but

also among teachers themselves (Filippini, 2001; Malaguzzi, 2011; Rankin, 1997). Co-teaching, and, in a more general sense, collegial work representing one type of collaboration, plays an important role in the Reggio Emilia schools. The founder of Reggio Emilia's educational philosophy, Loris Malaguzzi, explains: "The teachers work in co-teaching pairs in each classroom, and they plan with other colleagues and the families" (Edwards, Forman, & Gandini, 2012, p. 64). In the Reggio Emilia schools, co-teaching represents "a deliberate break from the traditional professional and cultural solitude and isolation of teachers" (Edwards, Forman, & Gandini, 2012, p. 71). Many studies have explored the implications of the co-teaching structure and effective collaboration among adults in the Reggio Emilia schools (Edwards, Forman, & Gandini, 2012; Hendricks, 1997; McNally & Slutsky, 2017). The results of the studies show co-teaching pairs collaborate to plan for projects, to assess observations and notes on the projects and activities, and to receive input from each other. Moreover, the conflicts between co-teaching pairs were found to be necessary for professional development (Edwards, 2012). The co-teaching arrangement is considered difficult because two teachers must "co-adapt and accommodate constantly" (Edwards, 2012, p. 154) but it is also considered to be "powerful" because it requires two teachers collaborating while sharing a belief in the value of children's learning and development. As two teachers jointly undertake learning, teaching, and making decisions, children and parents are better served.

In the Reggio Emilia schools, alternative but continuous professional development consistently supports teachers in-service. On-going training and theoretical enrichment are provided to encourage teachers and staff to "engage in collaborative discussion and

interpretation of both teachers' and children's work" (Gandini, 1993; Hendricks, 1997, p. 20). The pedagogical coordinators, called *pedagogisti*, "contribute a situation of continuous individual and group professional growth" (p. 20). This support includes helping teachers to sustain and implement the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia schools, deal with educational issues concerning children and parents, and identify new themes. Within the Reggio Emilia schools, it is important for co-teachers to receive support and assistance from the central administration. When the administration is actively involved, co-teaching is more likely to be successful.

There is a strong philosophical basis for collaboration among teachers in the Reggio approach. In this regard, Rankin (1997) pointed to the importance of Vygotsky's idea (1978), namely, to "recognize the importance of learning taking place in the social realm and emphasize the active role of adults (and children) in the learning process of others" (Rankin, 1997, p. 77). Rankin continued:

Both Vygotsky and educators from Reggio Emilia view the social realm

and social interaction as a place for the co-construction of understanding

among participants. Both give great value to learning in social settings;

both see a correspondence between cognitive and social processes (p. 78).

Some research has investigated the relationship between teaching structure and childcare quality in preschool classrooms. Teaching structure refers to the way teachers are grouped in the classroom. For example, a co-teacher structure may have either two lead teachers, a hierarchical two-teacher structure, including a lead teacher and an assistant, or a single-teacher structure with one lead teacher (Shim et al., 2004). Research findings suggest that teaching structure has an influence on childcare quality in preschool

classrooms (Shim et al., 2004). In this case, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-revised (ECERS-R) was used to measure the childcare quality in different childcare centres. It includes structural and process quality. Structural quality refers to regulatable variables such as group size, adult-child ratio, and the experience of the caregivers, while process quality refers to the physical and social environment the children experience. Shim et al. (2004) indicated that a co-teacher structure with two leads was associated with higher quality childcare and more positive teacher behaviours than a hierarchical two-teacher structure or a single-teacher structure.

Shim et al.'s work (2004) suggests that when teachers share the lead role, both teachers' individual talents can be used to benefit students. A successful co-teaching partnership should include equal authority over educational decisions and equal responsibilities. Thornton (1990) discussed how a hierarchical relationship between herself and another teacher in a pre-kindergarten classroom turned into a successful team-teaching relationship as a result of trust and continuing efforts to communicate. A co-teaching structure does not guarantee that teachers share responsibilities equally and successfully. Teachers' own personalities and characteristics, including personal strengths and weaknesses, also need to be considered.

In kindergarten classrooms in Ontario, Canada, team teaching has been used since 2010 to implement a full-day kindergarten program for 4- and 5-year-old children that pairs a certified kindergarten teacher with an early childhood educator to share responsibilities in a co-teaching arrangement (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Several studies have investigated the relationship between these kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators (Underwood et al., 2016; Pascal, 2009) and identified

several challenges including teachers' unclear roles and responsibilities, and differences in pay and working conditions (Callaghan, 2012; Gibson & Pelletier, 2012; Underwood et al., 2016). Similarly, in a study examining teaching structure in the same context, Gibson and Pelletier (2012) identified the existence of a hierarchical relationship between kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators, although the early childhood educators received similar degrees of support from the schools. Moreover, early childhood educators were challenged by a lack of joint planning, lower education and salaries, and less authority. Yet, it was found that both early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers benefitted from the co-teaching relationship as it improved their pedagogical approach.

In sum, co-teaching is positively related to children's learning and development, specifically childcare quality in early childhood education settings. Even teachers with the same cultural backgrounds could experience challenges and difficulties in terms of their beliefs, pedagogies, and personal and professional characteristics and school support, etc. On-going professional development and administrative support could be effective ways of ensuring the quality of co-teaching.

**Foreign Teaching in China**

There is a long history of foreign teachers working as English-language educators in China. However, the development of English-language teaching has been greatly influenced by various policies and politics over the years. English-language teaching was restricted during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, when all foreign teachers were expelled. When the Cultural Revolution ended, China's government shifted course, and economic reforms were introduced. Led by Deng Xiaoping, the reforms promoted an

open door policy which encouraged trade with foreign countries and economies. China enthusiastically opened up to the outside world in order to learn about advanced technologies and foreign cultures. Engaging foreign experts and teachers to work in the Chinese education system was considered an essential component of reform.  One of the very first international schools established in the People's Republic of China was founded in 1993[6]. The purpose of utilizing foreign teachers was to improve Chinese English teachers' skills and to prepare students for the construction of a modern society.

In the early 1990s, the Chinese government launched a policy which allowed foreign educational experts and teachers to work in institutions of higher education in China. There were clear requirements in terms of qualifications: foreign teachers needed to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and professional training in language teaching; moreover, they were required to have relevant language teaching experience. Although the policy did not clearly state what the foreign teachers were to teach, they were conventionally considered to be language teachers. In 2007, there were 13,872 foreign teachers working in colleges and universities in China, including 4,768 with doctoral degrees, 4,062 with master's degrees, 4,969 with bachelor's degrees, and 73 with less education than a bachelor's degree (China Education Statistics, 2007). However, the number of foreign ESL teachers is estimated to be 10 times higher today—as many as 150,000. According to a recent report, China's English education market has experienced rapid growth. Between 2016 and 2017, the market grew 298%, from 123.6 billion RMB

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[6] Shanghai High School International Division is known as one of the very first international school in China. ("Shanghai High School-Wikimapia". wikimapia.org. Retrieved 11 December 2019).

to 489.7 billion RMB. Furthermore, it was expected to have reached 947 billion RMB in 2019 (Daxue Consulting, December 2018).[7]

Situated in the exosystem of the ecological systems theory, flexible Chinese open-door policies and the growing ESL markets create possibilities and huge job opportunities for foreign teachers. Whatever the personal reasons of foreign teachers who have come or who want to come to China, the national policy and the education market, as the factors in exosystem, exert a positive effect on foreign teachers. There are jobs from kindergarten to high school in private, public, or international schools, in addition to higher education, as well as in language training schools and other organizations.

As a result of this rapidly changing environment, there has been a growing interest in hiring NESTs in Asian countries (Jeon & Lee, 2006). Co-teaching between NESTs and local English teachers (LETs) has become increasingly common. Research has investigated various aspects of co-teaching in different English-language teaching settings in Asian countries (Carless & Walker, 2006; Carley III, 2013; Roskell, 2013).

**Co-teaching in English as Foreign Language (EFL) Settings**

In other parts of the world, co-teaching has been part of EFL teaching and learning for decades (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008; Neely, 2016; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). Carless and Walker (2006) explored the effectiveness of collaboration between NESTs and LETs in a Hong Kong secondary school. Through case studies, they examined how native and non-native teachers worked together and how their collaboration impacted themselves and their students. They concluded that classes with co-teachers were more motivating than classes where LETs or NESTs taught individually. The co-teaching

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[7] Retrieved from *daxueconsulting.com*, December 2019.

environment provided more varied input and encouraged highly authentic opportunities to use English and Chinese. As well, the students in collaborative classes where the NESTs and LETs taught as a team were more motivated than those in non-collaborative classes. The research also pointed to tensions and problems that arose during collaborative teaching, for example, resulting from differences in educational philosophies and cultural experiences. However, Carless and Walker (2006) believe that as long as there are sensitivities toward both cultural and interpersonal differences and each party is able to show respect for and accommodate the views and actions of their co-teachers, the collaboration will benefit students' second-language learning and teachers' professional development.

In this research literature, planning is an important factor in a successful co-teaching program. Sufficient time for co-planning ensures that co-teachers have the opportunity for communication and discussion (Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, & Patterson, 2017). In an ESL context, "it gives teachers the opportunity to divide lesson preparation tasks and modify class work, textbooks, and homework assignments so that all students can take part in the learning process" (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2008, p. 10). However, according to Honigsfeld and Dove (2008), many school districts fail to provide adequate time for teachers to meet. Similarly, in conclusive education, Walther-Thomas (1997) also indicated that scheduling time for co-teachers to plan together is a serious problem because often the time allocated for planning is broken into small segments scattered throughout the day, making it difficult to do in-depth planning and preparation. Pratt, Imbody, Wolf, and Patterson (2017) discussed a co-planning framework used by

practicing co-teachers in special education and emphasized the need for administrative support when allocating planning time.

Only a few studies have been conducted in a Mainland Chinese ESL context, and they are more likely to investigate co-teaching within a higher education institution than in early childhood education settings. Mu and Bo (2009) examined the impact of co-teaching partnerships on the professional development of LETs and NESTs in a college. In this quantitative study, the researchers used an open-ended questionnaire to explore the views of three LETs and one NEST. The results showed that the teachers believed co-teaching to be useful in terms of improving their language development, knowledge about culture, teaching skills, and teamwork. According to Mu and Bo (2009), teachers accomplished their mission by assisting and scaffolding each other during co-teaching. However, one limitation of the research is that the analysis was over generalized. It ignored individual responses to the questionnaire. For example, the NEST didn't think co-teaching had improved his/her Chinese cultural knowledge according to the figure presented in the paper (Mu & Bo, 2009, p. 5). However, the conclusion stated, "co-teaching provided a platform for LETs and NESTs to facilitate each other's cultural knowledge" (p. 5). Further explanation from the NEST's perspective may be needed.

In a more recent qualitative study, Rao and Chen (2020) examined both LETs' and NESTs' perceptions of team teaching, which provided insights on how culturally-different teachers experience professional challenges faced in a Chinese context. Rao and Chen explored the difficulties that these teachers encountered when implementing team teaching in eight Chinese universities (2020). The research identified three sources for the difficulties encountered in team teaching: team teachers, students, and the

educational system. According to Rao and Chen (2020), the five constraints faced by team teachers were: (a) lack of training in team teaching; (b) lack of mutual understanding; (c) conflict of teaching styles; (d) unclear role distribution; and, (e) lack of time for co-planning. Three obstacles caused by students include: (a) deficiency in aural and oral English, (b) unaccustomedness to team teaching, and (c) unwillingness to participate in class activities. Two barriers presented by the educational system were large classes and grammar-based examinations. The researchers suggested that in order to achieve success, team teachers should establish a harmonious relationship, reconcile different teaching styles, and make a detailed teaching plan.

In a quantitative study, Yin and Lin (2012) examined 274 university students' Chinese English Test 4 (CET) results to compare the effectiveness of two English teaching approaches in one university in China.[8] Eight classes were divided into two groups: 4 experimental classes that used the co-teaching approach (where one LET and one NEST collaboratively taught English), and 4 controlled classes with a traditional English teaching approach (one local English teacher was responsible). The researchers found that co-teaching was more effective in improving students' English abilities, including listening, reading, comprehension, and writing skills. They also compared collaborative and parallel teaching and found that students in the collaborative teaching group had better performances in comprehension and higher total CET scores. Yin and Lin concluded that collaborative teaching helps students to better understand English than the parallel teaching method. However, the researchers in this quantitative study did not account for variables that may have interfered with students' CET performances; the

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[8] The Chinese English Test 4 is a national English as a foreign language test in the People's Republic of China.

students' CET scores could not have been due only to the teaching method. This study offers limited insight into contextual influences, as the design of the study did not allow for examination of the qualitative nature of this issue.

Co-teaching between NESTs and LETs is found in several countries in Asia. Similar to the Chinese experience, many countries, such as South Korea and Japan, have a growing number of English-language schools which employ NESTs to teach alongside LETs. Research has been done on co-teaching in these different countries (Carley III, 2013; Jeon & Lee, 2006). Some studies explore co-teaching from the perspective of local teachers (Kim, 2010) while others focus on the views of NESTs. Research from both perspectives is briefly discussed below.

Kim (2010) explored Korean English teachers' co-teaching practices and perspectives in a narrative inquiry of one high school teacher. Based on the lived co-teaching experience of that Korean English teacher (KET), the study investigated how the KET perceived her role as a co-teacher working with a NEST, as well as the role the NEST played. Kim looked at how the KET perceived her various roles as assistant, class management aide, careful mediator, and psychological supporter, as well as the role of the NEST as instruction partner, crisis manager, and secretary. The research provided suggestions for better co-teaching outside of language acquisition. However, the study was conducted primarily from the KET's perspective, and without the views of the NEST, there is an imbalance in representation that places limits on the findings. Another limitation of this study is the lack of information about the co-teaching goals and practices. What were the roles of the KET and NEST in co-teaching? Were there common goals?

In another study, Jeon (2010) explored the co-teaching experiences of native and non-native English teachers in a Korean elementary and secondary school, and provided in-depth description of the co-teachers' practices, interactions and professional development. The results indicated that while both types of teachers benefitted from co-teaching, success was deeply related to the interaction between the two teachers in and outside of school.

In contrast, Carley III (2013) criticized the team-teaching styles utilized in Japan, asking the question, "Do they really work?" (p. 247). In Japan, team teaching has been used in English language instruction at the elementary and junior high school levels since 1987. Carley III shared his personal experiences with team teaching as well as his observations of other teaching teams based on over a decade of work in Japan. He stated that the "reality can be something different" (2013, p. 247). In consideration of his personal team-teaching experiences in kindergarten, elementary, and junior high school settings, Carley III criticized the imbalance in the workload of NESTs and Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs). As a NEST, he was responsible for all preparation, presentation, implementation of the lessons, and, often, the classroom clean up, while the JTE had no duties or requirements. According to Carley III, team teaching was problematic due to factors such as cultural differences, personal pride, academic position, age, and busy teaching schedules that interfered with the teaching objectives. This non-empirical study was undertaken through an analysis of the researcher's personal experience. The reality of team teaching as seen through this lens appears to be highly subjective, and his findings may require further corroboration.

**NESTs and Chinese Language Teachers in Cross-cultural Teaching Contexts**

Literature explores teachers' experiences of living and working outside their home country in cross-cultural contexts. Halicioglu (2015) pointed out the potential challenges facing teachers working abroad for the first time. In terms of personal challenges, finding the optimal school is the first one. In a study of the factors that influence cross-cultural transitions when teachers go overseas, Roskell (2013) suggested that teachers' satisfaction with school culture and condition have a stronger influence on relocation adjustment than the host country culture. According to this study, culture shock, which describes the experience of difficulties faced in a new culture, is a separate challenge. According to Halicioglu (2015), the degree of closeness to the new culture and support from the host country (e.g., support from host nationals and/or co-nationals) are closely related to the degree of culture shock that teachers may experience. Personal life changes such as forming a new social network and adapting to living accommodation bring challenges, too. Professional challenges are mainly associated with school curriculum and philosophy, the student body, staff cultural norms, and leadership styles.

Many teachers go abroad to work in international schools. The number of expatriate teachers in international schools is growing rapidly and is forecast to reach up to 800,000 by 2026 (Bunnell, 2017) globally. Joslin (2002) explored a range of cultural dimensions associated with the process of teacher relocation to an international school. Reflecting on her wide-ranging personal teaching experience overseas, Joslin discussed the multi-level cultural influences that impact individual teachers. These range from one's own cultural heritage, international school culture, local community culture, regional culture, and national culture, to global context. In the study, Joslin also suggested the enhancement of pre-departure programs to prepare teachers for the

complexity of cross-cultural understanding and self-development in an international context.

In addition to studies focused on NESTs' overseas teaching experience, two studies examined Chinese language teachers' experiences in international schools in Hong Kong (Lai, Gu & Hu, 2015; Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). In a qualitative study, Lai, Li and Gong (2016) examined how Chinese language teachers' professional learning was shaped by teacher agency. The participants were Chinese language teachers working in international schools in Hong Kong. Through interviews, Chinese language teachers reported three areas of learning when working with Western colleagues: teaching pedagogy, relationships and interaction with students, and relationships and interaction with colleagues. Conversely, Chinese language teachers reported they had limited influence upon their Western colleagues due to individual teacher factors (e.g., lack of engagement into school affairs) and institutional factors (e.g., Chinese teachers' lack of equal positions as other Western colleagues). The findings suggested Chinese language teachers' professional and social positioning, and the imposed identity and roles in the school interacted to shape teacher agency. The study recommended establishing a school culture and structure that values diverse pedagogical practices and engages Chinese language teachers in mutual learning practices.

In another study exploring Chinese language teachers' legitimate authority in a cross-cultural context, 18 pre-service teachers undertaking practicums at international schools in Hong Kong were interviewed on their understanding of teacher authority. Lai, Gu, and Hu (2015) argued that the legitimate authority of pre-service Chinese teachers changed and developed over time from a predominant emphasis on pedagogical authority

to an interpersonal authority, mainly through interaction with students and other teachers. However, lack of cultural knowledge and skills created barriers to the development of positive interpersonal dynamics. The study suggested the provision of culturally appropriate implementation strategies and training in knowledge and skills to support the development of legitimate teaching authority among pre-service Chinese language teachers.

Studies focusing on teaching experience in a cross-cultural context have provided valuable information on how teachers experienced changes, and perceived cultural barriers and challenges. However, much of this research has drawn heavily on personal teaching experience and self-reported data. More empirical studies, including observations of teachers' practices in classrooms, would be helpful for understanding the tensions and cultural influences on teachers' pedagogies and practices in a cross-cultural context. Furthermore, existing literature fails to address teachers' cross-cultural experiences in the field of ECE. The approach in which a NEST works with a local teacher to implement an international curriculum for young children is widely used in Mainland China. However, there is limited research that deals specifically with early childhood educators' experiences in this setting. Finally, studies focusing on Chinese teachers' international school teaching experiences have identified the direction of cultural influence as being predominately from West to East. However, as Rogoff (2003) explained, all teachers' practices are cultural, which means that NESTs' teaching practices are also influenced by the cross-cultural setting and are potentially (re)shaped by the particular sociocultural context when they work with culturally diverse teachers in ECE settings. Fully understanding the complex cultural influences on ECE educators' co-

teaching practices and (re)identifying the flow of cultural influences between West and

East means listening to the voices of both local teachers and NESTs.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### Methodological Framework

This study is situated in a constructivist paradigm. Paradigms are belief systems based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994),

> a paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs that deals with
>
> ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its
>
> holder, the nature of the 'world,' the individual's place in it, and the range
>
> of possible relationships to that world and its parts (p. 107).

Ontological questions deal with *what is*, with the nature of existence, and with the structure of reality.

Constructivism is both realist and relativist. According to Crotty (1998), "all reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed . . . for each of us, when we first see the world in meaningful fashion, we are inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture" (p. 54). To say that constructivism is relativist is to mean that "at different times and in different places, there have been and are very divergent interpretations of the same phenomena" (p. 64). In terms of epistemology, knowledge in constructivism is transactional and subjectivist and is "created in interaction among investigator and respondents" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

The constructivist paradigm provides a firm foundation for qualitative methodology. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human experiences, studying "things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln,

1994, p. 2). Qualitative research is used in many different academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences (e.g., educational research) because of its capability to examine the views and lived experiences of participants. The qualitative method explores the *why* and *how* of human experiences, not just the *what, where,* and *when* (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers can use different approaches in collecting data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2016), such as interviews, observations, group discussions, reflections, field notes, artifacts, photos, and many other relevant materials.

Situated within the constructivist paradigm, this research is a qualitative case study designed to generate insight into co-teachers' pedagogies and perceptions regarding co-teaching in an international bilingual kindergarten.

**Case Study**

Case study methodology falls under the umbrella of qualitative research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 39). Stake (1995) states that the case in the case study is "an integrated system" (p. 2). By focusing on the object of the study, both definitions see the case as a single entity, a phenomenon, or a unit around which there are boundaries (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to be considered a case, the phenomenon the researcher is studying has to be "intrinsically bounded" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 39).

The objective of a case study is to provide a rich description and analysis of the case. Ashley (2012) points out that

> the strength of case study research lies in its ability to enable the
>
> researcher to intensively investigate the case in-depth, to probe, drill down

and get at its complexity, often through long-term immersion in, or

repeated visits to/encounters with the case (p. 102).

According to Merriam (1998), qualitative case studies are particularistic,

descriptive, and heuristic. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a specific

situation, event, program, or phenomenon. They are descriptive because the final product

is a rich description of the phenomenon under study. Case studies include "as many

variables as possible and portray their interactions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Finally, case

studies are heuristic because they emphasize "the discovery of new meanings, extend the

reader's experience, or confirm what is known" (p. 30).

There are no specific methods of data collection in case study research (Merriam,

1998; Stake, 1998). Merriam (1998) suggests that case study research can include

qualitative and quantitative measures. However, in educational research, case studies are

usually qualitative in nature because "researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and

interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (p. 28). Stake (1998) argues that because

case studies discover and portray multiple views, the "main road to multiple realities" (p.

65) is through interviews. However, a case study can include many methods of data

collection, from interviews to observation. This ambiguity may pose a challenge for case

study researchers because data collection procedures are not "routinized" (Yin, 1994, p.

55).

There are several reasons why case study is a valuable research methodology.

First, case studies focus on the participants' experiences rather than the researcher's

(Merriam, 1998). Second, a case study allows researchers "to gain an in-depth

understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

In-depth coverage is an important aspect of this kind of research and allows for complex understandings of what are often complex phenomena. Third, Stake (1998) noted that case studies are of value "in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability" (p. 104). Finally, case studies are useful because of their potential significance for policy makers and practitioners (e.g., teachers or librarians). In this way, case studies provide ways "to explore the processes and dynamics of practice in order to develop useful insights into educational practice which can inform policy, practice, and future research" (Ellis, 1998, p. 2).

In this research, an international school is the context for the inquiry. Golden International School differentiates itself from other international schools in China by employing a co-teaching model in kindergarten. Three pairs of kindergarten co-teachers are the participants. The co-teachers share some characteristics, but also bring their particular personal co-teaching experiences to this inquiry. Case study methodology provides an opportunity to learn and understand both the commonality and the differences among the three co-teaching pairs (Stake, 1995). Focusing on several pairs of co-teachers is more likely to generate a rich and holistic description of teachers' co-teaching experiences and pedagogical practices, and therefore, the interpretation is more likely to be compelling.

**Role of the researcher**

In case study research, a researcher seeks to "generate knowledge of the particular" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 28) by undertaking an in-depth exploration of a bounded

system based on extensive data collection. The researcher therefore collects multiple forms of data to develop a deep understanding of the case.

Merriam (1998) discusses the role of the qualitative researcher as primary instrument for data collection and analysis. According to Merriam, the researcher must be a good communicator with skills such as establishing rapport, listening, and writing. As well, the researcher must be a sensitive observer and analyst. However, there are also limitations on the researcher in a case study. Each researcher is "left to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities" in analyzing the data collected (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). Moreover, a researcher needs to be aware of the biases in the process of selecting and analyzing data. The subjectivity of the researcher may affect the results. Those challenges have been considered while conducting this research.

