Understanding the impact of INSET on experienced EFL teacher learning: A case study in a Chinese context

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

The focus of this study concerns the impact of an in-service teacher training (INSET) course on experienced secondary school English teachers under the wide environment of educational reform in China. Although there has been increased research on the influence of Chinese educational reform on English education, the impact of INSET course on teachers and their implementation of the new curriculum was a previously unexplored area.

This qualitative multiple-case study investigated five secondary school EFL teachers throughout the INSET course and in a six-month follow-up period. Classroom observation data and interview data were collected at multiple points of time. This methodological approach introduced a longitudinal dimension to the study which enabled any possible change in teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practice to be investigated.

Theories in teacher learning and development were used to explore the extent to which the INSET course made sense to the teachers' professional lives. The findings indicated a lack of significant change in the teachers' knowledge and beliefs and therefore no fundamental change in their subsequent practice to support the new curriculum. The inconsistency between the teachers' learning outcomes and practices was mainly because their theory-learning, the focus of the INSET course, did not work as major drive for the teachers' behavioural change. Increase in theoretical knowledge did not necessarily mean any change in concrete classroom practices even though the teachers made some short-term theory-practice application. After the INSET course the teachers mostly returned to their habitual practices which were largely influenced by their deeply-rooted prior beliefs. The relevant factors, from the INSET course and the wider context, were also examined as working elements to contribute to the lack of significant change through a context-sensitive lens. Implications for in-service teacher education and INSET course design and implementation were also drawn based on the findings.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study examines the impact of an in-service teacher education and training (henceforth INSET) course on the learning of teachers who teach English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) in Chinese secondary schools. In this introductory chapter, I first aim to briefly introduce this thesis in terms of its aims. Research questions and the reasons why I chose the research topic. Then I provide a brief description of the structure of the thesis and outline the chapters.

1.2 Aims of the study

Teacher learning has been widely deemed as a key element needed to achieve education effectiveness and improvement of students learning outcomes (Cumming, 2011; Kelly, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004). Of various forms of teacher learning and development in the world, the short INSET course has been widely used to bring about changes in teachers' professional lives. This is very true in China.

With the implementation of national education reform in China, teacher professional development has been given great importance since teachers are the key implementers of the new curriculum. The new English curriculum presents a considerable range of changes which pose tremendous challenges to teachers. The goal of education has been shifted from knowledge accumulation to students' whole person development. English teachers should no longer be knowledge-transmitters and the centre of the class. Teachers are expected to develop their educational views and new skills to realize these educational ideas and teaching approach in their classroom teaching. To help teachers cope with the challenges, in-service teacher education has become an essential part of preparation for implementing the new curriculum, and through attendance at such courses, teachers are expected to acquire the reform ideas and skills to teach the new curriculum. Therefore, it is important to try to understand the extent to which such INSET courses do help teachers to understand the reform ideas and change their practice.

An annual government-funded national training project started in 2010 and a variety of INSET courses have since been conducted in China, aiming at helping teachers

learn the new ideas and implement the new curriculum. The impact of the INSET courses on teacher learning is the focus of this study. Besides its importance for our understanding of teacher professional development, the reason why I chose this topic is partially due to my personal experiences in this field. Before this study, I had been involved in an INSET course as a trainer and that experience is the genesis of my interest, since I am still uncertain about the impact of the courses on teacher learning, on their perceptions of professional learning and development, their stance regarding the training input and the extent to which it supported their future implementation of the new curriculum. Regarding the wider field of second language teacher education (henceforth SLTE), my research interest responds to the need mentioned by Tsui (2011) for empirical evidence of teacher learning outcomes.

In order to clarify my understanding of the impact of the INSET course on teacher learning, I focus on examining the process of teacher learning and the learning outcomes articulated by the teachers and reflected in their practice, and develop the discussion by considering contextual issues which may arise. Regarding the INSET course content and process (see section 2.2 and 2.3) and the process of teacher learning and change (see chapter 3), the main research questions are:

- To what extent do teachers' knowledge and beliefs change during the INSET course?
- To what extent are teachers' practices influenced by the course?
- What factors contribute to the impact of INSET on teacher learning?

Answering these questions will help understand the teachers' own perspectives on their learning, and the impact of the INSET course and the wider context on their implementation of the new curriculum. The findings will provide further evidence to the existing body of research on teacher education and teacher professional development. In addition, I hope that this study will help inform the development of teacher education programmes and contribute to the development of favourable conditions for teacher professional development.

1.3 Overview of the study

The thesis comprises 11 chapters in total, including this introductory chapter. The overall organisation is that Chapters 2-4 provide the background to the research, Chapters 5-9 present the findings for this study and Chapter 10 is the discussion

based on the findings. Chapter 11 is the conclusion. Below I provide some more detail about each chapter:

Chapter 2 portrays the contextual background of this study, including the educational reform and in-service teacher education project in China as well as the INSET course which is the focus of this study. Chapter 3 reviews existing research on relevant issues to establish a theoretical foundation for this work. Chapter 4 describes and justifies the adoption of the qualitative multiple case study research design of this study and introduces the data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapters 5 to 9 present the findings of the data for each of the five cases in turn in terms of teachers' perceptions of the INSET input, changes to their knowledge and beliefs, and teachers' implementation of the new curriculum during and after the INSET course. Thick data is provided for each case so that readers can arrive at their own conclusions regarding assertions that are made.

Chapter 10 discusses the salient points that emerge from the data and answers the research questions presented above in comparison to relevant literature. The implications for teacher learning and teacher education are also addressed.

Chapter 11 summarises the main research results of this study and highlights its contributions as well as limitations. Suggestions for further research are also made.

Chapter 2 Research context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter first introduces the general context of this study, the educational reform of China, and then the specific research context, an INSET course which is designed with the purpose of disseminating the reform ideas to teachers and helping them bring about changes in their classroom practice. When introducing the research context, the rationale and aims of this study are introduced as well.

2.1 Educational reform in China

At the beginning of this century, the Chinese central government started the eighth national educational reform (now called the New Curriculum) "signalled by the issues of a whole package of newly designed curricula and their corresponding textbooks across all school subjects" (Wang, 2015: 126). The new national curriculum standards have proposed a shift in the orientation from subject knowledge transmission to students' whole-person development. This shift has resulted in a clash between the deep-rooted traditional thoughts of learning as knowledge accumulation and the new quality-oriented education. I will now introduce the curriculum goals and their characteristics as they contextualize the national in-service teacher education project.

In the history of educational reform in China, this is the first time that the national curriculum is promoting the concept of student-centeredness. The previous seven educational reforms were "often modifications to the existing textbooks and syllabus without any change in the nature of teaching concept and approach" (Rong, 2014: 24-25). Within the concept of student-centeredness, the new curriculum includes developing student interest and their learning strategies as instructional goals and promotes a humanistic orientation to language education and life-long learning for students. This change requires a paradigm shift from the teacher-centred, knowledge transmission-based mode of teaching to the student-centred, enquiry-based mode.

The central government issued the first version of *The National English Curriculum Standards for 9-Year Compulsory Education* (MOE, 2001) in 2001 and the latest edition in 2011. In all the versions of the new curriculum standards, the primary goal

of English education is to develop students' overall language abilities in terms of five interrelated aspects: language knowledge, language skills, affect, learning strategies and intercultural awareness (Figure 2.1) (MOE, 2001:6). For students at different levels, specific performance standards are designed for competence evaluation in each aspect.
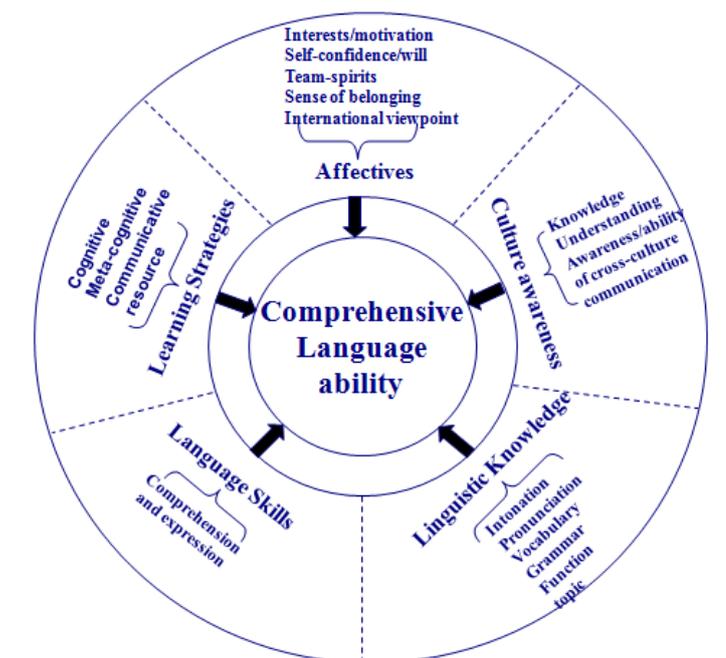
Figure 2.1 Framework of objectives in *The National English Curriculum Standards for 9-year Compulsory Education in China* (MOE, 2001)

For Chinese secondary school English education which followed the traditional approach for decades, it is the first time that emphasis is being placed on the enquiry of learners and their integrity into the learning process (Wang & Lam, 2009). In the new curriculum propositions, teachers' teaching is supposed to focus on satisfying students' individual needs, cultivating their creativity, developing their cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, fulfilling their affective demands and enhancing their cooperative and interactive abilities (Argo & Chen, 2007; Jia, 2010; Wang & Zang, 2010). Underlying this humanistic approach, students' learning experience and their lifelong learning abilities are emphasized being as important as knowledge, rather than merely learning to get admitted to a higher education.

For a long time, Chinese English education has been greatly influenced by ancient culture and learning has been viewed as process of accumulating knowledge transmitted from teachers who are thought to be endowed with knowledge, authority

and respect. In the process of learning, students are expected to receive and remember what is taught rather than being encouraged to construct their own knowledge. The focus of English language lessons has for decades been on a set of language and cultural rules. Now the new curriculum promotes a creative and critical pedagogy in conflict with the prevailing traditional culture of teaching and learning. The success of the reform therefore not only depends on the change of teachers' practice, but more importantly, should be based on the shift of a series of culturally rooted thoughts and ideas, including the philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, perceptions of the roles of teachers and students, strategies perceived to be effective for teaching and learning, and qualities valued in teaching and learning (Hu, 2002; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). However, there are more than 550,000 secondary English teachers and millions of students learning English at the secondary level in China (Yan & He, 2014). Without sufficient support and guidance, the proposed changes are hard to realize for such a large number of people. This is why the new curriculum has been considered to be "the most ambitious, radical, far-reaching, wide-reaching and complex in the world" (Yan & He, 2012:1).

However, many EFL teachers are not yet ready for the change (Wen, 2004). In a nationwide investigation on EFL teachers in primary and secondary schools by MOE from 2005 to 2006, some teachers felt it was difficult to meet the requirements of the new curriculum such as using new teaching approach in actual classroom teaching, evaluating students' learning in a formative way. Some of them attributed the difficulties to their lack of updated educational views and communicative teaching skills as well as appropriate understandings of the requirements of the curriculum reform (Yang & Wu, 2008). Hu (2002) concludes that the conflicts between the new curriculum and teachers include: the philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, learning strategies encouraged and qualities valued in teachers and students. That is to say, the curriculum reform challenges the whole traditional set of beliefs and attitudes to foreign language education which have been taken for granted for many years.

Indeed, the radical changes proposed require a great deal of learning on the part of teachers as well as support and guidance for their implementation of the new curriculum (Wu, 2005). Since the start of the educational reform, some local governments have made substantial financial and human investments in in-service

teacher training programmes. However, many teachers are still not aware of what and how much they have really learned and what changes this learning brings to their practice (Gu, 2009). The shortage of teachers qualified to teach the new curriculum still remains and the need for more appropriate and effective teacher education programmes has been highlighted by researchers (Wu, 2008; Gu 2009; Lin, 2009). In the following I will introduce the national in-service teacher training project proposed as a means to help teachers develop understandings of the challenges as well as their practice to support the new curriculum.

2.2 The National Training Plan project

As mentioned above, since the start of the educational reform, teachers' implementation of the new curriculum has been unsatisfactory. In order to help teachers understand and implement the reform ideas in their real classroom, the central government of China decided to launch an annual nationwide in-service teacher training project, the *National Training Plan*, in 2010. This was regarded as an important step in implementing the governmental requirement for teacher education emphasized in the document *State Planning outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* which states that a series of in-service teacher training courses should be carried out in twenty-one provinces and main cities in China with financial support from the government. These courses are supposed to provide participating teachers with a chance to update their understandings of language teaching and learning through introducing the underpinnings of the new curriculum standards and new teaching approaches. Through participating, teachers are expected to develop themselves professionally and improve their practice to support the new curriculum.

The national training project for English teachers consists of face-to-face training and internet-assisted distance training. In terms of face-to-face training, senior middle school English teachers receive short-term training courses while primary and junior middle school teachers have the chances to attend three types of courses: exemplary short-term training, short-term training for key teachers in Midwestern areas, and replacement training for teachers in Midwestern areas (MOE, 2012). The exemplary short-term training follows a cascade model of training. It is provided for key teachers to upgrade their educational views and teaching skills through observing demonstration teaching and learning the reform ideas. This sort of training

courses are now conducted at the provincial level for key teachers from major secondary schools, after which the trained teachers are expected to lead peer training in their own school. The two Midwest-area courses are particularly provided for the teachers in these areas which are not, comparatively speaking, as developed as others such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong Province in economy and education. These courses aim to raise the level of local education. Teachers are expected, through training activities, to gain advancement in their educational views, knowledge and professional skills, and so become better able to fulfil the requirements of the new curriculum in their classroom teaching. The course in this study is a replacement training course for teachers in Midwestern areas. Such replacement training course is comparatively longer (usually three months) than other courses and cannot be completed in the summer or winter vacation which is usually taken as the training time with least disruption to teachers' term-time teaching. When away from their classrooms for the training course, the participating teachers are replaced by other teachers temporarily for their teaching work.

In order to meet the expected training goals, the government issued *The Curriculum Standards for National Training Plan* in the year of 2012 and recommended a series of lecture topics for the course content. As the document says, these suggestions on training input (see figure 2.2) are drawn from research results on teachers' professional development recommended by Chinese experts. The suggested topics are categorized as teachers' educational views and ethics, teachers' professional knowledge, and teachers' professional skills. Just as figure 2.2 shows, Teachers' professional ethics and views and professional knowledge fall into the category of teachers' professional foundation, and teachers' professional practice mainly concerns teachers' skills to promote student learning and the capacities for their own professional development. A series of relevant topics which are suggested as foci or titles of particular lectures are also provided in the training curriculum standards.
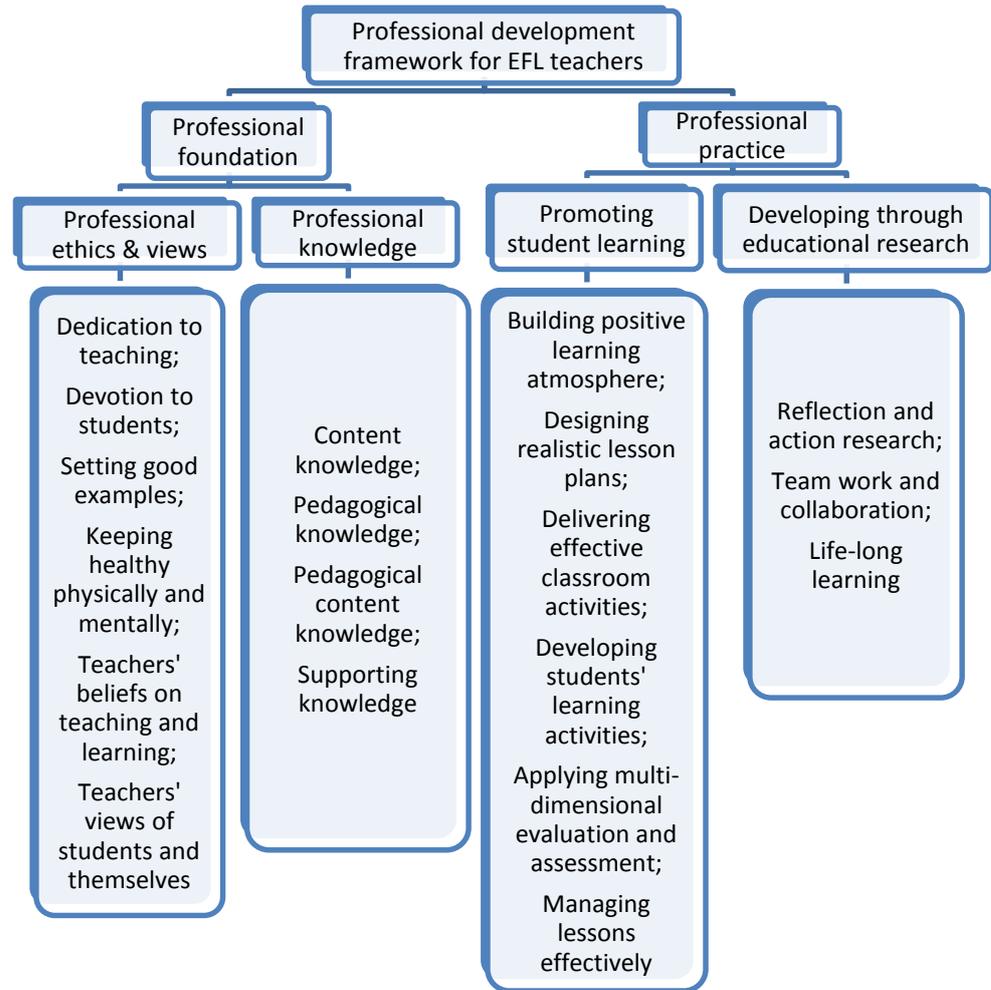
Figure 2.2 The professional development framework for teachers proposed in *The Curriculum Standards of National Training Plan* (MOE, 2012)

The training curriculum standards also propose the basic proportion of training content and time each category should be given in an INSET course (see table 2.1). But these standards allow each training organization to adjust the proportions by up to 5%. In the actual training, the lecture content cannot always be strictly confined within one category as some content might cross categories for particular training purposes. For example, in the lecture on teacher's pedagogical content knowledge in the training course in my study, the trainer encouraged the participating teachers to recall what they believed as practically useful from their pre-service student teacher education and teaching experiences. It covered both the categories of teachers' beliefs and knowledge. Detailed information about the course is provided in section 2.3.

Table 2.1 The basic proportion of training content suggested by *The Curriculum Standards of National Training Plan* (MOE, 2012)

Replacement training course for teachers in Midwestern areas	Required proportion of training contents and time
Teachers' educational views and ethics	5%
Teachers' professional knowledge	45%
Teachers' professional skills	50%

Based on the above description, it is not hard to conclude that the national training project has adopted a top-down training model with most of the training content and topics being pre-determined by the government and/or experts. Teachers are not involved in this procedure.

Some researchers have studied the impact of such a training model and pointed out that the distance between teachers and others (such as policy makers, teacher trainers) within the training system hierarchy contributes to the irrelevance between training content and teachers' real needs and accordingly the inefficacy of the training (e.g. Lamb, 1995; Tomlinson, 1988; Yan & He, 2014). But so far there is insufficient empirical evidence on the impact of such training course on teachers in China (Wang & Zhang, 2014; Yan, 2012). Studies on the impact of the INSET courses within this national project seem necessary to better understand the courses themselves and their contributions to teachers professiaonl development at times of educational reform. In order to explore its impact, I will first introduce the INSET course content, structure and methodology in the following section.

2.3 The INSET course in this study

The INSET course in this study is a short-term replacement training course in Midwestern areas for 50 junior middle school English teachers with at least five years of teaching experience. It ran in Chongqing, from late October, 2012 to early January, 2013. In line with the goal of the national training project, this course aimed to provide participants with updated information, both theoretical and practical, to support language teachers' professional development under the curriculum reform. The course document showed that, except theory-learning,

teachers were expected to bring change to their teaching in five aspects: lesson shape, teacher control, classroom activities, teacher-student rapport and classroom language use. These goals were developed based on the new curriculum requirements on classroom teaching. After the course, the teachers were expected to conduct their teaching through:

- Designing their lesson based on students' needs and flexibly adjusting their in-class teaching steps and/or procedures according to students' reactions, rather than solely following the flow of textbook (lesson shape);
- Choosing suitable classroom activities according to students' language levels and teaching content, and paying more attention to the development of students' communicative skills (classroom activities);
- Releasing teacher control to build up relaxing and supportive learning atmosphere (teacher control);
- Encouraging student learning and keeping their interest in English rather than using summative comments on their classroom performance (teacher-student rapport);
- Using English as instructional medium to provide students language input and stimulating students' use of English in class (classroom language use).

These five teaching aspects provided the outline to evaluate the change of the teachers' practices. Examining what change the teachers brought to their teaching according to these five goals would provide a picture on the extent to which the INSET course influenced their pedagogical behaviour. Therefore, these five aspects were used as the analytical categories in the cases studies to explore the teachers' practice.

The intensive course was expected to consist of three training phases: lecture-based university training, shadow school mentoring and practice in teachers' own schools. The course document explained there was no formal assessment and evaluation of teachers' learning in the course because this course aimed to encourage teachers' active application of their learning outcomes in their actual classrooms and hoped to avoid any possible extra burden caused by the course to teachers' daily work in the last training phase. Unfortunately, the shadowing phase was cancelled, mainly because shadow schools asked for an increase in payment beyond what local administrational institute could afford. So the participating teachers, in fact, were

only trained in two phases: university-based training and practical applications in their own classrooms.

In the first one-month training phase, the lecture-based university training, there were six training hours for six days each week in the form of lectures or workshops. In sum there were 22 lectures and 20 workshops by 16 trainers inside the university and 10 guest trainers from local educational institutes. The topics of lectures generally fell into the categories of teachers' professional ethics and views and professional knowledge and the workshops were mainly concerned with professional practice. The whole course plan cannot be quoted as evidence because the training course coordinator preferred the course design to remain as an unpublished document since each training institute bids for each course every year and course design is one of the most important documents to gain governmental approval. I can only make a brief introduction of the topics in each category.

Lectures on teachers' ethics mainly concern the principles of teaching behaviour, strategies dealing with teachers' personal feelings when teaching (such as job burnout, anxiety about teaching difficulties) and ways of maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships. Regarding teachers' professional views, the lectures introduced the requirements of the new curriculum standards, issues about teachers' professional development and helped teachers explore their own beliefs on language teaching. The focus of the lectures on teachers' professional knowledge was on the theories related to language teaching, including the theoretical framework of teacher's knowledge, the foundations of communicative language teaching, the theoretical framework of textbook evaluation, curriculum development, and school-based educational research. In the category of teachers' professional skills, a wide range of aspects related to teachers' classroom teaching were included and aimed at developing teachers' skills in pedagogical design, teaching methods, implementation of classroom teaching, and classroom management. Most of the topics in this category were covered through workshops. The following is an example of the course design:

Table 2.2 A part of the timetable and topic of the INSET course

Time		Topic
12/11/12	9.00-12.00	Lecture: Strategies for teachers' professional

		development
	14.30-17.30	Lectures: Methods for school-based educational research
13/11/12	9.00-12.00	Lecture: Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge
	14.30-17.30	Workshop: Lesson design under the new curriculum
14/11/12	9.00-12.00	Lecture: Analysis and implementation of the goals of teaching reading in junior middle school
	14.30-17.30	Workshop: "Different structures for the same lesson": Teaching Reading

In terms of the lecture content, some lectures covered two categories as mentioned above. For example, in the lecture on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, participants were asked to recall what they believed to be most useful for making their teaching effective in their previous classroom teaching and why. So the specific proportion of each category suggested in the training curriculum standards could not be exactly counted in actual training process.

During the INSET course, all the lectures were delivered in the form of plenary sessions. The lecturing forms were decided by the trainers themselves, either one-way delivery or discussion. I will take the three-hour lecture on teachers' beliefs as example to illustrate how the lectures were conducted. The trainer from the university presented the main contents of the lecture in PowerPoint as well as gave the printed slides as hand-outs to the participating teachers. In the first one and a half hours, the trainer introduced the definitions and characteristics of teachers' beliefs with some research results as examples. Then the participating teachers were asked to work individually to write down some key words about what they believed was effective in language teaching. The trainer collected some teachers' answers and wrote them down on the blackboard for a further discussion among the teachers to share their ideas on the answers. In the second part, the trainer focused on the "new beliefs" underpinning the new curriculum and compared these to the beliefs that had been elicited from teachers just now, and connected them with what the teachers discussed in the first part and helped them to find out the challenges to their existing beliefs that they might meet in the new curriculum.

In workshops the fifty participating teachers were divided into two classes. The twenty-five teachers in each class were further divided into groups of five. In each workshop there were also two key teachers invited from local major middle schools as expert teachers to share their ideas with the participants. A typical workshop lasted three hours and started with the trainers' explanation of the teaching practice and principles related to a certain aspect of classroom teaching (e.g. combining speaking and listening, classroom activity design). Then participants were provided with opportunities to work in groups for a 10-15 minute demo-teaching practice with provided materials. The purpose was to help participants consolidate, extend and apply their understandings of the new ideas and/or approach promoted in the new curriculum. The tasks participants engaged in focused on teachers' "trying-out", and at the end of each teaching presentation, the trainers and the key teachers gave their own feelings and comments on their work as well as some suggestions for improvement. This part mainly targeted at encouraging teachers to implement further practice in their actual teaching. Other participants were also welcome to share their opinions on what sorts of adaptations might be needed for implementation in their own classrooms. In some workshops the trainers also presented some video-recorded teaching samples (such as some teaching contest winners' model lessons and expert teachers' use of certain teaching methods) to the participants.

Meanwhile, during the first training phase, all participants were given the access to the university library and computer clusters. There were two training days particularly for them to do library research. In the second training phase, as all participating teachers were expected to try out what they learned in the first phase in their teaching practice, some university trainers went to their classrooms to observe some participating teachers' teaching and interacted with them after class. But because of the trainers' daily workload in the university and training time limits, not all the participating teachers' classes were visited. There was no systematic evaluation built into the INSET programme in the second training phase. At the end of each classroom visit, the trainers mainly encouraged the teachers to make more attempts rather than gave evaluative comments.

At the end of the second training phase, the teachers came back to the university for a three-day sum-up session where three lectures on teacher professional development were given and a one-day information exchange activity between

teachers was carried out. The three lectures were given by one university trainer and two by guest trainers. Their topics were mainly on reflective teaching and educational research. The sum-up information exchange activity was conducted in the form of group discussion hosted by two university trainers. Teachers were grouped to discuss their feelings of using what they learned in the first phase, such as the difficulties they met, and the usefulness of the new method in their teaching.

The above description indicates that this INSET course followed an applied science model (Wallace, 1991) where teachers were required to learn new knowledge and methods and then make attempts to "apply" them after learning. This model has been criticized due to its theory-practice gap and teachers' passive role when learning (see chapter 3). Regarding how the INSET course in this study was carried out, it is safe to say that the trainers mainly used the trainer-centred method to carry out their training work. This has also been considered problematic by researchers (e.g. Hayes, 2012; Mujis & Lindsay, 2008). Therefore, it will be interesting to explore what impact the INSET course has on teachers and whether such a traditional model can foster effective teacher learning and bring about change in their practice.

2.4 Research questions

In the chapter 1, I've briefly presented the research aims and research questions of this study. In this section, a detailed rationale is presented.

Borg (2009:169) said that "much more attention has been paid to the study of language teacher cognition in pre-service context than in in-service teacher education". With the focus on both in-service teachers and the in-service teacher training course in this study, I hope it may make some contribution to this under-researched field.

This study aims at exploring the long-term impact of an INSET course on teacher learning and consequently the impact of their learning results on their practice change. Although there are some studies on the impact of such INSET course in China, most of them only provide findings based on data collected immediately at the end of the course. For example, Yan and He's (2014) findings are mainly based on questionnaire data collected on the last day of the course. There is little empirical evidence regarding the ongoing effect of the INSET course on teachers. This is why

I decided to conduct this study with longitudinal research methods to follow the INSET impact on teachers.