My own background and experience are similar to those of the local teachers in this study, which brought both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was my existing in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences and the context in which they were working. I was familiar with the process of co-teaching and I had an understanding about the feelings that co-teaching could arouse. I was also sensitive to the context of the school as it is imbedded in the larger Chinese society, as well as the nuances of the implications of information gathering. These advantages allowed me to provide deeper insight into the meaning of the teachers' experiences. However, the disadvantages included my own biases, especially as they concerned the Chinese teachers in the co-teaching partnerships. My previous experience cannot be overlooked, and it created potential risk of me being more sympathetic to the Chinese teachers' stance. I continually reminded myself about this. Making personal assumptions was another issue I

had to address. To overcome these biases and limits, I discussed my field notes with the participants and used self-reflection to maintain a stance as an objective recorder, situating myself in as neutral a position as possible to minimize bias.

## Research Site and Participants

### Research site

Yin (1994) asserts that case studies must be conducted by researchers themselves because case studies require the researcher to engage in descriptive and interpretive data analysis. For this reason, the site for the research needs to be accessible so that the researcher can spend "extended time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, and revising descriptions and meanings of what is going on" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 450). In order to do this and to answer my research questions, I used purposive sampling to locate a suitable international school in China for my study. Purposive sampling is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources (Patton, 2002). It aims at identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of research interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to the participants' knowledge and experience, purposive sampling also needs to consider participants' availability and willingness, and "the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner"(Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2).

The research was conducted in three kindergarten classes in the GIS which is located in a large city in south China. The Early Childhood Education[9] program at GIS provides a Chinese-English bilingual program for children aged two to five. A co-

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[9] The early childhood education program is also referred to as kindergarten in this research.

teaching model has been implemented in the kindergarten for 10 years, reflecting the value the school places on both Western and Chinese language and culture, as described in school documents.

The co-teaching model was first introduced to GIK in 2006[10]. Before 2006, Western teachers were the lead teachers responsible for delivering the kindergarten curriculum to children. Chinese teachers assisted their Western counterparts and taught Chinese language. The working relationship between the two teachers resembled a supportive co-teaching model (Villa et al., 2013) at that time. According to Ms. Li, the Chinese coordinator for the program, the student body then was quite diverse, with only one or two Chinese-speaking students in each class.  After the co-teaching model was implemented in the GIS kindergarten, the concepts of *co-teacher* and *equal* were used to encourage both Western and Chinese teachers to share responsibilities and workload. In the first two years of the new approach, Chinese teachers struggled to co-teach with Western teachers. Instead of assisting, Chinese teachers were required to take a greater lead while collaboratively working with Western teachers in planning, preparation, instruction, and assessment. Different understandings, disagreement, tensions, and conflicts often occurred.  English was a communication barrier. In order to explore effective co-teaching, Chinese teachers spent more time on professional development than their Western counterparts. For example, from 2006 to 2009, Chinese teachers had an extra bi-weekly professional development meeting. Historically, according to Ms. Li, Chinese teachers took on more responsibility to improve the co-teaching relationship and practices. In contrast, it was hard to get information about the Western teachers'

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[10] The history of co-teaching development in GIS is based on interviews with ECE Chinese coordinator Ms. Li.

experience in the early years. Ms. Li was only a Chinese teacher then, not a coordinator. The Western coordinator at that time had left the school several years earlier. The ECE principal who knew the history well had retired in 2015.

The site was selected based on my personal relationship with the school. I was employed as a Chinese teacher in GIK from 2008 to 2012. I left that job when I came to Canada to pursue my PhD. Since my research passion has always centred on co-teaching in an international school setting, I decided to pursue the topic, and I contacted the director at GIS to discuss my research. The school showed great interest and welcomed me back as a researcher who would conduct an in-depth inquiry. The school administration agreed to support me by cooperating with the research process.

**Demographic Information of the Participants**

Once I had institutional approval, letters introducing the research were distributed to all teachers in the ECE section, and three pairs of co-teachers willing to be participants in the research were identified. Two coordinators, including one Western and one Chinese from the administrative level of the school, also agreed to be part of the research. Engaging two coordinators into the research as participants added context to the school policy. It was helpful to understand the rational of the school policies and administrative supports by interviewing coordinators. Furthermore, having coordinators' participation was also helpful in generating rich data in understanding administrators' roles in effecting teachers' co-teaching experience from micro-system. I arranged times for the interviews and completed observations in three classrooms. The observations included the physical environment, interactions between co-teachers, and interactions between teachers and

children during circle and activity time. Following my observations, I recorded a series of semi-structured interviews and transcribed them for later analysis.

The study involved three co-teaching teams. Each was comprised of a Chinese and a Western teacher. All were given pseudonyms for the study in order to ensure confidentiality. Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana were the teaching team in K3A; Ms. Liu and Ms. Jenny were teachers in K2A; and, Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang were the teachers from K2B. The two administrative coordinators were the Chinese coordinator, Ms. Li, and the Western Coordinator, Ms. Vanessa. Figure 3.1, which provides basic demographic information on these eight teachers, is followed by brief introductions to each of the co-teaching teams.

|  | Job position | Years of co-teaching in GIS | Total years of teaching | Home country |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ms. Jenny | K2A | 9 years | 21 years | USA |
| Ms. Liu | teachers | 5 years | 14 years | China |
| Ms. Sherry | K2B | 6 months | 4 years | Singapore |
| Ms. Wang | teachers | 10 years | 12 years | China |
| Ms. Diana | K3A | 5 years | 25 years | USA |
| Ms. Jin | teachers | 8 years | 9 years | China |
| Ms. Vanessa | ECE | 6 years | 29 years | Australia |
| Ms. Li | coordinators | 13 years | 15 years | China |

*Figure 3.1:* Demographic information of the participants.

**Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu.** Ms. Jenny, who was from the United States, came to China in 2004. She intended to stay in China for one year but ended up remaining for 12

years which was a surprise for her family and friends. She learned Chinese early during her stay. She was able to communicate using only basic words. She began her career in the United States as a supply teacher in a preschool in 1995; at about the same time, she started a four-year bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, graduating in 2000. A Chinese friend recommended that she come to China to teach, which she did. She worked as an ESL teacher in a private kindergarten for two years before taking a position at the kindergarten at GIS. At the time of the study, she had been at GIS for nine years and was planning to retire at the end of the school year.

Jenny's Chinese co-teacher was Ms. Liu, who received a 4-year bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from a university in China. She started her career as a teacher in a public kindergarten where she stayed for 9 years. A friend who was working at GIS encouraged her to leave the public system, which was a relatively good job, and to explore alternatives. She became a Chinese co-teacher at GIS in 2010. At the time of data collection, she had been working in GIS for 5 years.

Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu taught children aged two to three, and their class was named K2A for the purpose of this study. The period of data collection coincided with their first year of working together. There were 16 children in the class: 15 ESL children, and 1 CSL child.

**Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang.** Ms. Sherry was a newly hired Western teacher and native English speaker from Singapore. After graduating high school, she completed a 4-year college program in Early Childhood Education before working for four years as a kindergarten teacher at a daycare centre in Singapore. This was her first year working overseas. Sherry can speak, read, and write Chinese fluently. Chinese is a required course

in the Singaporean curriculum, and she studied it as a second language from kindergarten to high school. She had been teaching at GIS for six months at the time the interview was conducted.

Ms. Wang was a Chinese teacher who had been working at GIS for 10 years. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education in China, she worked in a Chinese public kindergarten as a teacher for 2 years before starting at GIS in 2006. Ms. Wang left the public kindergarten because there was a mismatch between her educational philosophy and values and that of the school. She thought the philosophy at GIS was a better fit, and she really enjoyed the curriculum, as well as the teaching and learning environment. At the time of the research, she was studying part-time toward a master's degree in education technology at a local university.

Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang taught children who were two to three years of age, and their class was named K2B. It included 17 children: 15 ESL children and 2 EAL/CAL children whose first language was German and Italian.

**Ms. Diana and Ms. Jin.** Ms. Diana, who was from the United States, had 25 years teaching experience. She had worked as a Western co-teacher at GIS for 5 years. She came to China to enroll her son in an international school, GIS, to gain global experience. While he was at GIS, she applied for a position as ECE teacher, and was offered a two-year contract. She enjoyed teaching and remained after her son finished his program and returned to the United States. Ms. Diana had completed a master's degree in special education in 1988 in the USA, focusing on behaviours and disorders. She first taught in a laboratory school at a university, followed by work as a special educator in a variety of settings and locations over a period of 11 years in different areas in the USA.

She then taught in a regular classroom in a small private and culturally diverse preschool for nine years. She had been at GIS since 2011 and was in her fifth year when the interview was conducted. She had prior co-teaching experience in a special education setting and felt her skills helped her to co-teach in the international school.

Ms. Jin, the Chinese co-teacher, graduated from a college in China with a major in teaching English as Second Language. She had limited knowledge about early childhood education when she started teaching at the GIS kindergarten, and only one year of experience as a teaching assistant in international classes at a local school. Because she was an English major she could communicate with foreign parents in English and work with Western teachers as a teaching assistant. After being recommended by one of the parents at the local school, she interviewed at GIS and was offered a position as a Chinese co-teacher. She had always wanted to be a teacher at GIS because the school, and particularly its ECE division, had a better reputation and more benefits than the local school. She also wanted to expand her knowledge of international ECE programs. She felt working at GIS would advance her professional development and give her the basis to understand the differences between local and international schools. She was particularly struck by the differences in the curriculum. She was in her eighth year at GIS.

Neither Ms. Diana nor Ms. Jin was new to co-teaching. They both had co-teaching experience before working at GIS: Ms. Diana in a special education classroom in US, and Ms. Jin as a teaching assistant at the local school. Although at the time of the study they had just begun working together as co-teaching pair, they had already formed a relationship as colleagues at the school. They taught children aged three to four and

their class was named K3A. There were 20 children in their class: 12 ESL children, 5 CSL children, and 3 CAL/EAL children whose first language was Danish, French, and Italian.

**Ms. Vanessa and Ms. Li.** Ms. Vanessa was the Western ECE coordinator. She was an Australian who started at the kindergarten at GIS in 2010, before her appointment as coordinator in 2012. At the time of the study, she had been coordinator for four years. She started working as an early childhood educator when she was 19 years old. She had various international and other teaching experiences before coming to China: in Australia, as an early childhood educator for many years, and, in Dubai, as an ESL teacher in a kindergarten.

Ms. Li had been teaching at GIS for 13 years, the longest of any of the participants. She taught for five years at GIS as a kindergarten teacher and 8 years as a Chinese coordinator. Before she became a coordinator, she taught in the K4 classroom for one year, in K1 for three years, and in K3 for one year. She held an early childhood education diploma and a bachelor's in computer science. She was appointed Chinese coordinator in 2006. She knew the history of co-teaching in the school and had been involved in creating and developing the co-teaching model. Most of the more recently hired teachers were not aware of this history or of Ms. Li's role in it.

Among them, the teachers have many years of experience. Most of them have ECE related teacher education background. Except for the one Western teacher who was relatively new to co-teaching, the others had each been co-teaching at GIS for at least 5 years. In terms of the student body in the three classes, the majority are ESL Chinese-speaking children.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected in several ways, in order to enhance my understanding, bring richness to the representation, and to ensure as accurate a portrayal of the teaching situations as was possible. A variety of sources were used to elicit a clear picture of what was happening in the classroom between each set of two teachers. Data were collected by means of questionnaires, environmental photos, interviews using open-ended questions, classroom observations, and field notes. Each of the data sources is detailed in the following section.

**Questionnaires**

All teachers in the kindergarten were given a written introduction to the research and asked to complete a questionnaire. Completing a broad questionnaire at the beginning of the research gave teachers a sense of what the study was about. The questionnaire, sent by email, asked for their biographical information, working experience, and a summary of their perceptions and practices related to co-teaching. Analysis of the results of the questionnaire was very useful to structuring the interviews that followed as they offered a broad view of general perceptions and experiences.

**Interviews**

Sarbin (1986) argues that much of what we know about individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and values is based on their responses to questions in an interview. A good interview should provide an opportunity for participants to tell their stories, recall significant experiences and analyze them, and to reflect on the meaning of those experiences. To help achieve this goal, each of the eight participants was interviewed individually on several occasions over a three-month period. The decision for a three-

month period time was made basically on several reasons, first, it was expected to collect rich but not too overwhelming data by limited data collection time in three months; second, teachers would have two weeks long Easter holiday in April and would become busy preparing the annual reports and portfolios for the school year after the holiday. Therefor, after I discussed with the kindergarten coordinators, it was not an appropriate time for conducting research after April. Therefore, the research started from December right after I received the ethical approval and run until the end of March.

Interviews with the co-teachers were held twice per month. Interviews with the coordinators were hold twice. After each week's classroom observation, the teachers were interviewed individually for 30 to 45 minutes, and the interviews were tape-recorded. English was used for all the interviews. Chinese teachers were given the option to use whichever language they were comfortable with during interviews. However, all Chinese teachers chose English except when using certain specific terms or describing phenomenon whose meaning they felt might be better conveyed in Chinese. When original interview data was in Chinese, it was translated, and the translation was double-checked by a critical friend with expertise in both English and Chinese.

The first round of interviews took place in the second semester, which means the co-teachers had been working together at least since the beginning of the school year. For teachers new to co-teaching, they at least had had some practical experience to draw on.

As Ellis (2006) writes, "the object of an interview is not simply to get answers to questions, but to learn what the topic of the research is about for the participant" (p.113). In order to get an emic or insider's perspective on the teachers' views, formal interviews between researcher and participants were used. Open-ended questions and semi-

structured interviews were used to collect data (see Appendices A and B). The two school

coordinators were interviewed only once during the research (see Appendix C). I listened

to and interacted with the interview participants to get their narratives on their actions,

teaching practices, and relationships with co-teachers. I asked teachers to clarify what I

had observed in the classroom.

Over the course of three months of data collection, each teacher gave four

interviews. Each interview had a different focus, and was conducted in a semi-structured

format, with interviewees initially led by the questions, but free to expand, and

encouraged to follow tangential thoughts. The first interview focused on beliefs and

personal feelings about co-teaching, as well as the teachers' backgrounds, and the life

histories that had led them to their current teaching and educational philosophies and

positions. A sample of intended interview questions for the first interview is in Appendix

B. The second interviews focused on how bilingual teaching was implemented in the

classroom, including how the co-teaching plan was made and how the bilingual or

monolingual circle time was organized in different classrooms. The third interviews were

adapted based on each teacher's previous interviews and cultural influence on their co-

teaching practices. The interview questions varied from teacher to teacher in order to gain

a deeper understanding of individual teachers' co-teaching experiences. The fourth

interviews aimed to clarify the answers to some earlier questions.

Each coordinator had two semi-structured interviews designed to gather

information about co-teaching from the perspective of the administration and, as such,

centred on topics such as administrative support and the co-teacher pairings. Open-ended

questions were used in order to generate rich data. All interviews took place in an empty

conference room in the school so that we had privacy. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. Chinese were translated to English and double checked by critical friend who was expertized in both English and Chinese.

**Classroom Observation and Field Notes**

I observed three classrooms once a week for half a school day over three months, either from approximately 7:40 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., or from 12 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The observation included wall displays, learning centres, and learning resources. The teachers' pedagogies were observed in both indoor and outdoor environments, with the focus being on co-teachers' planning time, languages, teaching practices, interactions between co-teachers, and interactions between teachers and children during circle time and activity time. There were a total of 12 visits to each classroom.

Field notes included a physical description of the school and the teachers, a perspective on what the teachers were doing and teaching, the teaching strategies, and notes on how co-teachers interacted. During observations, I was looking at how co-teachers worked collaboratively in various activities. Specifically, I focused on teachers' interactions and the interactions between teachers and children. Teachers' interactions occur throughout the whole day as long as the two teachers are present. However, I recorded the teachers' co-planning time because it was where the teachers had the most interaction and where they would discuss issues such as communication, what to teach, and how to share responsibilities such as writing reflections, writing the weekly newsletter, preparing follow-up classroom activities, performing general classroom duties, and anything else that came up over the course of the day. Throughout the day, there were other moments when teachers' interactions were equally revealing, such as

moments of tension or other situations. Therefore, I tried to also observe teachers'

communication during circle time, learning activities time, and transition time.

In terms of interactions between teachers and children, the observations

emphasized interactions with diverse-language-speaking children during circle and

activity time, such as how teachers interacted with children who spoke another language.

What was the co-teacher's role in helping a Western teacher communicate with a

Chinese-speaking child learning English as an additional language? Another purpose of

observing teacher-student interactions was to see how teachers' own cultural

backgrounds may have affected their ways of interacting with children. For example,

what were the differences between co-teachers when dealing with and disciplining

children's misbehaviours? Or, what were their practices of correction or modeling

appropriate languages use?

In addition to these methods, in order to better guide the observations, the

questionnaire was used to help identify aspects to focus on in my fieldwork. For example,

in the questionnaire, teachers were asked to describe good quality co-teaching. Analysis

of the responses guided my observations of specific moments and activities that might

shed light on the teachers' responses.

I made field notes while engaged in the classroom observations. These included a

running account of events in real time, and comments on the most typical moments. I

noted the languages teachers used when interacting with children and with one another,

and where necessary, I translated the Chinese into English, and had the translation

double-checked by a critical friend with expertise in both English and Chinese. I then met

the co-teachers individually to review my observation notes and verify that what I had

recorded was accurate. I reviewed the notes, highlighted important interactions and activities, and expanded the notes to include more of my thoughts and reflections before conducting the next set of interviews with teachers. The field notes inspired ideas for further questions, and I allowed teachers to clarify some of the points made in my field notes.

**Photographs**

I photographed the classrooms without the presence of students to capture the physical classroom environment. Visual methods such as photography can enhance the richness of data and add further information to already existing written data collection methods (Glaw, Inder, Kable, & Hazelton, 2017). The photos were taken in all three pairs of co-teachers' classrooms. Photos included teachers' working places, both sides of the hallway, the resource room, the book corner, bilingual signs used in the classroom, and other features.

<center>**Data Analysis and Interpretation**</center>

All interviews were audio-recorded, so that I could attend to verbal cues, and later transcribed. The narratives that developed from the interviews were analyzed along with the field notes from classroom observations.

One method used to uncover themes in the data was to highlight by circling or underlining what I saw as essential phrases and statements, using a process of line-by-line coding. Charmaz (2003) discussed the importance of line-by-line coding to enable the researcher to think about the meaning of the data which could lead in unforeseen directions during subsequent data collection.

The interview data and field notes were read line by line. The meaningful segments of text that the researcher felt were interesting or important to study were coded. Line-by-line coding was used for analyzing the transcriptions across cases. Then, direct quotations were categorized into possible subordinate themes. I used different coloured papers to identify groups of themes that might merit further consideration and classification as major themes.

The initial coding focused on writing narrative portraits to first introduce the participants and analytic possibilities, and then develop open codes as focus codes. Focus coding was used to categorize and identify themes. For example, phrases "I learn from every co-teacher" and "always, always, always you are learning something new" were sorted under the analytic category of "Co-teaching was a learning process". Following Charmaz (2003), focused coding was used after the initial coding to sort large amounts of data. According to Charmaz, focused coding "is more directed and, typically, more conceptual than line-by-line coding. These codes account for the most data and categorize them most precisely" (p. 260). The categories of themes for synthesizing data arise from the focused codes. Some general themes were derived from analyzing the transcriptions, and more themes and subthemes were added as I went along (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). As ideas recurred, and as commonalities or possible commonalities emerged, I categorized the data into different themes and patterns, and eventually organizational themes were identified with subthemes. The initial coding was compared across interviewees to search for patterns and repeating ideas. Annotation and memos were used. I utilized the analysis of narratives to identify themes, patterns, or differences across cases. Analysis was also made across the three co-teaching teams and across

Chinese and Western teachers for specific organizational themes and subthemes. In the focused coding data were examined theoretically based on the literature and informed by both interview transcription and field notes, and were then categorized into different themes and subordinate themes.

To retain the emic voice as much as possible when interpreting the data, I used direct quotations from the participants. The cultural context in the research was described; moreover, the research also "present[ed] the characters with enough detail that they appear[ed] as unique individuals" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 17) in the school setting and in each particular interaction.

Some commonalities across the cases could be summarized and used to inform teachers' co-teaching experiences. A cross-case analysis was used to compare similarities and differences. For example, similar themes emerged from among both Chinese and Western teachers concerning their potential differences. Once the common themes were identified, I was able to analyze the teachers' perceptions of co-teaching and interpret the research findings.

The ecological framework guided the data collection by widening the focus to include other elements in the different ecological systems, for example, engaging coordinators as participants in the microsystem added context to the school policy. The theories of culture provided theoretical guidance in leading the classroom observation and the open-ended interview questions design. For example, during the interviews, teachers were asked about "how do you feel working with a culturally different teacher impacts your teaching? Can you please give me an example?" The cultural framework also guided data analysis by directing attention to cultural dimensions that impacted

Chinese and Western teachers similarly or differently.

## Limitations

As with any kind of research, case study research has some weaknesses. As identified by Merriam (1998), these include: the length of time and amount of money required; the length of the final product or report because of the large amount of data; the heavy reliance on the researcher's skills and abilities to collect, analyze, interpret, and report on the phenomenon being studied; the possibility for researcher bias; and, because case studies are simply a "slice of life" (Merriam, 1998, p. 42) and not the whole picture, the risk that results can be oversimplified or exaggerated.

A further limitation of this study is the length of time during which the research was conducted. The data collection lasted only three months, which was not long enough to track and note changes in teachers' attitudes that could have taken place between the beginning and the end of the school year.

Finally, language posed another possible limitation. During interviews, some Chinese teachers, who began their interviews in English, switched to Chinese occasionally to better express specific terms or feelings. Using English as the main language for the study made it less likely that a translator's personal language ideology would affect the translations, and therefore the results. However, this also may have limited some participants in expressing themselves. Future research could be designed to use Chinese with Chinese teachers in order to explore how using different languages in interviews impacts meaning making.

A neutral position is helpful in separating the inquiry from the researcher's perspectives, background, and position (Given, 2008). In order to minimize the

weaknesses in case study research, I positioned myself as an outsider and a researcher during data collection and analysis. Transcriptions and field notes were member checked by the participants for accuracy. Critical friends and self-reflection were used in the entire process of data collection and data analysis.

## Ethical Considerations

I reviewed the ethical practices and guidelines from the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, and then submitted my ethics application. Following approval from the Research Ethics Board, I sent information and consent letters to prospective participants and developed other letters of consent where needed. Consent was provided by all participants. Permission to access the site and conduct the research was also secured from the school administration. All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

**CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

This study explored the experiences of three Chinese/Western teacher pairs co-teaching in early childhood education classrooms in an international school in China. The study focused on the teachers' perceptions about co-teaching and their pedagogical practices, including bilingual teaching practices, when implementing co-teaching, and the cultural influence on co-teaching experiences. Data were collected through a variety of means: a pre-research survey, transcriptions of recorded interviews, class observations, field notes, and class photos. This chapter presents the study's results, starting with a brief summary of the pre-research survey.

**Summary of the Pre-research Survey**

An online survey was sent to all the ECE teachers. Twenty-one of 24 teachers participated in the survey. Personality[11] and interpersonal skills were ranked as the two most important personal factors for effective co-teaching, followed by teaching skills gained from experience, knowledge of co-teaching, and philosophy of teaching.

When asked which activities were associated with better co-teaching, teachers reported that the top three were increased co-planning time, support from colleagues, and support from administrators. Additional ongoing training was ranked as the least useful strategy for better co-teaching.

In the open-ended question part of the survey, when teachers were asked, "*What are the qualities of a good co-teaching relationship?*" the most frequent words used were *communicate*, *discuss*, and *respect*. Other frequently used words were *talking*, *listening*, *change*, and *honesty*.

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[11] Personality refers to individual differences in the characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving (American Psychological Association).

In response to a question regarding their satisfaction with the co-teaching experience at the starting point of the year, teachers said they were very satisfied with three items: *getting to know co-teacher's culture*, *co-teacher's English I can understand*, and *the partnership between co-teachers*. For Chinese teachers, the item they identified as being least satisfied about was their salary. For both Western and Chinese teachers, *lack of time for co-planning* and *communication* were also dissatisfying. Overall, however, both Western and Chinese teachers reported a very high level of satisfaction in terms of the co-teaching experience: most were satisfied, and a few teachers indicated they were very satisfied.

Several aspects drew my attention when analyzing results. First, according to the survey, most teachers spend one to two hours every day co-planning, while co-planning time was also one of the aspects of co-teaching they found least satisfying. This finding led me to focus on co-planning time during my classroom observation and interviews. Second, according to the survey, many Chinese teachers were dissatisfied with their salary. Further questions to elicit how much salary affects co-teaching experiences and in what ways, became part of the interviews. Finally, no teachers said they were dissatisfied with their co-teaching experience. This led me to seek the precise reasons for their positive attitudes towards co-teaching.

### Emergent Themes

While the experiences of each team of co-teachers were unique, commonalities were found. Four influential themes emerged from the data: (a) perceptions about co-teaching partnerships; (b) the use of co-planning and bilingual circles in co-teaching; (c) cross-cultural conflicts; and, (d) factors that influence the effectiveness of co-teaching.

**Perceptions about Co-teaching Partnership**

**Co-teaching was a learning process.** Throughout the interviews, participants discussed co-teaching as a learning process; this was considered a benefit of co-teaching. The more co-teaching experience teachers had, the more likely they felt they were constantly learning from working with a co-teacher. Ms. Diana supported this idea by stating:

Always, always, always, you are learning something new. Everyone has different styles, different strengths, so I think every year, we get to fill our resources, either physically or in our mind [with] new ideas.

Ms. Diana had co-teaching experience as a teaching assistant in special education in the US for 17 years, and she had been working at GIS for 8 years. She believed that no matter whether her co-teaching partner was new or experienced, they could learn from each other. For Ms. Diana, this learning included ideas and content that she observed during the Chinese co-teacher's circle time that could be effectively applied to her English circle as well.

Teachers learned from one another in different ways. Chinese teachers found that working with their Western counterparts would help them better understand the school's curriculum as the curriculum is based on UK guidelines. Ms. Jin believed that, "we learn from each other," which, she stressed, was particularly important for her because she had studied in China and had no Western educational background. The curriculum in GIS was "totally different" for her, and she found that Western teachers could help her to "understand the ECE curriculum better."

Western teachers may also experience difficulties in implementing an
international school curriculum (Halicioglu, 2015). Ms. Sherry talked about the anxiety
she had about the curriculum at the beginning of the school year. Because she was new,
she was not familiar with the emergent curriculum used in ECE. Her co-teacher, Ms.
Wang, was very patient with her. She said: "For a while, she let me do things I shouldn't
have been doing, so I could slowly fade out my teacher-directed ideas and move toward
taking the cues from the children." According to Ms. Wang, every Tuesday during body
rest time, she discussed with Ms. Sherry the content of an online blog entry that Ms.
Sherry was required to write. As a new teacher, Ms. Sherry needed help selecting a topic
and then knowing what to write about it. After their discussions, Ms. Sherry would write
the blog in English and Ms. Wang would translate it into Chinese. In contrast, other co-
teaching teams did not need to collaborate on the blog post. Western teachers would write
a post, and Chinese teachers would translate what they were given.

Ms. Liu had worked with the same Western co-teacher for three years previously.
She strongly agreed that "it is not boring at all; every year, the Western teacher always
comes up with new teaching ideas and resources." Moreover, learning can happen even
when the relationship is poor. Ms. Liu used to work with a Western teacher she did not
have a good relationship with.

> The first year, I think my co-teacher didn't like me. I can feel it. I think because
> I can't communicate with her in English fluently. I think she didn't like China
> and Chinese people. She said "so stupid" when she heard the Chinese parents
> and Chinese kids saying something. She told me why you Chinese people pick
> their noses and eat some food in the metro. I don't know how to answer her. She

made me feel not good, and she made the children nervous, I mean the Chinese

kids. She feels not happy with everything.

However, Ms. Liu still felt she learned a lot working with that co-teacher.

She was a professional teacher, she had lots of good books and good activities. It

was my first year working with such a young age group, so I learned how she

interacted with children in K2. I gradually learned how to communicate with my

co-teacher in English and tried to avoid misunderstanding because of my English.

As she explained, "I learn from every co-teacher I have had, and no matter if the

relationship is good or not, you always learn."

The culture of the host country influences teachers' experiences (Joslin, 2002),

particularly when teachers go overseas. Not sharing a common culture may lead to

misunderstandings that result in hindering relationship development (Eun, 2010). In Ms.

Liu's story, Chinese culture had strongly influenced her former co-teacher and it caused

tension. However, Ms. Liu still believed she had learned how to interact with young

children, been introduced to some "good" teaching activities, and had gained a few

resources as a result of co-teaching.

Ms. Liu also mentioned the language barrier in communicating with her first co-

teacher in English. Ms. Liu learned ESL in a bachelor's program and passed CET level 4

but in the previous 9 years, she had not used English while working in a local

kindergarten. As a new teacher to GIS, assigned to co-teach, the language barrier was

another factor causing tension.

Co-teachers receive input from each other (Edwards, 2012), regardless of tension

in the relationship. Teachers in this study found co-teaching helped them to learn new

ideas, teaching contents, new language teaching resources, problem solving skills, ways of interacting with children, and school curricula. Co-teaching advanced teachers' professional development because it provided opportunities to learn ECE related pedagogies, knowledge, and skills while collaborating with another ECE professional. These learning opportunities provided ongoing support for teachers' professional growth (Weilbacher & Tilford, 2015).

For some teachers, it took time before they saw co-teaching as a learning process. For example, Ms. Jenny had co-taught with eight different Chinese teachers over the course of nine years at GIS, and it took her a while to believe that she learned from every co-teacher. When she accepted that, she came to understand that it was not only learning about different teaching practices and styles, but it was also about "thinking about things totally differently:"

> Something has changed over time. I think co-teaching is a great experience. Yes, I had to learn. I took a few years to learn that. I really had to learn, I really had to step back and look at things, you know, even after. And I had to realize I need to get to know other people. But it took me a while to realize that.

Ms. Jenny appreciated that she had had the realization eventually, while acknowledging the length of time it took. Ms. Wang strongly agreed that she learned from working with every co-teacher. She said she had learned "different things, there will be new ideas and ways when dealing with problems, talking to the children. But you didn't realize at that time-when you reflected back, yes, I think every teacher has new things that I could learn from."

Seeing co-teaching as a learning process requires teachers' critical reflection on each other's practices and willingness to accommodate differences. In co-teaching, teachers must constantly adapt and accommodate different ways of thinking and teaching (Edwards, 2012). By doing so, many will gain deeper understanding and skills over time.

**Co-teachers formed a friendly collegial relationship.** The participants talked about engaging in social activities inside and outside of school with one another. Traditional activities were organized by the ECE social committee, Chinese staff, and Western staff including celebrations to mark birthdays, Chinese New Year, Christmas, National Child Day, and other significant events. Teachers also organized outside school activities such as shopping, dinners, celebrating festivals, or going on weekend trips. Some Chinese teachers travelled to Western teachers' home countries with their Western partner during summer vacation, and some Western teachers travelled in China with their Chinese co-teachers. Ms. Jenny was invited to her Chinese co-teacher's home to celebrate Chinese New Year last year. She also had travelled to some cities in China with her previous Chinese co-teachers. As Ms. Jenny was planning to retire at the end of the school year, she said the Chinese teachers were proposing a weekend trip together in June before she moved back to the USA. Ms. Jin was going to travel to South Africa during the summer vacation with her previous Western co-teacher who had been from South Africa. As Ms. Jin shared, "For personal reasons, I have more and more friends here from different countries, and cultural backgrounds. And I can be their friend as well." In travelling, teachers are more likely to form an understanding of one another's cultures (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

In addition, Chinese teachers played important roles as cultural ambassadors and breakers, helping Western teachers understand and accommodate differences they noticed in China. By travelling across cultural boundaries, teachers exchanged cultural knowledge and information in a way which helped them establish close collegial relationships.

Western teachers found the friendships were especially important because they were far from their home countries, friends, and families. Furthermore, the help they received from their Chinese partners was not limited to teaching-related issues. Instead, the assistance extended to other matters outside the school. For example, Chinese teachers helped Western teachers communicate with their landlords and house cleaners, and also helped with ordering things online. Support from the host country can be a positive influence on adjustment to a new culture (Halicioglu, 2015). Getting to know the environment and culture improves overall satisfaction for Western teachers living in places very different than their home countries. The activities organized at GIS supported teachers to get to know more about their partner's cultural background and traditions, leading them to describe the co-teaching partnership as a "friendship." Ms. Diana shared her feelings about working alongside co-teachers:

> I never dreamed of building the friendship that I did here that feels like family. So, I mean, I used to get along with people cause that's how I am. But I never thought I would have year after year super, super, super close friends.

The notion of friendship was more frequently expressed by the teachers who had been working at the school for a long time. This finding is understandable, because the

longer-term teachers have had more opportunities to know more teachers, whereas new teachers may not have had yet the benefit of knowing a co-teacher as a friend.

The culture of the school community influences teachers' relationships in the international school setting (Joslin, 2002). The various activities showed how the school communities supported teachers in experiencing and understanding Chinese culture. The interactions that teachers had inside and outside the school through various activities all promoted cross-cultural learning. Particularly for Western teachers, a close collegial relationship with Chinese teachers eases their cultural adjustment and increases their understanding (Halicioglu, 2015).

**Co-teachers developed mutual understanding.** When I observed co-teaching in three classrooms, I was impressed to see Western teachers who, though they did not know Chinese, understood Chinese teachers' needs and offered support spontaneously. For example, in the K3A classroom when Ms. Jin was giving a Chinese monolingual circle around the theme "fire truck," Ms. Diana offered support in a surprising way. The following is from my field notes of the interaction:

> Sitting in front of the circle, Ms. Jin is talking about a group drawing of a fire truck the children did during morning free play time.  Ms. Diana sits at the back of the circle, filling in an observation sheet and taking photos of Ms. Jin's circle with children sometimes. Children are asked one at a time to add things to the fire truck which is posted on the whiteboard. Ms. Diana was taking photos of one boy drawing the fire truck.

One child says: 我也要画，我也要画，我要画雨. [I want to draw, I want to

draw, I want to draw rain.]$^{12}$

Ms. Diana says to the child: Shh, you have to take turns.

One boy draws a steering wheel.

Ms. Diana says, in Chinese: 好. [Good.]

Ms. Jin says: 好好好！[Good, good, good!] Ms. Diana, you are speaking Chinese

word!

Ms. Diana (smiles): Yes, 5 words, only 5 words (that I know).

Ms. Jin (looks at the group drawing of fire truck for a short while) and asks: 我们

的消防车就这样了么？我们有没忘记画工具？我们来看看消防车是什

么样子的？ [Are these all we have for our fire truck? Did we miss any

tools? Let's take a look at what a real fire truck is like.]

Ms. Diana: What about the tools that the fire fighters use? What did Anna draw?

Ms. Jin: Glasses, she drew glasses.

Ms. Jin: 我们学消防车上的工具，为什么我们一个都没有画？ [We have been

talking about the tools on the fire truck, but we didn't draw any of the

tools].

(January 2016, classroom observation and field notes in K3A)

The configuration of monolingual circle time is described in *Figure 1.4*. Ms.

Wang directed the circle, while Ms. Diana's role was to be a listener, participant,

supervisor, helper, and recorder. She was not the primary instructor, but she engaged by

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$^{12}$ The original languages used by teachers and children were recorded and presented. The English translation is written in square brackets. All the translation is reviewed by a critical friend.

joining the conversation, helping children take turns, taking photos for recording, and filling out the observation forms. Furthermore, she did not understand Chinese, so it was surprising that she asked in English about missing tools on the fire truck, which was exactly what Ms. Jin had been talking about. When I asked co-teachers about such interactions, they all agreed that there was a certain thing—a Chinese word was often used to describe it—默契［moqi], which is commonly understood to mean "good mutual understanding without verbal cues."

I asked Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana during individual interviews how they explained this phenomenon. Ms. Jin expressed that:

Somebody think you are crazy, but it is a kind of feeling. When you walk into the classroom, and your co-teacher understands what you are looking for. Something like that, you don't have to talk; she can understand what you are thinking.

In describing the co-teaching relationship, Ms. Wang supported Ms. Jin's idea by explaining, "I feel when two teachers are understanding each other, there is 默契 [moqi or mutual understanding]. You give her a look, and she knows what you need, or when you are talking to a child, she just knows what you mean and what you will do. That is what I consider success to be." Ms. Jenny described how, in working with her co-teaching partner, she would "kind of give her a look, so she knew," and when she talked about her previous partner, with whom she had worked for two years, she captured the experience in the phrase, "She finishes my sentences."

Co-teachers need to know enough about the teachers, students, and teaching context to predict what is going on and, if possible, what comes next. Teachers convey information through gestures, movements, eye and facial expressions, body posture, and

words (Covey, 2004) in their communication with students and co-teachers. Teachers need to be familiar with their co-teachers to understand verbal and non-verbal signs (Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, & Hartman, 2009). They also need to know about their students and the teaching context for a specific class. In Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana's example, Ms. Diana had known Ms. Jin for 5 years and they had co-taught as pairs the previous year. Thus, Ms. Diana would naturally be more likely to understand the messages conveyed by Ms. Jin's verbal and non-verbal signs. Ms. Diana also knew the teaching purpose and content for this specific circle time as they had been already working on the topic of the fire truck. Her understanding about the missing tools happened spontaneously in an authentic teaching context. She drew on many contextual clues based on her understating of the lesson, the teachers, and the students. In contrast, Ms. Wang, who was working alongside a new Western teacher, found they hadn't yet achieved the level of mutual understanding that year. In her opinion, because Ms. Sherry was new to co-teaching and still getting to know the curriculum and the students, both were still in the process of establishing their partnership.

**The three Cs: Communication, collaboration and compromise**. In recognizing and valuing the unique co-teaching context at GIS, teachers expressed personal satisfaction with co-teaching. Because of the specific working situation, they always had someone to "talk to, and share ideas and communicate, make decisions together, and know that teaching is not just my own thing" (Ms. Wang, individual interview, 2016).

Communication plays a fundamental role in co-teaching and is essential for developing a harmonious relationship between teachers (Walther-Thomas, 1997; Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez & Hartman, 2009; Sileo, 2011). Relationship building

requires communication on a continual basis. For Ms. Liu, communication was the biggest problem when she first worked with a Western teacher at GIS. English-language barriers caused misunderstandings with her Western co-teacher. Though Ms. Liu had learned English and passed a required English exam for her bachelor's degree, she had not used English while teaching during her 9 years' working in a local kindergarten. English as a barrier could affect Chinese teachers' communication, but it largely depends on individual teachers' English knowledge and ability as well as their previous teaching experience. The three Chinese teachers in this study expressed no concerns about their English in the context of their current teaching positions. Commenting on her personal experience, Ms. Wang advised, "Don't hesitate to communicate. If you don't say, people don't know what you want." As a coordinator, Ms. Li was aware of the cultural influence on Chinese teachers' communication with Western teachers:

> We have two new Chinese teachers this year, and they seem like they suit us well. Because of the culture of China, people express their ideas indirectly, and sometimes they may hesitate to speak when using English as a second language, and sometimes they are hesitant to say no. But this year, they (the new Chinese teachers) are quite humble and they speak and ask.

Communication was highlighted by teachers in response to disagreements. When sharing her perceptions of communication in disagreements, Ms. Diana suggested, "Don't talk to somebody else, talk to your partner."

In some contexts, co-teachers are designated as lead and assistant  (Cook & Friend, 2004), in a relationship with hierarchy. At GIS, according to school documents and as reported by teachers, there is no hierarchy. Co-teachers are considered equal and

they scaffold each other on a daily basis. Ms. Jenny said, "I never feel like an assistant. I feel like we are working together. She knows me, I know her. We don't assist, well, we do assist each other, but it's equal. There is no hierarchy." Ms. Jenny gave many detailed examples to explain how her team worked: "Sometimes, you might not see something, but they see something, and you look at it and think, 'yeah, that would be good to do that!' They might say something like, 'I want to do this activity,' and then you say, 'I have this activity, too.' So, you kind of, sort of, build up each other's ideas."

From a sociocultural historical perspective, "knowledge is something that is co-constructed and co-created in the process of solving problems rather than an established piece of fact that is transmitted from one person to another" (Eun, 2010, p. 408). Co-teachers recognized that each contributed ideas to classroom activities. They shared knowledge regarding what they saw about children's learning and development. Ms. Diana described this way of working as "scaffolding, absolutely, absolutely, absolutely yes. Team building." Ms. Wang stated, "I think you always have somebody to stand there. Two brains are always better than one." Co-teachers used collaboration, team work, and two styles to complement one another and thus enhance the delivery of instruction (Friend, 2008).

In the co-teaching context, culturally diverse teachers actively contribute to the accomplishment of shared goals with shared responsibilities, which is considered to be a way of stimulating effective cooperative interactions (Bornstein, 2007). Co-teachers perceive co-teaching as positive because it involves cooperative interactions through teamwork.  However, in this study, when conflicts or tensions arose, due to different

educational backgrounds and philosophies or other causes, teachers used their interpersonal skills to overcome the situation.

Ms. Jenny used the word "compromise" to describe her strategies to deal with conflict: "I need to be just calmer and watch, and to learn to compromise." Ms. Jenny realized that her attitude toward conflict had changed over time. She said, "I have to say, before, [compromise] was a bit harder. Because I was more inclined to think 'my way is the right way.' To be flexible with anything, you must compromise and make sure that your co-teacher's ideas are put into practice as much as your ideas are." Ms. Wang also pointed out her concerns when an experienced teacher was working with a new teacher:

> I think what I would really worry about is whether my co-teacher is an experienced teacher. How can we compromise? She has her experience, and I have my experience. Of course, it is going to be different. How can we balance it? This is one thing. On the other hand, if my co-teacher is a new teacher, I don't want her to think I'm the boss. I don't want her to follow me every day, in everything.

Ms. Wang further explained that it was necessary to step back, and she adjusted herself to fit her co-teachers' different levels of experience. She stated, "We need to compromise. I am quite okay to compromise. So, if my partner is a very strong person, I would be the one to follow more. If my partner is new and likes to follow, I would be the strong one." She also summarized the three Cs: communication, collaboration, and compromise that she used when building relationships with different co-teachers. According to her, among the three Cs, communication is the most vital component of a successful co-teaching team. Ongoing and effective communication can promote a positive culture of

collaboration. It is also the key ingredient in dealing with disagreement and misunderstanding, even when compromise is involved.

**The co-teaching relationship was both equal and unequal.** The co-teaching relationship is considered equal in some respects and unequal in others. Most of the teachers in the research mentioned sharing, saying that they share everything they have done, seen, and thought with their co-teacher. Ms. Diana said, "It is the fun of co-teaching. I like being able to share a moment. I like frequent dialogue with my co-teacher. It's just very nice to be able to share the load with someone else." Many teachers expressed their appreciation for having a co-teacher. For example, Ms. Jenny said, "I really like co-teaching because you share responsibilities. They might see something you don't see, and when you talk about the children, to me, it makes it easier to understand children. You get to know the children better."

According to GIS school documents, co-teachers share an equal workload and responsibilities. Beyond the documents, the coordinators also make a commitment to ensure an equal workload between Chinese and Western teachers. With that as a goal, co-teachers did share equally in the majority of their duties. For example, teachers either did a bilingual circle together or each had a monolingual circle; teachers shared co-planning time; and, children's development portfolios were prepared in both Chinese and English. Overall, the workload was shared equally, and when teachers were asked if they felt the workload was shared, most responded yes. Ms. Jin described the shared responsibilities during free play time, saying, "We have very clear sharing of responsibilities. If she is doing group work, then I will watch over other kids. I must have an overview of the class. If I'm doing individual observation, she needs to take over the overview."

However, Ms. Wang was skeptical about the notion of a shared workload, saying it was not equal in practical terms:

Everybody was told that our co-teaching would be half and half. But actually we can't do that. Because as a Chinese, you need to do translation [for the Western teachers], and you need to communicate to Chinese parents. Western teachers don't have to translate Chinese. There are different teachers. Some teachers realize what you are doing and show how badly they feel if you (Chinese teacher) do a lot. But some teachers just use Chinese teachers as TAs (teaching assistants).

From Ms. Wang's perspective, Chinese teachers potentially carry more of the workload because of the languages they speak. Western teachers rely heavily on Chinese teachers to do on-the-spot translation during the daily routines and in circle time because most children are new to English. Normally, younger children need more translation. Also, at the beginning of the school year, the Chinese teachers spend more time translating because the children are new to both the language and the school routine.

The translating involved more than oral translation of spoken interactions and written texts. Ms. Wang stated that, "Of course, it can't be equal because Western staff can't read Chinese. So that means we Chinese have to deal with Chinese issues and also have to translate the English into Chinese." For example, based on classroom observations, Chinese teachers did most of the work labelling and making activity posters to hang on the walls in the hallway because they could do so without Western teachers' translation. Though it was supposed to be a shared responsibility, the Chinese teachers appeared to do more because of their bilingual background.

Furthermore, the increasing number of students with parents who speak Chinese and not English adds to the workload of Chinese teachers. Chinese teachers often need to translate interactions between Chinese parents and Western teachers. However, in addition, some Western teachers would use language as an excuse to keep themselves away from tensions, issues, or troubles that might arise during such meetings. Ms. Jin described how she encountered this in terms of parental communication:

> Sometimes after Chinese parents finish talking with you, you translate the conversation for the Western teacher, and a misunderstanding happens in the process of translation. But if that kid happens to be a kid who needs more attention, then Western teachers are more likely to not participate in the conversation with parents spontaneously. What the Western teacher means is that she never spoke to the parents and therefore she never deals with the problems. Therefore, the Chinese teacher is the person who always gets involved in the case and has to take the consequences.

Ms. Jin added, "My Western partner would feel there is no relationship with (a parent). It's not because I didn't translate for her, because I did translate for her, but she would push all the responsibilities onto me spontaneously."

Other Chinese teachers also expressed concern regarding equality in workload due to the expectation that Chinese teachers do translation and communicate with Chinese parents. Ms. Wang mentioned the same pressure:

> They (Western teachers) don't have to communicate with Chinese parents if the parents don't speak English. It's already unequal. And co-teaching is like a marriage, so you can't say we share our work half and half. You are in charge of a

class. If your partner is not doing something, you need to do it. So, you can't really say this is your job and this is my job.

Another cause of the increased workload for Chinese teachers was the recent addition to the kindergarten program of Chinese small-group activities. The decision to include this new component was a top down decision made by the school administration. In order to improve children's Chinese language and to meet the Chinese parents' high expectations, beginning in the year the research took place, K4 Chinese teachers were required to provide an extra small-group learning activity for CFL students. They had already started this at the beginning of the school year. Although the new requirement applied only to K4, according to Ms. Li, K3 was to start the same additional activity after the Easter holiday. What made this unequal in terms of workload was that there was no additional English-language activities required of Western teachers.

This led to the feeling amongst Chinese teachers that there was a double standard, with different sets of principles applied to them and to the Western teachers. Chinese teachers indicated that the administration had higher expectations of the Chinese teachers than of their Western partners. Ms. Li, the Chinese coordinator, admitted that this was true from the administrative point of view.

In response to the question, "Do you expect Chinese teachers to do more?" Ms. Li answered frankly:

Yes. Why? Because—you may feel this is unequal and unfair—but some Chinese teachers came to ask me, why is it always us who need to compromise with Western teachers? But think of it this way: This is your language, your country, moreover, during these past two years, we have had a greater proportion of

Chinese parents. As a family, you are the host, you are supposed to compromise

with the Western teachers, because they have some new elements and concerns,

but Chinese teachers don't.