Before deciding the research topic, I was interested in teacher cognition and intended to examine teachers' learning results in terms of their cognitive changes (knowledge and belief change specifically) under the INSET impact (research question one). With increasing understandings on the process of teacher change, especially the relationship between teacher cognition and their teaching behaviour, and the integration of socio-cultural theories in teacher education, more concerns on how to evaluate teachers' learning results and what leads to such results emerged and were developed into the other two research questions. According to constructivist theories on the process of how teachers construct their own knowledge and how the context influences this process, I became aware that answering the second and third research questions can provide a fuller picture on how teachers learn and what they can do after learning than merely focusing on the first research question. Detailed theoretical underpinnings of the research questions are presented in chapter 3.

As introduced above, the ultimate goal of the INSET course is to support the educational reform through developing teachers' classroom practice in line with the new curriculum. Examining the change in teachers' practice should of course be the focus of this study from which the impact of the INSET course on teachers can be explored from the teachers' observable behaviour. However, teachers' observable practice is determined by their internal cognitions, which has been widely recognized by researchers (e.g. Borg, 2003, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Richards, 2008). Only by taking into account what changes teachers might experience within themselves can the underpinnings of their practice change be revealed and the long-term impact of the INSET course be explained. Meanwhile, the socio-cultural theories have emphasized the construct of teacher learning as a social event and provided research perspectives on how to analyse teacher learning within a certain context (Richardson, 1997; Johnson, 2006, 2009). So a further research question exploring the contextual factors influencing teacher learning and the impact of the INSET on such learning is also needed. Therefore, the main research questions in this research are:

- To what extent do teachers' knowledge and beliefs change during the INSET course?
- To what extent are teachers' practices influenced by the course?
- What contextual factors contribute to the impact of INSET on teacher learning?

The detailed discussion on the key concepts involved in this study and the relationship between teachers' cognitions and practice as well as the socio-cultural views on teacher learning will be presented in Chapter 3. For the purpose of this study and the existing literature on this topic, the three research questions share equal importance in terms of the answers to each them might provide evidence on how to achieve effective in-service teacher education.

Each question can be further divided into some sub-questions, some of them are closely related, even overlapping, with each other. Answering the sub-questions is assumed to provide rich answers to the main questions and, therefore, a full picture of the research target.

Question One is about the change of teachers' knowledge and beliefs:

- Are teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs changed by the INSET input?
- What do teachers feel about learning on the INSET course?
- What changes are reported in teachers' knowledge and beliefs?

Question Two is about the change of teachers' practice:

- Do teachers put what they learn on INSET course into practice?
- What are the difficulties in implementing what they learn from INSET into their practice?
- If changes occur in teachers' knowledge and beliefs, to what extent do corresponding changes in practice also occur?

Question Three mainly concerns the contextual factors that influence teacher learning and change:

- What role does the INSET course play in teacher learning?
- What elements in each phase support teacher learning?
- What are the supportive /constraining contextual factors influencing teachers' application of learning outcomes?

2.5 Summary

This chapter introduced the characteristics of educational reform and the national in-service teacher education project in China and described the design and process of the INSET course involved in this study. From the description of the INSET course above, it is easy to see that it follows a traditional training model but serves the reform purpose. Therefore, it is interesting to explore the impact of such an INSET course on teacher learning and how it brings about change to teachers' practice to support the new curriculum. In the next chapter I will discuss the literature relevant to such matters.

Chapter 3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, I introduced the context for this study: the national educational reform in China and a large-scale in-service teacher training project. In the educational reform the government hopes a new system of English education in secondary school can replace the old one and the upgrade of every aspect within the system seems an urgent task for teachers and school administrators. Worldwide research has considered teacher professional development as the key to the success of educational reform and has attached tremendous importance to it (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). In order to achieve the success of educational reform, a large number of in-service teacher education opportunities are therefore provided for the teachers in China. The complexities of the social context and the INSET courses under it are inevitably posing their impact on teachers who are regarded as the implementers of the educational reform and the practitioners of the INSET content. In section 2.4, I explained that I chose to examine the impact of the INSET course from the perspective of teacher knowledge and beliefs (research question one). By analysing them, I can take an insightful look at what teachers can use in actual classroom (research question two) and what social factors are facilitating or hindering their application of their learning results (research question three). Based on the findings, this study will be able to provide a full picture of what and how teachers are influenced by the INSET course and to what extent teachers are supported to implement the new curriculum, and then the nature of teacher change.

In this chapter, I will discuss the literature which provides a theoretical framework for the research questions. First, I will focus on the concepts which guides my analysis of the context where this study is conducted. I will begin by examining the features of educational reform and its relationship to teacher professional development. I will then illustrate current models of SLTE and the role that INSET courses are considered to play in teacher learning and professional development. Then I will move to the conceptual terms which help me explore the impact of INSET, including the definitions of teacher learning and the characteristics of effective teacher learning. After that I will outline the key concepts, teacher

knowledge and beliefs, involved in teacher learning in this study. Overall, my purpose here is to highlight the relationship between educational reform, teacher education and teacher learning as well as the connection between the research questions. By doing so, I intend to establish a theoretical rationale for this study.

3.2 Understanding the complexity of educational reform

Educational reform has been a common phenomenon around the world in recent decades. Policy-makers may initiate a large-scale reform for various reasons, such as the development of national competiveness in a rapidly changing world, or improving the quality of national education provision. Literature on educational reform indicates that "the perennial universal theme of change in all cultural and educational context globally [is] to solve problems, or bring about changes in the education system, and in the classroom teaching and learning process" (Yan & He, 2012: 2). What is implied in this assumption is that change is a complex process which might cause conflict and chaos between people's established ideas and/or behaviours and new ones in the reform process. Here, for my research purpose, I adopt Morrison's (1998) definition of educational reform to outline the relevant aspects involved in this study:

> a dynamic and continuous process of development and growth
> that involves a reorganization in response to "felt needs". It is a
> process of transformation, a flow from one state to another,
> either initiated by internal factors or external forces, involving
> individuals, groups or institutions, leading to realignment of
> existing v*alues, practices and outcomes* (p.13)*.*

The above definition indicates three important aspects influencing the success of educational reform. The first is related to the felt needs from internal and external factors, such as the needs perceived by national policy-makers for change to support the development of society or as a response to international trends. This implies that educational reform may be more than an issue within the field of education，but is also thought "to support desirable wider changes in other aspects of society as a whole" (Wedell, 2009: 14). The second aspect emphasizes that educational reform is a process, proposing a hoped-for state different from the current one. The core of this process lies in its classroom implementation with teachers as key participants

contributing to the success of reform (Edwards, 2012; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). The last aspect concerns the real changes that are needed for true educational reform to take place. Educational reform may usually be started or initiated by policy makers through publication of new documents and/or plans, but what lies at the heart of these are changes in the existing values of the people involved in the reform and consequently changes in their practice. These three aspects indicate that, within the context of curriculum reform, achieving the expected goals is a complex process which may challenge existing teaching and learning norms and practices across the education system. Therefore, the success of any education/curriculum reform does not depend purely on technical attempts to introduce new teaching approaches, but rather on the responses of all relevant participants.

Existing literature suggests a number of factors which are likely to influence the implementation of educational reform, either positively or negatively. Wedell (2009) argues that one influential factor is the extent to which the same meaning/understanding of the implications of the reform is shared among the people most directly affected. This idea is supported by other researchers (e.g. Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 1996; Hall & Hewings, 2001; Goh, 1999). Fullan (1993) furthermore points out that the insufficient understanding of the complexity of reform may mean that inappropriate implementation strategies are developed:

> …the problems are complex and intractable. Workable, powerful solutions are hard to conceive and harder to put in practice. The other reason is that the strategies that are used do not focus on the things that will really make a difference. They fail to address the fundamental instructional reform and associated development of new collaborative culturing among educators (p.46).

Fullan's statement implies that the reform ideas are hard to realize. The lack of appropriate strategies to address them also seems to be the main reason for the gap between theory-based reform policies and context-bound practices which has been recognized by researchers (e.g. Wedell, 2009; Wang, 2015; Said & Zhang, 2014; Kooy & van Veen, 2012). They observed that many reform ideas and policies are either directly imported from other countries assumed to have better education systems and/or devised by national level experts or policy makers who are distanced from actual classrooms. Consultation with the actual practitioners (particularly

teachers) is not typically part of the policy-making process. Consequently, policy makers within top-down reform systems have no access to and so cannot understand the views and needs of the core change implementers. This still common reality contrasts with Fullan's (2007) view, on the communication of reform ideas supported by socio-cultural perspective, "in order to achieve greater meaning, we must come to understand both the small and the big picture" (p.8) in which the small picture concerns the subjective meaning or the lack of meaning for individuals at all levels of the education system while the big picture refers to the broad socio-political environment. Within such a top-down system of educational reform, the socio-political demands are usually highlighted, but the actual needs from lower down the educational hierarchy, such as schools at different levels, and teachers from different schools, do not receive sufficient attention. This makes the topic of this study interesting since the lack of a shared understanding largely contributes to the lack of success in educational reform and influences the impact of other supporting educational activities (including teacher education which serves the educational reform and works as a part of the reform movement). Considering the contextual influence on the INSET results seems essential when generating meaningful findings on teacher education. Therefore, based on this idea, the research question on the impact of social factors is generated (see section 2.4).

3.3 Studies on educational reform in China

The basic education reform in China is carried out under the banner of quality-oriented education which, compared with the knowledge accumulation orientations of former Chinese educational reforms, is "ambitious, radical, wide/far reaching and complex" (Yan, 2012:1) because, as chapter 2 shows, the current reform aims at bringing about fundamental change to the longstanding teacher-centred and transmission-based pedagogies.

However, similar to many other countries, the educational reform in China is taking place in a top-down highly centralized system in which only the Ministry of Education at the apex sets educational policy. Thus, when introducing English curriculum changes, imported ideas such as communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching have been officially imposed on teachers who are required to adopt them. Existing research has indicated the shortcomings of such an approach to educational reform.

Hu (2005) questions if CLT is best for China. He criticises the manner in which the diverse contexts of ELT in China seem to be ignored and suggests reasons why the assumption of CLT's universal effectiveness is problematic in Chinese classrooms. Lack of communication between policy and teachers is also reflected in teachers' very limited implementation of the above teaching approaches. Zhang and Liu (2014) point out that it has been more than ten years since the start of the educational reform, but teachers are still teaching like a Chinese old saying: "wearing new shoes but taking the old path" (employing the traditional approach even though they have learned the innovative ideas) (An, 2011). Some other researchers have also realized this gap between actual implementation and the intended curriculum and have conducted a number of studies to explore it.

Yan (2012) collected qualitative data, including observation, interviews, field notes and reflection reports, on secondary school EFL teachers' perceptions and implementation of the new curriculum and found that the teachers' enactment of the new curriculum seemed superficial and their articulated feelings about the curriculum reform presented their resistance towards changes. In her discussion, Yan (2012) highlighted the importance of addressing the challenges and difficulties teachers encountered which involved a combination of individual teacher factors and systemic factors hindering the implementation process. The factors presented in her study included teachers' "lack of professional expertise needed for pedagogical transformations, the pressure from exam-obsessed students and parents, the constrained teaching resources and facilities, the lack of school support, and absence of effective New Curriculum teacher training" (Yan, 2012: 18). Among the factors, she highlighted that the lack of change at the macro-level in assessment seemed significantly important in discouraging teachers from making a transformation.

Lee and Yin (2011) investigated teachers' emotional experiences in the process of implementing the new senior middle school curriculum and suggest that teachers' emotional experiences about the curriculum change are complex. The crucial role of Chinese culture is highlighted, especially Confucian Heritage Culture, in shaping teachers' responses to curriculum reform. They propose that a situated perspective is necessary in studying China's curriculum reform and for investigating teachers' behavioural responses to the new curriculum as well as their affective responses. Yin's (2013) findings support this result. He used a socio-cultural perspective to examine teachers' response to the curriculum reform in senior middle school in

China through a three-year qualitative research project. Yin (2013) identifies teachers' obedience, facework and collaboration as the three major aspects in teachers' responses to the curriculum reform due to the societal culture within which they work. When analysing the findings, it was found that teachers' obedience was influenced by the Confucian culture of compliance and the traditional culture of respecting the superior in power distance. In reality, teachers tried to avoid interpersonal conflicts with policymakers which might label them as "resistant" to national policies. In the conclusion, Yin (2013) summarizes that teachers tried to harmonize human relationships by following the reform policy in a superficial way and hiding conflicts. The result was subtle resistance and passive obedience to the curriculum reform implementation, but minimal meaningful change in classroom practice.

3.4 Professional development for EFL teachers

The above sections illustrate some factors influencing the success of educational reform, including those impacting on teachers' pedagogical decisions on using the new teaching approaches espoused by the reform. There is an extensive literature on the relationship between educational reform and teacher professional development with teachers' professional development thought to be the cornerstone for the implementation of educational reform.

Teacher development is traditionally confined to staff development or in-service training (Villegas-Reimers, 2003); while in a broad sense, professional development refers to "the development of a person in his or her professional role" (Villegas-Reimers, 2003: 11). But the former definition only covers systemic intervention for teacher development, the latter contains a much broader sense of teaching as a profession rather than a mere occupation (Carlgren, 1996; Hoyle, 1995; Olson, 1996). Based on this view, teachers' professional development is given more importance in teacher research.

Under the circumstance of educational reform, teachers' professional development is an influential factor in the reform's success (Richardson, 1994; Malderez & Wedell, 2007; Burns & Richards, 2009). Developing teachers over time to meet changing educational demands has thus been a frequently debated topic in the field of teacher

education, including EFL education, and teachers' continuing professional development (henceforth CPD) has become a focus of research.

Hayes (2014) defines CPD as "multi-faceted, lifelong experiences which can take place inside or outside the workplace and which often moves beyond the profession and into the realm of a teacher's personal life " (p.5). Day (1999) views teacher CPD as

> all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives (p.4).

Consistent with this definition, a broad variety of professional development activities exist, encompassing formal, government-sponsored large-scale in-service teacher training programmes and small-scale or individual development initiatives (Hayes, 2014).

It has been long assumed that teachers would be ready to learn and grow by themselves after completing their university-based preparation, and a large number of studies on language teacher education have focused on pre-service teacher education. However, recent research increasingly reminds us that teachers' professional development is a continuous process and that in-service development which starts once teachers enter their classrooms, should last continuously throughout their professional lives. Researchers suggest that teacher learning should be recognized as a process of continuous reconstruction of experience in the light of experience that requires support over time (Crandall, 2000; Borko *et al*., 2000). Governments worldwide have also begun to be concerned with the need to raise standards of education, and to recognize that for this to occur teachers need to be helped to become well qualified, highly motivated, knowledgeable and skilful, not

only when they enter teaching but also throughout their careers (Day & Sachs, 2004). Therefore, teachers' CPD is an important element of any educational reform or development initiative. Before discussing how to help teachers to continue leaning throughout their careers, a deeper understanding of the nature of teacher learning and the factors that influence it is necessary (Wermke, 2011). Addressing such issues is central to this study.

From the policy perspective, CPD is seen as central to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning worldwide (Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005; Mujis & Lindsay, 2008). As the key implementers of any educational reform, teachers are usually required to adapt their thinking and practice to changing demands. Take China for instance. From 1980s to now, Chinese EFL teachers have experienced three government-driven reforms. These have demanded that they raise the level of their academic certificates, that they cope with changing from grammar-focused to communication-focused textbooks, and currently that they successfully develop students' learning and overall communicative abilities. The challenges for teachers in these reforms have shifted from improving teachers' subject knowledge to developing teachers' cognitions and professional skills of teaching and learning. In the current curriculum reform, the traditional concept of teaching and learning (teacher-centred, knowledge-oriented and transmission-based) and the authority of teachers in classroom are challenged (see chapter 2). Achieving the expected reform goals depends principally on teachers' capacities to cope with these imposed changes and improve their teaching practice accordingly. CPD is believed to be the critical means for teachers to develop the capacities needed (Hayes, 2014). How to provide appropriate opportunities for teachers to develop new capacities and what impact these development opportunities actually have on teachers has therefore attracted much academic attention.

3.5 INSET in teacher professional development

In this section, I will present and discuss the INSET course as the most dominant form of professional development provision in China as well as other countries in the world at times of curriculum change. The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the characteristics of INSET in terms of different training models.

INSET refers, in most cases, to the formal training courses which are provided and managed by outside partners (usually experts, and/or teacher educators). Differently from individual or informal professional development which focuses more on individual needs, INSET focuses more on institutional and organizational perceptions of need (Craft, 2000). INSET courses organized according to a limited range of models remain the most common means of "supporting" educational changes, and their main strengths and weaknesses seem to be common across contexts. Borg (2015) summarizes two contrasting training models in in-service teacher education: training-transmission model and development-constructivist model. The following will discuss these two models and figure out the perspective this study will take to look at the INSET course.

3.5.1 Training-transmission model

Borg (2015) states that the most commonly used training model in current in-service teacher education is transmission-based. It is usually planned by policy makers as part of a national top-down implementation process with experts from outside of school in charge of delivery. This kind of INSET course can be short or long (short in most cases), on-site or off-site and aims to serve the purpose of raising the quality of educational provision (Hayes, 1997).

Early research on short INSET courses identified the strength of such courses for delivering new initiatives to and/or developing new skills for a large number of teachers in a short period of time. Some prerequisites for running such courses are commonly mentioned, such as financial support from the government, formal opportunities with necessary facilities, and the knowledge and ideas delivered by external trainers.

Rudduck (1981) reports that the advantages of such short INSET courses include: (a) the chance of expanding the range of ideas and techniques available to teachers; (b) providing opportunities for teachers to share professional experiences and become more reflective about their teaching behaviours; and (c) providing teachers with options to choose from according to their particular interests and so encouraging them to make their own professional decisions. In sum, Rudduck's analysis highlights the effectiveness of INSET courses for stimulating teachers' enthusiasm for professional learning and development. It is also an important way for teachers to develop their practices through sharing professional experiences. However,

Rudduck did not say anything about how the course content and process might need to be planned and designed in order to inspire teachers' professional development.

More recent research questions the efficacy of this kind of INSET course. The most commonly discussed problem is related to the conflict between training-transmission model and the professional development required by teachers (Borg, 2015). What Rudduck (1981) views as a strength has been criticized for its potential to increase teachers' dependence on external expert knowledge. Within this model, knowledge about language teaching and learning is viewed "as a fixed body, coded in research articles and books, which can be transmitted to trainees, who will understand and incorporate it into their practice" (Diaz-Maggioli, 2012:10). Freeman (2009) describes this as an input-application view of language teacher education. From this perspective, the aims of teacher education programmes naturally focus on enhancing teachers' knowledge with the expectation that they can improve their practice with the new knowledge. The training content has often been labelled decontextualized and usually imposed on the teachers without encouraging them to understand the reason why it is important to know it or do it (Muijis *et al.,* 2014). The role of teachers as active learners and knowledge constructors is ignored because of the overemphasis on the learning of declarative or conceptual knowledge.

The theoretical orientation advanced in this model has been identified as being limited in terms of fostering change in teachers' practice because, based on the assumption of this training model, "there exists one right way of doing teaching … supported not by what works in the classroom but by the dictates of theoretical and empirical research in applied linguistics, psychology, or general pedagogy" (Diaz-Maggioli, 2012: 10). Day (1999:133) asserts that on such INSET courses, teachers have "less opportunity for extending learning, less choice over what they learn, less support for study unless they belong to a targeted group".

Numerous studies on such INSET courses have been conducted internationally (e.g. Lamb, 1995 in Indonesia; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008 in the US; Kubanyiova, 2012 in Slovakia; Sim, 2011 in South Korea; Yan & He, 2014 in China) and have reached the similar conclusion that the short one-shot INSET course tends to be ineffective in promoting long-term teacher change. A number of problematic features of short INSET course are, based on their findings, identified as follows:

- Teachers do not have the access to teacher education policy-making and the

course design and their real needs are not really addressed by the course;

- The course might try to "cover" too much new information or introduce too many new skills in a too short training period;

- The INSET course may involve teachers from different contexts without taking their local conditions into account;

- The training content mainly consists of theoretical knowledge and often fails to help teachers make connection with their actual context;

- Trainers are usually university-based researchers, not classroom teachers, with very limited knowledge or experience of teachers' specific teaching contexts.

As the weaknesses of traditional transmission-based training model have been recognized, calls for more effective forms of professional training and learning are emerging (Riding, 2001). In comparison, a development-oriented training model with constructivist view of course design and implementation seems likely to be more effective for teachers' professional development (Borg, 2015). In the following section I discuss this model and its characteristics.

3.5.2 Development-constructivist model

In contrast to the training-transmission model, the development-constructivist model calls for "a host of alternative professional development structures that allow for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers' classrooms" (Johnson, 2009: 25). This implies that, within the framework of this model, the role of teachers as active learners and knowledge constructors and the critical role of their context in their learning and teaching need to be taken into account on the training course

Differently from the knowledge transmission-based model, constructivist views on teacher education recognize that professional learning is not merely the sequential, additive mastery and routine application of knowledge and skills (Borg, 2015). From this perspective, teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs are likely to be challenged when learning the training input as well as exerting influence when processing new information. Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2006) suggest that the teacher training course focusing on theory and methods must work simultaneously with teachers' existing beliefs, practices and identities. It will be insufficient for an INSET course to just deliver theoretical information to teachers without making effort to help teachers explore their former perceptions of teaching and learning, internalize the

input and construct their own new knowledge on the basis of the interaction between prior views and new information. Therefore, this development-oriented model coincides with the assumption that teacher learning should be viewed as an autonomous process (Benson, 2010) and teachers as learners should take more responsibility for their own learning.

Another important element of a development-constructivist model is related to the role of teachers' work place, usually the classroom. In training-transmission model, classroom is just regarded as the place for teachers' application of theories. Its powerful influence of mediating teachers' understanding and perception of new knowledge and new teaching approach is ignored. With socio-cultural theories being applied to explain the process of teacher learning (see section 3.6.2), the mediating role of context has gradually been highlighted in research on teacher education to address the dichotomy between theory and practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). A number of empirical studies have illustrated that both the classroom (e.g. students' language proficiency, textbook content) and the general social context (e.g. local schooling regularities, social-cultural perspectives on teaching and learning) in which teacher education and teacher learning take place have strong impact on the extent to which INSET course can bring change to teachers (e.g. Edwards & Li, 2011; Singh & Richards, 2006; Zheng, 2012).

Meanwhile, teacher learning is also a social event in nature. The INSET course can be seen as a community for teachers to learn together and share experiences and expertise (Snow-Gerono, 2005; So, 2013; Stoll *et al.* 2006). Darling-Hammond (2013: 150) states that "teaching improves most in collegial settings where common goals are set, curriculum is jointly developed, and expertise is shared". Although teacher learning in nature is a process of internalizing input from outside, it does not rule out support from external agents (Borg, 2015), such as teacher trainers, university-school partnerships, etc., although teachers' personal ownership of their professional learning process and collaborative learning between teachers are emphasized.

In order to achieve the expected INSET goal, the practical implementation of this model has also attracted much academic attention. Richards and Farrell (2005) have suggested eleven different procedures to facilitate professional development under this constructivist framework: workshops, self-monitoring, teacher support groups,

journal writing, peer observation, teaching portfolios, analysis of critical incidents, case analysis, peer coaching, team teaching, and action research. Some of these have been used in in-service teacher training internationally, such as collaborative action research (Burns, 2010 in Australia) and, classroom video observation (Lo, 2012 in Hong Kong). However, in reality, the transmission-based model still occupies the dominant place in teacher education in China (see the national teacher training plan in chapter 2) while the development-oriented constructivist methods, which are believed to be effective for productive teacher learning, are not widely employed.

The comparison between the two models sheds light on the research perspective of this study: how to explore the INSET course and what factors to evaluate when considering its design and process, as well as the reasons for its impact. Hopefully, my study of this INSET course in China will contribute further to this worldwide field of research.

3.5.3 INSET in China

The above two sections discussed the two most debated teacher training models. In this section I will illustrate the model employed by INSET courses for EFL teachers in China and existing studies on it.

English language teaching in China has long been influenced by other countries, especially the UK and the US. So has language teacher education. The use of INSET courses for teacher education and development has been popular in different regions for years, increasingly so since the beginning of the English curriculum reform.

However, although tremendous financial and human resources have been invested in INSET courses, their effect remains limited in line with research findings in other countries mentioned above. Formidable challenges such as brevity, prescriptiveness, and disconnection of theory with practice in local contexts have not yet been overcome (Kiely & Davis, 2010, Wedell, 2011) and the lack of long-term effect and sustainability is noticeable (San Antonio et al., 2011). Wang and Zhang (2014) state that in China "teacher training at all levels for the new curriculum was found to be unable to help teacher solve practical problems or support their professional autonomy" (p.223). Existing literature shows that current INSET courses for EFL teachers in China, especially the ones funded by government, mainly adopt the training-transmission model which has received considerable criticisms as a mere administrative rhetoric, formality and burden (Yan, 2015).

Some researchers provide empirical findings on INSET impact in Chinese context and generally conclude that the courses are ineffective for teacher professional development (e.g. Wu, 2005; Paine & Fang, 2006). Their findings show that this result is closely related to the incompatibility between theories recommended by INSET programmes and teachers' practical classroom situation as well as the concomitant failure to provide relevant guidance for the specific problems (Yang, 2011). This incompatibility has been fundamentally related to the knowledge gap between theory/conceptualization-oriented teacher educators and experience/practice-oriented teachers (Day & Gu, 2007). Some research evidence supports the existence of this gap in China's INSET course. In a quantitative survey among 600 teachers on their training needs, Wang (2015) reports that many of the teachers involved held positive views towards change and demanded less theory-oriented talk and more practical techniques on putting theory into practice. Her investigation implies that a minimal gap between theory and practice might be more effective in fostering teacher change than mere delivery of theories. Liu (2006) investigated the models of new curriculum training for rural junior high school English teachers and found that the theory-practice gap resulted in teachers' resistance to INSET participation. Liu (2008) reports that the theory-practice gap makes it difficult for the traditional top-down and expert-driven curriculum to be transformed into actual classroom by teachers. By observing an INSET course on teachers' action research in a district of Beijing, Yang (2011) illustrates the training model which is based on the theory of action research and mainly conducted by university researchers. His findings highlight the general lack of responsiveness of the course to teachers' actual needs which results in teachers' difficulties of integrating their actual teaching and researching.

Among the current research on INSET impact on Chinese EFL teachers, two empirical studies are of relevance to this study in terms of the type of INSET course and research perspectives. Wu (2005), based on her one-year fieldwork on a government sponsored in-service teacher training project in China, reports that the social factors from the context in which teachers worked gradually emerged as a key issue that affected teacher change and development. She concludes that the inappropriateness of the teacher education programmes in terms of design, the setting and the training models and methods might contribute to the limited impact on teacher development and proposes that teacher development does not only

involve teachers' personal commitment but also the change in contextual factors, including social atmosphere and political environment. Yan and He's (2014) research investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of short INSET programmes and their feelings on INSET course improvement. Their findings indicate that the INSET course factors, such as training duration, theoretical orientation, the lack of peer observation and follow-up support of any kind, contributed to teachers' dissatisfaction with the course. Their studies show that the gap between teacher education policy and grassroots needs remain unsolved and imply the awareness increase for policy makers on how to support teacher learning and development from a socio-cultural perspective.

The above studies reveal first, that the INSET course studied mainly targeted at improving teachers' practice, just like the one in this study. The problems about the courses were related to the mismatch between course content and teachers' needs for real practice. Their studies provide important research perspective for this research to look at the teachers' change and INSET impact on them: examining teachers' classroom practice and compare their teaching before and after the INSET course can portray what change they might have experienced. This makes the second research question on teachers' practice change meaningful.

Secondly, together with studies on education reform in sections 3.3 and 3.4, the above studies have indicated that both the implementation of the new curriculum in China and teacher change are not straightforward. They have emphasized the role of the contextual factors that shape Chinse EFL teachers' perceptions of curriculum change, especially the well-established traditional cultural values which have a strong impact on teachers' practices and perceptions of appropriate teaching and learning. The gap between teachers' actual instructional behaviours and those expected by the intended curriculum change is thus not just the result of what teachers learn on INSET course but rather related to the reform policies to existing educational culture and teaching-learning conditions (Wedell, 2009) in China. The impact of the INSET course which is designed and conducted to serve the reform thus inevitably needs to be understood from various perspectives rather than just on what teachers may learn on the course. This further emphasizes the necessity of making connection between what teachers learn and what they can do after learning within their context. To serve this research purpose, some sub-questions are generated upon the above discussion under the research questions on teachers'

practice change and contextual factors (see section 2.4), aiming at probing a wider range of factors influencing teacher learning and change rather than just the INSET course and provide a full picture of teacher education and professional development in China.