Because Western teachers faced a variety of challenges working and living in

another culture when they did not speak the language, Ms. Li expected the Chinese

teachers to be more tolerant, and act as a host, when dealing with conflict. "In the East,

Confucianism emphasized collective, good and harmony coupled with self-regulation"

(Joslin, 2002, p. 46). Ms. Li's expectation on Chinese teachers' responsibilities to create

and maintain a harmony co-teaching relationship showed the influence of Chinese socio-

ideology on administrator's attitude. However, this expectation had limits. As Ms. Li

explained later, it was only true at the beginning of the school year, and it only applied to

Western teachers who were new to China and the school. She said, "Some Western

teachers have been here years. I won't ask Chinese teachers to continue to compromise

because these Western teachers already have experience with everything here." From the

perspective of administrators, Chinese teachers, as hosts, were obliged to compromise to

show tolerance to the Western teachers, but she also emphasized that this was limited to

the new Western teachers, and the extent to which it should last was largely dependent on

how the Western teachers adapted to the co-teaching approach, school curriculum,

environment, and culture.

**Co-planning and Bilingual Circles Used in Co-teaching**

**Flexible form and content of co-planning.** Co-planning plays an important role

in co-teaching. Indeed, all participants said co-planning was essential to success. In this

study, co-planning includes all the planning time required for co-teaching, whether the

planning was done together or individually. Based on classroom observation and field notes, teachers were very flexible with co-planning location, time, content, and language used.

*Co-planning form*. Data from observations and interviews revealed that co-planning took two main forms: formal planning time, according to a specific time and schedule, and informal or flexible planning time, based on the co-teachers' habits and time available. Ms. Diana addressed the need for flexibility saying, "You have to build your co-planning program. You have to build your co-planning procedures based on the personalities and teaching styles of the two people involved."

In general, co-teachers scheduled daily co-planning sessions to discuss specific teaching-related issues. The most common time for these sessions was during the children's rest period. To maintain required ratios, substitute teachers supervised the rest, which released the co-teachers to plan together. Sometimes the co-teaching pair met in the staff room, while most preferred to meet in their own classrooms. This was the case for Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu, who mainly used their classroom, talking quietly without disturbing the children's sleep. The duration of co-planning time was between 30 minutes and one hour, depending on the duty schedule. Similarly, Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang found it more convenient to co-plan in their own classroom. As they explained, it saved time because they did not need to move back and forth between different locations, e.g., the staff room and classroom.

Another commonly used time period for co-planning was after dismissal. Children were picked up by parents or caregivers at 3:30 p.m., and teachers finished their

workday at 4:00 p.m. That left teachers 30 minutes to talk about what they had observed that day, and the next step in teaching the following day.

In addition to the fixed times, co-planning could also happen spontaneously during the day. According to Ms. Jin, co-planning was very flexible: "We don't have a fixed talking time. We would just talk once we have time, and we were quite flexible. We talk a lot about individual kid's development, or ask ourselves how do we follow the children's interests, or what would happen if we did this activity tomorrow?" Ms. Liu believed flexibility worked well for her and her partner as well. She stated: "My partner and I are quite random. No matter what activities children are doing, we just speak out loud when we have ideas. We do not have to find a time to sit down and talk, 'let's plan something,' no, we just talk whenever we come up with new ideas."

Ms. Liu's partner, Ms. Jenny, found that their co-planning focused on their bilingual circle in which, she said, "We plan our steps, we really plan the circle." A classroom observation field note recounts an incident when Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu were co-planning around the project topic "pizza and food" during children's body rest time.

It is 13:10. Both teachers sit on the sofa in the book corner. The children are sleeping.

Ms. Jenny: We can sing the song "Pizza Hut." By singing the song "Pizza

Hut," the children will know the foods' names.

Ms. Liu: Yes, and the shapes, like triangle.

Ms. Jenny: Then we start to make the recipe and menu.

They talked about the current theme, "pizza and food." Each contributed ideas to form the future plan. By 13:15, Ms. Jenny went back to the

teacher's place, and, 10 minutes later, she came back to the sofa area and talked to Ms. Liu.

Ms. Jenny: Pizza is good. We can use brown paper to make pizza and cut
　　　some white paper as cheese.

Ms. Liu: Yes, that is a good idea. We could also ask the children to make toppings.

(January 2016, classroom observation and field notes)

The conversation took place intermittently and showed a very flexible way of communicating their ideas.

*Co-planning Content.* Co-planning time is used to discuss teaching-related issues such as activity ideas, blogs and portfolios, observations on the children, and so on. Besides, co-planning time may also be spent on issues that are not directly related to teaching. For example, teachers sometimes discussed different views and resolved conflicts during this time, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. In the observation of Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang's co-planning time, it was noted how they talked about an app for ordering food online in China:

It is body rest time and co-planning time for teachers. Ms. Wang comes back to the classroom from lunch. Ms. Sherry complains to her how expensive food is at a local grocery market, and that people cheat her when she doesn't speak Chinese. Ms. Wang recommends a popular cell phone app and teaches her how to use it to buy meat and vegetable online.

（February 2016, classroom observation and field notes）

During this conversation, Ms. Wang spoke Chinese, while Ms. Sherry spoke a mixture of Chinese and English. Other teaching pairs used English for co-planning, depending on whether the Western teacher spoke Chinese. Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang showed flexibility of language in their co-planning. In addition, conversation topics other than teaching, such as advice about daily life matters, were noticed in two other co-planning sessions. Consequently, co-planning time provided opportunities to share personal life knowledge and experiences which is beneficial for the co-teaching relationship.

The coordinators noted the value of two teachers having as much co-planning time as possible. According to Ms. Vanessa, the coordinators were committed to providing teachers with two extra hours per week for co-planning. In order to facilitate this, they recently hired two substitute teachers who worked part-time. These teachers took on the classroom duties so the regular teachers could have more planning time. During this time, one co-teacher remained in the classroom with the substitute teacher, while the other co-teacher took time to do individual planning. Ms. Diana expressed her appreciation for the extra planning time by stating, "It's a little bit hard [to arrange supply teachers], but we really do appreciate the planning time."

In conclusion, co-planning is an essential part of a successful co-teaching relationship in which both teachers use their individual expertise to benefit each other (Pratt, 2017). Teachers and coordinators emphasized how important it was to safeguard co-planning time. Flexible forms of co-planning ensure constant and on-time communication between co-teachers. Furthermore, co-planning time provides an opportunity for co-teachers to build up their relationships through cross-cultural communication and interaction.

**Teaching culture alongside language.** During the classroom observation, I

noticed co-teachers implemented cultural activities through festivals, special events, and

in their daily teaching. For example, as observed in Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang's circle

time, they introduced and compared eating utensils and habits found in different countries

(February 2016, classroom observation and field notes). Learning a new language

involves learning a different culture (Kovács, 2017). In this study, teachers integrated

culture into the language teaching. This matched what was described in the school's

documentation: the "co-teaching curriculum brings together the East and the West

through the implementation of a bilingual and co-cultural learning environment with the

co-teaching model" (ECE Procedure Guidelines, GIS, 2014).  The educational objectives

aim at language acquisition, placing emphasis on cultural learning through language in a

multicultural environment. The co-teaching model can be considered as a means to

achieve the curriculum goals.

When this study's classroom observations began, it was almost Chinese New

Year, which was reflected in classroom activities. Ms. Diana shared how she was inspired

by the Chinese zodiac activity initiated by Ms. Jin and how, as a result, she was planning

to apply it in her English circle time. She stated:

> Like yesterday, Ms. Jin was doing circle, and she had these beautiful
>
> animals for the Chinese zodiac. So, I paid more attention than usual to her
>
> circle, and then I thought maybe I would also use those for the English
>
> circle and talk about names of those animals to my Chinese speakers.

Ms. Diana said she had never done such an activity before, but she was led to try it

because "they (the children) are really interested in those zodiac animals, it's a hot topic

right now, and I can work on those animal's names in English." Before she introduced the zodiac animals to the students, she needed to learn about the animals herself; she found some confusing. She said, "But first I had to make sure that I knew what they were. Like, if it was a chicken or a rooster? A mouse or a rat? Is it a goat or a sheep?"

Ms. Diana considered co-teaching not only a way to teach, but also a way to learn and develop as a teacher. She stated that the "very big huge difference here would be that you are teaching with someone who has a different culture and different primary language, so that was a learning for me as well, [be]cause I know nothing about Chinese culture." As observed, Western teachers talked about Chinese New Year traditions with students, while Chinese teachers taught children Christmas songs and read Christmas stories in Chinese, and made Easter eggs at Easter time. Having cultural diversity enabled teachers to draw on their different backgrounds in order to incorporate culture into language teaching. Moreover, teachers gained their own knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

**Bilingual and monolingual circles.** Bilingual and monolingual were the two forms of circles used in the three co-teaching classrooms. In the Chinese-English bilingual circle, children sit on a carpet in a circle and two teachers sit in chairs at the front of the circle and teach at the same time. In a monolingual circle, one teacher acts as the primary instructor, sitting at the front teaching, while the other assists the students' learning[13]. There was no official school policy on whether to use a bilingual or monolingual circle. The teachers decided, based on the project-related content, co-teachers' preference, and the age of the children.

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[13] In Chapter One, bilingual and monolingual circles are shown in Figure 1.4.

In Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana's classroom, Ms. Jin explained how the choice was made depended on whether it was a project-related circle. The teachers would plan a bilingual circle when it involved a project. For example, when they came up with the topic of fire trucks, they decided to teach together and ask the same questions in both languages. Ms. Jin said they believed that by doing so "the children get support from both teachers, they feel free to contribute to the conversation, they don't need to worry whether they can't speak Chinese or English, because they would use whichever language they are comfortable using to express themselves better to answer the questions, so the discussion would be complete." According to Ms. Diana, a bilingual circle was also used to discuss new routines, rules, and big concerns. If there was no specific topic or project, a monolingual circle would be implemented by each teacher but with similar activities, including the calendar, singing, dancing, and storytelling.

Teachers' personal preference was another factor in determining which circle was used. As Ms. Diana explained: "Some years, your styles are more in alignment with your co-teacher, some years they are not. Some years, co-teachers are very interested in joining in a bilingual time and some teachers not so much."

Monolingual circles were used more often with older children such as K3 and K4, while teachers tended to use bilingual circles with the younger children such as those in K2. In two K2 classrooms, bilingual circles were used most of the time. A monolingual circle was only used when one of the co-teachers was absent. Ms. Jenny stated that the bilingual circle "works for children better, especially at this age." She elaborated on why it seemed more effective with younger children:

Because children are just learning their own languages, and then another language

is introduced to them. Some of the kids are even learning two languages at home.

So I think it's more beneficial for this age especially because they are scared, it's

their first time away from home, and so, if we do bilingual, I think it helps the

children to settle in better. They know someone is there if they don't understand.

Then, they begin to trust another language and begin to listen better. Even without

as much translation.

Ms. Jenny also believed that bilingual circles prepared the younger children for the next

step in their education because children "might be a little bit bilingual by the time they

have monolingual circles in higher grades. I think bilingual circles hold their attention

and they understand better."

Ms. Jenny believed bilingual circles helped children settle in when they first

started kindergarten because children received support in their first language. According

to her, bilingual circles provided opportunities for children with diverse language and

cultural backgrounds to continue to develop their first language while learning a second

language, so children may pay more attention in a bilingual circle and they "learn better"

and "understand better."

With the philosophy that a child's Chinese language knowledge could be helpful

in learning English, Ms. Jenny gave some examples to illustrate how she facilitated dual

language learning by valuing Chinese-speaking children's first language. For example,

when children brought her Chinese books, she would read as if she knew the story, and

then ask children questions such as, "How do you say this in Chinese?" Another example

she gave was speaking Chinese to give instructions. "I would say 'niao niao' and then

say, 'Do you have to go pee pee?', so that they learned the instruction in two languages."

Ms. Jenny also sang Chinese songs and answered questions in Chinese whenever it was possible. She said, "There has been some problem in the past. Western kids won't try to speak Chinese but if they see me trying, then a lot of times, they will try, too. Like when the Chinese teachers ask something in Chinese, and nobody is raising their hand, you know, I will answer if I know it. And, in that way, it kind of starts and helps children to begin."

In those examples, Ms. Jenny showed her strong belief in focusing on children's first language in bilingual teaching. She intentionally invited children to use their first language during reading. Children then acquired language knowledge by making connections between the two languages in the process of reading. Furthermore, Ms. Jenny acted as a role model to encourage children to learn another language. It was observed that role modelling was a common method used in bilingual teaching. It was a powerful teaching tool to demonstrate a positive attitude toward another language and engage children in dialogue.

As a K2 Chinese teacher, Ms. Wang strongly believed in the benefits of having bilingual circles especially for children learning two languages at the younger age. She used the example of her co-teaching with Ms. Sherry to support her belief, while also pointing out the challenges when working with a new Western teacher:

> I can see the benefits, but also, I can understand there might be difficulty training co-teachers because they have different ideas. There will be conflict. Like at the beginning, Ms. Sherry was little bit stressful. She didn't know when to talk. If I was doing the main activity, when was she supposed to pop in? When should she

translate if she needs to translate a part? So, those kinds of things are very

challenging for a teacher who has just started co-teaching in a bilingual circle.

Ms. Diana also pointed out the benefits for children and challenges facing Western

teachers in a bilingual circle:

I think it is amazing the success the children usually have. Being immersed in

both languages all day is very effective for children's language development and

then it just takes a kind of special balance between the co-teachers to know when

to run a bilingual circle, instead of a Chinese or English [circle], and also, to know

when translation is necessary and when you need to let your co-teacher

communicate with a child by themselves.

Teachers experienced challenges running a bilingual circle. In Ms. Sherry and Ms.

Wang's case, a new teacher was paired with an experienced co-teacher. Following the

experienced teacher's lead, the new teacher adjusted her approach and gradually learned

the techniques necessary for a bilingual circle. Paring a novice co-teacher with an

experienced one was commonly used by administrators to make success more likely in

co-teaching.

Participants believed translation played an important role for effective bilingual

teaching and learning. Translation was essential for bilingual circle time since Chinese

teachers had to translate for Western teachers who didn't understand and speak Chinese.

During a typical bilingual circle, there were several occasions when translation was

necessary. First, a Chinese teacher translated the Western teacher's English to Chinese-

speaking children in order to help them have a better understanding of what the Western

teacher was talking about. Second, Chinese teachers translated their own words for

Western teachers to help Western teachers understand what Chinese teachers were talking about during the circle. Finally, Western teachers needed to understand Chinese-speaking children, so the Chinese teacher translated those children's words to English. During the observation in Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana's classroom, I observed some of these types of translation in the Chinese circle time:

> Ms. Jin is sitting at the front of the circle, while Ms. Diana is sitting with
>
> children on the carpet. They are listening to Ms. Jin read a Chinese book.
>
> When Ms. Jin finishes reading, she addresses the class.
>
> Ms. Jin: 长大后你想当什么 What do you want to be after you grow up?
>
> Child: 老师. [Teacher.]
>
> Ms. Jin smiles and talks to Ms. Diana: She wants to be a teacher.
>
> Ms. Diana: Well, I'm not surprised.
>
> When one girl does not know how to answer the question, Ms. Diana
>
> walks to her, and asks her in English: What do you want to be after you
>
> grow up?
>
> Girl says: Engineering.
>
> Ms. Diana: That is a big job.
>
> While Ms. Jin keeps asking the question in Chinese, Ms. Diana is giving
>
> her comments and saying: "That is good."
>
> One girl says: 我想当小帮手. [I want to be a helper.]
>
> Ms. Jin: 好棒！一个小帮手. [Good job, a helper!]. An assistant?
>
> Ms. Diana: Wow, an assistant, what an important job!
>
> One boy: 我想当老师. [I want to be a teacher.]

Ms. Diana: I knew you would say teacher!

(January 2016, classroom observation and field notes)

Using translation can make learning meaningful because it requires the learner to become an active participant in the process (Shiyab & Abudullateef, 2001). Using translation can help children develop and express ideas in another language (Liao, 2006). In the example above, Ms. Jin translated her question into English for Ms. Diana and the other CSL children, and she also translated Chinese-speaking children's answers into English, so the Western teacher and children could participate in the activity. Ms. Jin was not sure how to translate the Chinese word 小帮手 (helper/assistant) to English, so she translated with uncertainty. This example illustrates Ms. Diana's concern that the translating is "coming from [the other teacher's] ideas," and that the meaning may not be same because it is filtered through that other teacher's understanding.

Ms. Sherry noticed how children benefitted when Chinese teachers translated for them at the beginning:

I think the children need exposure to words, so sometimes, if I say something, but they probably don't know what I'm saying, it's always good to have Ms. Wang say that word. It could be just one word, like I say 'lantern,' and she says 灯笼. So at least they kinda know, okay, teacher helps to translate. But at the same time, the teacher should not translate too much [be]cause the children still need to hear it more.

Translation is necessary in language teaching and it has positive influence, especially at the beginning, because it can help children comprehend (Liao, 2006). But some research has shown that using translation as a teaching tool can cause a dependence on first

language that inhibits free expression in the second language (Carreres, 2006). Teachers in this study noticed the potential disadvantage of constantly using translation. They translated when it necessary, but slightly limited their use of translation during circle time. For Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana, monolingual circle time was considered an alternative that put limits on the amount of translation needed. Furthermore, Ms. Jin said, "The translation is more in the beginning and less slightly afterwards."

Ms. Sherry explained her idea of using translation:

I didn't tell her (Chinese co-teacher) before. Now I just say, "Ms. Wang, don't translate too much. Otherwise, they become over reliant on your translation." So, she backed down. [Be]cause otherwise there are some kids who just rely on you, so you gotta let them hear more English. And, at the same time, I would try to do more gestures and actions, to get the message across.

Ms. Wang supported Ms. Sherry's view on the role of translation in teaching:

At the beginning, when we read a story, we used to do it bilingually. She read and then I translated, or I just talked briefly about the story. But later on, we realized that children were relying on my translation. So, Ms. Sherry said, "Maybe from now on, you don't translate. Just let me read and, if they don't understand, they can figure it out from the pictures, and through my facial expressions." So now we do that.

Among the three pairs of co-teachers, Ms. Sherry and Ms. Wang differed from the others in that Ms. Sherry understands and speaks Chinese. There are some advantages to working with a Western teacher who can speak Chinese, and translating is one of the benefits, as Ms. Wang stated:

If I miss something, there is another person who is there to support me. And also, if I'm doing activities, there is another person to help the children. And, if I'm talking about something the children might not be able to understand, she can tell them in English.

Ms. Wang felt that having a Western co-teacher who could speak Chinese made things easier. She said, "I don't have to always translate. Sometimes, when I say something, she can just translate." To understand how translation was used during circle time in Ms. Wang and Ms. Sherry's classroom, the following field note from their bilingual circle provides more detail.

Two teachers are sitting on the chairs in front of the circle. They are showing photos to children, one at a time.

Ms. Sherry: Look at this photo, mommy, daddy and brothers, they use chopsticks to eat. 筷子 [chopsticks].

Ms. Wang: 用筷子，谁的妈妈会用筷子？[Use chopsticks. Whose mom uses chopsticks?]

Ms. Sherry: Whose mom uses chopsticks?

Ms. Wang: 她们好多人用筷子。王老师在家里也用筷子吃饭. [Many people use chopsticks. Ms. Wang uses chopsticks at home.]

Ms. Sherry: Oh, Ms. Sherry uses chopsticks, spoon and fork. All of them.

Child: 我也用筷子 [I use chopsticks too.]

Ms. Sherry: Oh, you are using chopsticks!

Ms. Wang: 最后一张，姐姐哥哥和爸爸吃饭，她们是怎么吃东西的？

[Last picture, sister, brother, dad are eating, and how do they eat?]

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Ms. Sherry: What do they use to eat?

Children: 筷子 [Chopsticks.]

Ms. Sherry: 筷子？[Chopsticks?] Chopsticks? No.

Ms. Wang: 不是，是用勺子和… [No, they use spoons and…]

Ms. Sherry: Two spoons and…? What is that next to the plate?

Ms. Wang: 这是什么? 刀子.［What is this? Knife.］(Pointing to the

photo).

Ms. Sherry: Knife.

Ms. Wang: 她们吃饭用很多，叉子，勺子, 刀子. [They use many things

to eat, fork, spoon, knife.]

Ms. Sherry: So many, three things, spoon, knife, and fork.

(February 2016, classroom observation and field notes)

Translation can help students confirm whether their comprehension is correct (Liao,

2006). In this circle, Ms. Wang and Ms. Sherry used their bilingual skills to ask questions

in both languages to make sure children understood the question and the topic. They

translated between two languages to encourage children to participate into the

conversation.

In conclusion, bilingual and monolingual circles were used for co-teaching. The

factors that determined which type of circle was used included the specific teaching

context including teacher's preference, teaching content, the age of children, etc.

Teachers believed that bilingual circle time was beneficial for children's language

acquisition and teachers used various teaching practices and strategies in supporting

learning. Moreover, translation played an important role in bilingual teaching and

learning as teachers adjusted their strategies of using translation based on the specific context. Last but not least, having a Western teacher who spoke the local language was helpful in implementing a bilingual circle, and also led to efficient communication between teachers and students.

**Cross-Cultural Conflicts in Three Classrooms**

Conflicts and tensions are part of the relationship between two individuals who work together in a co-taught classroom (Conderman, 2011). Teachers are likely to experience more conflicts with collaborative teaching practices, especially in a cross-cultural teaching context. The analysis showed the teachers experienced uncomfortable spaces in which different cultural values, beliefs and norms intertwined and resulted in conflicts and tensions. It was found that the cultural differences were reflected in teachers' pedagogical practices, expectations for children's behaviours and child-rearing beliefs and practical instructions.

**Different pedagogical practices.** Different or even contradictory pedagogical practices were found when teachers implemented the Western child-centered approach. Both Chinese and Western teachers found it challenging to implement a Western child-centered approach while working alongside a culturally diverse co-teacher. On the one hand, considering the traditional way of teacher-directed instruction influenced by Chinese culture, Chinese teachers struggled with the child-centered approach. On the other hand, Western teachers implementing a child-centered approach with Chinese co-teachers considered the child-centred teaching discourse to be more authoritative.

According to the Chinese coordinator, Ms. Li, when teaching in the ECE program shifted from being Western teacher dominant/Chinese teacher subordinate to co-teaching,

Chinese teachers found it difficult to adapt their traditional approach of teacher-centeredness to child-centeredness. As a result, Chinese teachers required extra training on the child-centered curriculum after school hours.

As Ms. Jin described, the curriculum in GIK was "totally different" for her in terms of the roles of teachers, child-centered activities, and project-based learning as she was used to a "teacher-centered approach with highly structured activities." Ms. Liu, who had worked in local Chinese kindergartens for 9 years before she started working at GIS, asserted that "it is a big surprise" to see how independent children were in the international kindergarten because "even in the young age, like K2, K3, they all change shoes by themselves, carry their own water bottles, put on their jackets and wash their hands" which was different from the local kindergarten children. At the beginning, she was not used to the emergent curriculum of "flexible ways of teaching and learning," based on children's interests. As she described it below:

> the curriculum in the local kindergarten is more pre-planned and teacher-designed, and lots of stress comes from the teachers' competition. When I work in an international school, I need to observe children more, I need to find out what are they interested in now, so I can plan to their interests, not for other purposes."

The international curriculum particularly troubled Ms. Wang who stated: "From local kindergarten to international school, I'm quite new to the international environment and their philosophy is totally different. Here children are centered as the middle of curriculum, and the play-based learning is completely different from what I have learned about ECE." All the Chinese teachers articulated a philosophical and pedagogical shift from a teacher-centered approach to the child-centered, play-based, interest-driven

approach. Based on observations of teachers' bilingual circles, Chinese teachers demonstrated well-grounded understanding and practical skill through ensuring enough time for children's free play, taking cues from children' interests for project selection, asking questions before a project started, etc. However, when compared to their Western partners, there were still times when the embedded Chinese traditional teacher-directed approach surfaced in their daily teaching.

An observation from Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu's classroom revealed their different teaching practices when organizing an outdoor activity. At the time, Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu were taking the children to the outdoor playground, as related in this excerpt from the field notes:

Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu make a large circle with the children as preparation to play parachute. (Parachute is a common activity in preschools. In one version of parachute play, a group of children gather around a large, round nylon 'parachute.' They pick it up and simultaneously lift their arms to make it billow, while other children run under it singly or in larger numbers singing a song). Ms. Jenny signals to all the children to run under the parachute at the same time. While under the parachute, two boys collide and cry, bumping their heads. Ms. Liu then says repeatedly: "Let's go one by one now. Go only when I call your name."

(March 2016, classroom observation and field notes)

Ms. Jin, who was outside with her class and standing near where the activity was taking place commented for me to hear, "所有西方老师都是让孩子一起跑的。只有中国老师会一个一个叫名字." ["All the Western teachers ask children to run at the same time.

Only Chinese teachers would call the names one at a time."] When I asked Ms. Liu how she would explain the differences in her co-teacher's practice, she replied:

It was children's first time playing the game, they appeared to be happy and excited. When I'm playing parachute with the children, I explain the rules clearly first. It is impossible that all the children can run under the parachute together, which can cause lots of problems. I felt there was something wrong, because you didn't know where they would go, and you cannot control them easily under the parachute, so when Jenny asked me initially to let the children all go together, I didn't answer her at that time, and I didn't say yes or no.

When I told her that Ms. Jin had commented that Chinese teachers always set up rules first and get everything under control, she expressed disagreement, saying, "I don't think so. Some Western teachers also set up lots of rules." But when Ms. Jenny recalled this activity, she commented that Chinese teachers were good at teacher-led activities: "I think everybody has their own weaknesses and strengths, but yes, I have to say yes, Chinese teachers are really good at all sorts of group activities." Even though she felt that both Chinese and Western teachers "take the lead with children's discipline, routines, and help them to understand and use their words," she found that "Chinese children listen better sometimes to the Chinese teachers," so she felt that "there is no need (for the Western teacher) to say (to the Chinese teacher) 'don't do that.'"

When reflecting on the children's first experience playing parachute, Ms. Jenny said, "I think teachers should think of the potential problems and dangers before the game, not only about the fun. The first thing is safety." When asked how she would do

the game next time, she said, "Before playing the game, I would discuss it with my co-teacher."

Although the Chinese teachers had demonstrated quite rich knowledge, skill, and experience about child-centered teaching in general, the culturally embedded teacher-directed approach still had great influence on their pedagogical practices. In this example, the Chinese teacher revealed a risk awareness and group organizing skills. Chinese teachers were perceived by Ms. Jenny as being good at establishing rules, and keeping everything under control, especially when leading group activities and in outdoor play. In contrast, Western teachers were perceived by Chinese teachers as allowing children more freedom to explore new things. The Western and Chinese teachers' different instructional practices to a large extent reflected the cultural influences deeply embedded in their daily teaching.

An observation from Ms. Jin's Chinese circle recorded how a teacher-directed method was used.

> Ms. Jin is sitting on the chair in front of the children. She has a blue coloured feltboard displayed on the white board, some circle shaped fabrics with numbers from 0 to 10 and some fish-shaped fabrics. She says to the children that they are going to learn how to count today. Then she displays one number on the feltboard and asks one of the children to come up to the front, lets the child pick up the fish-shaped fabrics and stick the same number of fish on the feltboard. Then Ms. Jin asks children to count the fish with her while she is pointing to the fish one at a time. Ms. Jin calls children's names to let them take turns to participate the activity.

(Classroom observation in K3A, April 2016.)

The teacher-directed method Ms. Jin used in the Chinese circle showed a traditional Chinese cultural influence on her ideas and practices. The activity was preplanned and highly structured; Ms. Jin designed the lesson herself without taking into account children' interests. This activity asked students to practice counting skills continuously and repetitively. She focused her teaching on transmitting the content she had planned. Hence, the content and the process of this circle time were highly controlled by Ms. Jin, which seemed to significantly contrast with the child-centered teaching pedagogies that she sometimes used for her Chinese and bilingual circles.

Research has postulated that the reason Chinese teachers are better at teacher-directed activities than their Western counterparts is because of their educational background (Wang, Elicker, McMullen, & Mao, 2008). Teacher education training programs in China usually emphasize large group instructional skills and teacher-led activities. Chinese teachers are educated in a highly teacher-directed, skill-oriented educational system, and the cultural learning and teaching style in their own schooling may in some way influence their practices. Derived from the Chinese culture of collectivism, the traditional Chinese approach to teaching places strong emphasis on teachers' authority (Huang, 2013). The less-structured activities in which children are given more freedom, lead by Western teachers, are consistent with a Western focus on individualism. Therefore, when Chinese and Western teachers co-teach in a child-centered classroom, the culturally embedded differences regarding teaching beliefs and pedagogies will inevitably cause conflicts and create uncomfortable spaces.

GIK's implementation of the Western notion of child-centeredness had a significant impact on teachers' practices. More specifically, it challenged Chinese teachers' traditional teacher-centered approach: the original knowledge and skills they acquired were marginalized and considered different or even contradictory to the international kindergarten curriculum. As a result, they had to make changes in their teaching approach and pedagogies and start to use project-based learning and an emergent curriculum. All the Chinese teachers confirmed that they had to discard Chinese traditional knowledge and practices about ECE and adapt to Western-dominated ECE pedagogies and practices to be able to better fit into the required child-centered approach.

Although part of traditional Chinese culture was excluded from the educational practices through the process of Westernization, the traditional teacher-centered practices were still culturally embedded and influenced teachers' understanding of teaching and learning. For example, Ms. Jenny and Ms. Jin both felt that Chinese teachers, compared to Western teachers, were good at organizing group activities and setting up rules. Ms. Jin used preplanned and highly structured teaching in her Chinese circle time. This was consistent with Huang's (2013) observation, that "basically, in a culture of collectivism in Chinese, the traditional teachers with high authority never allow too much space for student-centered teaching" (p. 19). However, Ms. Jin showed adaptability, using child-centered teaching in her bilingual time with Ms. Diana and teacher-dominant skills when she taught alone. The contradictory approaches coexisted in Ms. Jin's practices. Despite their efforts to adapt in order to deliver a Western dominated model of ECE, Chinese teachers still had a different understanding of early childhood teaching and learning

which had been shaped by their particular sociocultural context. The Western notion of a child-centered ECE approach became hybridized with aspects of Chinese traditional teaching.

According to Dahlberg and Moss (2005), the particular Western notion of child-centeredness became dominant in early childhood discourse in the British and American influenced parts of the world and was first articulated in the English language. In this study, findings showed that Western teachers who came from North America embodied the cultural norms of the Anglo middle class. The Western categories of child development and approaches to learning tended to privilege the Western teachers' ways of knowing and teaching children, allowing them to identify as the educators who knew "appropriate" practices for children.

Ms. Jin felt that her co-teacher, Ms. Diana, had a different view of "controlling the whole class in the big picture." As she explained:

> Basically, [Ms. Diana] likes small-group activities, so, better you let her teach one to one. However, when she is teaching one to one, she ignores the other 10 children who need teachers' help. So, that is the time another teacher is needed, and this is cooperation, I know, but I always have to be there to provide for the other children's needs.

When Ms. Jin was asked if she would also like to focus on individual teaching, she said that she would really love it, but that there had to be a person to look after the other children when one teacher was leading a small-group activity. She felt that she had to be the person always "watching over the whole class."

According to Huang (2013), "child-centered teaching is derived from the West, which is consistent with the Western culture of individualism" (p. 19). Since she perceived the Western-dominant ECE curriculum as authoritative discourse for Western teachers, Ms. Diana did not feel it was problematic to focus on individual or small group interaction even when she was criticized for "ignor[ing] the whole picture" by her Chinese co-teacher. This created tension and uncomfortable spaces for both teachers as Chinese teachers had to compromise their individual interaction time with children and Western teachers felt less support from their Chinese co-teachers.

In the classroom of Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu there was a similar conflict that illustrated the privileging of Western knowledge in ECE practices:

It is 20 minutes before dismissal, Ms. Liu sits beside a children's table, cutting a big paper into a circle.

Ms. Jenny: Are you setting up for tomorrow? What are we going to do for tomorrow?

Ms. Liu:     Pizza. I want them to make individual pizza. They can play later.

Ms. Jenny: Are you cutting a paper round? Ms. Liu, can I make a suggestion? I suggest cutting into four pieces, then they can make a big one.

Ms. Liu:     Good idea. Then we can provide variety of "pizza toppings" for children to make their own pizza. I can download photos from computer, print and cut them. Then they can use whatever toppings they like. Like ham, cheese, mushroom, green pepper, blueberries, strawberries, or even herbs.

Ms. Jenny: I've never seen a blueberry pizza in my whole life. I don't think we

should put out fruits or herbs. I suggest we don't provide fruits, just

normal toppings.

Ms. Liu: I don't understand why we can not provide multiple options, it

doesn't have to be a normal pizza, the children can be creative and

add any toppings they like.

Ms. Jenny: I know pizza so well, I never saw any pizza with toppings like that,

there's no such a thing.

(January 2016, classroom observation and field notes in K2A)

In this excerpt, Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu had conflicting opinions on the teaching

content. Pizza is a type of Western food. Ms. Jenny felt she knew it better, considering

her cultural and personal experience. The disagreement between the two teachers

revealed Ms. Jenny's privileging of her knowledge of Western food over her Chinese co-

teachers knowledge, putting her in the position as the authority to determine what was

appropriate to teach and what was not. The implication of a Western dominant child-

centered approach in GIK is that it empowers Western teachers' authority even when

dealing with conflicts. From a critical perspective, Souto-Manning (2016) argued the

privileging of whiteness, which characterizes the early childhood teacher education field,

is a problem. She suggested that the field needs to rethink the current approach to early

childhood teacher education by "moving away from Whiteified curricula and programs

that continue to silence and exclude the expertise [and] experiences" of minority

educators (Souto-Manning, 2016, p. 26). It could take years for Western teachers to

realize how the "privileging of the whiteness" in "Whiteified" curricula and programs

creates problems for both teachers and students. Related to Ms. Jenny's notion that "co-teaching is a great experience, you had to learn. I took a few years to learn that," which was related earlier, this systemic issue also partially explains the reason why it took her many years to realize that she needed to "know other people" and "make sure that co-teacher's ideas are put into practice as much as your ideas are."

Ms. Sherry's experience of teaching in a Western dominant early childhood program told a different story about her particular cultural and educational background. Ms. Sherry was from Singapore and grew up in a Confucian-dominant society and educational system. The Chinese tradition of collectivism, which aligns with a teacher-centered approach, had significant influence on her teaching of young children. As a newcomer to GIK, she was also new to the child-centered curriculum. When working as a teacher in Singapore, her teaching approach had been more structured and teacher-directed, which reflected her  training. At the beginning of her co-teaching experience, she could not let go of her teacher-directed ways and had trouble focusing on children's interests and in implementing an emergent curriculum. As she commented:

> It (my challenge) stands from the school's philosophy, especially ECE
> curriculum about how the learning should be coming from the child's interest.
> So usually my co-teacher reminds me about that. And I'm also studying to be
> more aware of it, [be]cause I came from a very structuring educational system, I
> did a lot of planning, activities, so that was one thing for me that I felt like I had
> to learn to change, adjust basically to this school's curriculum. I think I need to
> understand the school's curriculum.

Talking about the way she was influenced by her co-teacher, Ms. Sherry stated,

I guess my co-teacher has influenced me in the way to be more observant of the

children's learning, especially she makes me more aware, to really take notice of

children, and even things like, having more one-to-one children interaction.

Similar to the Chinese teachers, Ms. Sherry experienced challenges regarding

understanding and applying a child-centered ECE approach. Although she was employed

as a Western teacher and co-taught with a Chinese teacher, Ms. Sherry had a hard time

with child-centered teaching and had to change her originally constructed teacher-

centered beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Ironically, her Chinese co-teacher Ms. Wang

played the role of the expert and experienced educator in the Western-dominant ECE

approach, and provided guidance and instruction for Ms. Sherry to better understand the

concept of child-centered and interest-based learning.

Implementing a Western approach to ECE based on child-centeredness has two

implications for co-teachers. First, as a dominant discourse, conceptions of child-

centeredness in ECE have been taken for granted by Western teachers who have believed

they were familiar with the cultures, norms, and practices of others, or were thought to be

familiar with them. Lee and Tseng (2008) argued "such a Western early childhood

discourse would privilege one form of knowledge over others as it claims to discover the

truth and/or promises to lead to ultimate progress and development for all children across

multiple cultural setting/contexts" (p. 184). In the co-teaching process, in terms of the

dominance of Western child-centeredness, teachers with a Western cultural and

educational background are likely to consider themselves or to be considered as

privileged over others in implementing such ECE curricula. The second implication is

that, from a postmodern perspective, the concept of child-centered education is

problematic because the knowledge of teachers with non-Western cultural and educational backgrounds tends to be marginalized and undervalued. As Lee and Tseng (2008) commented about ECE, this "dangerously made a singular norm and homogeneous universal standard" (p. 183). In this study, traditional ECE beliefs and approaches as embodied by the Chinese teachers were identified as problematic to the particular child-centered approach in the international kindergarten. Chinese teachers constantly changed their philosophies and practices to adjust to the Western child development perspectives and approach. Yet their embodied ways of teaching, using a teacher-directed approach, could not be completed subsumed, and they enacted their own personal and cultural ways of teaching in the co-teaching process.

Consequently, the Chinese teachers' traditionally constructed ECE knowledge and skills intertwined with Western discourse, resulting in a hybrid teaching approach. Moreover, in the process, when the culturally embodied practices were contradicted by the Western notion of child-centeredness, it created uncomfortable spaces with tension and conflict.

In a globalized world, early childhood education is often cast in the role of preparing human resources to meet the requirements of the economy and labour market. Western curricula and instruction (e.g., the project-based method, emergent curriculum) have been widely adopted in this effort: the international school's kindergarten curriculum is one example (Huang, 2013). The GIS school culture, valuing the culture and language of both the East and West and emphasizing diversity in theory defined the equitable relationship between two teachers. Nevertheless, the Western child-centered

ideas that infused the international kindergarten's curriculum created conflict and tension for the co-teachers.

**Different behavioural expectations and child-rearing beliefs.** Different expectations on children's manners and behaviour were reported in the interviews and identified during classroom observation. According to Ms. Diana, "any two co-teachers have different expectations, and it may or may not be about culture, it could be just about people's personality." Ms. Diana found that she and Ms. Jin had different expectations of behaviour and manners. She gave the following example:

> Mike (pseudonym) is constantly making this noise, *dig, dig, dig*, like this. And it's a helicopter noise. In my mind, it's absolutely fine for him to do that when it's the helicopter time, but today I stopped him because I wanted to teach him that's not what he does. To me, it's a behaviour that might cause him problems, not now, but down the way. . . . Today, Ms. Jin said to me, "It's okay." So Ms. Jin was trying to say, I think in her mind, let's just let that go.

Another example, identified by Ms. Jin, was the difference in the sound level in the classroom that was tolerated by each of the teachers. She noticed that her partner, Ms. Diana, was particularly focused on the children's voices during indoor free play time:

> "That is too much noise!" she (Ms. Diana) always says, but honestly, it is okay to me. Maybe because we have different cultural backgrounds. I feel that we Chinese are always loud and noisy, so I can accept children's high volume of voice. However, I'm not saying that it is good to be louder, but sometimes children are playing and really excited about their games and play, and it is impossible for them to control their voices. It is not really logical and scientifically right to

control this voice when you approach the kid and tell him to be quiet at this moment. However, their high-volume voice does bother other people. This is really hard to balance. We always have conflicts like this.

A tense moment was observed in their classroom during snack time, as described below:

One mom comes into the class with cupcakes to celebrate her son's birthday. After singing birthday songs in two languages, Ms. Diana distributes the cupcakes to each child while Ms. Jin stands beside the table.

Ms. Diana says to children: Can you please wait until everyone gets cake? When everyone gets a cupcake, then you eat!

One girl starts to eat as soon as she gets the cupcake. Ms. Diana notices.

Ms. Diana: Emily (pseudonym), please don't eat now, wait until everyone has the cupcake, okay?

Another boy who gets a cupcake speaks to Ms. Jin.

Boy: 金老师，我先吃啦？[Ms. Jin, can I start to eat?]

Ms. Jin: 可以，就是给你吃的 . [Yes, go ahead, it is made for you to eat.]

The boy and some other students start to eat after Ms. Jin says yes, while Ms. Diana gives a cupcake to the last child.

Ms. Diana: You may eat now! Thanks for waiting! That is called "manners."

(February 2016, classroom observation and field notes in K3A)

Ms. Jin heard Ms. Diana ask the children to wait to eat until everyone had received a cupcake. However, when a child asked permission to eat, she immediately said yes. Ms. Diana may or may not have noticed Ms. Jin give permission because she spoke in

Chinese. Ms. Diana emphasized several times while distributing cupcakes that the children needed to wait. Some children did wait, while others started because they heard Ms. Jin say it would be okay.

Obviously, the teachers had different opinions. Ms. Diana said that what she would normally do when two teachers hold different opinions was to explain the reasons why she felt something was important. As she explained, "Sometimes, you have to say, 'this is why I think this way, now what do you think?'" She acknowledged that her experience and training were not the same as Ms. Jin's, and she also understood it was "not always" like this. Ms. Diana suggested that while Ms. Jin might think she was too strict about children's manners and behaviour, she thought to herself, "I really don't care (if she agrees). I will keep doing it."

Ms. Jin also noticed the teachers' different expectations of children in the cupcake incident. She too believed it was closely related to different cultures and previous educational backgrounds. From her perspective, it was an issue of personal style and no one should be held to the same standard: teachers were a product of their distinct background and context. In Ms. Jin's opinion, Western teachers "focus more on the details" than Chinese teachers do. She also felt that the conflict related to her co-teacher's personal preferences: that Ms. Diana "likes doing that, and that personally she focuses on the table manners and so she expects that everyone else should do like she does. But not everyone else has to do so."

Ms. Jin elaborated more generally:

It is also related to educational backgrounds. If you were raised in a class or a family which emphasizes manners, and you were taught and educated to be a

well-mannered person in such a family environment, then you would be more likely to focus on these when you educate others. If you were raised in an open environment, you would not care about such detailed things. The result will be two completely different styles of persons.

There is no need to determine right or wrong in understanding different cultural practice, and the point is to understand, not to judge it (Rogoff, 2003). As a team, Ms. Diana and Ms. Jin were both aware of the differences but they chose to respect each other rather than try to change one another. Ms. Diana summarized the ways they dealt with conflicts by saying, "There are sometimes differences in what a person thinks is okay and what a person thinks is not okay, and then we just try to, I guess, respect each other."

According to Ms. Jenny, different child-rearing beliefs related to culture existed between her and Ms. Liu. Ms. Jenny noticed that when children were perspiring after play, Chinese teachers routinely changed the children's shirts, while Western teachers did not. After many years of working with Chinese parents and teachers, Ms. Jenny knew that Chinese parents had different ideas about staying healthy and child-rearing. Many Chinese parents believe children are more likely to catch a cold if they wear clothing that is damp with perspiration (Li, 2015). Ms. Jenny, however, felt that Chinese-speaking children were always overdressed with multiple layers, so they were more likely to perspire. Teachers would be criticized for not taking good care of the children because they did not change the children's damp clothing. Moreover, for Chinese teachers, changing the children's shirts was done not only to avoid potential complaints; it also showed the teachers' awareness of traditional health and hygiene beliefs, which were also part of their beliefs.

As described by Saudelli (2012), teachers working in cross-cultural contexts experience the cultural accommodation processes and find symmetry through cross-cultural interaction. In this instance, as a Western teacher who was initially unfamiliar with these ideas, Ms. Jenny required time to find the symmetry, and she eventually began to follow the lead of her Chinese co-teachers and change children's damp clothing.

Ms. Liu also perceived differences in how she and her partner fostered children's eating habits. She stated:

Normally, when we distribute snacks during snack time, my partner has a different habit than me. I thought K2 kids should be encouraged to try all kinds of food, so Chinese teachers will never ask children what they want to eat, and we will distribute all kinds of food to every kid. Actually, by doing so, we are encouraging the children to try new foods. But my partner, she is very democratic. She says, if you want it, you just say yes, and if you don't want the food, you just say no.

Then she further elaborated her ideas by giving an example of two teachers dealing with a child who did not like fruit:

I gave a child two pieces of pear and she said, "I don't want this," and I said, "It is good for you." I was encouraging her because usually she doesn't like to eat many fruits, but after two seconds, my co-teacher took the fruit away and said the student didn't like it, even though I had already given the fruit to the child and she had already accepted it silently.

Ms. Liu further explained her attitude by saying, "I believe that [teachers] should encourage the children of K2 and give them a push." On the contrary, Ms. Jenny showed

her disagreement with forcing children to eat food they do not like. Ms. Jenny's act of taking the fruit away from the child's plate revealed a tension between the two teachers.

As described by Rogoff (2003), people realize the culture that they take for granted when they experience contrasting perspectives. In this example, Ms. Liu considered fruit to be healthy food, without doubt, and she believed that children should eat healthy food such as fruits and vegetables no matter whether they like them. However, in Ms. Jenny's view, influenced by her cultural background, children should not be pushed to eat. Chinese teachers have different understandings about children's eating behaviour as well as their agency in making choices about what they eat, while Western teachers are considered more democratic by the Chinese teachers. The different attitudes and practices about eating that Western and Chinese teachers take for granted were revealed in this situation. Working in the cross-cultural context, teachers were more likely to realize the own culture and beliefs when exposing to something new or different.

Western teachers paid more attention on children's manners and behaviours than the Chinese teachers. This different ways of behavioural teaching reveal cultural influence on teachers' co-teaching practices. The conflicts caused by the cultural beliefs and norms regarding children's behaviours place teachers at odds with one another. Changing children's sweaty shirts and insisting that children eat healthy foods are common behaviours amongst Chinese parents as well as Chinese teachers. However, Western teachers found hard to understand. When confronting the cultural differences of child-rearing beliefs and practices, Western teachers appeared to encourage children's autonomy while Chinese teachers emphasize more on teachers' authority.

**Different ways of instructions.** There were fewer differences between Ms. Wang and Ms. Sherry in their co-teaching experience. Ms. Wang believed it was because they had grown up with similar cultural backgrounds. Ms. Sherry is from Singapore, which is influenced by Chinese culture, language, and tradition. These co-teachers found they have similar educational values and beliefs regarding child-rearing and early learning and teaching as compared to the other two teams. Ms. Wang stated, "Because we both have an Asian background, we focus on discipline a lot in a hard way. So, we both constantly are on the same level. When I feel something is not allowed, I know she wouldn't allow it for sure." Ms. Sherry also found that her ideas about discipline were consistent with those of her co-teacher. As she mentioned:

> It is a pretty free place and environment. And anytime, you know, when you have to discipline a child, you know, I mean, I'm glad my co-teacher also has the same standard as me and then we make sure that we are the same when we discipline a child as well.

Ms. Wang commented that differences between co-teachers mostly occur between Chinese and Western teachers. Using the example of a team consisting of a Chinese and a teacher from the United States, she explained, "For example, I think routine is very important, but she would think it does not matter, and that children just do whatever they want. Or, sometimes if I discipline a child, she would say, the baby is still young, that's okay." The strategy Ms. Wang used to deal with different beliefs is, in her words, "I think first of all, you should learn to respect each other. This is the most important thing. I think it is the basis."

However, some differences observed may have no relation to cultural expectations but are more likely the result of personal teaching preferences or experiences. Here is an observation from Ms. Wang and Ms. Sherry's class that centres on different beliefs about getting children to line up:

Generally, when K2 children walk together, they hold a rope. Two teachers hold the ends of the rope, while children walk in between. Today, children are lining up for a walk after changing their shoes in the hallway, Ms. Wang suggests that children walk without the rope. Ms. Wang is walking in front while Ms. Sherry walks at the end. This is the first time that the children have walked without using the rope.

Ms. Wang: 今天我们学习一个新本领，不用 rope 也能走.一个看一个.看到 Evan, 后面的看 Evan.开火车啦! [We are going to learn something new today. We will walk without holding a rope. You need to look at the front people. Everyone looks at Evan, and here comes the train].

Some girls are not walking in line. They are walking everywhere. Ms. Sherry has to stop them and tell them to get into line.

Ms. Sherry (says to Ms. Wang): It makes me wonder if it is too early to walk without the rope.

Ms. Wang replies: They need more practice.