3.6 Teacher learning

Sustained professional learning among teachers has been widely deemed one of the important global issues required to achieve educational effectiveness and improvement of student learning outcomes (e.g. Kelly, 2006; Cumming, 2011). No matter what learning activities teachers take, INSET course or individual informal learning, teacher learning takes the central role in the process. In this section I will discuss the nature of teacher learning from different perspectives and then explain what position this study employs to look at teacher learning on the INSET course which is its focus.

In recent years, the contrast between teacher education and development has been replaced by a reconsideration of the nature of teacher learning (Burns & Richards, 2009), which is increasingly viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and practice of a community of practice (Tsui, 2009; Singh & Richards, 2006; 2009). A range of qualitative and quantitative studies have generated evidence that has presented valuable insights into teacher learning (e.g. Abdelhafez, 2010; Bakkenes, Vermunt & Wubbels, 2010). From different research perspectives, their findings make different assumptions concerning the focus of teacher learning. In the following sections I will illustrate the two main perspectives that have been promoted - the cognitive perspective and situated perspective - and combine them as the research perspective of this study.

3.6.1 The cognitive perspective of learning

The cognitive perspective emerges from the psychological work of Piaget and emphasizes the individual workings of the mind (Cobb, 1994; Hoban, 2002). This perspective assumes that learning is a process of continually working and reworking an individual's knowledge based on experiences (Piaget, 1950). When learning occurs, an individual's cognitive schema becomes more and more complex which Piaget (1950) called "assimilation" and "accommodation". According to cognitive learning theories, the change of these cognitive schemes is a process within the

individual although they are influenced and modified through social interaction. This cognitive perspective highlights the process of personal knowledge construction and the importance of learner's prior knowledge as a major influence. Putnam and Borko (1997) suggest that cognitive learning theories are relevant to teacher learning as teachers' prior beliefs and knowledge about classroom practices influence how they interpret new ideas received externally.

Constructivism develops the cognitive perspective further to highlight that knowledge is actively stored in the mind and an individual's prior knowledge influences the build-up of new knowledge (Hoban, 2002). This also plays a role in research on teacher learning, as exemplified in the notion of reflection (Schön, 1983, 1987; Munby & Russell, 1994). Reflection has been regarded as the cornerstone of professional development and a central element of many professional development programmes (Abednia *et al*. 2013; Burton, 2009; Fejes, 2011; Sellars, 2012; Shabeeb & Akkary, 2013). "The action of reflection is consistent with a cognitive perspective, as it is the rethinking of experience that provides personal meaning and hence learning" (Hoban, 2002: 53). Among the essential factors involved in teachers' reflective learning, their existing knowledge and beliefs about classroom teaching and learning take the most influential place when interpreting experiences to modify and expand their knowledge (Putnam & Borko, 1997).

Some weaknesses of the cognitive perspective, however, have been identified by researchers. Schoenfeld (1999), contended that when cognitive learning theories are applied to explain personal knowledge construction, this is likely to ignore the impact of how identity is constructed and how social interactions play a role in the learning process. Another weakness of this perspective is that it fails to emphasize the context-bound features of learning, especially adult learning, in an authentic socio-cultural situation. These ideas have promoted an alternative perspective to analyse the nature of learning.

3.6.2 The situated perspective of learning
In contrast to a cognitive perspective, an increasing body of research has begun to emphasize the importance of the context or situation for learning based on the assumption that human learning and thinking cannot be separated from the context (Borko, 2004; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

The situated perspective is developed from cultural-historical psychology and grounded in the socio-cultural theories mainly developed by Vygotsky in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory views human as social beings and their cognitive development as a socially mediated activity. Terms like "situated learning", "social construction", and "community of practice" appear repeatedly in research literature. These terms, known as markers of a situated perspective, interact with the current reform movement in education (Putnam & Borko, 2000) and have enlightened the research perspectives of educational reform with three conceptual themes which are central to understand learning: (a) situated in particular physical and social contexts; (b) social in nature; and (c) distributed across the individual, other persons and tools. These three themes are rooted in theories of early educators and psychologists such as Dewey (1896) and Vygotsky (1978).

Putnam and Borko (1997) contend that the situated perspective also applies to teacher learning in terms of the social and situated dimensions of the learning process. They suggest that teachers learn a lot from the social interactions within the communities in which they share experiences and also learn in context as they experiment with practice in their own classrooms. Congruent with the situated perspective and socio-cultural learning theory, there is consensus in research to emphasize the combined characteristics of individual theorization in context, social interaction and importance of support from the context in the process of teacher learning and professional development (Arbaugh et al., 2012; Ur, 1992; Freeman & Richards, 1996). In the field of SLTE, some researchers have provided empirical evidence to indicate the usefulness of the situated perspective in understanding teacher learning as a socially constructed process involving active seeking of meaning through experience (Dahlman, 2006; Sim, 2011; Phipps, 2007).

3.6.3 Combining two perspectives in this study

As illustrated above, taking a cognitive perspective is like using a close-up lens to observe the details of what is happening in an individual's learning but missing out on the surrounding context. Alternatively, taking a situated perspective is like using a wide-angle lens to examine learning in a broad social-context, but misses out on individual details. In the literature for adult learning, researchers call for learning to be viewed through multiple perspectives as "the psychological perspective, which has been used as the major lens through which educators of adults have viewed

development, can be widened to include the other lens of biological, sociocultural, and integrated perspectives" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999: 135). Shulman (1988) also argues that a dichotomy is sometimes useful for sharpening opposing lines of argument, but the most appropriate view is often a balance between two extremes that considers the virtues of both sides.

To investigate the complexity of teacher learning, Putnam and Borko (1997) suggest the use of multiple research perspectives for the exploration of the personal nature of knowledge and beliefs and the social, situated and distributed nature of cognition. They propose six conditions for teacher learning that are underpinned by insights from this eclectic approach:

- Teachers should be treated as active learners who construct their own knowledge (from the personal nature of cognition);
- Teachers should be empowered and treated as professionals (from the social nature of cognition);
- Teacher education should be situated in classroom practice (from the situated nature of cognition);
- Teacher educators should treat teachers as they expect teachers to treat students (from the social nature of cognition);
- Teachers need to consider what ideas or content is essential in their learning and gain different expertise (from the distributed nature of cognition); and
- Teachers need to use a range of tools to keep track of the vast information available (from the distributed nature of cognition).

These conditions highlight the fact that understanding teacher learning should not be constrained within a certain research perspective. Only by looking at teacher learning from more than one perspective can a rich picture be provided. This inspires the selection of research perspectives of this study.

Richards' (2008) ideas on the nature of teacher learning provide further support for the view that teacher learning is not just translating knowledge and theories into practice but "constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes" (p.164). Within the INSET context, a variety of factors form a complex network influencing teachers' learning outcomes, such as the knowledge teachers are exposed to, the prior knowledge and beliefs teachers bring to the course, the way

they deal with input, and the process through which teachers construct new knowledge and practice. Therefore, when researching on teacher learning, it is necessary to take into account the characteristics of teachers as learners in learning process as well as participants in a social community (such as the INSET course in this study).

This study tends to combine the two perspectives to take a flexible view that takes into account individuals' learning processes as well as social and contextual influences. Hoban (2002) states that, when investigating teacher learning in a longitudinal study, "using two different units of analysis for learning is like looking through different lenses to examine the same event" (p. 58). Salomon and Perkins (1998) also support the use of the two perspectives because "the issue of where cognitions reside, particularly when discussed in an educational context, cannot be dealt with in an either (in one's head)/or (distributed) fashion" (p.111). There are already some studies in EFL teacher learning and professional development which employed the two perspectives to look at the changes teachers experience in formal and informal learning activities.(e.g. Lamb, 1995; Lefstein & Snell, 2011; Assalahi, 2013; Yu & Wang, 2009; Yan & He, 2014). Their findings provide evidence that the combination of the two perspectives is effective in gaining insights into the complexity of teacher learning. For example, Lamb's (1995) findings show that the limited uptake of INSET content by teachers is mainly due to the mediating effects of the teachers' own beliefs about teaching and learning, among which the teachers could find the influence of their teaching context on their adaptation and rejection of the INSET proposed teaching methods, including students' language proficiency and limited teaching resources. The gap between teachers' well-developed mental constructs and the focus of the INSET course was identified as the main reason for the conflict between teachers' post-INSET practice and proposed methods. In their longitudinal study on teacher learning in the context of education reform, Bakkenes, Vermunt and Wubbels (2010) analysed the content of teachers' learning experiences in terms of learning activities and learning outcomes and reported changes mainly in teachers' knowledge and beliefs, emotions rather than in teaching practice. In terms of the connection between learning environment and teachers' learning outcomes, they found that organized learning environments seemed to elicit better learning activities and outcomes than informal learning in the workplace.

Regarding the research focus and context in this study, the combination of these two perspectives will also be workable. Under the national context of curriculum innovation, there exists a contrast between personal experiences and the system-wide professional development imperatives. What the new curriculum promotes poses tremendous challenge to teachers who are used to a traditional approach (Wang, 2015; Wang & Zhang, 2014). Understanding the relationship between teachers' personal factors (teacher knowledge and beliefs in this study) and the external influence from the INSET course and the wider social context seems important to examine the issues relevant to this study, including how individual teachers perceive these challenges, what change their formal learning on the INSET course leads to their classroom, how the contextual constraints affect their perception and application of new ideas and skills. For this purpose, combining both cognitive and situated perspectives seems being able to meet the needs for analysing teachers' learning and then reaching the conclusion of the contextual influence on teacher education.

Therefore, the research position I will adopt within the constructivist and socio-cultural frameworks in this study includes:

- Teacher learning is an internal process where teachers use their own existing understandings and views to evaluate received information and construct new knowledge (research question one) and change/develop their practice (research question two);

- Teacher learning is influenced by external factors, not only from the learning activities but also from the social environment at different levels, from their classrooms to national curriculum change (research question three).

3.7 Key concepts in understanding teacher learning in this study

In existing literature various concepts have been used to examine the impact of teacher education programmes, such as the course content, course implantation, and teacher cognitions. In section 2.4 and the introduction to this chapter I mentioned that this study adopts teacher knowledge and belief as the analytical dimensions to examine the impact of INSET on teacher learning (research question one), based on which the research purpose of exploring a wider range of factors contributing to teacher change will be achieved. This section aims at defining these key concepts.

Richards and Farrell (2005) say that teacher professional development serves "a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers" (p. 4). Though defined in different words, teacher professional development is perceived as a long-term process of growth of teaching and being a teacher within a particular context, manipulated by formal and informal experiences. Research on curriculum implementation and teacher professional development reveals that teacher professional development influences the curriculum implementation from multiple perspectives, among which teacher knowledge and beliefs are the most widely discussed (Clark & Elmore, 1981; Penuel *et al.*, 2007; Roehrig & Kruse, 2005). Teacher knowledge and beliefs are also regarded as the most influential factors affecting Chinese secondary school teachers' responses to curriculum reform (Guan & Meng, 2007; Zhong, 2006). Shkedi (1998) states that the implementation of a curriculum lies in the process where teachers connect their beliefs and knowledge with practice. In the particular context of an INSET course, the role of teacher knowledge and beliefs seems important in teachers' negotiation of meaning when new knowledge is distributed. Teacher learning on INSET course involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher in the sense of their roles when teaching. The difficulty of changing teachers' practices through INSET courses has been stressed (Lamb, 1995; Bailey, 1992) and is often described in terms of resistance to change (Hayes, 2012) (see section 3.8).

Understanding the interaction of teachers' internal forces and external initiatives helps develop a conceptual basis for this study in terms of the two combined perspectives. In the following I will discuss the two concepts involved in this study as analytical parameters: teacher knowledge and beliefs. Before discussing them, I have to admit that these two concepts are intertwined and in practical terms it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction. The reason why I use them in this study is to explore the impact of INSET on teacher learning and help readers to understand it clearly rather than defining them theoretically.

3.7.1 Teacher knowledge

Teacher knowledge is a complex construct that has been extensively researched over decades. Existing literature shows that it is difficult to define teacher knowledge in a suitable-for-all way since it comprises a number of diverse dimensions that researchers might define from diverse perspectives. In the following I will begin by

discussing the nature of teacher knowledge and various categorizations by researchers, and then move on to explore the concept of practical knowledge in teachers' practices. At the end of this section, I will illustrate the relationship between teacher knowledge and curriculum implementation.

3.7.1.1 The nature and classifications of teacher knowledge

In the past decades, studies of the nature of teacher knowledge and knowledge change have sparked debates in the field of second language teacher education. Initial work using a positivist paradigm which regards the development of teachers' knowledge as a simple process of knowledge accumulation has been found to be insufficient for explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and classroom teaching processes. Growing research findings in cognitive psychology showed that the cognitive process greatly impacts on people's behaviours (Borg, 2003). Therefore researchers like Johnson (2006) have suggested that "an interpretative or situated paradigm, largely drawn from ethnographic research in sociology and anthropology, came to be seen as better suited to explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the various dimensions of teachers' professional worlds" (p.236).

This epistemological shift, recognizing that teachers' knowledge is not a simple accumulation of subject knowledge, has led researchers to conceptualize teacher knowledge in cognitive, situated, and social-cultural terms. Elbaz's (1981) study on teachers' practical knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly's (1987) definition of personal practical knowledge and the features of practitioner knowledge proposed by Hiebert et al. (2002) suggest that the nature of teachers' knowledge is different from propositional or conceptual knowledge. Borg (2006) characterizes teachers' knowledge as personal, practical, tacit, systematic and dynamic, defined and refined on the basis of educational and professional experiences throughout their lives.

A number of researchers have made efforts to categorize teacher knowledge and paved the way for research on teachers' knowledge base for teaching. Inspired by studies on differences between expert teachers and novice teachers, Shulman (1987) proposes seven categories of knowledge teachers need for teaching. Based on Shulman's (1987) study, much research has been conducted on teacher knowledge and multifarious classifications of teacher knowledge have been developed (Berliner 1995; Borko & Putnam, 1996; Grossman, 1995) (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Categorizations of teacher knowledge

Researcher	Categorization
Elbaz (1983)	Knowledge of subject matter (knowledge of subject content and related learning theories), knowledge of curriculum (knowledge of how to organize learning experience and curriculum), knowledge of instruction (knowledge of classroom management and organization of teaching), knowledge of self (knowledge of individual's characteristics), knowledge of school context
Shulman (1987)	Content knowledge (knowledge of interpretive frameworks used in a discipline, of inter-relationships within a discipline), general pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of strategies of classroom management and organization; curriculum knowledge), pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of subject matter and representation of the subject to students), curricular knowledge (knowledge of the program and materials designed for teaching), knowledge of learners (knowledge of individual differences of in learners' characteristics and cognition), knowledge of educational context (knowledge of the groups, classes and community as well as the local culture), knowledge of educational aims, goals and purposes
Grossman (1995)	Knowledge of content (content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge), knowledge of learners and learning, knowledge of general pedagogy (knowledge of classroom management and organization, of teaching principles and skills that can be applied across disciplines), knowledge of curriculum (knowledge of relationship across disciplines and grades), knowledge of context (knowledge of students, classes, family background and local community), knowledge of self
Berliner (1995)	Subject matter expertise (knowledge of subject matter and structure), classroom management expertise (knowledge of classroom management and organization), instructional expertise (knowledge of teaching strategy, implicit and explicit knowledge of teaching pedagogy), diagnostic expertise (knowledge of individual students' differences as well as the general information of student body as a whole)
Borko and Putnam (1996)	General pedagogical knowledge (strategy of classroom management, classroom teaching, knowledge of learners and learning), subject matter knowledge (knowledge of content, structure and development of subject), pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of teaching

	objectives, of student learning, of curriculum and materials, of representation of particular subject, of teaching strategy)
Villegas-Reimers (2003)	General pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, student context knowledge, knowledge of strategies, techniques and tools to create and sustain learning community, cultural adaptation knowledge, knowledge to facilitate social change and knowledge of technology implementation
Malderez & Wedell (2007)	Know about (declarative, being verbalized or explained, including knowledge of the subject to be taught, how that subject is supposed to be learned, the positioning of the subject within the wider curriculum, the educational institution and its culture and rules, the students' backgrounds and needs, as well as knowledge of strategies for managing one's own ongoing professional development)
	Know how (procedural, consisting of skills or behaviours that teachers need to master in order to thrive in the classroom and the school. These skills include strategies to support the learning of all pupils (as well as the teacher's own learning); the ability to notice and mark the relevant features of classrooms and organizations; knowledge of how to assess learning and teaching and how to relate to relevant stakeholders, routines that make up the professional behaviours expected of teachers, and knowledge of how to find and select strategies to help them think, plan, and assess, and how to adapt to changing teaching conditions.)
	Know to (expertise developed over time by expert teachers which allows teachers to intuitively and instantaneously use what they know (whether it is a knowing about or knowing how type of knowledge) at just the right moment, and in just the right way to support the learning of their particular learners, in their classroom)
Tsui (2012)	practical knowledge, personal narratives, content knowledge and situated knowledge

(adapted from Rong, 2014)

From this brief summary of different classification of teacher knowledge, it is easy to see that, although researchers categorize the knowledge base of teaching differently, there exists a basic agreement among them that subject content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge constitute teacher knowledge as basic elements (Malderez and Wedell's categories of teacher knowledge clearly reveal this).

Research on the knowledge base of teaching has drawn conclusions about the knowledge teachers need to acquire for teaching, and gives special attention to pedagogical content knowledge, which is even valued as the core of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1987). In addition, studies on the knowledge base of teaching highlight the two-fold nature of teacher knowledge, including knowledge of theory as well as of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). These studies are important for the theoretical underpinnings of this study when analysing the impact of different kinds of knowledge on teacher learning and their practice. Further discussion is in the following sections.

3.7.1.2 Teachers' practical knowledge

In table 3.1 above, it is clear that the practical and situated nature of teacher knowledge has been highlighted. In his concepts of "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action", Schön (1983) has emphasized the important role of reflection and suggested that it helps teachers to be aware of the tacit knowledge in practice because through teachers' reflection such knowledge might be transferred to practical knowledge (Bober, 2004). van Driel, Beijaard and Verloop (2001) further clarify that practical knowledge consists of "teachers' knowledge and beliefs about their own teaching practice, and is mainly the result of their teaching experience" (p. 138). To distinguish from theoretical knowledge, Woods and Çakır (2011) define teachers' practical knowledge as "implicit and embedded in practice (gained experientially and used automatically, like one's mother tongue)" (p. 383).

There has been increasing empirical interest in the practical knowledge of language teachers in different contexts (e.g. Hulshof & Verloop, 2002; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999; Tsang, 2004). For example, Tsang (2004) describes practical knowledge in terms of the maxims underpinning the instructional decisions of a group of pre-service language teachers, while Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (1999) have identified several types of practical knowledge about teaching reading comprehension in their study of language teachers in the Netherlands. Wyatt and Borg (2011) have conducted exploration into the process of how teachers grew in practical knowledge with the impact of an INSET course in the Middle East and found that in two of the three case studies there were encouraging signs of practical knowledge growth.

Closely connected with the practical nature of teacher knowledge is the fact that teacher knowledge is also situated. Teacher knowledge being situated may be understood from three perspectives: teaching situation as source of teacher's situated knowledge, teacher knowledge restrained by teaching situations and teacher knowledge as dynamic and changing. Recent research indicates that a situated perspective (see section 3.6.2) is necessary in order to understand teacher knowledge (Borko, 2004; Putnam & Borko, 2000). The natural and socio-cultural settings which teachers are working and learning in are claimed to mediate the development of teacher knowledge (Xu & Connelly, 2009; Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). Tsui (2011) also argues that teachers' pedagogical actions are guided by their own knowledge which is "typically personal and oriented to the situation in which they operate" (p.27). So when understanding how teachers' knowledge is formed and constructed, it is necessary to take into account the influence of the context in which their learning and teaching take place.

In this study, the INSET course forms a particular context for teacher knowledge to grow and be challenged. With prior knowledge being informed by the training input, teachers may experience changes in their knowledge without obvious changes in their practices or display changes in instructional behaviours underpinned or not by changes in knowledge. Such impacts on teachers' practical knowledge can be at least partly explained by the model the INSET course takes (see section 3.5). As illustrated in section 3.5.2, a development-constructivist model of training encourages teachers to make connections between what they already know and do and new ideas and experiences over time. This is seen by researchers (e.g. Farrell, 2007; Mann, 2005) to have greater potential for supporting growth in both teachers' cognitions (mainly teacher knowledge and beliefs) and their behaviours, and hence to enhance their practical knowledge.

From this perspective, it is therefore necessary to explore how teachers' situated and practical knowledge is negotiated in the process of being trained to implement a new curriculum. However, much less evident is attention to the manner in which practical knowledge develops and to the role that teacher education might play in this process (Wyatt & Borg, 2011). This remains a challenging area which has yet to be well examined in detail. This study aims to provide evidence regarding these two issues, with specific reference to the particularly under-researched context of in-

service language teacher education since most current literature focuses on the knowledge development of pre-service teachers.

3.7.1.3 Theory-learning and curriculum implementation

This section discusses the relationship between teacher knowledge and curriculum implementation based on the above sections on teacher knowledge. In the literature, the interactive relationship between teacher knowledge and practice has been widely discussed by researchers (e.g. Urmston, 2003; Tsui, 2003, 2011; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Scarino, 2005; Borg, 2003). In general, teachers' pedagogical practice is influenced by their knowledge of teaching and learning, and in turn teacher knowledge can be, at least partially, reflected in their practice.

From literature examining curriculum implementation, it is suggested that teachers should possess rich knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks and students' understandings (Carter, 2006; Powell & Anderson, 2002). Teachers' learning of new knowledge is more than simply providing them with new input. It needs to emerge from a process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2003), which in turn determines that practice change is not a linear causal process directly mirroring teacher knowledge development. Boyle (2000) discusses about the reasoning used by teachers to support their actions and suggests that new knowledge should be judged by teachers according to the degree to which it is pragmatic and effective in the specific learning/teaching context and with specific students. Teachers' arguments about the feasibility of the new knowledge in their classroom teaching therefore should not be treated as "true" or "false" propositions but as indications of what they view as workable and useful in actual teaching situation to achieve their teaching objectives. So when examining the impact of new knowledge (reform ideas in this study) on practice change, it is important to pay attention to how teachers learn new knowledge and how they develop it into practical knowledge, rather than just assessing how much new knowledge teachers can remember and repeat at the end of a training programme.

To be more specific, studies on teachers' knowledge base and curriculum implementation, especially during a period of curriculum reform, reveal that teachers' practice needs support from conceptual knowledge of discipline (such as English language knowledge, knowledge on how to instruct certain language

elements), as well as reform-based pedagogical skills (e.g. Freeman, 2002; Forsberg & Wermke, 2012; Bober, 2004; Wilson & Berne, 1999). In terms of empirical evidence for the impact of INSET on teacher practical knowledge, Wyatt (2009) and Wyatt and Borg (2011) explored the relationship between an INSET course and teacher practical knowledge, and confirmed that an INSET course first has impact on teachers' knowledge development and only then impacts on their implementation of communicative language teaching approach.

Given the INSET course in this study, it is presumed that teachers will be given information about new theories and equipped with new teaching techniques to teach differently in classroom. Regarding the course content (see chapter 2), new knowledge is usually conceptual knowledge or explicitly presented knowledge. And according to the course design, learning theories about the new curriculum is the teachers' main task in the first university-based training phase. However, in research on teacher education, theory-learning has been criticized by researchers. The perception that teacher education is too theoretical and that much of the theory that is taught in teacher education is irrelevant has almost become regarded as a truism. Darling-Hammond (2010: 40) says: "When teachers complain that university work has often been 'too theoretical', they usually mean that it is too abstract and general". Therefore, based on the discussion of teacher practical knowledge and its role in teaching practice, it is necessary to examine whether new knowledge can be transformed into teachers' practical knowledge, and if so, through what process this occurs because the training goal of the INSET course is to improve teachers' practice, not just to deliver new knowledge. Therefore, when developing teacher knowledge for curriculum reform in an INSET course, various issues might emerge when exploring the relationship between teacher knowledge growth and the INSET course provision, such as the relationship between new knowledge and teachers' prior knowledge, the relationship between the delivery of new knowledge and teachers' engagement with theory, the relationship between the INSET context and teachers' construction of new knowledge and so on. Keeping these issues in mind can help take deeper insight into the impact of the INSET course on teacher learning.

However, current research on the impact of INSET on teacher knowledge seems to be insufficient in China. Although Chinese researchers have begun to pay attention to teachers' implementation of the new curriculum reform and highlighted teacher knowledge as one of the most challenging parts for teachers in their experience-

based interpretation and analysis of the new curriculum (Guan & Meng, 2007; Zhong, 2006), there is still increasing need for process-oriented research to explore how the process of in-service training can help Chinese EFL teachers to renegotiate and reconstruct their knowledge to respond to the changes implied by the new curriculum. This study thus attempts to enrich understandings of this issue by examining secondary school EFL teachers' process of learning on an INSET course and responding to the new curriculum implementation in classroom.

The above issues also inform the collection of data for analysis in this study. Since the main resource for teacher knowledge development is the theories and/or new knowledge imparted on the INSET course, the data collected for examining the change in teacher' knowledge should thus focus on their feelings about the input during their learning process and the support they can find from the theories for their practice. The themes for analysis should accordingly be based on the main categories of the formal training topics and teachers' application of them in practice.

3.7.2 Teacher beliefs

This section discusses another key concept involved in this study, teacher beliefs. There is a growing body of research on the investigation of EFL teachers' beliefs about a wide variety of aspects of language teaching and learning, and teachers involved are from all educational levels: pre-service, elementary, secondary, and tertiary. According to Pajares (1992), teachers' teaching behaviours such as lesson planning and instructional decisions and classroom practice are strongly associated with their beliefs. Since teachers are considered to play a key role in the implementation of curriculum reform and such reform usually implies teacher learning, it is also necessary to explore teachers' beliefs since "beliefs are seen to be a key element in teacher learning" (Borg, 2011:371). In the following, I will review definitions of teacher beliefs and the relationship between teachers' beliefs, educational reform and teacher education as well as factors believed to influence teacher belief change.

3.7.2.1 The definitions of teacher beliefs

Before discussing definitions of teacher beliefs, I will first explain a potential obstacle within the field of teacher beliefs due to the lack of clarity regarding some of the key terms which are employed (Borg, 2006), particularly the terms "knowledge' and 'beliefs". The concepts referred to by these terms are often

extremely difficult to distinguish (e.g. Meijer *et al.*, 1999; S.Borg, 2006; M. Borg, 2001). In the above sections, teacher knowledge has been discussed in terms of its complex and practical nature, and it is easy to see that teacher knowledge is different from the epistemological definition which assumes "knowledge" should be demonstrably and objectively true, with an evidence base sufficient for it to be consensual (Fenstermacher, 1994). Pajares, in his review of literature on teachers' beliefs, found that most studies used the term beliefs to describe teachers' own interpretations of what could be asserted to be true and used the term knowledge for more objective fact (Pajares, 1992). Given the research purpose of this study and the data needed to study teacher knowledge change mentioned above, I will adopt Pajares' theory on the difference between knowledge and beliefs for data collection and take teachers' pre-existing personal ideas, attitudes and/or ideologies rather than the training input as the basis for analysis.

The growing influence of constructivism and cognitive psychology in education has led to a paradigm shift in understanding teacher learning as a cognitive and social process and teachers are seen to be active decision-makers. Researchers have adopted multiple ways to define teacher beliefs in terms of their role in teachers' mental lives. Pajares (1992) describes teacher beliefs as a system including "beliefs about confidence to affect students' performance (teacher efficacy), about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), about causes of teachers' or students' performance, about perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem), about specific subjects or disciplines" (p.316). Richards (1998) summarizes "information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning teachers build up over time and bring with to the classroom" (p. 66) as the content of the belief system. M. Borg (2001) and S. Borg (2003) clarify the main features of teacher beliefs based on a review of literature as context-specific, personally-accepted, teaching-related, guiding teachers' thinking and actions as well as re-constructible due to personal interpretations and reinterpretations of learning and teaching experience.

The vast amount of diversity in research on teacher beliefs may, at least partially, be attributed to the complexity of beliefs and the wide range of possible ways of describing and explaining them. But this study adopts M. Borg's (2001) definition of beliefs which I believe provides a concise and clear explanation of what the term means: a belief is "a proposition which may be unconsciously held, is evaluative in

that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour" (p.186). Borg's definition emphasizes salient denotations of beliefs such as propositions, implicit theories and propositional knowledge which influence teachers' decision-making in their classrooms.

According to Peacock (2001) some of teachers' beliefs might be "detrimental" to the teaching or students' learning processes and hence intervention from teacher education programmes becomes necessary for teachers' belief change. This proposal informs this study that when exploring teachers' beliefs in the context of teacher education, it is necessary to take into account the deep understanding of the interplay between teacher beliefs, teaching practices and the extent to which tension between what teachers learn on INSET course and how their teaching practice looks like.

Meanwhile, the crucial role of teachers' belief in their learning and practice also implies that exploring teachers' beliefs is an important task for teacher educators because, if not explored, it will be difficult to fully understand the complex change process of teachers. Awareness of teachers' beliefs does not only shape teacher educators' knowledge about how these beliefs impact on teachers' practice but more importantly informs teacher educators' decisions about what measures need to be taken to promote teachers' professional growth. This is also an important aspect to be taken into account when examining the influential factors of the INSET course on teacher change.

3.7.2.2 Teacher beliefs, educational reform and teacher education

In the literature on educational reform, much attention is given to teachers due to the crucial role they play in determining the visible success of any educational reform. The failure of many top-down educational reforms is attributed to the lack of congruence between teachers' practices and the expectations of policy makers (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001). Among various influential factors, teachers' beliefs about the reform are recognized as playing an important role in, to some extent, determining whether the reform ideas will promote long-lasting change in teachers and be realized in classroom (Richards, *et al.*, 2001; Chávez, 2006; Farrell & Tomenson-Filion, 2014; Sang, *et al.*, 2009).

There is consensus that teachers' beliefs and practices influence each other (Borg, 2006; Gabillon, 2012; Li, 2013). Change in teacher beliefs has been proposed as an

essential prerequisite for long-lasting change in teachers' practice. Meanwhile, when teachers are exposed to new ideas or approaches, their beliefs will also play an important role in filtering the new information and new belief construction (Donaghue, 2003). Therefore, when examining the impact of INSET on teacher learning, especially when practice change is expected after the learning, it is necessary to take a look at what happens to teachers' beliefs and what impact of the change has on their practice.

Many empirical studies, in various contexts and disciplines, provide evidence that if changes of beliefs are not considered when introducing pedagogical innovations, teachers may resist, re-interpret, misinterpret, revise, refine and/or alter the new principles using their own theories (e.g. Edmonds & Lee, 2002; Handal & Herrington, 2003; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Lamb, 1995; Orafi & Borg, 2009; van Driel, *et at*., 2001). For example, Fetters *et al* (2002) investigated science teachers' beliefs and the challenges they faced as they started implementing a new curriculum in the USA. They concluded that teachers' beliefs play major role in making sense of, interpreting and implementing the new curriculum. They concluded that teachers' beliefs need to be taken into account by professional development programmes as an important factor which influences the extent to which the training goals can be realized. In an article which discusses the relation between mathematics teachers' beliefs and curriculum reform, Handal & Herrington (2003: 65) suggest curriculum reform design needs to take into account teachers' beliefs for successful change. Orafi & Borg (2009) examined the implementation of a new English curriculum in Libya by investigating the beliefs and practices of three teachers using classroom observation and subsequent interviews. The study shows that there was a gap between the new curriculum and the teachers' practices and provides evidence that teachers' practices are influenced by their own understandings and beliefs about themselves and their students in addition to the contextual realities and the demands of the system. Richards *et al.* (2001:41), based on their investigation of teacher change, conclude with claims related to teacher professional development which may be seen as a summary of the features of teacher beliefs in above mentioned research:

- teachers' beliefs play a central role in the process of teacher development;
- the notion of teacher change is a multidimensional and is triggered both by personal factors as well as by the professional contexts in which teachers work.

In the field of EFL teacher education, empirical studies on the impact of teacher education on teacher beliefs focus more on pre-service teachers (M. Borg, 2002, 2005; Busch, 2010; Lee, 2015; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2010; Peacock, 2001; Tam, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2014; Zheng, 2009). The impact of INSET course on in-service teachers has not been sufficiently studied (Borg, 2006; 2011) even though there is increasing academic attention paid to in-service teachers' beliefs (e.g. Chávez, 2006; Bamanger & Gashan, 2014; Polat, 2010; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). Regarding the characteristics of in-service teachers' beliefs and the complexity of teacher learning as well as the demands of the educational reform, researching the impact of an INSET course on teacher beliefs can provide evidence to explore the nature and process of teacher belief change and shed light on INSET course design and process.

In this section I have illustrated the crucial role teacher beliefs play in the success of educational reform and the necessity of considering teachers' beliefs in teacher education programme. In the following I will focus on the factors which might influence change in teachers' beliefs.

3.7.2.3 Factors influencing teacher belief change

There is evidence, mostly from evaluations of the effectiveness of educational innovations both in language teaching contexts (Wedell, 2009) and in general education (Smith & Southerland, 2007), that promoting the development of in-service teachers' practice can present significant challenges. Borg (2003), after a thorough review of literature in both general education and foreign language teaching in particular, suggests that teachers' own educational backgrounds (including schooling and professional education), teaching practice and their teaching contexts interact in shaping teachers' beliefs about teaching. To sum up, he considers the following three main factors to have an impact on teachers' belief formation: 1) prior language learning experience; 2) teacher education; 3) classroom practice. Due to the research focus, I will first discuss the factors related to INSET courses which may influence teacher belief change, and then discuss other factors which are also believed to be influential in the change process.

From the above discussion, it is not hard to understand that, if an INSET course aims at changing teachers' practice, its process has to be related to teachers' beliefs and/or belief change and what impact an INSET course can have on teachers' beliefs

can be explained in terms of the model the course takes. For example, as section 3.3.1.2 illustrates, if the course adopts a development-constructivist model and encourages teachers to make connections between what they already know and do and new ideas and experiences, it is seen to have greater potential for supporting growth in both teachers' cognitions and their behaviours (Farrell, 2007; Mann, 2005), and hence to change their beliefs. Although there are few studies on the success of teacher belief change, the importance of proper INSET provision has been highlighted by researchers. Waters and Vilches (2008) investigated teachers' implementation of curriculum innovation in the Philippines and found that the English teachers continued to hold traditional beliefs and used methods not aligned with the principles of the new curriculum. They concluded that the lack of professional training and shortage of resources for new curriculum implementation were the main reasons leading to teachers' unchanged beliefs. Zheng and Borg (2014) investigated three senior secondary school teachers' implementation and understanding of task-based learning and teaching as promoted in the 2003 curriculum in China. The investigation suggests that teachers' responses to curriculum innovation do not seem to be straightforward, and that appropriate, continuous teacher education efforts are called for to achieve effective curriculum implementation. This suggestion also confirms the importance of appropriate provision of INSET course if the training goal is to influence teacher beliefs.

At the heart of this model is the opportunities given to teachers to become aware of their prior cognitions (Malderez & Wedell, 2007). Such opportunities seem to be a prerequisite for teachers to examine their cognitions in relation to the new ideas and approaches they encounter during teacher education. As demonstrated in the literature of educational innovation (e.g. Orafi & Borg 2009), teachers are unlikely to embrace new ideas and practices without sufficient opportunities to first understand their current cognitions and practices. As section 3.5 illustrates, generating teachers' awareness of what they currently think, believe, know and do is necessary before enabling them to "accommodate new ideas to appreciate the theory underlying them, understand their practical realisation and evaluate their usefulness" (Lamb, 1995:79).

Beside the external conditions, the factors shaping teacher beliefs are also worth exploring for belief change. Research has shown, for example, that language teachers' prior experiences as learners themselves can have a powerful impact on

their beliefs and practices. Borg (2003) maintains that research in teacher beliefs provides evidence that teachers' prior experiences as learners inform their pedagogical beliefs and influence their teaching experience throughout their careers. In the same vein, Williams and Burden (1997) assert that teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about language learning would infuse into their classroom performances more than a particular methodology they have learnt during their teacher education programs.

Another influential factor is of course the context in which teachers work. It is assumed that teachers' beliefs, like all other beliefs in general, have a cultural as well as personal dimension. Cultural beliefs that reflect views of the society the individual has been brought up in, form a kind of base on which the individual constructs other beliefs (Gabillon, 2005). Teachers' beliefs are found to be context-bound in terms of various contextual factors, such as classroom conditions (Sim, 2011; Lamb, 1995), and evaluation system (Wedell, 2009; Hu, 2002). Cultural beliefs are considered to be more resistant to change than other beliefs formed later in life (Edwards & Li, 2011; Gabillon, 2012). Adopting a mixed-method design, Zhang and Liu (2014) examined junior secondary school English teachers' beliefs in language teaching and learning during the nationwide curriculum reform in the new century and contextual factors influencing their beliefs. The examination resulted in the claim that constructive and Confucian beliefs coexisted, and contextual factors such as constructivism which the curriculum espouses, Confucian culture, and high-stakes testing exerted a strong impact on the teachers' beliefs. In this way, cultural factors might be a more resistant power than others in the process of teachers' belief change.

The diversity of influential factors on teacher beliefs and informs the theoretical framework I will adopt to explore their change through INSET in this study. In the following section I will consider the process of teacher change through INSET input.

3.8 The process of teacher learning for change

The above sections have illustrated the research perspectives I adopt in this study and the key concepts I use to look at the impact of INSET on teacher learning. Before taking a deep insight into what impact the INSET course might have on teachers' knowledge and beliefs, it is necessary to consider what change process

teachers might experience and what factors might contribute to such change. This section discusses the existing research findings on this issue.

When an INSET course aims at developing teachers for educational reform, the key concern of the course is the extent to which the reform ideas may be transformed into effective teaching practice through learning on the course. Meanwhile teacher learning involves a change in ways of thinking and teaching, which is usually a gradual process, and the process of teacher learning, in some researchers' views, is still seen as problematic and even intangible (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2006; Korthagen, 2010; Tedick, 2005). In the literature, some researchers have studied teacher learning in terms of both internal change and external factors. In the following I discuss the main aspects emerging from their studies and develop a framework for the data analysis in this study.

The starting point of teacher change, as Bailey (2006) suggests, is teachers' awareness which is the key to potential behavioural change. Bailey (2006:35) views this claim in two ways: the strong and the weak versions of the awareness hypothesis. The strong version is that people will change their less-than-optimal behaviour when their awareness of it is increasing while the weak version is that people must become aware of less-than-optimal behaviour before they can purposefully change it. Both the strong and weak versions of the hypothesis make claims about the sufficiency of awareness that when bringing about change, awareness of the change should increase to a sufficient level to lead the change to take place. Among current literature on INSET impact, researchers have found training input could influence teachers' awareness. For example, Phipps (2009) states that course content generated teachers' awareness of challenge for practice improvement. Wyatt (2009) also provides evidence that, based on his study on the development of teachers' practical knowledge during in-service training, teachers' awareness can be informed by course content with positive effect on practice development. Borg's (2011) study on the impact of an INSET course on teachers' beliefs provides further evidence that an INSET course can work as resource for increasing teachers' awareness.

Concerning the process of teacher change, Scott and Rogers (1995) recognize that teachers have to go through different stages whatever context they are in. The first stage teachers experience is to know or get familiar with what change they will have

to make and how the change works. In most cases (such as being required to replace their former teaching method with a new one), teachers also need to form an initial personal or professional attitude towards it, such as exploring their former beliefs and articulating their ideas of effective teaching. This is followed by teachers' decision of rejecting or adopting the change, either fully or partially, and then teachers may attempt to implement it. Through attempts, teachers can develop their own perceptions of how it works and whether it needs further adjustment. Their personal judgement of the feasibility of change will finally result in what Rogers' (2003) terms "confirmation" where the change is either accepted, rejected, or continued with in a slightly modified form. Rogers' theories on the change process imply that teachers take the determinant role during the process. In an INSET context, these stages are informed by the training input. How the input informs teachers and how teachers react to the input seems central to the issue of to what extent an INSET course might impact on teacher learning and subsequent practice. So exploring teacher learning and change needs to take into account both influential factors from teachers and the INSET course at each stage and its impact on the next stage.

However, teacher change is never a linear process. Under the conditions of education reform, resistance from teachers to change can often be found in the literature, which makes it more complex to understand teacher learning. In this case, teachers' existing beliefs can be powerful. For example, Zhang & Liu (2014) found Chinese EFL teachers still employ traditional teaching approach rather than the approach recommended in the new curriculum due to their core beliefs on language teaching and learning remained unchanged.

Meanwhile teachers' resistance can be seen more than just as an individual trait, but also "as a feature of the change process, or even as representative of a systemic resistance" (Sim, 2011: 34). For example, the teacher education programme fails to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge for the change, or the expected changes are regarded too idealized and beyond teachers' capacities to realize. The external inappropriateness, not factors within the teachers themselves, may be responsible for teachers' resistance to change. The provision of teacher education is therefore also worthy attention in terms of its efficacy in fostering teachers acceptance of change.

Based on the emerging consensus among researchers and the issues raised in the field of teacher learning, Borg (2015: 544) made a summary of the characteristics of successful teacher learning:

- It is seen by teachers to be relevant to their needs and those of their students;
- Teachers are centrally involved in decisions about the content and process of professional learning;
- Collaboration and the sharing of expertise among teachers is fostered;
- It is a collective enterprise supported by schools and educational systems more broadly;
- Exploration and reflection are emphasized over methodological prescriptivism;
- Expert internal and/or external support is available;
- Classrooms are valued as a site for professional learning;
- Professional learning is recognized as an integral part of teachers' work;
- Classroom inquiry by teachers is seen as a central professional learning process;
- Teachers are engaged in the examination and review of their beliefs;
- Adaptive expertise is promoted;
- Student learning provides the motivation for professional learning; and
- Teachers experience the cognitive dissonance that motivates change.

All of these criteria have great relevance for the design of teacher education programmes or professional learning activities and in different ways have been much reported on in the literature (e.g. Pickering, 2007; MacBeath, 2011). They also provide a framework for this study to examine the learning activities the teachers experienced and their impact on teachers.

The educational reform in China is posing challenges to in-service teachers, particularly with the promotion of new communicative approaches to syllabus design together with a focus on learner-centred classrooms and the development of autonomy. Teaches, no matter whether they are well prepared or not, have to experience a process of change required by the government. How teachers overcome resistance or keep their prior teaching routines seems of importance for the success of education reform. Although there are accounts in the literature of the relationship between theories of innovation and change and effective INSET (e.g. Lamie, 2004; Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Waters, 2006), this kind of research in China is still scarce. This study seeks to make some contribution in this respect.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has set up the theoretical basis in relation to the factors influencing the implementation of a new curriculum with particular focus on the role of teacher learning on an INSET course and considerations related to teacher knowledge and beliefs. Also this chapter has discussed the relevant arguments, factors and issues emerging in the field of in-service teacher education which underpin the rationale for this study and inform its research focus and design. Constructivist and situated perspectives on teacher learning and teacher education have been highlighted and are adopted as the research lens to examine the impact of an INSET course on teacher learning and change. Meanwhile, the key concepts of teacher education and teacher learning involved in this study are discussed and will be used to inform discussion of the research findings in Chapter 10. Furthermore, by reviewing the relevant literature, the relationship between the research questions are evaluated and the way how I modify the weighting of the questions towards research question two and three are also presented, which makes explicit the focus of this study and addresses the values of following findings.

Chapter 4 The study

4.1 Introduction

In order to provide the rationale for the research design and process of this study, this chapter aims at making explicit the methodological and theoretical assumptions underlying the concepts and methods used in this study, because doing this "is not only essential to achieving a fuller exploration of the data we gather, but also to providing the research with higher levels of validity because assumptions guide the decision-making process as in any other cognitive activity and making them explicit will help others evaluate the research" (Calderhead, 1987: 188).

This chapter starts with an outline of the research framework. Next a detailed description of the specific strategies employed to collect and analyse data is provided. The quality issues and ethical considerations involved in this study are also outlined, together with a discussion of data analysis. How data will be presented is discussed at the end of this chapter. The overall aim of this chapter is to provide information which allows readers to follow the logic of this work and to assess the findings.

4.2 Research framework

This section discusses the conception and characteristics of qualitative research involved in this study and the three issues – ontology, epistemology and methodology- which are typically considered in defining the constructivist-interpretive research framework are also discussed.

4.2.1 Qualitative research

This study takes a qualitative approach to the research process. Qualitative research is traditionally contrasted with quantitative research as Corbin & Strauss (2008) state "qualitative research can be used to mean any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (p.11). But, in fact, distinctions between quality and quantity derive from much deeper beliefs about the nature of research and the world it seeks to understand and reflect in different paradigms. Among the dominant paradigms, constructivism questions whether all knowledge can really be considered to be universally true and

decontextualized, and suggests that for many kinds of research the situatedness of activity needs to be taken into account when drawing conclusions about what data means (Richards, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated that:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self....This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (pp.4-5).

So the general aims of qualitative research are to provide an in-depth and contextually interpreted understanding of the human participants in natural settings and conditions. Their perspectives on the world are explored through a process of interpretation which involves immersion in the data and draws on different perspectives. Qualitative methods are usually used to address research questions that require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and particular contexts (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The goal of this study falls within the general framework of teacher cognition. The focus will be on learning about teachers' personal experiences, perspectives and social circumstances. Qualitative research approaches are thus appropriate to the nature of enquiry and the research paradigm. These issues will be addressed in the following sections.

4.2.2 Research assumptions in this study

Based on the above definition and characteristics of qualitative research, the three issues typically considered in defining the research framework within which this study is conceived are outlined:

A. Ontology

Assumptions regarding ontology concern the very nature of the essence of the social phenomena under investigation (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Relativism, the philosophical opposition to realism which proposes the free and independent existence of reality, stresses the phenomenological notion that reality comprises the world of subjective experience as it is lived, felt and undergone by its actors. Thus there is no one reality but rather multiple, subjectively-defined realities. This study takes a relativist stance and is based on the following assumptions:

• Inquiry into social phenomena is in effect the study of how humans construct

and construe their experiences and actions. Constructivism also stresses that human action is purposive, intentional and goal-directed (Schwandt, 2003). Thus when studying teacher cognition it is necessary to access teachers' perceptions of their own practices and to understand the meanings they attach to those practices.

- All observations and perceptions of human life are subjective (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992) and researchers have their own values and perspectives which are inevitably and necessarily subjective (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992; Scott & Usher, 1999). Thus this study should be seen as an attempt of a human researcher with his own values and perspectives to understand and represent the phenomena under study.

- The reality is constructed by each individual as they experience the world, thus there can be multiple conceptions of the reality. The same social phenomena may be perceived and interpreted in different, equally valid ways by different individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

- This study does not embrace the radical relativist notion that all interpretations of social phenomena are valid. A concern with the validity of social inquiry is relevant (Seale, 2002), even within relativist ontology. The detailed methodological account I provide in this chapter is one way to illustrate the validity of this work.

B. Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge and justification (Schwandt, 2003). The tenets of the constructivist-interpretive epistemology underlying this study come from the philosophical perspectives of constructivism which stresses that human beings interpret or construct their social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social and historical contexts (Carter & Little, 2007). The epistemological assumptions of this study include:

- Knowledge is subjectively defined and is a construct of the human mind. Individuals' perceptions of the world can be understood and interpreted in different ways (Bassey, 1999). So research on teacher cognition explores teachers' personal beliefs and knowledge in connection with their educational and professional lives in the context of the specific environments that they work in.

- Within constructivist-interpretive epistemology research is inextricably

involved in the inquiry and knowledge is created through the research process itself as a result of the interaction between the researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, Fossey, *et al.,* 2002). Instead of the notions of "objectivity" which have been conventionally invoked to judge the quality of research, I take the stance of "disciplined subjectivity" proposed by Wilson (1977) to monitor my subjective involvement in this study and take a reflexive approach through the research process. A detailed account of the procedures is presented in section 4.3 to illustrate that I was aware of the subjectivity issues.

- Constructivist-interpretive research maintains that knowledge is inherently tentative and uncertain (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2003).The fundamental epistemological assumption of this study is that it does not presume to provide definitive conclusions about the phenomena under study but working hypotheses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which are always provisional and subject to revision in the light of subsequent studies (Silverman, 2011).

C. Methodology

The ontological and epistemological positions outlined above have clear implications for the methodology underlying this study. Here are the methodological assumptions in this study:

- The methodology of constructivist-interpretive research focuses on making explicit participants' perspectives on the phenomena under study. Although this study uses the INSET content categories for the analysis of observation data (see section 4.6), the teachers' own delivery of their learning outcomes in their own context still remained the central of the data analysis. Furthermore, the decision of adopting pre-determined categories is also drawing from the literature on INSET which presented meaningful studies on the impact of INSET (e.g. Lamb, 1995; Butcher & Sieminski, 2006; Davies & Preston, 2002; Yan, 2008). Their findings provided me with support on classifying the particular areas in which impact or transfer of an INSET course was perceived and justifying my decisions on analytical categories.

- This study is idiographic as it focuses on understanding the particular and unique way in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world, rather than trying to produce any generalizable, context-free knowledge (Cohen *et al.,* 2000). This assumption highly stresses the notion that human action is always

context-bound. The uniqueness of the cognitions and instructional practices of individual teachers presented in the data provides sufficient support for this assertion.

- This study also takes a naturalistic-ecological stance proposed by Wilson (1977) which refers to the fact that given the effect context has on the way humans construct and interpret social reality, attempts to understand these sense-making processes should occur in and with reference to the naturally occurring contexts rather than artificial settings. The situatedness of this study can be shown in terms of the introduction of the research context (see chapter 2), the places and phases of data collection and the connection between teachers' perceptions and contextual influences in data analysis can fully reflect the situated nature of this study.

4.3 Research approach

The study adopts a multiple case study approach within the research framework described above. This section focuses on presenting the rationale for the use of qualitative case study and the explanation of how the multiple case studies are approached.

4.3.1 Qualitative case study

According to the research questions, researching on the impact of INSET on teacher learning involves making sense of what changes take place in teachers' knowledge and beliefs and what effect these changes have on teachers' practice. The need to gain insight into teachers' particular views and understandings of their learning process, from both internal learning and external behaviours that may indicate cognitive change, determines that this study should adopt research method that enable in-depth interpretation of teachers' implicit inner world. Qualitative case study can meet this need because it enables in-depth study of the phenomenon (Hamel et al., 1993) and can help researchers to "capture its dynamic, complex and multi-faceted nature" (Wyness, 2010: 161). Given the complexity of teacher learning and development discussed in the literature review, this intensive research approach is particularly relevant for this study.

Meanwhile, in order to understand the impact of INSET on teachers, a relatively complete picture of each teacher's learning needs to be developed to present the

characteristics of their learning. For this reason, the influence of the context where teacher learning takes place as a social event should inevitable be taken into account. Qualitative case study also enable researchers to better retaining "the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 1994: 3) with an emphasis on the natural context (Stake, 1995).

Another strength of qualitative case study also suggests its appropriateness for the exploratory nature of this study, in that it allows for the use of a variety of methods depending on the circumstances and the specific needs of the situation (Yin, 2009). In this case, different methods can be used to collect data from a variety of sources and so enhance the richness of findings. The constructivist paradigm mentioned in Chapter 3 highlights the multiplicity of interpretations that may be arrived at according to the people and contexts involved. This multi-method approach can "clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen" (Stake, 2005: 454).

4.3.2 Multiple case study

A multiple case study method serves the research purpose of focusing on a relatively small sample (the five cases in this study) and collecting substantial data on each selected case (Yin, 2009). Differently from investigating a large sample, a multiple case study allows researchers to conduct in-depth exploration of the uniqueness of each case, and then make the arguments more compelling and add robustness to the conclusions (Stake, 2006).

Multiple case study does not limit research work within finding commonalities. The differences emerging between cases are considered as potentially interesting and important as commonalities (Silverman, 2000) and can help to provide deep understanding of the contextual factors.

4.3.3 Longitudinal research

The research questions in this study focus on examining teacher learning and the impact of the INSET course on them over time. The first and second questions investigate the extent to which teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practice are influenced by the INSET course not only during the course but also during a follow-up period after the course whilst the third research question seeks to identify the factors which appear to be facilitating or hindering the impact of INSET. Longitudinal research can enable me to track the impact of the INSET course on

individual teachers and have the potential to "catch the complexity of human behaviour" (Cohen et al., 2007: 212).

Because teacher learning and change itself is a time-consuming process, tracking such process implies that longitudinal research is necessary since in which there are multiple data generation points over the research period (Gorard, 2001) rather than a snapshot at a certain point of time. The different data sets within each case can be compared for deep insight (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). In this way, the rich data collected in longitudinal study can help increase the credibility of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). But I'm also aware of the potential participant attrition during the extended time (Duff, 2008) and this is also one reason I choose multiple case study rather than single case study.

This section outlines the rationale of employing qualitative multiple case study approach in this study. In the following section I will introduce the research site and the participants.

4.4 Research site and participants

To obtain direct information and individual perspectives of teachers, a group of Chinese secondary school EFL teachers on the INSET course in Chongqing were my research participants. This section introduces the research site and participants, as well as the criteria for selection and the selection procedures.

4.4.1 Research site

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the INSET course in this study was conducted in Chongqing. Chongqing is now widely acknowledged as the largest city in the south-west of China. The local social development has led to massive requirements for the improvement of education. With the increase of common recognition of the importance of English language learning, English, as a compulsory subject in secondary school, is considered as important as Chinese language. There are more than 200 local secondary schools with thousands of EFL teachers. Since the education reform in 2000, the abilities of secondary English teachers to implement the new curriculum in Chongqing, like everywhere else in China, has been a widely discussed problem. Local educational institutes and universities provide some programmes for in-service training and certificate courses for EFL teachers. Some teachers attended these programmes voluntarily or for administrative requirements.

From the year of 2010, the national training project started local level INSET courses in Chongqing and hundreds of secondary English teachers have been selected (usually based on the length of teaching experiences) by their schools to participate. One of the training goals of Chongqing INSET course, stated by local educational administration, is that all teachers with five or more years of teaching experiences should attend the course at least once before 2016.

Choosing Chongqing as the research site is also because of my own professional experience. For the last decade I have worked as a teacher educator for both pre-service and in-service teachers in the city. The annual INSET course is held in my university. Before this study I had participated in it as a teacher trainer in 2010 and 2011, which enabled me to gain easy consent from the programme coordinator. With prior work experiences, I have developed extensive professional relationships and mutual respect with many EFL teachers from local primary and secondary schools. This provided me easy access to approach the INSET participants for sampling. In addition, my familiarity with the local environment provided me with insightful views into the socio-contextual factors that might influence teachers' teaching and development.

4.4.2 Research participants

When selecting participants, I first used "purposive sampling" (Patton, 2002, Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, Cohen *et al.,* 2011) to select participants among the fifty INSET participants from junior secondary schools. In the initial research design I planned to invite six teachers to be my participants so that if one or two teachers dropped out, the sample size could still maximise the benefits of multiple case studies (Stake, 2006).

The whole sampling procedure had two steps. The first was to identify a larger group of potential participants through sending them the research information sheet (see appendix 1) in May 2012 when the INSET course and participants had been decided. The teachers did not arrive the university until one day before the INSET course started. However, in order to interview the participants and observe their pre-INSET teaching, I had to decide the participants one or two weeks before the course and then have time to collect pre-INSET data. Therefore, during the first stage I asked for help from my former classmates who now work in secondary schools and some head teachers to get in contact with the participating teachers and send them

the information sheet online. I contacted with and sent the information sheet to sixteen teachers and twelve of them sent me back their responses. From my prior experience as a trainer on the course, I knew that some teachers could not engage fully because of other commitments (e.g. family). So I conducted sampling interview (see appendix 2) with them to explain the details of the study and to confirm whether they could provide appropriate opportunities for interviews and observations. Meanwhile some teachers were from remote areas three to four hours' drive away from the city and it was not easy for me to approach them after the university-based training phase. I decided to choose a "convenience sample" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) among the teachers from the urban area. Therefore, the sampling criteria were mainly based on the voluntary principle and ease of access in terms of distance, time and money (Swanborn, 2010).