(March 2016, classroom observation and field notes in K2B)

In this instance, Ms. Wang tried a new idea without discussing it with her co-teacher in advance. It didn't work well, and it ended up in chaos. Ms. Sherry followed the new idea, but she did not fully agree with it. She expressed her concerns to Ms. Wang as

she thought it would be a big challenge for the children and that they might not be ready for it. During co-planning time that afternoon, Ms. Sherry brought it up and Ms. Wang explained the underlying reason for her views, based on her many years of K2 working experience. According to Ms. Wang, it was the second term of this school year, and children should be trained to walk independently. By doing this, she was preparing the children for K3 as the K3 children don't walk with a rope. Ms. Sherry agreed that they would keep trying. In this instance, Ms. Wang's previous teaching experience in K2 had an impact on her current teaching practice. Ms. Sherry had no K2 teaching experience, so she chose to support Ms. Wang's proposal.

In sum, there were some commonalities to be found regarding conflicts across the three co-teaching pairs. Each teacher experienced conflict and tension but in different ways. I never saw teachers argue in front of the children; they always discussed their differences during co-planning time instead. The three pairs accepted that the primary principle for responding to different views is "be respectful." Ms. Liu gave an example:

> I'm with Jenny now. She says she is the grandma teacher. Sometimes she is a grandma. When I saw her helping children put shoes on, and put jackets on, at the beginning of school year, I told her that the children could do it, just let them try, and she said, "Oh, I just want it done. And I want to be a granny. They are so little." Now the children are growing bigger, she still does it. But it's okay, I let her try.

For Ms. Liu, "be respectful" required good communication and tolerance for ambiguity.

However, Ms. Diana's view on disagreements is more consistent with the other co-teachers' perspectives:

There are always disagreements and it's impossible for there not to be

disagreements, but as long as you can talk honestly with each other, and be

respectful, most things you can sort out.

Yet, teachers responded to conflicts differently. How teachers "sort out" various

conflicts is based on their perceptions in the specific context in which the conflict

occurred (Pratt, 2014). Specifically, conflict on the one hand serves as a catalyst for

teachers to rethink early learning and teaching. As a result, teachers adjust aspects of

instruction, practice, and their child-rearing approach to accommodate the conflict. In this

study, for example, Ms. Jenny adapted Chinese child-rearing traditions by changing

children's damp clothes. Ms. Jin customized her way of instruction to focus on the big

group to compensate for her co-teachers' lack of "big picture" thinking. Ms. Jenny

reconsidered how to lead a group activity with increased attention paid to safety.  Ms.

Sherry chose to accept an approach for managing K2 children that she did not initially

believe but which may lead her a new understanding on young children.

On the other hand, tensions do not necessarily lead to the adoption of different

practices or beliefs. Teachers exert their agencies in the co-teaching context to make

choices about what to adapt and reject (Prochner et al., 2016). In this study, Ms. Jin and

Ms. Diana retained their own views on children's behaviour and good manners despite

disagreements; Ms. Jenny and Ms. Liu continued to hold opposing opinions in terms of

forcing children to eat healthy food.

It is worth noting that I saw some conflicts that created tension during classroom

observation, but the teachers did not perceive them as problematic. For example, when I

asked Ms. Diana her attitudes about seeing children eat cupcakes without waiting, she

responded calmly and told me that she was "used to it." One reason to explain this could

be that teachers acknowledged the inevitable existence of different views, and they

gradually grew accustomed to accommodating the differences. Another reason could be

that teachers adapted their ways of thinking, being, and doing through the interaction

with culturally different co-teachers. The oppositional or diverse ideas or practices that

initially challenged teachers and caused tensions in the relationship may become more

understandable in the process of cultural adaption. International educators experience

cross-cultural interaction function in a "third space" (Bhabha, 1994), a place where

opposing or diverse beliefs, ways of knowing, and experiences interact and find

symmetry (English, 2003). In particular, Western teachers may become more aware of

Chinese child-rearing traditions and teaching styles. Compared to the local Chinese

kindergarten teachers, Chinese teachers may have become more westernized after

working in an international school for many years, especially if that school operates with

a combination of Western and Chinese educational philosophy, curriculum, and practices.

In this study, teachers discovered a sense of symmetry by moving between, beyond, and

with the oppositional or diverse forces simultaneously (Wang, 2007).

**Factors that influenced the quality of teachers' co-teaching experiences**

Co-teaching is like a marriage, and there are many factors that contribute to a

satisfying relationship in general, such as commitment, good communication, respect,

willingness to compromise, constructive management of disagreement, and equal

partnership (Sileo, 2011; Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez & Hartman, 2009). However,

when viewing the co-teaching relationship through ecological lenses, additional factors

arise from the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. In this chapter, I

discuss factors that influence the effectiveness of co-teaching including co-teaching experience, co-teachers' personalities, teachers' languages, and I also address factors from the ecological systems which include administrative support, disparity in wages and benefits, change of leadership, change of student body, and other contextual factors.

**Teacher's co-teaching experience in GIS.** Throughout my time at GIS, teachers and administrators highlighted previous co-teaching experience as an important factor affecting the ways in which teachers form relationships. According to the coordinators, several factors were considered when pairing co-teachers. The Chinese coordinator Ms. Li said that prior experience co-teaching at GIS was the most important. In general, an experienced teacher was paired with a relatively new teacher regardless of their cultural backgrounds, resulting in pairings such as an experienced Western teacher with a new Chinese teacher or vice versa. From the administrative perspective, the expectation was that the experienced co-teacher would take the lead and help the less experienced co-teacher implement the bilingual curriculum, set up the classroom, plan the circle, and so on. The experienced co-teacher played a role as a mentor, but in a relatively equal relationship.

Teachers new to the school expressed appreciation for being partnered with experienced co-teachers, because of the help they received with the school curriculum and the co-teaching model at the school. Ms. Liu used the word *follow* a few times to describe the relationship in her first year of co-teaching. She said, "That was my first year. It was my first time in K2, so I followed my co-teacher. I followed her on everything."

When teachers recalled their first year working at GIS, they all said they benefited in particular from the help their more experienced co-teachers provided in understanding the curriculum. In recalling her early days, Ms. Diana said:

I was scared of the emergent curriculum approach at the beginning, so my Chinese co-teacher, Mary, was very patient with me. For a while, she let me do things I shouldn't be doing so I could slowly fade out my teacher-directed ideas and move toward taking cues from the children.

Chinese teachers found it easier to learn about co-teaching and the curriculum when working with a Western co-teacher who had experience in the school. With the co-teacher's help in the first year, they developed very fast. Ms. Jin stated:

I got a very good co-teaching partner. And she helped me a lot in understanding how the Western curriculum worked in the classroom, so I quickly got into my job. It was not very hard.

Ms. Wang had worked with a new Western teacher that year, and she concluded by saying, "I think every time you work with a new teacher you learn more. Ms. Sherry is willing to learn, so everything she will ask, and she will find out my ideas." Ms. Wang found that she enjoyed working with new teachers and, as mentioned earlier, she was also learning in the process.

The Chinese coordinator Ms. Li believed that, "if two teachers were both new, then it would be too difficult for them to have a good co-teaching experience. They would be both lost."

**Teacher's 'personality'.** The term *personality* appeared frequently in the interviews with participants. In the pre-interview survey, personality and interpersonal

skills ranked as the highest personal factors important to co-teaching, followed by teaching skills, knowledge of co-teaching, and philosophy of teaching respectively. The importance that the participants placed on this factor drew my attention to the meaning of personality in order to understand its role in co-teaching.

Ms. Jin discussed what she had come to believe about the influence of personality on co-teaching: "[The experience] just depends on personality because I'm very positive, and active, and my partner . . . maybe she is very quiet. She is very good, but not like me, excited to see the kids in the classroom. She might think that maybe I am just too loud in the classroom." The personality Ms. Jin talked about includes one's tendency to be quiet or talkative, and the level of one's speaking volume.

According to Ms. Diana, different opinions naturally arise during co-teaching due to individual teachers' characteristics. Ms. Diana stated that, "Any two co-teachers have different expectations of their partner. These might be the result of different cultures, but they could also be just about people's personalities." She elaborated on this, saying that "even if two Chinese teachers or two Western teachers work as co-teachers, there would still be some differences because they have different personalities even when they share the same culture."

Apparently, the term personality, frequently used by Ms. Jin and Ms. Diana, does not refer to the different personality types discussed in the domain of psychology, but rather is a term to describe co-teacher's personal characteristics in general. From a sociocultural perspective, each individual has unique personal characteristics that have been shaped by a sociocultural and historical context. Moreover, teachers also valued certain characteristics in a co-teacher. For example, Ms. Sherry used *easygoing* to

describe herself and her co-teacher Ms. Wang as she said: "I think my co-teacher and I are both quite easygoing people. So far, I think we have never really tried to assert our authority over one another." Another word frequently used by teachers was *open minded*. Ms. Jenny said: "I am pretty open minded…. When you get a co-teacher, of course, you have your own ideas, but you don't come in and think you know it all. You try to open your mind up to their ideas, and work together." When talking about how to establish a harmonious relationship with a co-teacher, Ms. Wang believed that, "If two teachers are both open minded and respectful, and willing to learn new things, then the degree of working harmony will be very high at the end of school year."

In sum, teachers' personal characteristics played an important role in achieving a harmonious relationship and effective co-teaching practice. Successful co-teaching requires teachers to: (a) recognize and understand the different characteristics that each teacher carries as individual person; (b) respect different personal characteristics; and, (c) see working with teachers with different characteristics as a learning opportunity.

**Administrative support.** Situated in the microsystem, the support from administrators was important in ensuring good functioning.  The initial pairing of co-teaching teams was no guarantee of success. Other practical strategies were needed to support the co-teaching pairs in building up and maintaining a good relationship. These strategies included providing a workshop at the beginning of the school year, building positive relationships early on, placing higher expectations on Chinese teachers in situations of disagreement, and being available for ongoing consultation about diverse issues related to teaching.

The Chinese coordinator Ms. Li believed that it was important to provide as much support as they could to help both new and returning teachers. Various strategies were used during different stages of co-teaching during the school year. Workshops and training were provided to all teachers at the beginning of the year. In general, teachers' contracts started two weeks ahead of students' arrival, so they had time for professional development and to prepare the classroom. If conflicts happened during the school year, Ms. Li would "mostly talk to the Chinese teachers and let them know what kind of background their partners had come from, like culturally" and she would tell the Chinese teachers "you cannot work by yourself, and you have to work complementarily."

The Western coordinator Ms. Vanessa also talked about detailed strategies that she used in the beginning of the school year to help teachers get to know each other better. For example, after the pairs had been set up, if the Western teacher had been newly recruited from overseas, Ms. Vanessa would give both teachers each other's email addresses so they could communicate before starting to work together. During orientation, co-teaching pairs from the previous year would give presentations to new co-teachers, and they would share some of the tips they felt were important in building good relationships with co-teachers. Other strategies aimed at teambuilding included planning tasks that the two teachers would do together, such as ordering classroom supplies and organizing tours in which Chinese teachers visited local markets or tourist attractions with Western teachers. Although some tasks were not directly related to teaching, the coordinators believed that through these activities, the teachers began to build a relationship that would lead to a better co-teaching arrangement in the long run. As Ms.

Vanessa expressed, "we try to build the positive relationship early on." Ms. Vanessa also showed great appreciation for the Chinese teachers' help, saying,

> I'm extremely grateful for what the Chinese teachers did [for the Western
> teachers] that goes above the job. The job description does not say you
> [Chinese teachers] have to help the international teachers. It is not the role.
> But I couldn't survive here without my co-teacher. These are major
> benefits!

In her two years' experience working as a Western co-teacher, Ms. Vanessa came to value the Chinese teachers' work, and she appreciated their help, both in her personal life and professional work. She also tried to help the Western teachers understand the perspectives of the Chinese teachers: "I think all the time I talk to the Western teachers, I try to make sure they understand that at the beginning you may not understand each other, but you should put yourself in their (Chinese teachers') shoes."

As mentioned earlier, coordinators had higher expectations of Chinese teachers. From Ms. Li's perspective, Chinese teachers should take more responsibility for the relationship and make more compromises whenever disagreements or conflicts take place because the Chinese teachers were considered as 'hosts' and they were obliged to help the Western teacher to settle in the school and the country.

Ms. Li used concrete examples to illustrate the different expectations:

For example, one Chinese teacher has a new Western partner. I must tell the Chinese teacher to make more accommodations because she is responsible to lead and start real co-teaching, otherwise they will never achieve the "co." Just like two strands of rope, if you don't get her involved, you will never start co-

teaching. However, if two teachers are experienced working in GIS, then I will have different expectations. I won't force Chinese teachers to accommodate but I require both teachers to discover which aspect needs to be improved together.

Teachers at GIS faced a number of issues in co-teaching, and participants indicated that the administration had been supportive in helping to overcome those issues. Ms. Jin stated, "I think the school is trying a lot to help the class teachers. Both coordinators support us." Ms. Jenny also acknowledged the support of the two coordinators, saying, "In the experiences I have had here, the coordinators were there for us if we needed the help, more than in any other school I have worked at."

Teachers were not necessarily required go to a specific coordinator, but Chinese teachers had a preference considering language. Ms. Wang described her experience when seeking help from a coordinator:

Normally, I seek help from Ms. Li more often because we speak the same language and it's easy to communicate. But for some issues, I also need to talk to Ms. Vanessa. Normally, I will ask my Western co-teacher, using English to communicate.

Ms. Wang further explained her thoughts on administrative support:

I think if co-teachers are working well with each other, the extra support can be like going to a workshop together, so they can both be on the same page. If they don't get along well with each other, the extra support will consist of help from coordinators to build a better relationship.

Co-teachers had various needs for support from coordinators. Ms. Sherry, who was a Western teacher from Singapore, experienced difficulty dealing with a few parents

who had concerns about her Asian ethnic background. She worried about that at the beginning, as she stated:

> My friend who works for this school gave me a heads up: "Be careful because there are parents who, when they walk in, might not be happy to see you." I was like, oh, that is quite a worry. Because in this school, most of the English teachers are Western-looking. So that was actually my worry in the beginning.

Then she gave an example to show how the coordinators supported her through this issue:

> [The coordinator's] got my back. Any parent who makes a complaint about such things, or who wants to change classes [because of my Asian ethnicity], she's like "No! All my teachers are excellent." So, when I heard that, okay, I was reassured that, no matter what, the coordinators would be very supportive.

According to Ms. Vanessa and Ms. Li, the ongoing support provided by administrators and the strategies that coordinators used have been successful and they have never had to separate a co-teacher team due to relationship issues.

**Changes in the student body.** Changes in the student body at GIS have had a great influence on co-teaching experiences. The increasing proportion of Chinese-speaking students has had an impact on the dual language program. For example, language dominance in the classroom has changed. During classroom observation, Chinese was the dominant language used by the majority of children to communicate with peers and the Chinese teacher. They also spoke Chinese to Western teachers when they didn't know how to speak English. English was mostly used in the circle time and in the daily conversations among Western teachers, children, and the Chinese teachers. In addition, there were rising needs for translation between Western teachers, students, and

parents. Western teachers relied on Chinese teacher's help in understanding Chinese-speaking students and their families. However, teachers were aware of the disadvantages of using translation in language teaching, so they critically used translation in different teaching contexts.

Having more Chinese-speaking students enrolled in each classroom has created new challenges for co-teachers. Ms. Diana described the situation and expressed the pressure it created: "I really feel there is too much Chinese in the classroom, and then some days, I just feel like I do not even have enough of a voice with the children." In contrast, Ms. Jenny saw the benefit of having more Chinese-speaking children in the classroom as she believed children's Chinese language knowledge would be helpful in learning English.

From the Chinese teachers' point of view, having more Chinese-speaking children had pros and cons. As Ms. Wang commented: "For me, maybe it's easier to deal with Chinese-speaking children because I'm from a Chinese background, so I can understand them more. I can understand their family background more easily." However, it also brought challenges to co-teachers on how to extend dual language learning. Ms. Wang expressed the situation in this way: "But on the other hand, how to extend their language would be another challenge for me."

According to Ms. Li, the school also experienced challenges in having more Chinese parents. Chinese parents had high expectations of their children's development, and consequently, expected more from Chinese teachers. The administration responded by asking more from the Chinese teachers as the following conversation with Ms. Liu illustrates:

Researcher: Do you feel having more Chinese-speaking students influences your

    way of teaching?

Ms. Liu: Definitely. We had a meeting for this purpose. With more and more

    Chinese-speaking children, the overall level of Chinese language is higher.

    The coordinators asked us to think about designing different activities to

    suit children's various levels of Chinese language.

Researcher: Was the meeting for Chinese teachers only?

Ms. Liu: Yes. I think the two coordinators have very high expectations of the

    Chinese teachers and they hold different expectations of teachers.

In order to facilitate the learning of children with strong Chinese language skills, Chinese teachers were required to add small-group Chinese activities into daily teaching. According to Ms. Li, small-group Chinese activities "set up different learning goals and content for different levels of Chinese-speaking children." The purpose of the activities was to "improve children's Chinese based on their original level." Ms. Li explained,

    Chinese teachers need to provide me with notes on their reflections. And every

    month, K4 Chinese teachers are required to share the learning and teaching

    materials with other Chinese teachers. I only asked for K4 Chinese teachers to do

    so, but now the K3 teachers will join in, starting after Easter holiday.

While Ms. Li emphasized that the small-group Chinese learning activities were implemented not only to please Chinese parents, she added that "there are fewer complaints from Chinese parents since we started to have the small-group activities," which indicates that having small-group activities is aligned with Chinese parents' requirements.

Furthermore, the increase in Chinese-speaking children and families caused an increase in parental communication issues. Western teachers found it hard to communicate because some Chinese parents could not speak English or preferred not to speak English. Less communication with Western teachers led to increased and at times stressful communication tasks for Chinese teachers. Ms. Diana experienced a situation in which one Chinese parent did not communicate with her at all even though the parent knew how to speak English. That bothered her a lot:

> She [the Chinese parent] does speak decent English, I think, and if I'm standing, if I try to stand with the two of them [Chinese mom and Chinese teacher], she won't even acknowledge me. Ms. Jin also finds every now and then a parent who isn't very interested in speaking to her either, because they only want to speak to me. So that gets a little bit tricky. It's certainly one of the biggest challenges we face here, because you always want to make some sort of relationship with parents.

In this case, Ms. Diana was trying to build a relationship with the Chinese parents. However, there are other cases in which Western teachers automatically leave the communication with Chinese parents to Chinese teachers. Ms. Wang found that dealing with more Chinese parents caused issues for Chinese teachers. She said, "Of course, it has been an issue. I think they (the coordinators and the school) already thought of doing something to control the enrollment ratio for the Chinese families. And make sure at least one of the parents can speak English."

Ms. Liu stated that she had to undergo more pressure than her Western partner as a result of being the main teacher communicating with Chinese parents:

If the parents came to me and made a complaint, I definitely felt guilty and blamed myself at that moment. I think this is my personality. I wouldn't tell my partner how badly I felt, and if she could remember [what happened to cause the parent to complain], then ok, otherwise I would not blame her [for what happened]."

In this study, changes in the student body, a factor arising from the exosystem, influenced aspects of the dominant language used in the classroom, language teaching activities, administrative expectations of Chinese teachers, and parental communication. It challenged co-teachers to make adjustments and adapt their co-teaching practices.

**Teaching and learning environment.** Vygotsky (1978) argued that "humans personally influence their relations with the environment and through that environment personally change their behaviors, subjugating it to their control" (p. 51). In other words, in the case of teachers, they act on the school environment, while that environment also acts on their thinking processes. Situated in the microsystem, the innermost level of the model of ecological systems theory, the classroom environment is an essential element for teaching and learning. It is the place where the most direct interaction between co-teachers, colleagues, students, and parents takes place.

The school aimed to create a multicultural environment to embrace cultural and language diversity, and the physical classroom was the manifestation of that belief and those values. It was therefore considered essential to give, using photographs, a sense of what the bilingual ECE looked like. It was especially important to give a sense of how teachers organized the environment to give it a strong bilingual and multicultural focus, which can be seen in the photos. Furthermore, the teaching and learning environment

affected the nature of the co-teaching relationship because the two teachers needed to share the space and negotiate how to set it up. In ECE, the environment is often referred to as the *third teacher*, and the co-teachers understood it in this way. Throughout the school year, teachers had to decide which playing areas needed to be created and changed, and what toys or resources needed to be replaced or added. The co-teachers created and maintained a multicultural and multilingual learning and teaching environment, and, as a microsystem, the physical environment enforced and structured the collaboration between the two teachers.

At the end of each school year, teachers pack all their materials into boxes, ready to be moved to a new classroom, or to stay in the same classroom for the next school year. Every classroom is empty at the beginning of the new year. Co-teachers design their classroom together, which is the first official task working as a team. Each classroom may have a different play centre layout and different displays and design, but there are some commonalities among them. All signs and labels are bilingual (Chinese and English), books on the shelves are bilingual, children's art works are described by teachers in both languages, and there are many cultural elements which show that teachers are striving to create a bilingual and bi-cultural environment, as shown in Figures 4.1 to 4.7 below.

***Book corner.*** Figure 4.1 shows books, some of which are in Chinese and others of which are in English. There are fiction and nonfiction books, and the bookshelf is labelled in two languages. When the photo was taken, there happened to be many books about sea creatures, which were related to a project that the class was undertaking.

*Figure 4.1:* Bilingual books in K2A

*Figure 4.2:* Public resource room

***Resource room.*** Figure 4.2 shows a storage shelf in the teachers' resource room. All materials not in use are stored here. Teachers sign the materials in and out. Therefore, teachers do not have to store a large variety of materials in their classroom; instead, they rotate materials from the resource room to their classroom as needed. Co-teachers typically come to the resource room together to decide what resources to use. Having a resource room creates more flexibility for co-teachers; they have more space in the classroom and it encourages them to discuss which materials they need for specific projects. It also ensures a distribution of materials across the classrooms.

***Bilingual labels/signs.*** All the items and play corners are labeled in Chinese and English. For example, as shown in Figure 4.3, the children's water bottle box, school diary, allergy alert, and attendance are labeled in both languages. Figure 4.4 shows the parent information board outside the classroom, on which all documents posted are written in Chinese and English.

*Figure 4.3:* Bilingual signs
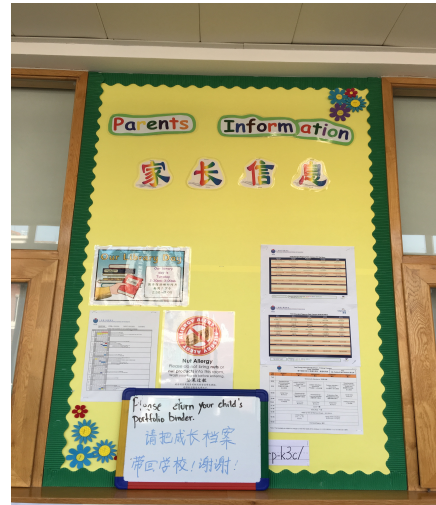


*Figure 4.4:* Parent information board

***Teacher's place.*** As seen in Figure 4.5, each classroom has a cabinet which is

used as the teachers' place. The two teachers use it jointly. Teachers work on the laptop

inside the cabinet. Other drawers are used for storing teaching resources and files. On the

doors, co-teachers display the project plan, known as a *webbing,* which makes it easier to

contribute ideas or add activities carried out with children individually. On the inside of

the doors, the teachers post school schedules, student lists, and other documents for

reference.



*Figure 4.5*: Teachers' place in the classroom

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 show the hallway outside of each room. When parents or caregivers arrive to collect their children at the end of the day, they wait in the hallway. Teachers use the hallway displays to communicate about ongoing or completed projects, using posters with photos and bilingual descriptions.



*Figure 4.6*: One side of the hallway



*Figure 4.7:* Another side of the hallway

The classroom and hallways, as shown in the photographs, illustrate how co-teachers built their physical environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), individuals influence their relations with environment, similar to a stimulus response, while the environment acts on an individual's thinking process. As shown on the photos, teachers acted on their co-teaching classroom environment by using bilingual signs, labels and books, co-constructing co-planning webs in the shared teacher's space, sharing resources and determining what resources should be used for learning and teaching, and displaying children's art work with bilingual illustrations. Teachers acted on the classroom environment as they created a particular co-teaching environment for children, parents, and themselves.