By mid-October 2012, five participants had signed the informed consent form (see appendix 3) and were interviewed and observed in classrooms. Several days before the INSET course started, another teacher voluntarily participated this study. But there was not enough time to observe his classroom teaching so he provided me with a video he prepared for a local teaching contest as the pre-INSET observation. Unfortunately, near the end of the first training phase, one teacher felt dissatisfied with the course and dropped out of the course as well as this study. Therefore there are five participants to be studied throughout this whole research process. Table 4.1 provides their background information, including the pseudonym I assigned to each in the interests of confidentiality and which I used throughout this study. The information I provide here gives an idea of the respective experience and qualifications of teaching English as a foreign language (henceforth TEFL) of the teachers.

Table 4.1 Participants and their background information in this study

Pseudonym	Years in TEFL	Highest academic qualification
Yuan	6	Master of Education in TEFL
Shi	12	Bachelor of Arts (henceforth BA) in TEFL
Qiang	5	BA in TEFL

| Fen | 11 | BA in English (not in TEFL) |
| Tan | 5 | BA in translation |

4.5 Data collection methods and procedures

The aim of this section is to introduce data collection methods, non-structured observations and semi-structured interviews, and the procedures of how data was collected at different stages. Table 4.2 provides a brief summary of the process.

Given the research questions and the conceptual framework (see section 4.2), the data sought in this study related to teachers' learning during the INSET course in terms of changes to their prior understandings and practices. This data could not be collected separately because it is all embedded in the process of teacher learning and change. Thus semi-structured interviews, non-structures observations and post-observation interviews were employed to explore the relevant issues from the participants' perspective. The following is a detailed account of the methods and the process of using them to collect the data.

4.5.1 Semi-structured interview

As a data collection instrument, semi-structured interview is widely used in qualitative research (Mann, 2011; Duff, 2008). Patton (2002) states that interviews allow us to take insights into the interviewees' perspectives since we cannot observe their feelings, thoughts and intentions. If we are seeking long and detailed personal accounts, a personal interview is likely to be more suitable for this purpose (Dörnyei, 2003). Through effective interviewing, the introspective data of the unobservable can be elicited. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews are "flexible, allowing the conversation a certain amount of freedom in terms of the direction it takes…respondents are also encouraged to talk in an open-ended manner about the topics under discussion …" (Borg, 2006:203). The interviewer can generate data which are more elaborate and qualitatively richer than those generated by closed questions. Thus the interviewer can direct the interview more precisely and respond to the emerging views of interviewees (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The reflexive nature of this approach makes it possible for the researcher to make and explore unexpected discoveries (Cohen et al., 2011).

Many researchers have used semi-structured interviews as the major instrument to explore how the interviewees construe their views and make sense of their experiences when investigating teacher knowledge, beliefs and practice in TESOL (e.g. Elbaz, 1981; Golombek, 1998; Borg, 2011; Phipps, 2009; Sim, 2011).Their research design and use of interview provide me with rich professional experience and suggestions for using this method.

Before collecting interview data I piloted my interview schedule among some teachers from another in-service training course. From the teachers' responses, my interview questions were clear and answerable; they did not have any difficulty in understanding them. From the perspective of researcher, the pilot results reminded me to take the following into account when collecting interview data:

- Teachers form their answers simultaneously when interviewing, just by following their flow of thoughts. Some of their answers are not well-organized, even overlapping two questions sometimes. Adjusting the probing questions from moment to moment is necessary.
- Some answers are not clear enough, even irrelevant. The interviewer needs to know how to interrupt politely to prevent further straying from the subject. A more direct or clearer probing question is need to get the interviewee back to the point.

From late September to early October, 2012, I conducted semi-structured initial interviews (see appendix 2) among potential participants after I had got the information sheet back to identify the final sample. When the final participants were decided, each participant was interviewed seven times at different stages: one interview after the pre-INSET observation, one at the end of the first training phase, two stimulated recall interviews after classroom observations in the second phase, one interview at the end of the course and other two post-observation stimulated recall interviews in six-month follow-up investigation. All interviews were conducted in the teachers' learning and teaching contexts (except the last two which were done online or on phone), such as the university during the INSET course and their own schools, and at the times convenient to the participants. The length of each interview was 40 to 60 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded in order to improve the detail and accuracy. In order to create a natural and relaxed atmosphere and ensure free expression and smooth flow of thought, all interviews were

conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Table 4.2 includes the procedures and time frames for interview data collection.

The first interviews (see appendix 4) were conducted after the pre-INSET observations to elicit teachers' prior views and understandings of foreign language teaching as well as their classroom practices. Questions about their expectations of and attitudes to INSET course were also asked. In order to enable each stage of the research process to inform the next and gain more detail and elaboration, all later interview questions were formulated based on participants' responses to the previous one and the main contents of each training phase. In all post-observation interviews, specific teaching behaviours observed were the main sources for generating probing questions and the teachers were stimulated to recall their feelings and ideas for their behaviours. The interview schedules served as basic checklists to make sure that the following general information categories relevant to research topic and questions were covered: 1) their knowledge and beliefs that guide their practices; 2) their feelings of learning on the INSET content; 3) their perceptions of how teaching settings and wider socio-cultural context influenced their practice and development.

All interview questions were serving the research purpose on the teachers' learning experiences and their application in particular classroom teaching, so each interview focused on eliciting the teachers' descriptions of their specific, rather than general, situations and actions. Meanwhile, although the semi-structured questions were generated before interviews, I paid much attention to adopting a deliberate openness (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) to new data and phenomenon, rather than being too pre-structured, which guaranteed the generation of probing question for in-depth exploration when interviewing. For example, in the pre-INSET interview, one pre-structured question was "why do you think the method you used is effective?" (see appendix 4) which seemed general and might cover a wide range of factors. When I asked this question, I started with asking what methods the teachers thought they were using and then why they felt useful. Based on their answer, I continued with questions on particular aspects they mentioned for further information. If they thought the methods they used were suitable for their students, I would ask about their students' current language levels and learning situations. If they mentioned the coverage of textbook as a reason for test-oriented teaching approach, I would ask about the text pressure they faced. Usually the teachers talked about several aspects on the effectiveness of their teaching methods, such as students' language levels,

administrative requirements, test pressure, etc. By generating probing questions based on their answers to a pre-structured question, information on the teachers' real life and teaching context was therefore collected.

Meanwhile interviews must be conducted carefully and sensitively. In face-to-face interviews, I did not only audio-record what the teachers were talking verbally but also paid attention on how to capture their facial and bodily expressions which might contain some useful information and helpful in generating further probing questions. The following is an example of how I conducted the interview in such case. When I asked Fen on her learning experience on the INSET course at the end of the first training phase, she at first did not give any direct answer:

> Q: Do you think what you learned is generally useful for your teaching?
>
> A: Mm…(hesitated several seconds)…
>
> (Fen did not look comfortable with this question)
>
> Q: Do you feel hard to say?
>
> A: Mm… I have some ideas but do not know how to say.
>
> Q: Don't worry. We can talk about it in another way. Mm… Do you feel happy when learning on the course?
>
> A: It's hard to say I'm happy…because most of the training content is too theoretical... I feel not interested in it. (FI2: 30-39)

When Fen did not answer my question directly, I noticed that she stayed quiet for seconds and looked uncomfortable with it. So I thought I should ask her feelings on the question rather than asking the question again. When Fen said she had some ideas I immediately thought she had something to talk but felt hard to give answer to the question immediately. So I changed the designed question into another one by asking her feelings of learning on the course and gradually Fen started to talk more and more about her learning experiences and more detailed information was then collected, and finally her feelings on the course content were elicited.

In the follow-up investigation period, the interviews were conducted online and/or on telephone. For these interviews, I made careful arrangements with the teachers for timing. Meanwhile, all the interviews in this period focused on the teachers' classroom teaching after the INSET course, I carefully prepared interview questions

based on their observed lessons as well as prompts and probes in case the teachers might feel dried-up on the telephone. Meanwhile, since I could not observe the teachers' non-verbal expressions, I paid attention to how they articulated their feelings, such as their tones, pauses, and asked further questions on how to interpret their statements. For example, in the first interview with Qiang in the follow-up investigation, I asked a question on why he still used classroom choral as the main method to ask question rather than give the opportunities to individual students. He paused several times when telling me his reasons and I could sense that he had some difficulties to express himself. When he said he had some difficulties in using the classroom activities recommended by the INSET course, I immediately understood that the reason why he could not articulate his feelings smoothly might be related to his hesitation of articulating his actual feelings on the INSET course. So I encouraged him to say that in a straight way by asking him "so do you think the course did not provide enough information to help you adjust your teaching approach?" He immediately said "Yes, yes. I really think so". It successfully helped elicit the teacher's really feelings and carried on the interview.

At the same time, Mann (2011) highlighted that qualitative interviews can be seen from the perspective of co-construction between interviewer and interviewee. Interview techniques mentioned above reflected that I paid attention to elicit the teachers' feelings

It is now well established that interview talk is inevitably a co-construction between the interviewer and interviewee (Silverman,1973; Briggs 1986; Mishler 1986; Holstein and Gubrium 1995 references see Mann's article) . In this study, I, as the researcher, know well about the INSET course and the teachers' context (see section 4.4). The stance I took in the research process were subject to my research interest in teacher change and development (see section 4.5.3). This helped me kept aware of the teachers' voice and their response to my interview questions.

In this research, the teachers were from their actual teaching context and learned on the INSET course. My familiarity of these contexts (see chapter 2 and section 4.4.1) enabled me to get a perspective on the lived experience and the context of teacher learning as well as the context of this research. When interviewing I could interact with the teachers well and give contingent response to elicit their ideas. The following quote could reflect my effort on this aspect.

Q:…students did not give you the expected response?

A: Yes. That is frustrating. But I could not do it (the group work) again.

Q: You don't have enough time to do it.

A: Yes, yes. I only have 40 minutes.

Q: How about the textbook?

A: I have to finish it of course. That's why I can't afford time to conduct many classroom activities…even if one activity is not going successfully, I still have to move on… no time to do it again.

(QI4: 53-61)

In this example, I asked about the difficulties Qiang met when using group work in the second training phase. When he was talking, I mentioned the potential contextual factors based on previous interviews and my understandings of local context, and he responded well. The meanings of the contextual influence were thus constructed through the interactional process.

At the same time, in order to minimize the co-construction dilemma, researchers should "represent the talk with some kind of transcription" (Mann, 2011: 15). In this study, in order to gain respondent validity, I returned the interview transcripts to the teachers for their confirmation to check for any possible misinterpretation. After the first interviews, I emailed the transcripts to the teachers and received their comments. Their written comments were added to the interview data. But for the second interviews, only two teachers answered and one of them just returned the transcript without making any changes or comments at all. I guessed that teachers might feel reluctant to read the whole long transcript and, after the first training phase, it was highly possible that all the teachers were busy with their teaching work back in their own schools. So in all subsequent cases, I brought extracts which might need further confirmation to the next interview site and asked them directly or made telephone call to them at convenient times for their comments. The change of the method was of particular value in helping me clarify all the interview data and reducing extra work for the teachers. Furthermore, this adjustment of research method helped a lot in maintaining the rapport between researcher and the participants. All the interviews and data confirmation went well thereafter.

4.5.2 Observations and stimulated recall interviews

Given that teacher cognition is practice-oriented and grounded in specific contexts, observation, as a research method, helped this study to be naturalistic in data collection by recoding teachers' real-time classroom teaching (see example pictures in appendix 6). While observing, I entered the classroom without prior assumption for what was worth attending to or not. This allowed a large amount of detailed descriptive data to be collected and analysed, and the teachers' perceptions of reality could be analysed and understood close to their real-life phenomena. In addition, observation, as a flexible method, also allowed me to generate questions in relation to specific observed behaviours which provided the basis of post-observation interviews, the stimulated recall interviews (Glesne, 1998) in which I and the teachers discussed the meanings of these behaviours.

In this study, each participant was observed five times, most of which were video-recorded (apart from two audio-recorded ones. See more details below). When observing, I played a "non-participant observer" role (Cohen *et al.* 2011) to reduce the effect of the presence of researcher on the classroom. One observation was conducted before the INSET course, two in the second training phase and other two observations during the six-month follow-up investigation. Besides pilot study and sampling, I observed four participants' teaching once before the INSET course and received one video-recorded classroom from a participant. The number of observations during and after the course was determined by the availability of the participants. For me as researcher, I wished to observe as much as possible of the teachers' classroom teaching and gain more information about their actual teaching for deep insights. The participants as teachers had their own concerns, such as defending their reputation, worries about being judged, their workload, and did not want to be observed too often although they all had articulated their willingness to be studied. During the first training phase, I discussed the frequency and time of observation with them and reached an agreement of two observations in the second training phase and another two observations in the follow-up period. In the second training phase which lasted only one month, the participants were observed almost once in each two weeks. In the six-month follow-up investigation each observation was collected in every three months. Because of the limited study time, I was back in the UK after the INSET course. The follow-up classroom observations were

recorded by the teachers themselves with video-recorders or smart phones and the videos were sent to me online.

When collecting video-recorded observations, the effects of video recording had been taken into account. In addition to informing the participants about the research purpose in the research information sheet and informed consent form before data collection, I tried to build up mutual trust between me and the participants during interviews. I assured them observation was to be conducted without any judgment, just for my own research purpose and emphasized that no special preparation was required on their part and they only needed to teach as normally and naturally as possible. However, although they had been videoed twice, two participants still felt reluctant with the presence of the video-recorder in their classrooms at the third observation. So audio-recorder was used for them instead. But, what is interesting is, during the follow-up investigation, they did not feel uncomfortable when video-recording themselves. So the reason for their reluctance of being video-recorded seemed not to be the video-recorder, but the presence of the researcher, probably due to their worries of being evaluated or judged.

Observation alone is insufficient as a means for "exploring [teachers' cognitive] processes in more depth and ascertaining the validity of the inferences made" (Borg 2006: 231). Therefore, during observation, I collected instructional material, such as textbook copies, hand-outs, and took down field notes as supplement (see example in appendix 7 and 8).

All the observations were followed by stimulated recall interviews which are often used to prompt participants to recall the thoughts they had while performing for further exploration (Gass & Mackey, 2000) and prompt teachers' interpretations of their teaching behaviour. Before interviewing, I watched the video again as well as consulting the field notes for probing interview questions. In my initial research design, I assumed that teachers would watch the videos as they like during the interviews to help them recall their teaching. However, during the interviews, only one teacher asked to watch his own teaching in the first post-observation interview. All other observational data were not asked to be seen any more. But when mentioning some of their specific observed teaching actions, teachers could verbalise their reasoning and thinking behind them. That is probably related to their rich teaching experience and high-level familiarity with their own teaching. In order

to ensure the reliability of recall, I kept the time lag (usually less than three days) between observation and interview as short as possible (Gass & Mackey, 2000). All stimulated recall interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed as original data for analysis. Table 4.2 is an overall outlined framework for my data collection procedures.

Table 4.2 Procedures and time frames for fieldwork

		Yuan	Qiang	Shi	Tan	Fen
Pre-INSET	Obs1	07/10/12	08/10/12	10/10/12	17/10/12	29/10/12 (a video provided by the participant himself for a local teaching competition in April 2012)
	Int1	08/10/12	09/10/12	11/10/12	18/10/12	03/11/12
Transcribed data returned to teachers for respondent validity (Int.1)	Data sent to teachers	14/10/12	16/10/12	20/10/12	26/10/12	10/11/12
	Data returned by teachers	14/10/12	18/10/12	23/10/12	26/10/12	14/11/12
1st training phase (29 Oct.-30 Nov.)	Int2	02/12/12	08/12/12	02/12/12	05/12/12	07/12/12
Transcribed data returned to teachers for respondent validity (Int.2)	Data sent to teachers	14/12/12	15/12/12	13/12/12	12/12/12	18/12/12
	Data returned by teachers	15/12/12	19/12/12	16/12/12	13/12/12	21/12/12
2nd training phase (10 Dec.-11 Jan.)	Obs2	17/12/12	17/12/12	14/12/12	12/12/12	20/12/12
	Int3	18/12/12	19/12/12	16/12/12	13/12/12	21/12/12
	Obs3	26/12/12	25/12/12	28/12/12	24/12/12	10/01/13

				(audio-record)	(audio-record)	
	Int4	02/01/13	02/01/12	29/12/12	27/12/12	11/01/13
Participants' responses for validity(Int.3-4)		30/01/13	28/01/13	29/01/13	28/01/13	24/01/13
Post-INSET interview	Int5	30/01/13	28/01/13	29/01/13	28/01/13	24/01/13
Participants' responses for validity(Int.5)		20/02/13	19/02/13	19/02/13	22/02/13	22/02/13
Follow-up investigation	Obs4	20/04/13	06/04/13	12/04/13	15/04/13	15/04/13
	Int6	21/04/13	08/04/13	13/04/13	17/04/13	18/04/13
	Obs5	28/05/13	03/06/13	07/06/13	11/06/13	15/06/13
	Int7	29/05/13	05/06/13	09/06/13	13/06/13	16/06/13
Participants' responses for validity(Int.6-7)		29/06/13	30/06/13	29/06/13	02/07/13	07/07/13

*Int=interview; Obs=observation

4.5.3 The role of researcher in data collection

Apart from the research methods employed for data collection, I was also aware of the effect the researcher might cause in the research process because at the heart of the qualitative study is the researcher whose "gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 25). Qualitative research depends on the interpretations offered by the researcher and on the relationship developed between the researcher and the data. The role of the researcher therefore seems important in making explicit why the research focus was chosen, what the researcher's views are in terms of the focus and what relationship exists between the researcher and the participants (Schram, 2003). Describing the role of me as the researcher is hoped to achieve auditability and highlight any possible biases during investigation and in reaching conclusions.

My own perspectives on teacher learning and professional development – particularly in the case of in-service teacher education – were instrumental in selecting the focus of this study, as pointed out in chapter 1. Since this exploratory

case study research aimed to generate a rich description of a constructivist-interpretive particular setting and its participants, I as the researcher needed to have access to as much local knowledge as possible. This was crucial given the importance of context in teacher learning (as I stressed in sections 3.5 and 3.6). Insiders often understand the significance of what is happening as they are very familiar with the context (Campbell, McNamara & Gilroy 2004; Robson 2002). This study benefitted from my former identify as a teacher trainer with insider knowledge of the INSET course and language teacher education in general and local contexts, as well as the teaching context of the teachers and the constraints this imposed on them. At the same time, my former working experiences in teacher education, such as supervising pre-service teachers' practicum and doing fieldwork in secondary schools, also enabled me with the basic information and skills to communicate with teachers with natural language according to their real life world.

On the other side, my previous identity as teacher trainer also posed challenges to me. In traditional training model, teacher trainer was placed at a higher position than the teachers, which might lead to the distance between me and the teachers, and even cause their discomfort when being researched or difficulties in communication. However, I conducted the study for the purposes of my research as a doctoral student, and not as a figure of any authority in the teacher training system. I hoped that I was viewed by the participating teachers as a colleague rather than an "expert". To diminish such negative effect, I employed some techniques to make the teachers feel comfortable and stay in this study. The preparations I made before data collection, including information sheet, informed consent form (see section 4.4.2) helped increase the teachers' confidence of being researched as they were aware of the research purpose and convinced that there would be no judgement on their articulations and behaviours. When data collection started, I employed various methods to keep the interviews going smoothly (see detailed description in section 4.5.1) and took non-participant role when observing lesson see details in section 4.5.2). I could feel that the teachers' trust on me gradually increased because they were able to speak their actual feelings. In some interviews, they expressed their dissatisfaction about the course content and delivery in a straight way rather than trying to say anything to please me (see some quotes in case studies), which showed that my efforts to generate effective communication between me and the teachers were useful and developed the collegial relationship with the teachers.

4.6 Data analysis

Data analysis in this study mainly involved two formal steps: transcription and analysis. This section aims at presenting the particular procedures through which the data was analysed.

- Because all participants were interviewed in Chinese and in order to avoid any communication problem when asking for their confirmation, all the recorded interviews, observations and post-observation interviews were first transcribed in Chinese (see example in appendix 5) through a combination of manual and computerised strategies (such as *Voicewalker*). The first stage of dealing with the data was transcribing them into natural and readable discourse. Data transcription lasted throughout the whole data collection as each interview and observation was transcribed once being collected and transferred to computer. Transcribing is a time-consuming but worthwhile process as I was able to immerse myself in what was seen and heard. I read and reflected on each transcription and wrote analytic memos (example in appendix 9) as summary sheets for each set of data (Duff, 2008). These memos were used for generating questions for the next stage of data collection. When receiving confirmation from the teachers, the transcripts were translated into English (example in appendix 5).

- When translating, literal translation was adopted for most of the interview transcripts because the teachers' answers were mostly clear with coherent sentences and easy to be translated word by word. Although the interviews were conducted in Chinese and the sentences involved grammatical and syntactical structures that did not exist in English, my Chinese and English language proficiency supported to cope with this problem and prepare readable quotations for case studies. According to my translation, taking into consideration the whole conversation and the social context is necessary to guarantee the reliability of the text (Filep, 2009), especially when English equivalents could not be found. In such cases, consultation is a helpful strategy. For example, one of the teachers mentioned a Chinese term "jiaoyanzu" when explaining the information source of her views on teaching which refers to a team which consists of the teachers who teach the same subject and the same grade of students within a school. This term could not be directly translated into English since there is no existing equivalent. I

first consulted the meaning of this Chinese term with the teacher and then decided to use the strategy of paraphrasing to express it in a sentence rather than a single word. This adaptation is necessary when "no corresponding cultural or institutional custom or object, idiom or expression exists in the target culture or language" (Newmark, 2001:62). Such case did not take place a lot because most of the teachers' articulations were daily used words and the terms they learned on the INSET course were closely related to my research field which could also be easily translated. So the translated transcripts could accurately reflect what the teachers meant by what they said. No translation-related problem influenced data analysis and thesis-writing. The quotes in case studies clearly showed this.

- The determination of the categorization (see sections 2.3 and 4.2.2) of impact on teachers' practice derives from the INSET goals and content on teachers' practice change since the INSET course is the context for teacher learning to take place and the main source of new knowledge, and can exert influence on subsequent teaching practice. Therefore, the observation data were analysed according to the five teaching aspects the INSET expected teachers to improve as stated in the course document: lesson shape, communicative classroom activities, teacher controls, teacher-student rapport and classroom language use (see details in section 2.3). The key episodes of observational data were analysed together with field notes I took down when observing to generate questions about the rationale for teachers' behaviour within their teaching contexts in post-observation interviews. Literature on second language teaching and the INSET content, as well as my own professional experience, were useful here in identifying the range of behaviour to explore and find the key episodes. This process was repeated after each observation and the analysis informed me to focus on the recurrent facets worthy closer attention. The categories of the INSET impact on the teachers' cognitive changes were drawn from the literature of in-service teacher education and professional development. In order to inform and justify my decisions on analytical categories, I have classified the particular areas in which the impact of INSET course was perceived to take place, teacher knowledge, beliefs and the influencing factors (detailed discussion see chapter 3). This is closely consistent with the dimensions of the purpose and content of the

INSET course which aimed to transfer new knowledge into the teachers' practice. Consequently the categories made in this study were based on the content of the INSET course, the data from the teachers, and concepts and taxonomies in the literature.

- When coding the data, I used open coding at the first stage. Open coding refers to "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:6, cited in Kvale & Brinkman, 2009:202). Likewise, while reading and re-reading the transcribed data, at first I tried to look for frequently mentioned words as Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Merriam, 1988:135) suggested; in other words, I looked for recurring themes and patterns, and compared similarities and differences for each case. I then highlighted a word or passage that I considered relevant to my topic and started to group and label them (e.g. "confidence" "teacher-student relationship", etc.) in order that they could be easily identified and retrieved. When labelling and highlighting, I used Word's track change function (I worked with an electronic copy not a hard copy) since clarity is the most important feature when labelling (Dörnyei, 2007). I also used Nvivo 9.0 for the purpose of easily coding all the data. I set up my Nvivo database in January 2013 with labels in previous open coding as nodes and it did seem to be easy to search for extracts (example see appendix 10). However, a problem emerged as well when I examined the reference rates between the Nvivo records and my manual work results. The numbers of message I thought relevant to a label was more than the reference numbers on the Nvivo. For example, when I was coding Tan's first interview, she mentioned school support as a factor for her to participate the INSET course: "The head-teacher told me that there was such an opportunity (to learn on the INSET course). I think it is good for me so I agreed" (TI1: 90-91). When coding manually, I labeled such message as "school support" but when using this node to search in Nvivo the results did not present this extract. This problem became more obvious when the follow-up data were imported into Nvivo with increasing unmatched reference rates. Because I had missed the opportunity of applying for another Nvivo training session which was always the busiest and my knowledge of Nvivo could not afford me to solve this problem, I then turned to rely more on manual work when

coding to ensure all relevant messages were coded with Nvivo only as a useful tool of organizing and archiving the data.

- From April 2013 to May 2013 when I was preparing my first case study, manual efforts were made to ensure the relevance of extracts and quotes in case study and double check any possible missing of important extracts and then I carried out my final coding. I printed out all hard copies of the data under each category and re-read them one-by-one, highlighting the insightful and interesting extracts. When writing the first case, this coding process enabled me to formalize and systematize my interpretation of the data and reach the interim conclusions which were refined and modified in the light of subsequent cases.

4.7 Quality issues in this study

Case studies are seen by positivists as having insufficient precision, objectivity and rigor (Yin, 2009). Researchers should be careful about how to overcome these criticisms. This section presents the relevant issues I took into account to enhance the quality of this study.

- Triangulation: Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of multifaceted data through cross verification (Duff, 2008; Cohen *et al.,* 2011). This study adopted cycles of interviews and classroom observations and the data gathered at each stage helped inform the focus of subsequent stages. This use of multiple sources of data assisted me to overcome the limitations of single data collection instrument in capturing the complexity of the target phenomenon (e.g. Borg, 2006; Maxwell, 1996; Yin, 2009). Investigation in the early stage provided stimuli for subsequent data collection. Issues raised in classroom observation were highlighted in the interviews as well. The teachers' accounts of views and practice formed the focus of the post-observation interviews. Thus interviews served as a technique through which the issues raised by other methods were explored. In this triangulated approach, the compensation for the limitations of each method was complemented by each other.
- Credibility: Credibility means the believability of research outcomes, ensuring the data speak to the findings. For this respect, the tactics I used include following teachers through the whole INSET course, persistent interviews and observations, and trying to be explicit about my methodological procedures

(Yin, 2009). All of them helped to support the legitimacy of the findings (being fair and reasonable). The respondent validity was achieved through inviting the participants to comment on and respond to the particular queries I had when transcribing the data.

- Dependability: Dependability refers to the extent which the research findings are dependable. In this study, I have clear research objectives and the specific concepts related to them were discussed in the literature review. Examples of all research instruments are provided in the appendices. In this way it is easy to check the whole research process.

- Transferability: Transferability means the generalizability of findings and/or results of one study to other research settings, situations, populations, etc. Different from producing statistically significant data, case study aims at understanding the research topic and questions posed in depth in a particular context, not seeking universal truths. My goal is to understand and accurately represent my research participants' experiences and the meanings they construct. It is for the reader to make an informed judgment about how relevant the findings are for other research (Stake, 2000).

- Confirmability: Confirmability proposes that research findings should be true results of inquiry and are not affected by researcher bias. The interpretivist approach in this study allows preconceived notions or biases to result in a loss of objectivity in findings. It is very likely that my own worldview, values and perspectives may have influenced how I selected the participants and filtered all the data (Merriam, 1998). Thus I needed to remain conscious of my research goals and assumptions to minimize interpretative bias when choosing participants, collecting and analysing data. Being candid and reflective about my own subjectivities and engagement with research participants and with the research itself is essential for the confirmability of this study. The sources of all interpretations will be made sufficiently explicit and clear to allow readers to track them to their source.

4.8 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted bearing ethical considerations in mind. Before data collection, I submitted the ethical form to the AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee, University of Leeds and gained their approval. When sampling, the aims

of the research and its procedures were explicitly explained to the institution and the participants when asking for their informed consent prior to the administration of the research tools. During data collection, interviews were audio-recorded and classroom observations were video-recorded with participants' informed consent. Meanwhile I also was aware of the need to protect the participants through the techniques of confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen *et al.,* 1994; Merriam, 1988; Heigham & Croker, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; Gall *et al.,* 1996). I discussed with the participants to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution of using numbers, codes or other pseudonym methods instead of their actual names or any other personal means of identification. All data and findings including recordings, transcriptions and videotapes were shared with others without using participants' names and will be kept with pseudonym methods with only the researcher having access.

4.9 Presentation of data

The presentation of data in this study is based on the use of extensive extracts of primary data as evidence to support all claims. Regarding the validity of qualitative research, readers have the opportunity to inspect the data and assess the interpretive validity of the findings and conclusions as co-analysts (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Maxwell, 1996). However, there is no fixed format of data presentation in qualitative research. The following is an outline of the key issues which influence my choice of structure and format.

First I struggled to find a workable format between organizing the case studies thematically through extracting common themes from the cases and presenting each case in the form of one chapter. After trying writing thematic chapters, I found that doing so entailed a lot of repetition across chapters because the factors influencing one aspect of teachers' practice was likely to influence another (e.g. for three teachers, the INSET course influenced all their work). Such repetition might reduce the uniqueness of each case and lose its individuality. So I decided to present each case as a separate chapter. The benefit of this approach is that each teacher's practices and cognitions can be presented as a unified account in which the individuality of thinking and action emerges clearly. Thus the chronology of the developments in each teacher under the INSET course is presented in a more effective manner. In addition, this approach also offers readers the chance to trace

and evaluate the process of data collection and analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Another challenge to data presentation in this study is to find an appropriate way of capturing specific aspects of teachers' practices. After trying drafts for the first case chapter, I finally decided to organize each case into three sections to reflect the chronology of participants' developments in the overall process and the holistic processes and influences that impinged on their developments: (1) participants' learning experience in the INSET course; (2) five salient facets of classroom teaching according to the INSET expectations (also the categories for practice analysis); and (3) a summary of participants' individual developmental processes and impact of the INSET course on these developments. This structure tried to keep the balance between the depths of each case (Duff, 2008). The structure of all the cases is similar with headings and subheadings within each of them to help signpost for the reader (Dörnyei, 2007). One detailed chapter of discussion of all the cases will follow the presentation of all the data.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the research design of this study and outlined the paradigmatic assumptions underlying the research, the practical procedures involved in data collection and analysis, quality issues and ethical integrity as well as data presentation. These methodological issues covered in this chapter show that this study made efforts to use methods that were consistent with research aims and philosophical commitments.

Chapter 5 Case of Yuan: Change with limits

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the data of the first participant, Yuan. I will provide a brief life story of him with background information and comments on the data collection process on him. Then I will give a detailed account of developments in his knowledge, beliefs and classroom practice drawn from the observations and interviews by looking at six facets of his learning on the INSET course and in his classroom teaching and examining influences on this learning. Finally I will summarise the key issues which emerge from this case. This format will be used for all other cases in this study.

5.2 Background information

In this section I present background information about Yuan, some of which predates the period of the study but was collected from interviews during it.

5.2.1 Teaching career background

Yuan finished his four-year undergraduate pre-service teacher training in English education in a Normal University in Sichuan province and entered teaching directly after graduating in 2006. Because of family issues, he decided to come back and work as junior secondary school teacher in his hometown, Chongqing. The school he worked in was a major secondary school famous for its long history and the high rate of its graduates' entry to senior secondary schools and universities. Yuan obtained the job because of his high exam scores during his undergraduate study. He had been teaching English to junior secondary school students for six years and in 2010 he completed a two-year M. Ed study in the university where the INSET course in this study was held. The following year, he was promoted to a middle-level position which is similar to lecturer in Chinese universities. As most of his students successfully entered local major senior secondary schools in the entrance examinations, he was regarded by his school as one of the key young teachers with potential for further development.

Before this research he had attended two teaching competitions, an educational research project and a one-week in-service teacher training programme. However,

his prior teaching work had been mostly influenced by his initial teacher training: "When I started to teach, my learning results in pre-service training made sense and gave me a framework to follow in lesson planning and classroom teaching" (YI1: 76-78).

5.2.2 Pre-INSET classroom teaching

Yuan's pre-INSET classroom teaching information mainly came from one observation conducted before the INSET course with a post-observation interview. His pre-INSET information provided a baseline for exploring the change and development he experienced as a result of the training course.

In his observed lesson, the focus was on teaching students how to use past tense of verbs with the unit topic "Where did you go on vacation?". Yuan started the lesson with a lead-in reviewing the words students learned last time as "students should be motivated before entering the main part of the lesson" (YI1: 31).

The main parts of the lesson consisted of teacher presentation and student practice. Some classroom activities were employed for classroom communication in the form of teacher-student dialogue, student-student pair work and group work. Yuan had firm ideas about the use of interactive activities:

> For language learning, I think we should provide students chances to talk and listen. It's good for motivating them and keeping their interests in learning…I want my students to learn through using the language, not just rote learning (YI1:23-26).

This lesson included a short passage reading activity, and Yuan used a three-stage reading process (pre-,while-, and post-reading). It had become, as he reflected, a teaching habit he had learnt in his formal learning and from observing other teachers:

> (the method) is easy to conduct and I can easily plan what students to do at each stage. The other reason is that I have used them for a long time...since the start of my teaching career (YI1:29-31).

In the whole lesson, teacher-fronted teaching with students' sitting in their seats showed a typical Chinese traditional classroom pattern which indicated teacher's obvious dominant role. For example, during group work, Yuan walked around the

classroom, listening to students' talking but paying no attention to any certain group. This was what Yuan thought as necessary to ensure every student participate in the work: "when I don't look at them, they (some students) might not speak in English" (YI1: 45-46).

Yuan used English as the only medium in class (with the Chinese translation of "past tense" on PowerPoint slide), which he regarded as a way to "provide students a language model to follow" (YI1:7).

At the end of his lesson, Yuan covered all the teaching content as planned. In the post-observation interview, Yuan commented that his teaching "was completed in a conventional way... Some different options are needed, especially the ways on motivating student participation" (YI1: 98-101).

5.2.3 Expectations of the INSET course

This section considers the factors which made Yuan decide to attend the INSET course. Knowing what Yuan expected from the course again provides a starting point for the analysis of the learning resulting from the course, and therefore, the exploration of the development in his knowledge, beliefs and practice.

In the pre-INSET interview, Yuan's responses to the question "Why are you taking the INSET course?" could be categorised as extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. For extrinsic reasons, his school required him to attend the course because the vice-head teacher told him he was "one of the young teachers with the potential to develop… and will grow into a better teacher"(YI1:107-9). Yuan felt he could not say no to the administration since he had to work in the school and he knew he had to get along with the administrators for his future work. This showed that, in China, the administrative power over teachers' career life was still strong and dominant in teacher's decision-making for professional activities.

On the other hand, Yuan wanted to take this training as a chance for further development. Since the school had appointed a teacher to replace him during the training time, he felt it was not bad to be away from his work for a while. In the training course, Yuan wanted to learn some theory about language teaching and learning because he got the feeling that theory learning was necessary for teachers in his M.Ed study: "without theoretical knowledge I can hardly explain my teaching clearly" (YI1:286). And now the pressure for secondary school teachers to carry out educational research was also intense. The requirement for their published research

work as promotion criteria had become a national phenomenon. Yuan was highly motivated by this reason:

> I want to publish some research papers for promotion. Theories are…important in doing research work, especially the updated ideas and views (YI1:287-90).

Yuan's reasons for attending the INSET course were not limited to the course itself. Obtaining practical information for actual teaching was also a part of Yuan's expected results:

> I want to exchange information about classroom teaching with other teachers, especially the practical information on how to use a certain teaching method and how to deal with the difficulties in teaching (YI1: 294-96).

From the interviews during and after the INSET course, it was clear that Yuan's expectations on the above aspects had been met and his feelings about them will be presented in the following sections.

Yuan also wanted to improve his language proficiency and increase his confidence. But in fact there was no particular language course for the participating teachers. At the end of the first training phase Yuan articulated the change of his views on EFL teachers' language learning in formal courses:

> My expectation for language learning was not met…but it would not be a problem since my understandings of being teacher has been enriched… I think fluent English is important, …[but it] does not necessarily make good teachers (YI2: 67-71).

This reflected that, although his expectations for language improvement were not met, Yuan's views on being a good EFL teachers had developed from being concerned with teachers' language proficiency to include other factors.

5.3 Learning on the INSET course

This section is mainly concerned with Yuan's feelings on the training input and his perceived learning outcomes. From the data collected on his development and

change in knowledge, beliefs and practices, the sources of the course impact could be traced back to his learning in first training phase.

Yuan generally felt satisfied with the course. His familiarity with the environment and lecturers from his prior learning experiences (M. Ed study) helped him quickly get fully engaged in it. In Yuan's view, the training content focused on the curriculum reform, language teaching and teacher professional development, some of which was similar to his M. Ed modules. The workshops presented information on teaching methods and provided chances for teachers to present their attempts.

When asked about whether his expectations were met in the first training phase, Yuan felt most satisfied with theory learning. He felt this was an obvious learning result with his educational views being "updated with the interpretation of the new curriculum standards and some other relevant theories on language teaching" (YI2: 12-13). He thought the theories confirmed some of his prior ideas of language teaching and enriched his views in the field. Even though the theories challenged some his existing ideas, he still at least tried to see if they could work in practice. His attempts at new practice will be presented in section 5.4.

At the same time, the increase of theoretical knowledge triggered Yuan's exploration of his unconscious beliefs:

> I haven't given much thought about my own beliefs…Before the course I buried myself in teaching work, thinking about how to improve their (students') exam scores but ignoring what I know and believed. I now know that it is necessary to know about myself as teacher…I now know [from the lectures] it is necessary to review what I think and believe underlying my practice…and the challenges I face under the circumstance of curriculum reform (YI2: 43-51).

This showed that Yuan was provoked by the lectures on teachers' beliefs and professional development and had realized the importance of self-exploration for further development. In the lecture on teacher reflection, Yuan received the information on effective teaching reflection and started regular reflection after the first training phase. This helped him to explore his own ideas and understandings for classroom teaching. The interview quotes in the following sections are the evidence

for his reflective practice which can be viewed as a part of the impact of training input on Yuan's professional practice.

In the interview at the end of the first training phase, Yuan found that the theoretical foundation for some of his fundamental beliefs were confirmed while some were challenged. For example, he thought his prior beliefs about curriculum design had been strengthened:

> The lecturer introduced the principles in design communicative
> activities…I felt it confirmed my ideas indeed. I don't know how
> to summarize my ideas into abstract principles…I do think all
> classroom activities should be communicative enough to provide
> chances for students to use English (YI2: 71-76).

Meanwhile Yuan also felt that using teaching methods in the proposed way to support the curriculum reform challenged some of his beliefs, such as teacher's roles in student learning, the need to evaluate the method used in his own teaching context, through teacher's reflection on using the method in the classroom. In the pre-INSET interview, Yuan believed in the effectiveness of following good teaching methods. However, the course changed his prior beliefs:

> In the lectures, I found what the lecturer told us was not about
> how to use a particular method, but how to change our views on
> teaching methods… I believed in the direct effect brought by the
> use of good teaching methods. But now the lecturer taught us to
> look at the methods from some other perspectives, from what
> role a teacher plays in using the method to how to evaluate
> student's in-class performance…We are also told that after-class
> reflection is important for us to know more about the method we
> use (YI2: 101-09).

In the workshops on teaching methods, Yuan felt he learned the underpinning theories and implementation principles of teaching methods:

> The workshops on teaching methods are good. I feel I've gained
> much more insights into teaching methods. I learned some

theories on teaching methods before, but my understandings just
stayed at a superficial level (YI2: 111-13).

With the challenge to his prior beliefs, the INSET course expanded Yuan's views on teaching methods. In his reflection on practice after the first training phase Yuan took some influential factors into account for lesson design such as teaching purpose, students' needs and so on. The impact of this learning on his beliefs about teaching methods and his practice will be analysed with evidence from the interviews and observations in the following sections.

Yuan also felt satisfied with the chances for peer interaction during the training course, which provided him with opportunities to meet and talk to other teachers inside and outside the classroom. Information exchanged on actual classroom teaching and contextual factors enriched his learning:

> Working with other teachers in the workshops is really a good
> experience. We are told to do some short teaching practice...with
> the topic from the lecturers. During our group work, we
> discussed about how to use the method in our actual classrooms.
> Their (other teachers) suggestions are very useful for my own
> teaching... This training course provides a good chance for
> teachers to communicate. We also chat a lot after the
> lectures...about our current teaching, our schools and the social
> context for English teaching. I feel I can even get something
> useful from our complaints about the current situation (YI2: 119-
> 30).

The peer interaction informed Yuan's awareness of the gap between reality and theories: "theories are universal but teaching contexts vary…the change in practice needs a process of adopting them into my own classroom" (YI2:132-34). In his interviews after the course, Yuan felt practical tips were more useful than theories, especially when he met problems in his teaching:

> Theories cannot solve my current problem…I feel their (other
> teachers) suggestions are useful… They help me solve [the
> problem] immediately in the classroom…(YI6: 101-05).

Yuan's expectation of language proficiency improvement had not been met as mentioned in section 5.2.3. In the pre-INSET interview, Yuan connected language proficiency with teaching confidence. The lectures on teacher knowledge and professional development inspired him in his own language learning. The lectures mentioned the roles language proficiency plays in teachers' professional work and how teachers can improve their language proficiency. In the interview at the end of the first training phase, Yuan reported that:

> Language learning is a complicated process. As teacher, I don't want my students to rely on me too much in language learning. So I think I should not expect much from the training course [in language learning]…I should change my ideas [about learning language through formal training courses] (YI2: 20-23).

He consciously felt the need to change his idea about the teacher's English learning. In his previous language learning experience, he learned English in formal courses, such as undergraduate studies. In terms of teacher professional development, Yuan learned that teachers as language learners should develop the views of being an independent lifelong learner rather than relying on formal courses for language learning. Teacher's development as an independent language learner could help raising students' ideas of being independent learners.

After the second training phase, Yuan felt more enthusiasm and motivation to implement his learning outcomes in the actual classroom with more insights into the new curriculum and language teaching:

> I feel I'm more enthusiastic for my career… with enhanced motivation to develop my teaching. The training course really helped me a lot in this part (YI5: 5-7).

This showed that Yuan's awareness for change and development increased after his learning. But at the end of the first training phase, Yuan also had some confusion about the course content which seemed constraining his change:

> I don't think I have understood what student-centredness really means…They (the lecturers) left the classroom after the lectures and I don't have any chance to ask them…(YI2: 132-135)

At the end of the course, Yuan felt:

> This (theory-learning) is different from reading books. I want to
> apply it into my practice…I think I need advice from them on
> my application. But I cannot find any…Sometimes I have to give
> up [trying] (YI5: 86-90).

His words showed that there existed the lack of sufficient support from the course and the lack of communication between trainer and the teachers. This, to some extent, affected Yuan's uptake of the training input in his practice.

Meanwhile, through the training course and interaction with other teachers, Yuan was aware that he faced some challenges, such as the conflict between the proposed ideas and reality, the possible inconsistency between beliefs and practice. Yuan also anticipated some obstacles which might make it hard for him to retain and act on what he learned in the course in his future work, since he had experienced such difficulties after his first one-week in-service training course:

> The current needs from the students, parents and schools are still
> test-oriented. They may probably reject any change in classroom
> teaching because they think exam scores are the most important
> in assessing students' learning results (YI5:42-44).

After several months' practice, Yuan still felt that, due to the social constraints, "it is very likely to lose, even give up what I learned when meeting practical difficulties" (YI7: 231-33).

Here Yuan's two main worries about applying his learning outcomes in practice can be summarized as: first, how he could develop his teaching to meet the requirements of the new curriculum as well as not affect students' learning in term of their exam results; secondly, what he could do if his change did not bring any change to students' learning. The lack of follow-up support also made him uncertain about whether he would be able to sustain the changes he introduced into his practice.

In sum, the training input (mostly theories) enriched Yuan's knowledge and triggered his self-exploration of his own beliefs and practice. His practice in the second phase also developed him insights into the feasibility of the training input in reality through his attempts to implement what he had learned in actual classroom.

5.4 The impact of INSET on classroom teaching

The following sections highlight the impact of INSET on the development of Yuan's professional life in relation to specific aspects of explicit classroom teaching in the second training phase and the six-month follow-up investigation.

5.4.1 Shape of lesson

From observations, it was easy to see that the general shape of Yuan's lesson remain the same before and after the INSET course. The first defining feature of Yuan's lesson shape was starting with lead-in as revision or introduction to the new lesson. Teacher's presentation and students' learning were intertwined in the language points learning and practice. At the end of each lesson, a short summary of lesson was followed by an assignment. This section examines and explores the impact of the development of Yuan's knowledge and beliefs on his comparatively unchanged practice.

In the pre-INSET observation, Yuan started his lesson with a short interaction between teacher and students on "where did you go on vacation" by showing students a picture of his travels in America.

Extract 1

T: Look at the picture, please. Do you know where it is?

S1: A foreign country.

S2: I think it is America.

T: Yes. It is America. Do you want to travel there?

Ss: Yes.

T: I also want to travel in America. I want to travel around the world. Do you want to do it too?

Ss: Yes.

T: What we will learn today is about travel.

(Then teacher wrote down the topic of the lesson on the blackboard "Where did you go on vacation?") (YO1: 3-11)

In the post-observation interview, Yuan articulated his reasons for this lesson design:

I think students should be motivated before entering the main part of the lesson. This will be helpful for my teaching since English language learning is different from other subjects and cannot be learned by counting or remembering formulas… The activities I used in my lesson helped both me and my students get involved in the teaching and learning process. Students got more stimuli from me and others (YI1: 31-37).

In the first observation of the second training phase, around two weeks after the first training phase, Yuan kept using this method as a lead-in activity to start the lesson by comparing two pieces of chalk to introduce the new language points.

Extract 2

(Yuan is holding two pieces of chalk in his hand)

T: I have two pieces of chalk. Are they different?

Ss: Yes.

T: Who can tell the difference? (asking individual students to give their answers)

S1: One is red and the other is white.

S2: The white one is long and the red one is short.

S3: You used the white one just now.

T: Good job. You can find the difference between them.

(Then teacher showed some pictures of animals on PPT)

T: I have some pictures here. What are they?

> Ss: Animals.
>
> T: Yes. They are different animals. Now I want you to tell me how different they are from each other?
>
> (Then teacher asked individual students to tell the names of the animals and their characteristics in terms of their colours, shapes and sizes. After doing this, teacher introduced the main topic of the lesson: comparative forms of adjectives.) (YO2:3-14)

In the above extracts, Yuan used display questions (typically closed questions) in lead-in to introduce the topic of the lesson. In the second observation in the second training phase, Yuan arranged students to start the class by reviewing the learnt language points (for a detailed discussion for students' lead-in see section 5.4.3). From interviews, Yuan's purpose for beginning lesson with lead-in was to prepare students for learning because he believed that a good start could lead to good teaching result in each lesson. In his experiences, the lead-in worked well in motivating students.

The lessons in each textbook unit consisted of reading, functions and grammar, and listening and speaking, and writing. The lesson observed before the INSET course consisted of reading, listening and speaking. In each lesson, Yuan provided opportunities for students to use and practise target language elements. For example, after learning the past tense of verbs, Yuan led students to complete the reading passage through starting with a discussion on pre-reading questions in the textbook: "What do you like to do in weekends?" and "What did you do last Sunday?" Yuan asked the questions and selected individual students to answer them. The main types of interaction in the whole lesson were teacher-student and student-student interaction. This pattern of classroom interaction was repeated in post-reading activities.

In all the observed lessons after the first training phase, there was not significant change to the lesson shape. When asked about this, Yuan said that:

> In the teaching sample videos I watched in the lectures, I found most of the teachers conducted their lesson in a similar shape…I discussed with the lecturers and other teachers in the workshops.

> They all think there is no problem with it… The more important is, my students have got used to this lesson shape. I wonder whether they may meet some problem when I change the shape. I don't want to take the risk (YI4: 7-13).

In the last observation in this study, Yuan made a brief summary of his lesson shape:

> The lesson shape I use is mainly from what I learnt [during undergraduate study] before and observing other teachers. In the training course, I found many teachers also used this shape…The lecturers on classroom teaching supported this shape. The three stages (pre-, while- and post-) of reading, listening and reading are the general framework for many teachers' teaching. The training input on lesson shape confirmed my ideas…I will keep using this shape in the future (YI7: 17-24).

From Yuan's words, his lesson shape was formulated based on his previous learning experience, both formal and informal, and gained approval from others on the course. This showed that his former beliefs and practice were confirmed. Before the INSET course, he had used the lesson shape but he could not explain why it was good. Now he continued to do it and could also give explanations for doing so. That is to say, although Yuan's practices did not change he was more theoretically aware of the reasons for them.

However, Yuan also mentioned another issue related to the INSET input:

> They suggested us not to follow the flow of textbook…but I think it is hard [to do it] since I don't have much time to do that. I still have to cover the textbook and linguistic elements…students might feel I haven't covered the textbook content (YI7: 26-30)

This showed that Yuan's decision of lesson shape was also constrained by external factors (textbook coverage and student expectations) which were in fact related to knowledge acquisition. A gap between the INSET input and teacher's actual teaching emerged and the lack of influence of the content on teacher's practice could be sensed in this issue. This, to some extent, also showed why Yuan's lesson shape

remained unchanged.

5.4.2 Teacher control

This section mainly concerns the two issues of releasing teacher control and increasing student involvement. Observed teaching events will be presented as evidence to explore the change in Yuan's practice for a comparison with his pre-INSET teaching. The change in his knowledge and beliefs about teacher control will be explored through his post-observation interviews.

In the pre-INSET observation, Yuan took the dominant position in the lesson. Even though he implemented some activities for students' in-class participation, he monitored their group work by walking around the classroom and listening to students' talking in groups. Yuan reported his feelings on this:

> When doing group work, I have to ensure every student participate in the work. At least I want to hear all of them speak English…sometimes some students just play a cat-and-mouse game with me. When I don't look at them, they will not speak in English…but I don't want to do that (YI1:42-46).

Inspired by the theoretical information in the first training phase by which traditional teacher-centred teaching had been challenged, Yuan took a look at his teaching from the perspective of teacher control. In the first observation in the second training phase, he adjusted the extent of his control. He gave students five minutes to finish a circle story by using the past tense of verbs. When students were doing that, Yuan stood at a corner of the classroom rather than walking around to keep an eye on each student. Only when time was up did he ask two volunteer groups to perform their stories. In the post-observation interview, Yuan explained this was his attempt to "return some freedom to the students in learning and reduce their reliance on teachers which might be caused by teachers' tight monitor on them" (YI3:33-34).

When talking about the impact of training input on his practice, Yuan reported that:

> In the lectures we are taught that teachers are not expected to monitor the students all the time. This is not good for student autonomy…but I am not sure what effect this change may bring to my teaching and student learning. I want to make it a

> successful change but I think I still need to make more efforts on
>
> that (YI3: 36-40).

Yuan was not sure what effects his taking a background position had on student learning. But his attempt to change the implementation of classroom activity suggested that he positively accepted the training input and tried to take steps for a less teacher-controlled lesson.

In the second observation in the second training phase, two students conducted the lead-in of the lesson instead of the teacher. They presented two notes on the projector with two grammatical multiple-choice exercises on each of them. They took the role of teacher in turn to ask other students for answers and give right answers and explanations (see examples of observation in appendix 6). During students' presentation, Yuan stood in a corner of the classroom and kept silent. Only when the second student could not explain the answer well in English, Yuan allowed him to use some Chinese. In the post-observation interview, Yuan explained his thinking:

> I think giving students chances to play as teacher is a way to
> motivate their learning. What students do in lead-in is reviewing
> what they have learned…Preparing their lead-in presentation is
> also a way for them to learn again. If they can do it well, it
> means they really have understood. And I think this is also a way
> to fulfil student-centeredness in my teaching. I don't want to be
> the only person speaking in the class (YI4: 25-30).

This was another attempt by Yuan to apply learning outcomes in his teaching practice because he mentioned this was a classroom management method learned in the workshops. He adopted it with some adjustment according to his students' language level. For example, he allowed his student to write down the Chinese translation of the sentences they presented if they were not sure other students could understand them.

Before this observation, Yuan had already done this students' lead-in presentation for around one week. He thought this change had motivated students a lot and felt satisfied with students' responses.

> When I told them (the students) about this, they got very excited. One student told me that he could finally be a teacher now…It is not hard to find out that students want something different from their daily learning… I asked volunteers to do this work every time. Now I already have volunteers for the next two weeks. Some of them want to do it again (YI4: 31-37).

With students' support Yuan felt confident in releasing his control because students' active involvement stimulated their enthusiasm in English learning. In the interview at the end of the training course, Yuan reported that:

> I think releasing my control is beneficial for both me and my students. We both feel freer than before. Without my tight monitor on them, students engage in classroom learning more actively than before (YI5: 34-36).

Therefore Yuan was sure that he made a right decision and had developed it into his teaching routines in the follow-up investigation. In the interviews, Yuan expressed his feelings on his changes:

> To my surprise, my students still wanted to do this (the lead-in presentation) after the Spring Festival vacation (similar to Christmas break)… Starting the lesson with students' work makes the whole class much easier to manage…All the sentences are chosen by themselves. Sometimes they find some interesting sentences which make other students burst into laughter…without my effort, students can still enjoy their in-class learning (YI6: 24-31).

This indicated a development of Yuan's beliefs on teacher control from a concern for his own teaching towards more concern for student learning.

For his change in practice, Yuan also interpreted it from another perspective: classroom management:

> Students' mutual support stimulates their attention to the class…I don't think I need to make more efforts to "attract and control them" in class (YI6:35-37).

In the last interview, the change made Yuan felt confident that he turned this tentative action into routinized work:

> My students like it… For me it brings me less trouble in managing the class while teaching. Students are motivated by their own work at the beginning of the lesson, which saves me much effort in organizing them in class.…I have benefitted from doing this. I'm happy I continued it (students' lead-in presentation) (YI7:42-47).

Yuan's feelings indicated that he also felt satisfied with the easier classroom management resulted from releasing teacher control. This "side effect" reflected, to some extent, Yuan's adjustment of his teaching in response to the training input. Accordingly, his decision to continue this change indicated that his beliefs had been confirmed by his practical attempts.

For further practice in releasing teacher control, Yuan articulated his expectations for follow-up support:

> For longer-term effect (of stimulating student learning through releasing teacher control), I think I need some other methods to enrich my practice, such as peer observation, expert teacher supervision, and other practical examples of alternative practice…If there are some other such training courses, I will be happy to attend (YI7:51-55).

5.4.3 Patterns of classroom activities

In all observations of Yuan's work, the main patterns of classroom activities were teacher-student and student-student interaction in pair work and group work.

The INSET workshops on teaching methods recommended that teachers use pair work and group work as the basic patterns of classroom communicative activities. When watching the videos of demonstration teaching, all participating teachers were presented with ways of using various activities in classroom teaching. From the pre-

INSET observation and interview, the two factors Yuan mainly considered were whether the activity was communicative and whether it had worked well in class. In his actual classroom teaching after the first training phase, he adjusted the methods according to classroom reality rather than simply imitating them. In the second observation in the second training phase, Yuan used a whole class activity for students to use adjective comparatives. He revealed his thoughts for doing this:

> Q: Do you think the students can complete the classroom tasks as expected?
>
> A: most of them can use English to complete some tasks, only a small portion of them don't want to use English in class.
>
> Q: How do you deal with this problem?
>
> A: When doing whole class activity, I need to guarantee this part of students (those with less motivation) participate in it… Since the students' language level is still low and they cannot complete any complicated tasks, I need to reduce the difficulty level of PK game (the activity Yuan learned in the first training phase for student-student contest) …and ensure most of them can speak out them own sentences.
>
> Q: It seems you have to pay much attention to them.
>
> A: Sure. When doing tasks, I also need to think whether students really like doing it …because I want them to enjoy the learning process rather than just learning and using the language points (YI4: 41-56).