Additionally, the physical classroom environment had an impact on individual attitudes and behaviours (Weinstein, 1979). Co-teachers needed to discuss the layout of the play centres and the displays of children's artwork, and then update the contents in and outside the classroom over time. This required co-teachers' collaboration, dialogue, negotiation, communication, and thinking in setting up, maintaining, and updating the classroom. The co-teaching classroom also impacted teachers' attitudes. The environment was not only a bilingual learning setting for children but also a shared working and teaching place for the co-teachers. It created an atmosphere for children, parents, and teachers. The spirit of co-teaching was permeated within each learning corner and each wall of the classroom. Teachers would be reminded to see themselves not only as teachers but also as co-teachers while immersed in the environment they had created through daily teaching.

**The change of leadership.** One year before the research was conducted, Cathy was the ECE principal at GIS. She was fully in charge of the whole ECE program at this campus, and received assistance from two coordinators. She had been working in ECE for decades. At this campus, there was also a primary school section. The primary school and ECE both had independent buildings, but they shared some facilities, such as an outdoor playground. The primary school had one Chinese principal and one Western principal, but they did not have any responsibility for ECE. After Cathy retired in 2015, her position was withdrawn, and ECE leadership was instead added to the duties of the two co-principals of the primary school. This change affected the experience of co-teaching in ECE in many ways.

Cathy had majored in ECE and had been working in the early childhood field for years, with enormous working experience with children, parents, and teachers. She was familiar with the emergent curriculum and project-based learning as implemented in ECE, as she was also an ECE teacher before she becoming principal. With her professional background, she had a very good understanding of teachers' needs, and she also did lots of work communicating with parents and offered valuable help to teachers. After her retirement, teachers found the primary principals did not really understand the ECE curriculum. As Ms. Wang noted:

> Cathy left, and actually, I feel the biggest difference is that now we have two principals, but they are from the primary school and in charge of ECE and primary at same time. They don't quite understand ECE. Some policies and decisions they made might not be so appropriate for ECE, but in considering the school as a unit, and their appointment as a school decision, everyone has to accept it.

As an example of a policy decision, the current job appraisal approach for Chinese teachers is considered inappropriate by most Chinese teachers. Prior to this change in administration, the annual appraisal was conducted by Cathy alone. She came to the classroom on a random day and observed the teacher's work without asking for a teaching plan because she acknowledged the emergent curriculum implemented in ECE. The teachers were very comfortable with Cathy's method because it took place naturally in an authentic context and it was professional, considering the children's ages and the characteristics of ECE. However, the two primary principals, who did not have an early childhood background, used an appraisal method for the Chinese teachers that was more

suited to primary school. The Western teachers did not have the same concerns because the Western ECE coordinator was the only person to evaluate their work even before Cathy retired. So, the change only affected Chinese teachers.

In the current appraisal for Chinese teachers, the Chinese principal and Chinese coordinator come together to the teacher's classroom on a scheduled date. The teacher was required to submit a teaching plan for that date, and the two administrators observed how the teacher followed the prepared plan and implemented teaching. Everything was pre-planned, with no room for teachers to allow for the emergent curriculum. As stated, Western teachers were not required to be present in this teaching. For example, a Chinese-English bilingual circle may have been typically implemented in K2, but, on the day a Chinese teacher was being appraised, she would have to lead the circle alone. Neither Chinese nor Western teachers were satisfied with the new method, because it was considered not "real." When Ms. Jenny observed the appraisal of her Chinese co-teacher, she was confused. She stated:

> When she [Chinese co-teacher] did her lesson in front of the principal and Ms. Li, I just didn't feel like we were doing "co." It wasn't real. If they want to come in and observe. . . . You know, what I hope them to see is how it really goes.

The current appraisal system was a concern for Chinese teachers because they felt what they did for the current appraisal did not reflect what they normally did in the classroom. The core of the whole ECE curriculum was not valued, and, according to the teachers, the principal should have made evaluation differences between ECE and primary. Therefore, they expressed the belief that the appraisal method should be improved.

In the mesosystem, the different microsystems including school leadership, administration, and school policies together had a direct impact on the co-teaching experiences connected with evaluation. The change of leadership directly influenced how the new school principals adapted new criteria for assessing teachers' performances. The fact that the policy provided different appraisal systems for Chinese and Western co-teachers influenced how teachers perceived their teaching relationships.

**Disparity in wages and benefits.** Disparity in wages and benefits between Chinese and Western teachers exists at the GIK. According to the Western coordinator, Ms. Vanessa, Western teachers are paid three or four times the monthly salary of the Chinese teachers. They also receive a number of bonuses and benefits. For example, after teaching at the school for three consecutive years, they receive an additional year's salary. They also receive housing subsidies, and have free tuition for up to three of their children. None of these benefits applies to Chinese teachers. Chinese teachers understand that the Western teachers may have made some sacrifices to come and teach overseas. However, the Chinese teachers are "definitely not okay" with the income disparities because the pay gap is becoming "incredibly huge." Ms. Jin stated,

> Their monthly housing subsidy is higher than our monthly salary. Our monthly
> salary is not enough to pay their rent. So, for Western teachers, they get too much
> in benefits. We don't have any of these benefits.

Ms. Jenny felt sorry for her Chinese colleagues as she shared the same concerns regarding income and benefits: "I mean they (the school) can do a little bit more for the Chinese teachers. And, I would even be willing to give them (Chinese teachers) a little bit

more money. But anyway, it does not solve the problem. Yes, there is a big gap. It should be improved."

The huge gap between incomes caused tension because the Western and Chinese teachers had relatively the same workload. However, from the school's perspective, it was important to implement policies that would encourage Western teachers to remain in the same job, in order to ensure a higher quality education for the students. Western teachers are less likely than Chinese teachers to remain at the schools where they are employed for various reasons. Some return to their home country after a pre-planned number of years working abroad, while others go to a new school or leave China to teach in a different country. Nearly half of all English teachers abroad leave their positions and return to their home countries each year. Fifty percent of NESTs stay for another year, while only 10% remain for a third year at the same school (International TEFL Academy[14]). Some will even leave during the school year. Teacher turnover appears to have negative effects on school quality (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017).

The way the exosystem impacts the microsystem has indirect influence on co-teaching. The English education market in China determines the school policy regarding staff benefits and salaries. Because that market is booming, English teachers are very much in demand. As a result, the needs of NESTs are given greater priority, and consequently, they enjoy higher salaries and benefits than local language teachers. In China, salaries for local language teachers are often less than half of those offered to NESTs working in the same institution (Thorburn, 2017).  Why do these inequalities

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[14] Retrieved from: www.internationalteflacademy.com

exist and persist? The answer offered by some analysts is that "customers demand it" (Holliday, 2008, p. 121).

Despite the inequality, several factors from the exosystem and mesosystem of the ecological systems theory could be used to understand the joy that Chinese teachers found in co-working at GIS, and why some teachers would stay for many years, even though they received a lower salary. First of all, from the microsystem, Chinese teachers were passionate about the international school curriculum. Most of the Chinese teachers at GIS had a background working in local kindergartens, and they found that they did not like the educational philosophy and curriculum there. According to Ms. Liu and Ms. Wang, who had worked in local public kindergartens, the workload was heavy. Besides the regular classroom work, teachers had to deal with various promotion related teaching competitions and teaching skill competitions. Such competitions, meant for professional development and teaching performance evaluation, normally took place in an open class with evaluators observing the teacher's performance. In most cases, teachers needed a long time to prepare the open class prior to the evaluation day. Kindergarten teachers feel much pressure as a result of this competitive system used in teaching evaluation (Guo & Yong, 2013). Instead of focusing on children's learning interests and needs, they would have to spend considerable time on what they judged to be meaningless predesigned activities. In contrast, the play-based learning and emergent curriculum focusing on children's interests at GIS was attractive. As they explained, they were seeking "something different," and they found the educational philosophy at GIS aligned with their teaching values and purposes. The GIS curriculum provided a platform for them to

implement ideal educational practices, and thus their careers brought them a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

Moreover, compared to their counterparts in local kindergartens, their salary was competitive and sometimes even higher than in the local kindergartens. The Chinese teachers also enjoyed the multicultural working environment. For these reasons, Chinese teachers were motived to continue working at GIS, and perceived co-teaching as a joy despite their large salary differences and workload disparity with Western teachers.

These several elements from the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem, when interwoven together, had a complex impact on how teachers experienced the inequities of benefits and salaries. To see the inequities from ecological systems theory gives insight into the complex situation within the specific sociocultural context.

**Other contextual factors**. In the external setting or exosystem, factors such as the presence of local and global industry and the effects on air quality in China, do not directly impact teachers' practices. However, they have indirect influence on co-teaching. According to Ms. Vanessa, in the past few years, the global manufacturing market has shown a slight shift from China to other Asian countries. Many international companies have withdrawn their branches in Mainland China and moved to other Asian countries, such as Cambodia and Thailand, where the labor is cheaper. Moreover, the increasing air pollution in China has caused some foreign parents to move back to their home countries, or to other countries, because they are worried about the health effects of high levels of air pollution on their children.

The exosystem, as a result, has a significant impact on the mesosystem. The research participants believed that these factors have contributed to a lower number of

foreign children being enrolled in international schools in China. According to Ms. Jin, in 2008, the first year she worked at GIS, Chinese-speaking children were rarely seen in the classroom. However, by 2016, the student demographic had changed dramatically, and there were only a few foreign children in the classroom. Some classrooms now have no foreign children at all. According to Ms. Li, having more Chinese-speaking children is a trend in all international schools in China, not only at GIS. These contextual changes have effects on the school as the coordinators work with the new ratio of Chinese and foreign students in each classroom, and teachers work to understand its impact on a bilingual and bicultural curriculum.

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

In this chapter, I provide a synopsis of the research study. The first section summarizes the research questions and findings. The discussion session provides in-depth insights on co-teaching based on the findings. In the final section, I explain the implications of the study and provide recommendations for practical work and future research.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers perceived co-teaching and experienced working with teachers from different cultures in a co-taught kindergarten class. This included examining teachers' perceptions about the co-teaching model, the relationships formed between co-teachers, the practices used for co-teaching, the cultural influence on co-teaching, and the factors that determined the quality of co-teaching. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators and classroom observations. The study was structured around the following research questions:

1.  How do culturally diverse teachers perceive co-teaching in the international school context?

2.  How does co-teaching influence teachers' pedagogical practices?

3.  How do culturally diverse teachers experience cross-cultural teaching in co-teaching?

4.  What factors do teachers identify as determining the quality of their co-teaching experience?

The results were categorized into the following overarching themes:

1. Perceptions about the co-teaching partnership, which include the following subordinate themes: co-teaching was a learning process; co-teachers formed a friendly collegial relationship; co-teachers developed mutual understanding; the three Cs: Communication, collaboration, and compromise; and, the co-teaching relationship was both equal and unequal.

2. Co-planning and bilingual circle used in co-teaching, which include the following subordinate themes: flexible form and content of co-planning; teaching culture alongside language; and, the bilingual and monolingual circles.

3. Cross-cultural conflicts in three classrooms, which include the following subordinate themes: different pedagogical practices; different behavioural expectations and child-rearing beliefs; different ways of instructions.

4. Factors that influence the quality of teachers' co-teaching experience, which include the following subordinate themes: teacher's co-teaching experience in GIS; teacher's 'personality'; administrative support; changes in the student body; teaching and learning environment; the change of leadership; disparity in wages and benefits; other contextual factors.

**Discussion**

**Balance of Leadership Between Co-teachers**

According to the school documents, school leaders are committed to creating a harmonious working environment for both Western and Chinese teachers by enabling equality of both identities and respecting different languages and cultures. It was emphasized in documents and shown in the co-teaching arrangement that teachers were

to equally share responsibilities in the co-taught classroom. The findings in this study suggest that it may not be equal in light of factors such as the actual workload, the languages the teachers speak, and the expectations of coordinators. Nevertheless, teachers agreed there was no hierarchical relationship in the co-teaching relationships.

The findings indicate that in some co-teaching teams, there is a mentoring relationship between co-teachers. For example, in the case of Ms. Sherry (new teacher) and Ms. Wang (experienced teacher), Ms. Wang played a role guiding Ms. Sherry into co-teaching. This process of working with a new co-teacher may also be described as mentoring as the relationship extends throughout the first year of a new teacher's professional practice. However, the mentoring relationship changes over time. When the new teacher gains more understanding and knowledge about co-teaching, then the mentor can step back and shift more leadership responsibility onto the new teacher. In other cases, however, when two teachers are both richly experienced co-teachers, then the leadership seems to be more equally shared by both. However, as there were increasing numbers of Chinese-speaking students in each classroom, Chinese teachers seemed to lead some activities more often than their Western partners, such as large-group activities and communicating with parents. When it came to other teaching practices, such as parent-teacher conferences and annual reports, the Western teachers took on greater leadership roles.

Thus, the research illustrates how the leadership dynamics of each co-teaching pair can vary case by case and change over time. The foundation of the co-teaching relationship is respect, sharing, communication, and understanding of the "co-" as being at the core. Without these fundamental concepts, it is hard to keep the leadership

balanced in the co-taught classroom, and once the balance is disturbed, there could be serious consequences on the teachers and students (Carley, 2013). Evidence from this study shows that the co-teaching was successful because the teachers, no matter whether new to co-teaching or experienced, were all satisfied with their roles in their co-teaching relationships. Co-teachers enjoyed working collaboratively with their partners because they assisted each other, but no one was considered or treated as an assistant. The results of this study support a previous study, which showed that when teachers have a strong individual teacher identity, yet are flexible, collaboration with a co-teacher can be "a source of support and enjoyment" (Rytivaara, 2012, p. 310) rather than an extra burden. Ms. Wang defined being a good co-teaching team required not only in terms of a harmonious relationship but also as a productive learning experience for children and teachers. Co-teachers perceived themselves as professional early childhood educators and professional team players at the same time. The flexibility of teachers seeing themselves with different roles in teaching in the co-teaching context enabled them to perceive the support and enjoyment of co-teaching instead of seeing it as another required task. This study adds to the literature by describing how teachers experience working with co-teachers specifically in an early childhood setting from both local teachers' and native English-speaking teachers' perspectives.

**Co-teaching Pairs Formed Shared Professional Identities**

Co-teachers were not considered successful if the two could not work collaboratively together. Having said that, if the co-teachers were doing things individually and had trouble communicating, no matter how well each individual teacher performed, it could not be deemed a good co-teaching team. In this study, the findings

showed that once co-teaching pairs were formed, the teachers started to construct a shared professional identity in the manner described by Rytivaara (2012): they considered their co-teaching team to be a unit and were committed to helping each other develop professionally together. Teachers made the effort to not only be a good teacher but also a team player and a partner. Co-teaching gave teachers another layer of professional identity in addition to their individual teacher identity. This shared identity critically influenced the teachers' professional lives as they supported and helped their co-teaching partner's work by scaffolding ideas about teaching and children's development, and by sharing related everyday work. Co-teaching served as a form of professional development for the teachers. Through co-teaching with another professional, they expanded their teaching practices and developed new insights about co-teaching.

Therefore, seeing the co-teaching team as a unit requires the school to offer the team training together. The pre-research survey indicated that teachers felt the training they received was the least that was required for good quality of co-teaching. Ongoing professional raining is essential for teachers to develop their professional roles and skills in co-teaching. It is not contradict for teachers to see less importance on training in impacting co-teaching experience. On one hand, training is useful to the co-teaching arrangement when it involves both Chinese and Western teachers. When both teachers are treated as one unit and together receive professional development training and workshops, it is likely to be beneficial for their co-teaching. On the other hand, co-teaching professional development programs need to focus on both co-teaching skills as well as early childhood teaching knowledge in general. A shared professional identity is naturally formed by two teachers without administrative requirements. To build this

shared professional identity, it is suggested that school provides training opportunities for both teachers, such as attending conference together or make presentation to share each co-teaching team's experience periodically. Furthermore, the evaluation should also consider evaluating the co-teaching performance instead of focusing only on personal performance.

**Cultural Difference was a Double-Edged Sword**

  **Cultural influence on co-teaching from different dimensions.** Culture played an important role for co-teachers working in a cross-cultural context. The five dimensions of culture impacting teachers' professional practices were teacher's own cultural heritage, culture of previous organizations where the teachers worked, the culture of the school community, the international school culture, and the culture of the host country. It was found that all dimensions of culture influenced teachers' co-teaching experiences.

  *Teacher's own cultural heritage.* First, teachers' own cultural heritage has greatly influenced their teaching and learning beliefs, values, ideas, and practices. Comparing Western and Chinese teachers' practices through a cultural lens, the findings in this study indicate that Chinese teachers were good at leading and organizing large-group activities while Western teachers focused more on individual learning or small-group activities. According to Cortina, Arel, and Smith-Darden (2017), Western culture is usually described as individualistic, and consistently, child-rearing practices in Western countries emphasize personal choice and independence. Conversely, East Asian cultures tend to be more collectivist (Triandis, 1989; 2001), which extends to child rearing practices which emphasize interdependence. When compared to members of individualistic cultures, teachers educated in collectivist cultures emphasize larger-group

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achievements, and teaching is more teacher-centred (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Therefore, teachers working in a cross-cultural setting where there are different values, ideas, and practices experience different or even conflicting early learning and teaching practices. For example, the Western teachers in the study were considered more democratic in relation to their respect for individual children's choices when compared to the Chinese teachers. On the contrary, in Confucian philosophy, teachers are highly respected and valued, and teachers have absolute authority in a traditional Chinese classroom (Scollon, 1999). Chinese teachers assume more responsibility, obligation, and authority towards students, and will compel students to do things which they believe are for the good of the children.

*Culture of school and school community*. "School culture enhancing mutual learning through hybridized discourse that value different cultural practices, through building community of practices and through developing critical stances among both the Western and Eastern colleagues towards their own practices" (Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016, p. 20). In the study, evidence showed that school was characterized by an equitable two-way influence from West to East and East to West. The culture of the international school was critical in facilitating mutual learning and understanding between Western and Chinese teachers. By valuing different cultural practices, respecting both Chinese and Western teachers' contributions, the school created a discourse that boosted teachers' willingness for cross-cultural learning. Organizing various inside school activities between co-teachers was considered as an effective way for cross-cultural communication to take place. Allowing informal interaction outside school also encouraged teachers to consider their cross-cultural influences (Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016).

In the discussion of international school culture and the local community culture, Zhou (1996) argued the interactions of education and culture from an Asian perspective by saying that, "Culturally, the East and West are compatible and complementary rather than contradictory and mutually opposing." He suggests that education can make a great contribution to humanity if the "East and West could learn and benefit from each other." Echoing Zhou's (1996) ideas, Allen (2002) suggested adapting the international school culture to the key values of the local community. Some studies identified the concept of *international values* by emphasizing global and universal values across cultures instead of embracing Western values exclusively (Ryan, 1997).

A co-teaching environment provides a platform for teachers to reflect on their own culture and the culture of others, especially when they experience opposing perspectives. Richardson and Placier (2001) point out that research has recently acknowledged that teachers' change is best facilitated through deep reflection on beliefs and practices, and that dialogue with other teachers could assist this process. In the co-teaching process in this study, co-teachers had the opportunity to examine their own cultural script through dialogue with their co-teachers, making it more likely that co-teachers will make changes consciously and unconsciously in terms of their cultural values, teaching beliefs, and practices. This was especially true for Chinese teachers, who saw themselves as hosts, and helped Western teachers living and teaching in China. Chinese teachers played important roles in the process of Western teachers' adjustment to their new culture by providing cultural information as well as social support. Similarly, Western teachers also provided essential support for Chinese teachers trying to adjust to an international school culture. Chinese teachers in the international school experienced

challenges in terms of the Western curriculum, speaking English as a work language, and cultural diversity among teachers, students, parents, and colleagues. Chinese teachers gained a deeper understanding of the Western curriculum and diverse culture by communicating and working with Western teachers. As a result, both Western teachers and Chinese teachers played roles facilitating each other's cultural understanding and adjustment through daily teaching and social activities. Co-teaching then became a reciprocal learning among teachers of diverse cultural background.

*Host country culture*. The host country culture has influence in particular on Western teachers' teaching and learning practices. Western teachers work and live in China facing challenges related to an unfamiliar culture. Ms. Sherry experienced culture shock when she first came to China. For example, she mentioned the 'splitting pants'[15] that Chinese-speaking children wear in her classroom; the fact that people speak loudly; the frequency of seeing children pee in public. Ms. Diana recalled how her first accommodation in China, which she described as "a super local compound," shocked her by drying laundry on the street. Ms. Jenny was surprised by the smell in China, as well as no pharmacies attached to grocery stores. As a result, Western teachers faced more challenges regarding change.

In the findings, for teachers working overseas, host country support is a positive influence on adjustment to the new culture (Halicioglu, 2015). Evidence from the findings showed the school administration recognized the challenges facing Western teachers and provided positive support. One of the supports from the school administration was to give Western teachers fewer responsibilities in their first year of

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[15] Slipping pants also known as open-crotch trousers, are worn by toddlers.

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co-teaching as compared to their Chinese partners in order that they have more time to adjust to the new living and teaching environment. Another support is that, from an administrative perspective, Chinese teachers were considered "hosts" who could assist Western teachers settling into their new culture and environment. Finally, the school organized various workshops and activities to support Western teachers' cultural adjustment. The support from the school and co-teachers helped the Western teachers to adapt to the new culture.

The findings show no significant cultural influence from previous organizations where the teachers worked on teachers' current work, it may because of the teachers have worked for the international school for many years while the culture from previous working places gradually fade away and have less and less influence on the current teaching practices. One example would be Ms. Sherry, who was the only new teacher for co-teaching among all the participants. She had struggled with teacher-directed methods that she used in Singapore before she worked in GIS, with the support and help from her co-teacher, she started to shift from teacher-led activities to student-centered ways of teaching. This provides the evidence of why limited cultural influence from their previous working places was found on other experienced co-teachers.

**Dealing with cultural differences.** The findings of this study indicate that both the Chinese and Western teachers were learning about culture. Rather than expecting their partners to adjust to their ways, teachers learned how to respect different cultural values, ideas, and practices in early teaching and learning. Then, they adapted the new knowledge and norms as they constantly engaged in cross-cultural teaching.

Understanding different cultural practices does not require determining which is right. Furthermore, it does not require giving up one's own way (Rogoff, 2003). However, it does require individuals to be open to understanding what is done in different circumstances, and it also requires "suspending one's own assumptions temporarily to consider others and carefully separating efforts to understand cultural phenomena from efforts to judge their value" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 12). The findings agree with the arguments that the co-existence of a multitude of cultural ways of being may facilitate mutual understanding across cultural boundaries (Barrett, 2013; Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). These findings parallel those in a study by Ladson-Billings (1992), who concluded that teachers saw themselves as learners as much as teachers.

According to Humbert, Burket, Deveney, and Kennedy (2012), teachers experience a greater awareness of cultures after they are exposed to differences in time management and social norms. Rogoff (2003) pointed out that to understand an individual's cultural heritage and other cultural communities, "taking the perspective of people of contrasting backgrounds" (p. 11) is required. In this study, teachers not only acknowledged their personal cultural biases and beliefs, but also developed a greater understanding of their co-teachers' performance, values, beliefs, and norms, suggesting the co-teaching relationship was strengthened as a result. Furthermore, participants sometimes moved away from the traditions of their own cultures. For example, indirect communication is traditionally practiced in China for the purpose of saving face or avoiding causing embarrassment to individuals (Hofstede et al., 2010; Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). However, Chinese teachers in the GIS challenged themselves to express their ideas in a more straightforward manner when communicating with Western teachers.

Their efforts minimized potential misunderstanding and were beneficial for effective co-teaching.

Consequently, the Chinese teachers in the study tended to be more westernized. For example, Chinese teachers came to expect children to be more independent in dressing themselves when going outside. Equally, Western teachers learned to care for Chinese-speaking children by following certain traditional Chinese child-rearing practices. Western and Chinese teachers both adapted to the other's culture, which resulted in a more harmonious co-teaching relationship. Moreover, stereotyped images of traditional Chinese or Western teachers are barely seen in the GIS. Thus, this study does not support other research that has found that professional learning in the international school context is characterized by a predominant one-way influence from West to East (Lee, 2012; Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). In this cross-cultural teaching context, in which Western teachers learned from Chinese teachers while Chinese teachers' cultural heritage influenced Western teachers, learning was mutual.

As the co-teaching process developed, cultural boundaries between teachers became blurred. Another layer was built on top of teachers' own culture. Teachers created a unique discourse within each classroom in which all cultures were valued and respected, and no culture was superior to another. This created a new hybrid culture and it explains why it was hard to synthesize certain contradictory aspects of teachers' practices based on cultural traits. As teachers began to learn the other's culture and adapt that new culture into their teaching, their practices were rooted in this created hybrid culture.

**Third Space.** Bhabha's (1994) Third Space Theory underpins the nature of hybridity and accommodation processes experienced by international educators. According to Bhabha (1994), the hybrid space is where opposing or diverse beliefs, values, ways of knowing, and experiences interact and find symmetry. In this study, co-teachers constantly experienced cross-cultural tension by moving between, beyond, and within context, culture, and the teaching environment. On one hand, Western teachers lived and taught in a different nation and culture, they faced challenges in understanding and accommodating the new culture, and therefore, they had a strong sense of hybridity as occupants of this third space. According to Bhabha (1994), there is a space "in-between the designations of identity," and "this interstitial passage between fixed identification opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (p.4). Several studies have employed hybridity to describe the international educators who experienced a cultural shock and cultural accommodation process (English, 2003; Saudelli, 2012). In relation to the present study, it was Western teachers who travelled across borders to work overseas. Considering that the host country culture was quite different than their home country culture, they were more likely than the local teachers to experience cultural differences, shocks, and conflicts. Finding symmetry meant they had to admit the cultural differences and the existence of cultural shocks and conflicts, live with them, and make accommodation for the hybridity by eventually integrating the two cultures. However, such a process took time, and would be unlikely to occur during a short teaching contract.

The Chinese teachers did not move across national borders to the school, but they still experienced a version of the hybridity and accommodation processes in this cross-

cultural context. Without travelling, Chinese teachers in the study had experiences similar to what they would have had if they had gone teaching overseas. They experienced the complexities of cross-cultural co-teaching. Working in the international school, Chinese teachers entered a hybrid space where diverse beliefs, teaching philosophies, teaching pedagogies, and ways of thinking and teaching interacted, and subsequently, they had to find symmetry.

Acknowledging the cultural differences and their influence creates greater awareness for co-teachers, allowing them to adapt and learn from their differences. The findings indicate that this greater understanding is beneficial and allows both teachers to achieve a successful co-teaching relationship. This finding supports Carless and Walker's (2006) suggestion that "diversity is an asset in team teaching as it enables partners to showcase different talents and emphasize different elements of the teaching and learning process" (p. 473). In this study, teachers benefited from working in a cross-cultural context as "cultures are increasingly thought of as carving routes rather than possessing roots" (Barker, 2004).

**High Professional Requirements for Co-teachers**

Co-teaching is not easy and could be especially challenging when the two teachers come from different educational and cultural backgrounds and have different belief systems. It takes time and energy to work together in planning and teaching. Appropriate professional knowledge, skills, and attributes regarding teaching and learning are considered basic for any ECE teacher. However, to become a co-teacher, teachers are required to also know how to work collaboratively with other teachers, and apply applicable knowledge, skills, and strategies. To some extent, co-teachers are not

only responsible for their own personal and professional development, but also need to help their co-teachers grow and learn. In co-teaching, professional growth is an everlasting process that takes place for as long as a teacher is working, because co-teachers change every year, and working with a new co-teacher starts a new learning process. Each co-teacher is unique, and that explains to some extent why teachers in the GIS never felt bored with co-teaching, and constantly enjoyed working with co-teachers. Enthusiasm and a positive attitude are essential when two teachers are engaged in teamwork (Friend, 2008). The opinions of co-teaching that participants in this research expressed show great enthusiasm and a positive attitude towards co-teaching.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the co-teachers were capable of showing great professionalism when dealing with conflict and disagreements. Because co-teachers shared the goal of providing good education to the children, they didn't take conflict personally, but instead considered it in a more professional way. As long as new ideas worked well for teaching and learning, teachers would adopt them no matter whose ideas they were. The process of negotiating conflicts required co-teachers to listen with an open mind and be willing to compromise. The findings support two of George and Davis-Wiley's (2000) suggestions for effective collaboration, namely willingness to compromise and complementarity. Moreover, by not taking conflict personally, co-teachers could learn from one another no matter the state of their personal relationship; co-teachers were still willing to learn from their partners regardless of how much they disliked them. This is another aspect that showed the teachers' professionalism.

**The Flexibility of Co-Planning**

Planning time is essential if co-teaching teams are to be effective (Friend & Cook, 2007). Adequate co-planning time in a teaching team has been correlated with positive teacher relationships, high quality schools, and higher student achievement (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999). The teachers in this study were provided with both scheduled and flexible co-planning time. The findings show formal and informal ways of co-planning that allowed effective and on-the-spot communication between co-teachers each day. Teachers dealt with conflicts and shared their thoughts and ideas regarding teaching practices, children's development, and life experience. In addition to co-teaching time, each teacher had individual planning time every week during which a supply teacher took over regular duties. The extra hours for teachers to plan was considered individual rather than co-planning time because teachers took it one at a time, and used it to work on teaching-related tasks other than communicating with their partners. Co-planning time was effectively used to establish the necessary foundation for co-teaching success in this study, which supports Howard and Potts's (2009) research on how to use co-planning time.

**A Western Teacher Spoke the Local Language**

Ms. Sherry could speak both English and Chinese, which was advantageous, especially in the bilingual circle and in interactions with students and Chinese teachers. Ms. Sherry understood Chinese-speaking children which was helpful in providing effective instruction. Moreover, Ms. Sherry and her teaching partner experienced less cultural conflicts compare to other co-teaching pairs. Yet, having a Western teacher who speaks the local language does not necessarily guarantee a successful co-teaching

relationship because there are various contextual and cultural factors that also influence

co-teaching practices. In sum, if the foreign teacher has a similar cultural background and

the ability to speak the local language, teaching pairs may experience certain advantages

but this doesn't guarantee the effectiveness of co-teaching.

**Internal and External Factors that Influence Co-Teaching Quality**

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system model, the individual is

placed at the centre with various developmental influences represented in concentric

circles. In other words, individuals are influenced by several environmental systems to

differing degrees. In the co-teaching ecological system, co-teachers are the centred

individuals, and the relationship and practices of co-teaching are determined by factors

rooted in the different environmental systems.

**Internal factors.** The findings suggest that a co-teacher's own personality,

attitude towards co-teaching, interpersonal skills, language, and job experience are the

primary internal factors that impact on the quality of co-teaching. Petrick (2015)

described similar findings in a study of co-teachers' perceptions of their collaborative

relationship. Petrick found that the four primary concerns about collaboration expressed

by co-teachers were conflicting co-teacher personalities, respect, communication, and

parity and trust. Co-teachers in this study expressed how the co-teacher's personality is a

foundational component of a successful working relationship. When conflict between co-

teachers occurred, it may or may not have been related to cultural and educational

differences; rather, it may have been caused by different personalities. When a co-teacher

is open-minded and willing to learn, then the co-teaching relationship tends to be more

successful.

Additionally, positioning oneself and one's co-teacher as equal working partners is also important for building a respectful and collaborative working relationship. When leadership remains balanced between two co-teachers in a nonhierarchical environment, they are more likely to assist and scaffold each other.

The findings also suggest that various interpersonal skills help teachers build and maintain positive co-teaching relationships. Specifically, these include effective communication skills, collaboration, compromising, flexibility, willingness, active listening, and responsibility. The same skills have been identified in other studies on collaborative co-teacher relationships (Carless & Walker, 2006; Conderman, 2011; George & Davis-Wiley, 2000; Petrick, 2015).

In this study, co-teaching experience, gained over time, enhanced the co-teaching knowledge and skills of the teachers. Teachers gained more insight by deeply reflecting on each co-teaching relationship they had experienced. Since co-teaching teams varied year to year, things that teachers learned from working with previous partners helped prevent the same problems recurring in subsequent years. Moreover, the findings indicate that teachers with rich co-teaching experience developed a greater passion for co-teaching as they discovered the fun of the practice. Co-teaching enriched not only their professional lives but also their personal lives. Often, the partnership grew into a close, collegial relationship, which was described by some teachers as friendship.

**External factors.** Students, parents, the school administration, the classroom environment, the job market, local and global industry, and local air pollution all influence co-teaching in many ways. Such external factors underscore a range of

differences between Western and Chinese teachers, such as the different expectations, ways of evaluation, and salaries due to decisions made by the school administration.

In terms of salary and benefits, Western teachers received a much greater financial reward than their Chinese partners. Chinese teachers were less satisfied with their salaries than their Western co-teachers. However, it is not known whether their dissatisfaction had any significant influence on their co-teaching experience. Despite that, participants suggested that equality of payment and benefits would lead to a more equal co-teaching relationship.

## Implications

The teachers not only taught their students about language and culture, they also learned about their co-teachers' language and culture. This helped them examine educational issues through a cultural lens, which, in turn, helped them to better understand their co-teaching partners, students, and parents. The co-teaching process was about more than teaching; it was also a journey of learning for both Chinese and Western teachers. Chinese and Western teachers gained an appreciation for diversity, which helped them to minimize misunderstandings and conflict.

For international schools staffed by local teachers and NESTs, this study provides an example of how all teachers can take advantage of cultural diversity and use it as a means for individual professional development. Doing so requires them to actively immerse themselves and seek the meanings of norms by exploring the values and beliefs that drive the behaviour of their co-teaching partners, students, and parents. It must be acknowledged that not all teachers will be willing to engage in this way. In this study, teachers challenged their personal values, beliefs, and norms once they had constructed a

meaning of cultural differences, which helped improve the co-teaching relationship and the quality of the co-teaching experience.

When working in a cross-cultural school setting, all teachers should ideally be encouraged to develop cross-cultural competence. Schools should actively provide activities and opportunities that enable teachers to acquire knowledge of others' cultures. Cultural and team-building activities should be implemented, as well as activities focusing specifically on teaching.

In order to achieve co-teaching success, teachers should be supported to develop knowledge and skills. Co-teaching pairs should be encouraged to share their experiences within the school setting, because their teaching colleagues will benefit from hearing about other's experiences. Successful co-teacher pairs are professional development resources. Through workshops and professional development activities, co-teaching teams should be given opportunities to share experiences on a regular basis.

The results of this study suggest that, in a co-teaching context, teachers may start constructing a shared professional identity once they see their team as a unit. When only one teacher is performing well, the whole team is not successful. Co-teaching is a demanding way to work. Therefore, Western and Chinese teachers should both receive similar training and evaluation, and schools should have the same expectations and requirements for both Chinese and Western teachers if they want to enhance collaboration.

Similar to the requirement for equal professional development, the evaluation of teachers' performances should also be relatively the same for both Western and Chinese teachers. A new set of evaluation methods should be created based on the uniqueness of

co-teaching and applied to both sets of teachers. The purpose of evaluation in a co-teaching setting is to see not only each individual teacher's performance, but also the quality of collaborative work being carried out. If an evaluation does not reflect the core values of co-teaching, it lacks consistency with the school's mission. Evaluation would only be meaningful if considered within the co-teaching context. Furthermore, the evaluation should be more appropriate for the early childhood education domain. Since the emergent curriculum and the play-based learning curriculum were implemented in ECE at the school, the emphasis of teaching is on children's interests, their involvement in their learning, and their ability to make constructive choices. Most teachers plan their teaching around a curriculum, which provides a direction and helps them to clarify their thoughts and articulate a rationale for what they do. However, changes should be easy to make to allow for flexibility, adaption, and on-the-spot decisions (Gordon & Brown, 2014). It is problematic to expect ECE teachers to rigidly follow the prepared curriculum in their actual teaching.

The findings of this research indicate that administrators play an important role in ensuring co-teachers achieve success. In this study, the strategies they used included pairing co-teachers systematically, providing opportunities for co-teachers to get to know each other before school starts, implementing team task-based activities, offering professional workshops and training opportunities at the beginning of the school year, arranging ongoing consultations throughout the year, and, involving students, parents, and teachers in various cultural events and activities.

Teaching in a cross-cultural context challenges development personally, culturally, and professionally, no matter whether the teacher is a NEST or a local teacher. Teacher

education should prepare preservice teachers for the culturally diverse experience of working with colleagues, students, parents, and families from diverse cultural backgrounds. The programs to prepare preservice teachers should not be limited to preservice English teachers, but also include others, such as early childhood educators, math teachers, and science teachers.

Recommendations were generated from the findings of this study. These apply to schools implementing co-teaching or to schools and teachers who would like to consider co-teaching in the future. The recommendations include the following:

- Organize cultural learning activities and team-building events in addition to teaching training.

- Provide opportunities for teachers to share their co-teaching stories and experiences on a regular basis.

- Provide equal training opportunities and requirements for teachers from both cultures.

- Use professional and appropriate evaluation methods.

- Create a set of appropriate professional evaluation criteria.

- Consider co-teaching within the broader social and cultural context, and understand the external influences on co-teaching

**Future Work**

The study examined a group of co-teachers who already had some experience in cross-cultural co-teaching, which they generally viewed positively. The particularities of the research participants may have lead the findings to be more positive, and could be considered a research bias. As stated in the earlier chapter, participants' willingness was

one of the factors that limited the diversity of the participant's teaching experience. However, considering it another perspective, having mature co-teaching practices could also be considered as one of the particularities of the study. Further studies on teachers with diverse co-teaching experiences or particularly with a focus on the newcomers to co-teaching would be helpful to see co-teaching from another perspective.

Future studies on cross-cultural teacher professional learning in co-teaching contexts would be beneficial for teachers who currently work in a similar context or potential teachers who are planning to teach in such a context. Exploring teachers' professional growth in the co-teaching context would be helpful for schools and administrators to provide appropriate opportunities and supports to enhance the quality of co-teaching.

Because this study focused on co-teaching in an international school in China, one recommendation for further research would be to explore teachers' co-teaching experiences in other regions and countries. Teachers in different countries implementing a similar model based on a bilingual program may experience different issues considering various environmental and cultural influences on teachers. Additional exploration of co-teaching in a bilingual program in other regions, such as the United States or Canada, may foster insights on how the experience is shaped by the social and cultural context.

Some of the language teaching and learning issues discussed in this study deserve a closer look. Some future research questions include: What are the benefits of implementing co-teaching in a bilingual education program for children's dual language acquisition? How do teachers promote language and literacy in young dual language learners in a co-taught classroom? What are the practices and strategies co-teachers use to

support young children who are learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language? What is the role of culture in young children's language teaching and learning? How should teachers teach dual language in a cross-cultural setting?

Another recommendation for future research would be to explore the co-teaching model in other types of bilingual programs, such as a French-English immersion program or a Japanese-English program. The purpose of implementing co-teaching in an international school is to prepare students to become competent in two languages, so there is a strong possibility that the co-teaching model could be applied in many other bilingual settings. Exploring the co-teaching model may deepen understanding of how the languages and cultures of the co-teachers influence their ways of co-teaching.

This study focused on the co-teachers' experiences in a co-taught classroom from both teachers' perspectives. The findings describe how teachers perceived co-teaching and experienced working with a culturally different teacher. In-depth research could investigate the academic outcomes of co-teaching from students' perspectives. Investigating students' experience in a co-teaching classroom may add more insight into how co-teaching is beneficial for students, both academically and culturally.

In this study, a qualitative case study was used to capture teachers' co-teaching experiences during a limited period of time. The findings addressed the changes in teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and power balances over this period. A final recommendation for further research would be to explore co-teaching using ethnographic or other research methods for an extended period of time. A longer period of observation would generate richer data with the potential to track and understand changes in perception and practices over time.

Four years have passed since this research began, and since then, the sociocultural context of the international school has changed. Some school policies such as the evaluation system, student body, and administration may have changed as well. If I were given the opportunity to return to the international school that I have been studying since 2016 and reexamine the research questions, I would expect that my re-visits would yield more thought-provoking findings about the historical changes that may have impacted co-teaching experiences, and how the teachers' work has changed or stayed the same.

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**APPENDIX A: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW**

1. What was it like for you when you decided to work in this kindergarten? Were you happy or excited or worried?

2. When you were getting ready to work with a co-teacher in this school, what did you look forward to the most?

3. What did you expect co-teaching would be like before the actual implementation? Are there differences between your expectation and the reality? Any surprises?

4. What surprised you after you started co-teaching? What was better than you thought it would be? What was more difficult than you thought it would be?

5. What are some of the things you like about co-teaching in this school?

6. What do you like about your experience working with co-teachers in the classroom?

7. What is easy and difficult when you work with co-teachers? Is there anything you are worried about?

8. What are some of the things you do to help yourself to work well with co-teachers? What extra support would you like to receive for better co-teaching?

9. What do you hope the benefits of co-teaching will be for children and teachers?

10. What advice would you give to other teachers who are going to be involved in the co-teaching program?

11. What things or activities do you look forward to doing with your co-teachers outside of school?

12. What are some of the ways to improve professional development in the future for better co-teaching?

## APPENDIX B: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR THE SECOND INTERVIEW

**About Circle Time**

1. How do you think about children's bilingual development in the kindergarten?

2. What are the main teaching practices or activities for bilingual language teaching in the circle time?

3. What resources are used for language teaching in the circle time? Where do you find the teaching resources?

4. How does working with a culturally different co-teacher influence the way the circle is organized?

5. How do you make your circle plan? Are there differences between your circle and your co-teacher's circle?

6. How do you assess your circle?

7. Which type of circle do you most often use, monolingual or bilingual? Why?

8. When you are doing a monolingual circle, what do you expect your co-teacher to do? What do you do when your co-teacher is giving a monolingual circle?

9. How do you decide whether to have a bilingual circle or a monolingual circle?

**About Activity Time**

1. How do you and your co-teacher come to decide the learning areas for daily teaching?

2. Who provides the learning resources for each learning area?

3. How do you and your co-teacher share responsibilities during the free play time?

4. What are the challenges when working with a co-teacher during activity time?

5. What strategies are used to overcome the problems that you have faced during

   activity time?

**About Co-planning**

1. How do you co-plan with your co-teacher (when, how often, what do you

   discuss)?

2. How do you find co-planning works between you and your co-teacher?

# APPENDIX C: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR THE THIRD INTERVIEW

**For Western Teachers**

1. How would you respond to Chinese parents if they asked you something in Chinese that you didn't understand?

2. Have you ever received any specific request from Chinese parents who want you to speak more English to their children?

3. What feedback have you received about the Chinese-speaking children's English learning from the daily parents' conversation or from the P/T interview?

4. How do you feel about having supply teachers?

5. Is there anything about teaching and learning that you care a lot about even though your co-teacher does not seem to care as much as you do? Or vice versa?

6. How do you feel working with a culturally different teacher impacts your teaching? Can you please give me an example?

7. Have you experienced any differences when working with a culturally different teacher in terms of teaching philosophies, values, or beliefs? Can you please give an example?

8. How do you feel about the "equal" relationship between Chinese and Western teachers? Is it equal? What are the unequal aspects? Are you okay with the relationship? As a Western teacher, how do you feel about the equality in your co-teaching relationship?

**For Chinese Teachers**

1. How do you feel about having supply teachers?

2. Is there anything about teaching and learning that you care a lot about but that your co-teacher does not seem to care about as much as you do? Or vice versa?

3. How do you feel working with a culturally different teacher impacts your teaching? Can you please give me an example?

4. Have you experienced any differences when working with a culturally different teacher in terms of teaching philosophies, values, or beliefs? Can you please give an example?

5. How do you feel about the "equal" relationship between Chinese and Western teachers? Is it equal? What are the unequal aspects? Are you okay with the relationship? As a Chinese teacher, how do you feel about the equality in your co-teaching relationship?

6. I know you just had the semi-annual appraisal by the school principal and Chinese coordinator. What is your opinion on having the appraisal for Chinese staff only? Do the Western teachers have a similar appraisal? Do you feel that Western teachers should have a similar appraisal?

# APPENDIX D: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR THE FOURTH INTERVIEW

**For Western Teachers**

General Questions

1. Have you ever sought help from the Chinese or Western coordinator? For what reasons? Did you receive help?

2. What has changed since the previous ECE principal retired?

3. Do you think the school and coordinators have more expectations of Chinese teachers than of Western teachers?

4. As a K2/K3 teacher, what are your impressions of planning time? Do you work at home?

5. What do you see as a successful co-teaching team? Can you give an example?

For Ms. Diana

1. What is your perception of the fact that children more often went to Ms. Jin when they had conflicts during outdoor play time? Is this because there are more Chinese-speaking children and because of the language that they speak?

2. Ms. Jin speaks in Chinese sometimes and it seems you can understand. How do you understand what she means? For example, one day Ms. Jin said to the children: "我们要去吃饭了，还有人在厕所么" [we are going to have lunch, is there anyone in the washroom?], and then you said, "I'll come with the rest."

For Ms. Jenny

1. Ms. Liu leaves at 3:30 pm. When do you talk to her about the plan for tomorrow?

2.  What do you think about Ms. Liu's approach in asking children to go one at a time when you played parachute outside? Do you believe Chinese teachers are good at teacher-directed activities as compared to their Western co-teachers?

For Ms. Sherry

1.  What do you think about Ms. Wang's approach to letting children walk without holding the rope? I saw that you seemed to have a different opinion. Is it because you think the children are too young? What will do you if Ms. Wang still wants to try?

**For Chinese Teachers**

General Questions

1.  Have you ever sought help from the Chinese or Western coordinator? For what reasons? Did you receive help?

2.  What has changed since the previous ECE principal retired?

3.  Do you think the school and coordinators have more expectations of Chinese teachers than of Western teachers?

4.  As a K2/K3 teacher, what are your impressions of planning time? Do you work at home?

5.  What do you see as a successful co-teaching team? Can you give an example?

For Ms. Jin

1.  How do you feel about your role and your co-teacher's role in dealing with children's conflicts during outdoor play time?

2.  I saw you that asked your Western co-teacher to help put up the activity posters that you made in the hallway. Do you generally have to ask her to help?

3. Do you feel that you have the responsibility to teach her how to co-teach? Do you find that your co-teacher is getting more co-teaching experience?

4. I observed the day when parents came with birthday cake and your co-teacher asked children to wait to eat until after every child got cake, but you told children that they could eat the cake right away. Do you think children should wait to eat? How do you see the differences in terms of eating manners between you and your co-teacher?

For Ms. Liu

1. You go home at 3:30pm. When do you talk to your co-teacher about the plan for tomorrow?

2. What do you think about your approach in asking children to go one at a time when you played parachute outside? Do you believe Chinese teachers are good at teacher-directed activities when compared to their Western co-teachers?

For Ms. Wang

1. As an experienced teacher, do you feel you still learn from your co-teacher?

2. Have you noticed any changes in the co-teaching relationship over the course of the first year working with a new teacher. For example, do you see changes in the leadership between you and your co-teacher?

**APPENDIX E: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR THE COORDINATORS**

1. How long have you been a coordinator? Tell me about your background.

2. What do you see as the advantages of implementing co-teaching in the international kindergarten?

3. What do you see as the challenges to implementing co-teaching in the international kindergarten?

4. What do you see as the challenges to being a co-coordinator in the international kindergarten?

5. What do you see as a successful co-teaching team? Can you give me an example?

6. What support do you or the school provide to ensure that co-teaching is effective?

7. What changes have you seen after the previous ECE principal retired?

8. Do you have more expectations of Chinese teachers than of Western teachers?

9. What are the reasons why there is an increase in the enrollment of Chinese-speaking children and families? Is this happening only in GIS or in other international schools as well?

10. Is there anything you would like to add?

**APPENDIX F: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND FIELDNOTES FORM**

**Class:** _____ **Classroom teacher:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Time:** _____ **Observation time:** _____

| Time | Observation | Comments |
|------|-------------|----------|
|      |             |          |
|      |             |          |
|      |             |          |
|      |             |          |
|      |             |          |
|      |             |          |
| Remarks, Reflections, Questions: | | |