This showed that Yuan made some efforts to apply his learning results in classroom teaching. His classroom activities had been expanded from pair work and group work to a whole classroom activity. This is an obvious attempt inspired by the INSET course where the workshops on teaching methods introduced and demonstrated how to conduct whole class activities. Meanwhile, his use of the activities learnt in the course was more than an imitation. He was flexible in adopting INSET input and made adjustment to the scheme of work according to students' language level and interest. Thus, Yuan's choice of classroom activities was based on both external input and analysis of his actual teaching context. His contextually reconstructed knowledge of classroom activity patterns informed his actual practice. That is to say, he actually tried out ideas/theories from the first training phase in the second phase and became more conscious when making

decision in the light of reality rather than trying to implement new approach just as it had been presented:

> Although I feel students are happy every time when I use any new activity, I am not sure whether all the new activities can help me reach the teaching target. When planning the lesson I have to spend much time on thinking out what problems may emerge in class and how to deal with them… (YI5: 58-61).

> I want to change [the activities] student feel bored at… [but] what I'm worried about is how to use the activities I've never tried before in a successful way. You know, my students are around 13-14 years old and very active and curious about the new things. What if the class goes out of control when I ask them to do a whole class debate? (YI4: 49-53)

During the follow-up investigation after the INSET course, Yuan kept on adjusting the learnt activities in his practice and gained more confidence in using them:

> I modified the "chain story" activity (an activity mentioned in the training course). I combined it with reading skills as the reading passage can provide a familiar topic for students to develop their own stories. I did not follow the sample [presented in the training workshop] because I wanted to bring some change to the pattern. Rather than doing it in groups (Yuan's students are usually divided into seating groups of four), I asked them to do this work in rows…The whole class is active…The change of their group members made them feel they are doing something different. I feel satisfied with their participation (YI6: 69-79).

> I think they (students) like something new in each lesson, especially the work they are asked to do. But I don't think I can meet their needs every time. I encouraged them to give me their suggestions after class…Now in the lead-in, they are allowed to present a joke or something funny they can find, not just sentences related to the language points they learned…I hope

> doing this can make them feel confident in language use and I
> will also feel confident in my teaching (YI7: 103-10).

This suggested quite clearly that Yuan adjusted his learning results according to students' interests. His perceived change in activity pattern was linked to increased confidence in his class.

Another issue of Yuan's choice of classroom activities was illustrated by his concern of knowledge acquisition. In three observations (YO2, YO4,YO5), he used teacher-fronted activity when guiding students to do grammar quiz to emphasize the memory of grammar rules. Yuan articulated his reasons for doing that:

> I have to do this because grammar is still an important part of the
> lesson…Students are concerned a lot about their exam scores
> (YI6:90-92).

> …[not] emphasizing grammar is not realistic for current teaching.
> Students need it [for exam]…It's (using teacher-fronted strategy)
> easier. I have to emphasize it or they won't be able to notice it
> (YI7:120-126).

This showed that although Yuan developed his confidence in using communicative activities as response to the new curriculum requirements, contextual factors (exam pressure and student needs) still influenced his choice of classroom activities.

Meanwhile, trying to apply his learning results in teaching for six months, Yuan also articulated the difficulties he met in terms of classroom management:

> There are about 50 students in my class...I feel some difficulty to
> keep students well-motivated in the frequently used activity
> patterns… I use pair work and group work a lot…They (students)
> might feel bored doing work with the same people every time.
> They might want to invite others to join them. But I cannot
> afford the time for them to change their seats and select group
> members. And if they make loud noise, the teachers and students
> from next door might complain about it…I have to find some
> topics which can help motivate then in the same activity

patterns…(and) meet their language levels and related to the unit

topic… (YI7:113-25).

In conclusion, Yuan believed in the positive effect various classroom activities would bring to his teaching and student learning while contextual factors were also influencing his decision. With his recognition of the possible difficulties in new attempts, he felt he needed more support from the INSET course to develop his confidence and skills to effectively adapt the methods but "they (the INSET course) did not do that. I cannot find them any more…for more attempt in teaching" (YI7:185-87).

5.4.4 Teacher-student rapport

In the educational reform document and new curriculum standards, teacher-student rapport had been highlighted as being of paramount importance for successful implementation of a lesson. Inspired by the lecture on classroom management, Yuan explored his prior beliefs in teacher-student rapport:

> The lecture reminded me about the importance of establishing teacher-student rapport. I haven't thought about it before. In my class, teacher and students are arranged by the school. As a teacher, I just think I should take on the responsibility to teach them well (YI2: 32-35).

When asked about how he dealt with teacher-student rapport when teaching, Yuan said:

> I'm patient with students' questions and giving them answers as long as I can…I probably look serious in class but I'm friendly to my students and care about them…I also participate their extracurricular activities sometimes (YI2:37-40).

The INSET lecture broadened Yuan's views on teacher-student rapport. He began to take establishing teacher-student rapport into account as an essential factor influencing classroom teaching in the first training phase:

> In the lecture, I found teacher-student rapport is important in motivating students in learning. It is much important than just

developing a friendly relationship between teacher and students
or preventing students complaining about me (YI2:42-44).

He took immediate action in the second training phase to attempt the new ideas and methods in practice. The following extract shows Yuan's attempt for this:

Extract 4

T: Well, just now you all finished reading the short text. That's very good! Now I want someone to tell me what the text is about? Any volunteer?

S1: It's about animals.

S2: Different animals.

T (to all the students): Any other ideas? (turning to another student) How about you?

S3: I agree with them.

T (to all the students): Do you think so?

Ss: Yes.

T: Good. (to the two students who answered the question) Good job! This text tells us we should?

Ss: Protect animals. (YO2:122-32)

In this two-minute teaching, Yuan used "good", "very good" and "good job" as positive comments for students' performance. In the post-observation interview, Yuan articulated the reasons for it:

I did not often give them (students) such direct positive comments before because I was afraid that they may feel over-proud of their learning. But the lecturer told me giving more positive comments can be effective in motivating students in

learning. Now I began to do it. I hope this can be supportive for
their learning (YI3:87-90).

At the end of the training course, Yuan felt giving students positive comments was useful for promoting positive environment for learning:

I feel the students become more active than before. They raise
their hands to answer questions rather than wait passively to be
called. I think this is a change in my students and good for my
teaching (YI5: 64-66).

This showed that Yuan's attempt in giving praise has been confirmed by his own teaching practice. The two follow-up observations further presented Yuan's confirmed beliefs in this aspect where Yuan complimented the students on their group work even when individual students did not do the work as well as other group members. This illustrated that Yuan made efforts to motivate all the students rather than the individual ones:

My goal is to teach all the students... If I only complimented the
ones who did their work well, the others would feel frustrated.
This is not what I want to see in my class... The new curriculum
standards say teaching is for the development of all students, not
only the ones who study well (YI7: 103-107).

This showed that Yuan's beliefs on teacher-student rapport have grown from promoting a positive classroom environment and motivating student learning to taking into account students' development. This change not only indicated an addition to his beliefs but also reflected the fact that Yuan's attempt for change had been developed into his routine teaching behaviour.

An episode in Yuan's last observation typically illustrated his development in establishing teacher-student rapport in classroom teaching:

Extract 5

(Yuan conducted a "word map" competition between girls and
boys and gave comments on their work)

T: Now, look at the blackboard. We can see girls gained 12 points and boys, let me see, 11 points. Well, I have to say girls have done a better job because…

(One boy interrupted, saying loudly: "Lady first". The whole class burst into laughter. Yuan also laughed.)

T: OK. OK. But boys, girls really gained one more point than you, right?

Girls: Yes! Yes!

Boys: But we also did a good job.

T: What do you think about their work, girls?

Girl 1: Good. But not as good as us. (The class laughed again.)

Girl 2: I think we can do it again next time.

T: Good. Boys, you still have chance to do it again next time. Hope you will do a good job. OK?

Boys: Of course. (YO5: 270-82)

During the post-observation, Yuan highlighted his change in teaching behaviour:

In before, I would tell the boy to behave himself. But I didn't. I just thought it is a chance to keep their interest in the lesson…Giving them chance to hear their own voices is also a good way to keep the rapport. You can see that students' in-class participation is active. For me, no matter how good a lesson plan is, the teacher cannot reach the teaching goal without student participation…Keeping the teacher-student rapport is really important (YI7:179-189).

Therefore, it was easy to capture the impact of the training input on Yuan's teaching in this issue. His practice had developed after the INSET course and his beliefs on

the effectiveness of establishing teacher-student rapport in motivating student learning had also been further confirmed.

5.4.5 Classroom language use

Teacher's use of English in class was considered a potentially valuable resource of comprehensible input for the learners. The new curriculum standards recommended that secondary school EFL teachers should use English as the main medium in classroom teaching and encourage students to use English as much as possible.

In pre-INSET observation, Yuan used English as the main medium in his teaching:

> I use English in my teaching because this is English class, not Chinese or maths… They (students) have to focus on what I'm saying or they will miss my words. This is a way to attract students' attention…I think teaching English can also set a language model for them to follow (YI1: 3-7).

While pre-INSET interview, Yuan stated that he wanted to improve his language as subject matter knowledge. His concern about language improvement was related to his need of confidence in classroom teaching. Yuan answered the question about his reason for participating in the INSET course in the following way:

> I want to improve my English. Although I studied English as major during undergraduate study, I can absolutely feel that my language proficiency has dropped a lot… [I] have no chance to practice my English except the classroom. But I sometimes feel I cannot express myself clearly in English when teaching. This makes me feel worried… So I think improving my language competence should be helpful in building up my confidence in teaching (YI1: 82-89)

Yuan's words indicated that his prior beliefs on teacher's confidence were dependent on his language proficiency. However, his beliefs were affected by the training input, especially the theories on teacher professional development as discussed in section 5.3.

In the observations after the first training phase, Yuan used English to conduct his lessons. But in the first observation in the second training phase, one episode of his teaching indicated another aspect of his decision in using classroom language:

Extract 3

(Yuan was explaining how to put irregular adjectives into their comparative forms after the students worked out the forms of regular ones)

T: Just now you find out how to change regular adjectives into their comparative forms. But not all the adjectives can be turned into their comparatives by adding "er". Now, I will show you some other words and hope you can find out the difference.

(Yuan wrote on the blackboard: fat, fatter, thin, thinner, big, bigger, hot, hotter, red, redder, wet, and wetter)

T: Do you know how to turn them into comparatives? Can you find them in the textbook?

(Students worked on themselves to work out the answers and raised their hands to give the answers)

S1: There is a same letter before "er".

S2: There are two same letters.

T: Good. This is irregular change of comparatives. So far there are the six irregular adjectives whose comparative forms are changes in this way. I hope you will remember them. Now read after me: fat, fatter

Ss: fat, fatter.

(Teacher and students read the adjectives and their comparatives together for several times.)

T: In order to remember them easily, you can remember them in Chinese "pang (fat), shou(thin), da (big), re (hot), hong (red), shi (wet)". It may help you remember much easier. Now read after me: pang, shou, da, re, hong, shi.

Ss: pang, shou, da, re, hong, shi.

(Teacher led the students to repeat the Chinese words again and asked them to remember them) (YO3: 167-81)

During the post-observation interview, Yuan articulated his reasons for using Chinese to explain grammatical rules:

It is the first time for students to learn the comparative forms of adjectives...Students might get confused by the irregular adjectives so I think Chinese should be effective to help them in memorizing the 'exceptions'. On the other hand, I don't think I have much time on this part since I have to cover the whole textbook before the final term exam...this is part of the reason why I used Chinese here...[it] saves time. I'm sure my students can remember the irregular ones in this way (YI4: 76-83)

From Yuan's responses, it was clear that his choice between English and Chinese was influenced by realistic factors. Using Chinese was a "shortcut" to reach the teaching goal. Yuan's belief in the effectiveness of using English as sole instructional medium was outweighed by his concern for students' instant learning outcomes.

In the following months after the INSET course, Yuan developed his understandings in classroom language use:

The new curriculums standards recommend teachers only using English in class. But for realistic reasons, using Chinese properly sometimes can lead to better results. Just like what I did in my class, I explained the adverbial clause of condition (the unit topic is 'If you go to the party, you'll have a great time!') in Chinese to help students understand the sentence structure clearly and

> easily. Then they used them in pair work. The goal of the lesson
> is for students' use of the structure. It is not easy for them to
> understand the structure in English. Chinese explanation can help
> them understand it better…I think it (only using English in class)
> depends on the purpose of the lesson…Of course, over-use of
> Chinese in English lesson is not good for students (YI6: 122-32).

This showed that the impact of training input, especially the requirements of the new curriculum on classroom language use, did not bring any significant change to Yuan's beliefs. Although Yuan still believed in the advantage of using English as the main medium in classroom teaching, he was aware of his students' language levels and the possible difficulties they might encounter with only English as the lesson medium, based on which he developed his beliefs on the compensatory use of Chinese. It was clear that Yuan filtered the curriculum standards through his understandings of actual teaching context.

5.5 Summary: Main developments and the INSET contributions

The previous sections highlighted that Yuan felt interested about the learning input while limited uptake was found in his teaching. In the following I outline Yuan's main areas of development and the influence of the INSET course on them.

5.5.1 Main developments

Firstly, the data showed that Yuan felt good about the course. This kept him well-motivated through the whole training process. Based on the increase of his theoretical knowledge on topics, such as teacher control, classroom activity, teacher-student rapport, Yuan began to explore his prior beliefs and practices which had not been explicitly examined and linked before the course. At the same time, Yuan also valued the opportunities to exchange opinions with other teachers, and he thought the practical information from them were useful in his actual classroom teaching.

Secondly, Yuan recognised the possible tensions between his new beliefs and practices when considering the theoretical information and practical guidance in the light of contextual factors. He devoted time and energy to apply what he learned on the INSET course and made new attempts for change. But contextual factors, especially exam pressure, had crucial influence on his pedagogical decisions and

contributed to the incongruence between his stated beliefs and actual behaviour in some teaching aspects(such as classroom activities and classroom language use).

Thirdly, Yuan's attempts at using his learning outcomes in actual classroom practice played a crucial role in enabling him to see the benefits of doing so in terms of classroom teaching and student learning, whether in terms of greater flexibility in teacher control or more confidence in classroom activity design. This enhanced Yuan's confidence in making attempts in his classroom.

Fourthly, the impact of the course on Yuan's practices specifically consisted of confirmed beliefs in lesson shape and design, enriched theoretical underpinnings for teaching reflection and higher motivation for further professional development. But there was still a gap between what Yuan believed and what he felt confident to implement. For example, he felt confident releasing teacher control in allowing students to do group work but felt worried about them being out of control. This showed that he had not yet worked out how to effectively implement new practice in his context to meet the training expectation. More support and practice were needed to try out "being different" as well as more reflection on it.

5.5.2 The INSET contributions
The INSET course seemed to have contributed to the developments of Yuan's knowledge, beliefs and practices in a number of ways.

Firstly, the first training phase provided both theoretical input and practical guidance in lectures and workshops (all were called "theories" by Yuan). The lectures presented new curriculum requirements and theories on language teaching and teacher development and the workshops provided practical guidance for certain teaching methods and opportunities for participating teachers to give practical presentations followed by comments from lecturers, expert teachers and other participants. In addition, the INSET course created an opportunity for teachers to exchange their ideas on actual classroom teaching within the local social context which seemed of practical value, for Yuan's further actual teaching. All kinds of information led to an increase in Yuan's understanding of language teaching and learning which triggered him to explore his beliefs and practices.

Secondly, the INSET course seemed to have helped Yuan to make some of his beliefs explicit through questioning and restructuring them. The training input in the

first phase provided a framework for exploring his beliefs and linking them with his practice. Another important aspect was that the INSET course provided theoretical justification for Yuan and led to his increased confidence in classroom teaching. He was confident about both his prior teaching and trying out new practices.

Thirdly, the INSET course encouraged him to attempt new ideas and methods in teaching. In the first training phase, the teachers were presented with examples of alternative teaching practice and given practical guidance for certain teaching methods. In the workshops teachers were given chances to do short teaching presentations followed by comments not only from the lecturers and expert teachers (invited from some major middles schools) but also from other teachers from similar contexts. The feasibility and effectiveness of their teaching were thus discussed. The encouragement for trying out new practices inspired Yuan to gain insight into the underpinnings of his own practices.

However, the INSET course did not succeed in fostering fundamental or sustained change in Yuan's practice due to the lack of close relevance between its content and Yuan's teaching reality (other teachers' practical tips seemed more useful) and the lack of follow-up support for Yuan's further application and problem-solving.

Chapter 6 Case of Shi: Change under pressure

This chapter is a detailed account of the impact of the INSET course on the cognitions and practices of the second participant, Shi.

6.1 Background information

6.1.1 Teaching career background

Shi finished his four-year EFL pre-service teacher training in a key normal university in Chongqing and had taught junior middle school English for twelve years.

His decision to be a teacher was influenced by his parents' suggestions because his parents were middle school teachers and they thought teaching was a peaceful job without any trouble to deal with complex social network. But Shi, in the pre-INSET interview, felt being teacher was not as simple as he expected after his twelve years' teaching experiences. Apart from students, he had to deal with parents and the school which took him much time after teaching.

The school Shi worked in was an ordinary middle school with a locally average rate of its graduates to higher-level education. Most teachers' attention was paid to increasing students' exam scores because the school wanted to develop into a major one, so Shi felt some pressure from the school do teacher professional development. Before the INSET course, Shi published two journal articles for his last promotion. When entering the study, Shi was a key experienced teacher and the chief of the EFL teaching section for second graders in his school.

6.1.2 Pre-INSET classroom teaching

In Shi's pre-INSET observation, a vocabulary review started the lesson where he conducted a dictation of newly learnt words for students. After that, students exchanged their work with their neighbours to check how many words they wrote right. After that, Shi moved to the textbook and started from where they ended last time, 2a in Section A, Unit 3. Shi articulated the reason for his lesson design in the post-observation interview:

> This is what I usually do in class… The textbook is the only
> teaching and learning material both teacher and students are

> using… The current textbook is much better (than the previous ones)… It clearly tells teacher and students what to do in each section. What I need to do is just follow it and explain the language points (SI1: 11-17).

In the main part of the lesson, student were given time for language practice in pairs and groups according to the textbook.

> All the activities are designed in the textbook. Students just follow the direction of them. What I need to do is to organize them in pairs or groups and check their work (SI1: 34-35).

When asked whether students had any problems with these activities, Shi said:

> Sometimes they cannot finish the listening activity after listening only once. I usually play the tape one more time or give them some guiding questions… For speaking, the problem they meet most is they don't know what to say… (In this situation) I usually ask the better ones to present their work in class as model (SI1:40-44).

At the end of the lesson, Shi assigned two sections in the exercise book as homework. The reason Shi did this was:

> My students are generally not as good those in the major middle schools…The exercises are mainly a practice of the language points in each unit. Doing them can reinforce students' grasp [of language knowledge] (SI1:72-78).

Shi's pre-INSET observation showed that his teaching concentrated more on students' acquisition of linguistic knowledge. His lesson shape, classroom activities and even assignments clearly revealed this idea. The following sections will give a detailed account of what took place to Shi's ideas during and after the INSET course.

6.1.3 Expectations of the INSET course

During the pre-INSET interview, Shi talked about why he decided to take the INSET course. From his words, his decision was made for both external and internal reasons.

When Shi received the message that he would have the chance to attend the INSET course, he hesitated:

> My first reaction is no. I participated two in-service training programmes before. I think they are useless for my teaching... (Each course) lasted only one week … with all the teachers sitting in one large classroom and listening to the lecturers talking about theories. Their theories sounded profound but most of the audience did not understand them…not to mention using them in classroom teaching (SI1: 142-48).

However, Shi also felt curious about the INSET course when he asked some teachers who had attended it:

> It is a national training course. I heard from some teachers who attended it that it was kind of useful…some of the training content was useful. So I feel interested in taking this chance (SI1:156-59).

At the same time, school administration also contributed to his decision for the training course:

> The head-teacher told me I should take this chance…because I am the chief of EFL teaching section for second graders. They want me to bring something new back from the INSET course (SI1:163-66).

So Shi's decision to attend the INSET course seemed to be informed by both school administration and other teachers' positive comments. When talking about his own expectations of the INSET course, Shi first articulated his needs of theory-learning to support his teaching improvement:

> I want to learn some new theories…the really useful theories which can help me improve my teaching practices…I've taught for twelve years. Sometimes I feel my teaching lack of creativity. I need something new…to bring some difference to my classroom. And also I think I want to have a clear understanding

of the new curriculum because now all our teaching work should

be conducted under its standards (SI1:195-202).

Shi also wanted an improvement of his classroom teaching from the INSET course with the purpose of increasing students' exam scores:

I think for me the most beneficial part of the training course should be some useful tips for better teaching…Every teacher wants to teach more effectively…Of course better teaching can affect students' learning results. It'd better if [they have] higher exam scores (SI1:210-14).

Meanwhile Shi expressed his hope for professional development and further promotion:

I know now the new curriculum requires teachers to develop themselves. I don't have a clear idea of teacher professional development, but I still hope I can meet these requirements…Now the promotion criteria are increasing, especially the publish requirements. I want to write some articles for my next promotion. I think this is also a kind of professional development (SI1:222-28).

Furthermore, Shi expected a higher language level after the training:

Language level is important for EFL teachers…It would be better if there are some foreign lecturers… I want to increase my current language level... because my language level dropped a lot since the start of my career…A higher language level can help me teach more confidently (SI1: 236-41).

6.2 Learning on the INSET course

In the first training phase, Shi felt satisfied with the training lectures and workshops and gave positive comments on his training experience:

This is really a good chance. I feel like I'm a university student again…When teaching, I give students what I know. Here (in the

> INSET course) I take what the lecturers said…I think I should try to learn as much as possible to avoid becoming "empty" when "giving" (SI2: 08-12).

Shi's active attitude kept him learning throughout the INSET course and gained him an increase in his knowledge on language education. As he said in the interview, he felt the INSET broadened his views on English teaching and learning with some new ideas and theories he had never heard before:

> The lectures are very good… After my undergraduate study this is the first time for me to take a look at what the new curriculum standards require, what EFL teachers should do to conduct effective teaching, how to analyse teaching and find problems, how to look at myself as an EFL teacher and so on…[The INSET course] really provides me rich information and some new ideas to learn and apply (SI2: 14-19).

But Shi also had met some problems in his theory-learning:

> I don't think I fully understand the new knowledge…some of them [are] too new for me…Maybe I'll try to remember them… I cannot find them (trainers) after the lectures (SI2: 23-26)

From the course content it was clear that the INSET course met Shi's expectation of theory-learning. His learning outcomes informed some aspects of his teaching in the second training phase. But due to insufficient support from the course, his theory-learning experience was not fully satisfying.

Regarding the impact of the INSET input on his beliefs, Shi thought the INSET course gave him a new perspective to look at his teaching and himself:

> The lecturer used group work for us to talk about what we believed as right in our teaching and asked why we believed it… For me, it is the first time after teaching years to look at what I believe in English teaching. Before this, I and my colleagues talked more on teaching methods and how to use them, how to manage the classroom and so on. But we did not pay attention to

why and what supported our specific teaching behaviours…It inspired me to take a look at the things behind my teaching (SI2: 30-37).

For Shi, the training input worked like a catalyst for him to look back into his previous teaching experiences to explore his own teaching ideas and thoughts. However, when reflecting on his prior teaching and learning the proposed teaching approach, Shi felt other teachers inspired him more:

> Before coming here, the aspect I paid most attention to is which method is the most effective… I often discussed with my colleagues about how to use a certain method. But from the workshops (on practical teaching), teaching method itself is not the guarantee for effective teaching [mainly exam scores in Shi's views]. Instead other (participating) teachers' analysis of the method and their students determines how well he can use the method…Their ideas are really useful (SI2: 92-99).

In the second training phase he used the practical tips received from other teachers in his teaching and felt they were more useful than the learnt principles of proposed teaching methods.

When exploring his previous teaching, Shi also clearly felt the challenge to his prior views about student learning and the role of teacher in it:

> Obviously the traditional (teacher's) role is challenged…What I'm concerned now is how I can manage the class with the three learning models (collaborative learning, explorative learning and autonomous learning) proposed by the new curriculum…They are challenging to my current teaching…I've never realized them in my own learning experiences. How to fulfil them is now a big challenge (SI2: 71-77).

Although the INSET input increased Shi's awareness of the challenges he encountered, he admitted it was not easy to change his exam-oriented practice and teach in line with the new curriculum:

It encourages us to take a deeper insight into how we teach and how students learn. This is not easy… Too much attention was paid to the exams before. Now I have to think how to shift my focus (from exam to the inner world of teaching and learning) (SI2: 193-98).

Learning in the workshops also benefited Shi a lot in terms of actual classroom teaching and practical classroom management:

The lecturers [in the workshops] used teaching videos to show us how certain teaching method can be used and in what way language skills can be taught and practiced in class. I like this part very much…[This is] what I need for my classroom teaching…We (Shi and other teachers) discussed and worked in groups for short teaching presentation. We shared a lot on actual classroom teaching…and the social environment for English teaching (SI2: 109-17).

So the fact that Shi valued the teaching demonstrations and other teachers' opinions indicated that he was looking forward to immediate effect on his actual classroom teaching from the INSET course. This was in line with his work background (exam-oriented education) and expectation of the training course (immediate effect on classroom teaching).

At the end of the first training phase, Shi talked about the pressure he felt for change and career development:

It's necessary to change myself before it's too late…I heard about some of the ideas proposed by the new curriculum before coming here but didn't pay any particular attention to them. In the lectures I found there is so much I need to learn…This training is a good chance [to learn]…More and more new teachers entering this field (EFL teaching). It's possible to be sifted out (losing his career prestige) if I don't change (SI2:224-31).

Shi kept learning throughout the INSET course, such as reviewing the training hand-outs, reading notes, searching for more materials online. At the end of the course, he felt he gained a greater confidence in learning. But when talking about his learning results, he felt he was still unclear about some training content:

> I cannot say I have understood all the content. Some theories are completely new to me…I used some of them in my practice [in the second training phase] but I have to admit that there is gap between the [training] content and my actual classroom…What I need to do is to think how to connect them…I think the INSET course provided a guidance. What to do next and how to do it should be on the teachers themselves, right? (SI5: 116-24).

This showed that Shi's grasp of some training content remained unclear but he kept his positive attitude to the INSET course and his learning. However, on the other hand, Shi's words indicated the gap between the training content and his actual teaching. The ideas from the INSET course did not seem feasible back in classroom. So Shi also felt the ideas were not clear for actual practice. This will be discussed in Chapter 10.

In addition, Shi's lesson was visited by a trainer once in the second training phase. He did not feel good about the visit:

> [The trainer] just observed my teaching…did not say anything good or bad…just encouraged me to keep on doing that (attempting the new ideas). Just that…I think it's useless (SI5:21-25)

In the follow-up investigation Shi thought he wanted to continue his learning. But there was no more support from the INSET course:

> I only finished undergraduate study…So I want to learn more…[I] felt slow in learning new things …but I don't think I can ask for help from them (trainers) now (SI7:341-45).

He also mentioned the external factors influencing his learning after teaching work:

> Daily workload, family issues, all are taking much time…Sometimes I feel no more energy to learn… The current assessment system still remain unchanged. Exams are like the Sword of Damocles. All teachers have to pay much time and attention to increasing students' scores. So it's really frustrating [for my learning]…The reality does not change, I cannot have a clear idea of the value of my learning (SI7:350-55).

So Shi's learning was influenced by both internal and external factors although his attitude to his learning was positive. Lack of follow-up support for the INSET course and contextual factors contributed to the difficulties of his continuous learning. The various factors affecting the result of the training course and teacher learning will be discussed in Chapter 10.

6.3 The impact of INSET on classroom teaching

This section looks at the impact of the INSET course on Shi's classroom teaching in the second training phase and post-INSET period.

6.3.1 Lesson shape

Classroom observations suggested that the general shape of Shi's lesson were the same before and after the INSET course. The first defining feature of Shi's lesson shape was starting with a lead-in as revision of what was learnt or as an introduction to the new lesson. Teacher's presentation and students' learning were intertwined in the learning and practising of language points. When concluding the lesson, a short summary of was followed by an assignment. This section examines and explores the impact of the INSET course on the development of Shi's knowledge and beliefs on his comparatively unchanged practice.

In all observations after the first training phase, the main part of each lesson was, in most observations, followed the flow of textbook. Shi articulated his rationale for this:

> I discussed my general teaching steps with the lecturers and other teachers in the workshops when we were discussing how to design a lesson. Most of the teachers do so (follow the flow of textbook)…The lecturer encouraged us to think more about how

to make each teaching step more effective… Since we have a fixed amount of teaching content to cover and textbook is the material both teacher and students have, we all think it (this lesson shape) is workable to meet the teaching purposes (SI4:47-55).

This showed that opinions from other teachers and lecturers informed Shi's decision to continue his lesson shape in following teaching practices. From his words what he took into account the most were external factors in his teaching: textbook coverage and limited existing teaching materials. These factors played an important role in confirming Shi's belief in the value of his prior lesson shape.

Shi also talked about how INSET input affected his idea about lesson shape:

I feel some change might make it (lesson shape) better. The INSET course encouraged teachers to bring creativity and difference to teaching…But I don't think it is necessary to make big changes because of the fixed amount of teaching content to finish in each lesson... I think what I can do is to pay more attention to how to make each teaching step work better (SI4:57-62).

From observations, some changes could be found. One change was less word-dictation in lead-in after the first training phase:

I used word-dictation to start a unit before because I thought vocabulary is basic for English learning. We also discussed about using dictation in the training workshops…The lecturers and some teachers thought dictation might take much teaching time and affect the rest part of the lesson…If a lesson is started with pressure, students might be feeling stressful for the rest of the lesson. So I'm considering a change to this (SI6:37-45).

In the first observation in the second training phase, Shi started the lesson with an introduction of Unit 9. He presented some cartoon images of famous sports stars with background music and asked students to describe them. Then he led students to start "1a make a list of the international sports stars you know". In the second

observation in this training phase, Shi used word-dictation to check students' memorization of newly learnt words. But he did not do it for all the students. He just asked five students to write down their words on the blackboard and then asked the rest of the class to find out the right ones. When checking the words, Shi reminded students what they needed to pay attention to and how to memorize certain words. In the two follow-up observations Shi started his lessons by reviewing newly learnt sentence structures and text. This shift in his practices showed Shi's attempts for improving his teaching and indicated that, to some extent, Shi's belief in the effectiveness of word-dictation to start a lesson was changed.

But Shi did not give up dictation as a way to check students' vocabulary learning. As the result of change, Shi moved word-dictation to early morning study (a 30-minute study time between 7:40 to 8:00 in the morning before the classes) and the former reading-out practice in the morning study time was partly assigned as homework to finish after class.

> Vocabulary is the basis of language learning. I have to check
> their work [of memorizing words]…This is an essential part in
> my work. All teachers in my school do this (SI6:48-50).

This showed that Shi still held the idea of "the best way" of doing things that all teachers should follow, which is not consistent with the socio-cultural idea on teacher professional development that teacher should develop their own ways of teaching according to their particular context. A lack of change of the context of and social views on teacher development was reflected (see chapter 10). At the same time, Shi still held on to his belief in the role of word-dictation in language knowledge acquisition so that he continued using it as a way to check students' learning results. This might bring about some doubts about the authenticity of his change because, in terms of time arrangement, Shi's change in word-dictation seems superficial. But from the perspective of lesson design, Shi's change at least reflected his enthusiasm for practical improvement stimulated by the INSET course, just as he said in the final interview:

> The most difficult part [for change] I think is how to change the
> traditional teaching model fundamentally…to change the
> ineffective parts of the traditional teaching model. At present

what I can do is to make each teaching step work better based on which I can do more change. Only by doing this my changes can improve students' learning results…This is a long-term process. I'll try my best to do that (SI7:362-68).

6.3.2 Teacher control

According to the INSET lectures on the new curriculum standards, traditional teacher control on student learning should be reduced and students deserve the freedom for authentic language use. After the first training phase, Shi thought he had accepted this idea:

> I haven't realized this problem (teacher control) before…I think in most teachers' minds controlling students' (learning) behaviour is teachers' duty from Chinese traditional view…but now it is necessary to reduce teacher control and make students feel free in language learning and practice (SI3:82-86).

However, incongruence between his stated beliefs and teaching behaviour was seen in his observations. For example, one defining feature of Shi's control was the use of mechanical practice for grammar teaching. In the second observation in the second training phase, Shi taught the "grammar focus" in Unit 11 with pair work for students' practice. The following observation extract presented how the pair work was carried out.

> Extract 1
>
> (After introducing the sentence structures "Could you please do…? Could I do…? Yes/ Sorry, I/You can't." to students, Shi wanted students to practise them in pairs.)
>
> T: Now I want you to practice the sentence structures. Two of you work together to use them. And…please look at the two example sentences on page 66. There are two example sentences in the box with their answers. Can you see that? You can use each of them to make your dialogues. Understand?
>
> Ss: Yes.

T: Good. I'll give you two minutes to do that. Ready?

Ss: Yes.

T: OK. Now do it.

(Two minutes later Shi asked ten pairs to read out their dialogues in class. All the dialogues are made of two sentences from the four example sentences in the textbook)

S1: Could you please do the dishes?

S2: Yes, sure.

S3: Could you please clean the room?

S4: Sorry, I can't. I have to do my homework.

S5: Could you please do the dishes?

S6: Sorry, I can't. I have to do my homework.

S7: Could you please clean the room?

S8: Yes, sure.

… (SO3: 234-53)

This extract showed that the ten pairs only repeated the example sentences. Students' use of language was strictly limited during the dialogue practice. In the post-observation Shi said that he believed that such pair work could help students remember the rules:

> They (students) repeated the sentences… Repetition can help them get a deeper impression of the language points. This is good for their learning…I don't think [without repetition] they can remember the grammar point better (SI3:70-74).

Shi's belief in the value of mechanical practice for memory seemed to conflict with his stated beliefs about the importance of reducing teacher control for students' authentic language use. He explained why he needed to pay much attention to students' memorizing grammar rules:

> Grammar is essential at all stages of learning. It is the only way
> of making sure that students understand the language and express
> themselves clearly and coherently…They makes errors time and
> time again…even with the simplest rules (SI3:90-93).

So Shi's statements showed that his choice of mechanical practice was mainly due to students' inability to understand and remember grammar rules. He felt that he needed to control the reinforcement of students' perception of the rules, just like he felt "I need to push them sometimes" (SI4:103).

Therefore, the incongruence between Shi's stated beliefs and actual teaching was due to his worries about students' learning results and his previous belief in the effectiveness of mechanical work in his teaching experiences.

Meanwhile contextual factors also influenced Shi's teacher control, such as limited lesson time, pre-determined workload by the school and coverage of the text. All these factors were a powerful influence on Shi's actual teaching:

> Q: I saw you used some controlled work when teaching.
>
> A: Yes. I have to sue my power to control them (students) sometimes.
>
> Q: Do you think it works?
>
> A: Sure. It works well most of the time.
>
> Q: Why do you think so?
>
> A: Because it can help me achieve the goal within 40 minutes (a
> lesson)…I have to catch up the schedule. It (using teacher control) helps a
> lot to keep the class in order and save much time (SI4:106-13).

6.3.3 Patterns of classroom activities

In the first training phase, Shi thought he gained a lot of information on classroom activity design and use. The workshops on teaching plan and implementation enriched Shi's prior knowledge on classroom activity:

> The workshops are very useful… [I] gained a lot practical information for actual classroom teaching…Some actual classroom teaching issues are discussed, such as dealing with large class, students with different language levels, adjusting textbook activities according to actual classroom teaching and so on…I think I learned a lot (SI2:161-66).

In the observed lessons, the main patterns of classroom activities Shi used were pair work and group work. Shi explained this in post-observation interviews:

> There are around 50 students in my class. Every time when I want them to do some language practice in class I have to find some which can get all of them involved in without taking much time…In the INSET workshops, we reached an agreement that pair work and group work are the most effective forms for large class (SI4:123-27).

Shi used the two forms of classroom activities in the second training phase and follow-up investigation. He concluded the advantage of using them in his class:

> They are useful…I used them before [the INSET course]. But I think my understandings of them developed… For example, I also used whole class activity before, such as reading out the text or answering my questions altogether. But now I try to avoid this kind of activity…Pair work and group work are better choice even though they may need more time. I feel it is better to provide even opportunities to individual students. In whole class activity, it is hard to ensure every student is working. But in pair work and group work, they may monitor their neighbours or partners (SI6:174-83).

His words showed that using more pair work and group work was useful in terms of students' language practice and classroom management. For Shi, the activity forms were not new but his perceptions of them developed through the INSET input and practical attempts. This change could be seen as the result of the influence of theory-learning on his belief confirmation. In the second training phase, Shi kept using pair

work and group work in the observations, which, to some extent, indicated an interactive process between belief change and practice change.

But with more attempts Shi also felt some difficulties in using pair work and group work in a large class:

> Sometimes I still feel unable to take a look at every student's work… Time is limited. I cannot listen to each group and check their work. This is not a problem of the activities themselves but the large size of my class…This is constraining the effectiveness [of classroom activities]… I'll continue using them...My solution [to the large class problem] is to try to spare my attention to individual groups in turn…three or four groups today and then other three or four groups tomorrow (SI7:141-48).

Here Shi thought the large class size hindered him in monitoring all students which can be regarded as a contextual factor influencing his actual teaching. His attempts to find out solution to this large class problem revealed that his belief in the classroom activity patterns got confirmed, otherwise he would probably have given up using them.

In Shi's observations he also tried to fulfil the new learning models proposed by the new curriculum in his teaching practices. In the second training phase Shi wanted to apply the ideas and practical examples in his actual classroom. For example, in the first training phase, collaborative learning was introduced by the lecturers. They used a problem-solving group work among the participant teachers as an example to motivate them to learn and share their knowledge, and hoped that teachers would create this kind of collaborative learning environment in teaching practices. At the end of the first training phase, Shi expressed his feelings on this:

> This is interesting. I've never tried it before. Since this is proposed by the new curriculum I think I should try it when returning to my classroom. At least now I think it is useful…and will be helpful for my teaching (SI2:281-83).

In the second training phase, Shi attempted this. In his third observation, he used a group work for students to learn a grammar which he thought easy for them to learn collaboratively.

Extract 2:

(After a listening exercise, teacher asked students to work out the meaning of the sentences with "Could you…")

T: Well. Please look at the sentences in the box. I want you to work with your neighbours to find out what they mean and give some sentence to show how to use them. OK?

(Few students said yes but others kept silent)

T: OK. Let's begin.

(students discussed about the new grammar rule. Teacher walked around and leaned to hear some groups)

T: Time' up. Who can tell me what you find?

(Ss still kept silent. Teacher called one student's name)

S1: This is … Can I speak in Chinese?

T: Um…OK. You can use Chinese.

S1: This is a way to ask people to do something (in Chinese)

T: How to ask? In what way?

(students remained silent)

(Teacher called another student's name)

T: What is your idea?

S2: Wanting others to say yes? (also in Chinese)

> T: Well. Site down please. I didn't expect this would be hard for you. But don't worry. Now, I'll write two other sentences and try to find the difference between them… (SO3:97-116)

In the post-observation interview, Shi articulated his feelings:

> I want to use the training content in my practices. This is new for me… I tried to use it to motivate my students to learn by themselves in a collaborative way. But the result is not satisfying (SI4:153-155) .

Shi made some other attempts in later lessons to fulfil the learning models but still did not receive satisfying feedback. He felt "more efforts and time are needed for further practices…this is completely new for me and my students" (SI4:157-158). It seemed that Shi's belief in attempting new learning models in his teaching was firm and might develop if practices were successful. On the other hand, it also indicated that Shi's attempts focused more on how to ask students to finish a certain activity collaboratively rather than focusing more on meaning. It seemed that Shi's practice was not compatible with the underpinnings of the proposed learning models, and a gap between his practice and the purpose of the new curriculum emerged.

When deciding what classroom activities to use, Shi was also concerned about the differences in language levels among students:

> My class is large (around 50 students). Their different language levels are also a problem. It causes difficulties for my teaching since there is such a gap between strong and weak students…In group works, the weak ones might remain silent while the strong ones take the most time to speak…The weak ones might lose their confidence in learning (SI5:72-78).

In the follow-up investigation Shi made efforts on how to balance the work within multiple-level groups:

> I walked around [when students are doing group works] and leaned to listen to some groups…I know who is stronger and who is weaker in each group so I went to them on purpose to

ensure everyone talks, not just the stronger ones take the chance
[to speak] (SI6:69-72)

At the end of the study, Shi was still not sure of the most effective way to deal with mixed-ability large class although he admitted that his INSET experiences prompted him to think critically about this issue. At the same time, his beliefs in the value of group work were challenged and his thinking on the contextual factors went deeper and thus some problems remained unsolved at the end of the study.

6.3.4 Teacher-student rapport

For Shi, the INSET input expanded his understandings of teacher-student rapport. Before the INSET course, he believed establishing teacher-student rapport was to ensure students behave themselves in class. But in the first training phase, the training input on classroom management informed his prior beliefs and he started to think about how to take students' affective factors into account when making teaching decisions.

> Students' interests are important in keeping my teaching easy and smooth…Some students are not interested in English. I used to ask them behave themselves in class and not to bring any trouble...Sometimes I also feel I do not have more time and energy to deal with them…But the lecturers reminded me one thing that sharing attention to students' interests might make classroom teaching more effective. I discussed with them (the lecturers) about how to motivate the ones with less interests…[A better] classroom atmosphere is the first thing I want to try to motivate them…by making the atmosphere relaxing and supportive for their learning (SI2:311-321).

So in the second training phase, Shi's effort on establishing teacher-student rapport concentrated on keeping students' interest in learning English. In the following observational extract Shi used some funny pictures to start Unit 9.

Extract 3:

(Teacher showed cartoon images of some famous sports stars on PowerPoint in turn and asked students to name and describe them.)

T: Who is he?

S1: He is Beckham.

T: Why do you think so?

S1: Because he is handsome.

T: (pointing to the exaggerated picture and saying in an interesting tone) Do you really think he is handsome in this picture?

(All students burst into laughter)

T: OK. Let's look at the next one. Who do you think he is?

S2: Yao Ming.

T: Why?

S2: He is tall. And his face is very big.

(All students laughed again)

… (SO2: 12-26)

In the post-observation interview, Shi felt satisfied with this part:

> I use the pictures to start this unit because I think students might like them…because it can attract students' attention very quickly as the INSET lecturers told me. Nowadays jokes and pictures can be found online easily…I plan to use a video clip in next unit…to make them feel happy as well as reduce the pressure they might feel when learning (SI3:20-27).

Shi also admitted the INSET input informed his belief in this aspect:

> I used this (funny pictures) before. I just thought it could be useful for classroom teaching but did not consider it from the perspective of students' affects…The INSET lecture on new curriculum standards introduced the concept of students' affective development as a teaching goal…I tried to consider that in my teaching plan. From the teaching results, I think doing this is useful (SI3:29-34).

The above words showed a shift in Shi's beliefs about the value of supportive classroom atmosphere for student learning. He used to consider how to set up the atmosphere in terms of the convenience of teaching but after the INSET course students' affective factors were included in his consideration. This could be seen as an expansion of his understandings of teacher-student rapport as well as a confirmed belief informed by the INSET input.

Meanwhile, Shi also mentioned his feelings about the tension between keeping students learning and entertaining them.

> Some students feel bored at learning language rules… They feel happy at the interesting stuff but reluctant to learn the grammar rules…This is the problem I need to deal with…I'm afraid their attention may be only on the entertaining part not language learning. If so, my efforts would be worthless…I don't want them to ignore language learning (SI3:39-44).

This seemed to be the challenge Shi encountered when creating a relaxing learning atmosphere. What he needed to do was to keep the balance between entertaining students and teaching language rules and work out a way to combine them together effectively to motivate students' language learning for both affective development and language improvement. At the end of the study, he thought he needed to do more to meet this goal:

> It's not an easy job. Students are teenagers with less control on themselves and do not know how to adjust their moods in study. Their reactions also differ in different lessons…I need more time

> [to solve this problem]…More training opportunities would be
> better (SI7:61-66).

Although some problems remained unsolved, this revealed some change in Shi's beliefs about the value of teacher-student rapport. His feelings in this issue did not only concentrate on how to transfer his ideas into specific teaching behaviour but also on analysing the possible effect his practices might have on students' learning. However, his interviews also reflected the time issue related to learning on INSET course that a short training course could not expect teachers to change their beliefs and practice in a short period, especially when the context was not supportive.

6.3.5 Classroom language use

In pre-INSET interview, Shi believed that using English as teaching medium was important because in his undergraduate study he was taught that. During his teaching experiences he developed his ideas on this issue:

> The resources are very limited. During a lesson, students'
> language input is only from the teacher. How well the teacher
> uses English influences how well students learn it (SI1:260-62).

But in the pre-INSET observation, he also used Chinese when teaching grammar focus "What are you doing for…?" and "When are you going?" in Unit 3. His reason for doing this was due to the convenience of student learning:

> This is not easy for students to learn it in English. I think using
> Chinese can help them understand easier and faster…after
> explaining it I asked them to make short dialogue with the
> sentence structures (SI1:270-272).

In the first training phase, the lecturers on classroom language use analysed the reason why EFL teachers should use English for teaching in terms of creating classroom learning environment, providing language input and motivating students' interests. Shi accepted these ideas:

> I know using English is an important part of my job, just like
> Chinese teacher use Chinese to teach. It is determined by the
> subject we teach… (SI2:153-54).

But he also held on to his prior belief about using Chinese for special teaching purposes:

> The convenience brought by using Chinese cannot be denied…We shared our teaching experiences and felt using Chinese is still necessary in current teaching…Yes, teachers' use of English is important but this is not against the use of Chinese (SI2:157-61).

Shi used the language level of his students as evidence to defend his idea:

> They are just second graders. Their vocabulary is still limited. What they usually listen to is just short conversations and texts… Using English to explain grammar rules apparently seems too difficult to them…I only use Chinese for grammar presentation as this might cause some confusion for students sometimes. But I still use English for the rest of the lesson (SI2:164-70).

But in his interviews, Shi only emphasized the difficulty of teaching grammar in English but did not mention any information on how to teach grammar introduced on the course, especially on how to teach grammar in an easy way for students. It seemed that Shi's belief in the effectiveness of using Chinese as teaching medium was still strongly linked with his prior explicit grammar teaching method.

In his teaching in the second training phase, Shi used English as the main teaching medium, such as in giving directions at each teaching step and conducting classroom activities. However, there seemed no obvious regular use of Chinese. The following observational extracts can show this:

> Extract 4:
>
> (Teacher was explaining the sentences in a blank-filling exercise in 2c, section A Unit 9)
>
> T: How long did Charles Smith hiccup? What do you fill in the blanks?
>
> Ss: He hiccupped for 69 years and 5 months.

T:Yes. He hiccupped for 69 years and 5 months. (then repeated this sentence in Chinese)

T: Next. When did he start hiccupping? (repeat this question in Chinese)

…

(SO2:203-07)

Extract 5:

(After listening to a conversation in 2a, Section A Unit 4, teacher asked students to circle the true or false statements in the table)

T: Ben told Lana that Marcia was going to have a surprise party for her. True or false? (calling one student's name)

S1: um…

T: (repeated the statement in Chinese) Is t true or false?

S1: True.

T: OK. The next.

…(SO4: 33-40)

The two extracts did not show any regular use of Chinese in class and Shi's random use of Chinese did not give any hint of his only using English in grammar presentation as he stated in interviews, which can be seen as the incongruence between his statements and behaviour. Shi explained it as a teaching habit:

> Maybe this is because of my habits for the years of teaching…When looking back at them, I think this is my reaction when they (students) did not give me their answers immediately. Sometimes I feel worried when the class keep silent (SI6:123-26).

Shi's words revealed, to some extent, his reliance on Chinese to implement teaching, ensuring students understand his questions and eliciting their answers. So his belief in the convenience brought by using Chinese might also include easy classroom management.

Another interesting phenomenon in Shi's observations for classroom language use was his use of Chinese as a reminder of already learnt language points to reinforce students' memory.

> Extract 6:
>
> (After the dialogue make-up activity, teacher reminded students the spellings of past tense of verbs)
>
> T: Look at the verbs in the sentence. The past tense of "hiccup" is "hiccupped". There is one more "p" before "-ed", right?
>
> Ss: Yes.
>
> T: Now let's have a look at the words we've learnt for the same change.
>
> Ss: Stop, stopped;
>
> T: Good. (Then in Chinese) Now let's review the rules of changing verbs into their past tense. The first rule is adding -ed after the verb, right?
>
> … (SO2: 251-59)

In the post-observation interview, Shi explained his reason for emphasizing the grammatical rules in Chinese:

> I think this is useful. It is not easy for them (students) to understand the regularities of changing verbs into their past tense. Chinese is easy for them to remember. Students can spell right only if they remember these Chinese regularities no matter in homework or exams (SI3:146-49).

So Shi's use of Chinese stemmed from the consideration of students' explicit learning outcomes, such as their written works and exams. Such behaviour and ideas reflected that Shi's belief in classroom language use was also influenced by the reality among which the assessment on students' learning outcomes took a large proportion.

In an interview late in the study, Shi talked about another factor influencing his use of English in classroom teaching:

> After teaching for years I feel my English level has dropped. Teaching students all the time…only textbook and exercise books as teaching materials. I'm not sure I can teach a whole lesson only in English…especially when presenting text and grammar rules. That's why I wanted some foreign lecturers in the INSET course for language practice (SI6:212-18)

This showed that the lack of confidence in his English also contributed to his classroom language choice. In his words, teaching experiences affected his English and led to a lower level. This seemed to be another internal reason influencing his choice of teaching medium.

So generally Shi's use of English and Chinese seemed haphazard. To some extent, his practices was determined by his belief in the importance of using English as language source for student learning but his teaching habits of using Chinese and his lack of confidence in using English contributed to the conflict between his stated beliefs and actual teaching.

6.4 Summary: Main developments and the INSET contributions

The previous sections presented that Shi felt the pressure for change when learning on the INSET course but no fundamental change took place in his actual teaching. In the following I outline the main areas of Shi's development and the influence of the INSET course on them.

6.4.1 Main developments

First, Shi's enthusiasm for theory-learning played a crucial role in the development of his knowledge. The training input increased his knowledge on EFL teaching and learning which was regarded as one of his obvious learning outcomes although his

grasp of some theories was at times unclear. His positive attitude towards theories also contributed to his active construction of new knowledge with his beliefs and practices. From the analysis of the change in his practice and beliefs, the increase in Shi's knowledge was applied mainly in classroom management, classroom activity design, and motivating student learning. But Shi also felt confused with some of the new knowledge because he did not understand what it meant and how to use it in practice.

Second, Shi made attempts to explore his own beliefs based on learnt theories. A new belief in collaborative learning was generated after the course but the new belief did not result in stable practice change. He also used newly learnt knowledge to explore his prior beliefs and reflect on former practices. Some of his beliefs and teaching routines were confirmed and some were challenged. Such self-exploration led to greater confidence for more reflection.

Third, Shi carried out practical attempts in his classroom teaching, mainly focusing on certain teaching steps and classroom activities. However, most of his teaching still followed the traditional teaching approach because of his limited understanding of the new curriculum and lack of support for greater experimentation with new ideas (the post-course trainer visit to his classroom was ineffective).

Fourth, there existed incongruence between Shi's stated beliefs and actual teaching behaviour which could be found in his observations and interviews, such as the difference between his stated beliefs about the importance of using English as teaching medium and his actual use of Chinese in classroom, his stated beliefs in the effectiveness of communicative activities for language development and his employment of mechanical activities for root-learning of grammar.

Fifth, contextual factors seemed powerful in determining Shi's actual pedagogical decisions about the above mentioned teaching aspects. Although Shi seemed to be well-motivated for learning on the INSET course, when trying out the new ideas, factors from the INSET course and his teaching context hindered his application. The main factors he mentioned mainly included short training time which limited his learning, pre-determined syllabus which limited his teaching to textbook content and exam pressure which focused his teaching on language elements rather than communicative abilities.

In sum the development of Shi' knowledge and beliefs were influenced by the INSET course. But such development did not directly lead to fundamental change in his practice. When attempting to use new ideas in classroom teaching, the consideration of contextual factors determined the kind of change that was possible and the extent to which the change could be made.

6.4.2 The INSET contributions

The INSET course seems to have contributed to the development of Shi's knowledge, beliefs and practices in a number of ways.

Firstly, the first training phase provided both theoretical input and practical guidance in lectures and workshops. The training content ranged from new curriculum requirements to theories on language teaching and teacher development. The formally presented information enriched Shi's knowledge on EFL teaching and learning as he admitted in interviews. Furthermore, the INSET course created an opportunity for teachers to exchange their ideas on actual classroom teaching within the local social context which seemed with more practical value for Shi's afterwards classroom teaching.

Secondly, The INSET course has helped Shi to make some of his beliefs explicit, begin questioning them and restructure them. Just as Shi said in interviews (see section 6.3), he started to look back to his previous teaching experiences and tried to gain an insight into his own teaching behaviour. At the end of the first training phase, he clearly felt challenge to his prior beliefs in teacher role and teaching methods. However, as mentioned above, the influence of Shi' exploration on his practice seemed superficial since no fundamental change could be seen in his teaching.

Thirdly, the INSET course encouraged Shi to try out new ideas and methods in teaching. The lectures and workshops in the first training phase presented examples of alternative teaching practice and gave practical guidance for certain teaching methods. For Shi, all this information triggered his attempts in practice. However, the encouragement from the INSET did not seem always effective for him. The trainer's visit to his classroom did not make any sense in facilitating his attempts.

Chapter 7 Case of Qiang: Change in flux

This chapter is a detailed account of the changes in cognitions and practices of the third participant, Qiang.

7.1 Background information

7.1.1 Teaching career background

Qiang finished his undergraduate study in EFL education as a pre-service teacher in a famous normal university in Chongqing before becoming a junior secondary school teacher. The reason why he chose to be a teacher was because of the encouragement of his family. The school Qiang worked in was an ordinary secondary school where the students were at the average level compared with major and challenging schools. It was the fifth year of his career when the INSET coursed started. Before it, Qiang had attended only one in-service training course in the first year of his career and the one-week training course focused on classroom management.

Before this study, Qiang had also published one journal article for his last promotion. He had never been engaged as a participant in any research.

7.1.2 Pre-INSET classroom teaching

From the pre-INSET classroom teaching observation and post-observation interview, Qiang's pre-INSET information provided a basis for the exploration of his change and development under the impact of the training course.

In the pre-INSET observation, Qiang started his lesson with a lead-in activity in which he led the students to review newly learnt vocabulary and sentence structures. The main parts of the lesson were text-reading and dialogue-listening. For the reading, Qiang employed three-stage teaching method: presenting some pictures related to the text and leading students to guess the main idea of the text from the title, giving students five minutes to read the text with two questions to answer afterwards, checking students' answers after reading and finishing the post-reading exercises in the textbook. Qiang explained his rationale for using this method in the post-observation interview:

> Reading is very important for junior secondary school students...I learned this method in my undergraduate study...When observing other teachers, especially in teaching competitions; this three-step method was very popular. Many teachers used it...So I also think it is useful (QI1: 64-71).

This showed the sources of Qiang's knowledge about teaching methods included formal pre-service training and other teachers. In his teaching experience, his choice of method was based mainly on other teachers' practice and opinions.

As post-listening practice, Qiang used a controlled group work activity for the students to make a short dialogue by imitating the one they heard. When students were doing that, Qiang walked around and leaned over to hear some groups. He also asked three groups to present their dialogues in class as checking. Qiang talked about his ideas afterwards:

> Students need opportunities to use what they learn...I was told listening and speaking could not be taught separately...in my undergraduate study. So I took it as a chance for speaking practice... Many teachers also do it (QI1: 80-84).

Qiang's words showed that ideas about EFL teaching formed in pre-service training were implemented in his in-service practices. And again he used other teachers' practices as "evidence" to support his beliefs. Combining these observations with the above on teaching reading, it was clear to find that Qiang's understandings of classroom teaching before this study were mainly influenced by his previous learning experiences and other teachers' practices. Qiang's description of the process of learning to teach revealed the reason why his teaching was influenced by the above factors:

> Before becoming a teacher, all I know about English teaching is from university teachers...I took the course of language teaching methodology. The teachers have much knowledge about lesson planning, classroom activity design, and teaching methods...The theories they told me are the basic knowledge I have for teaching. I also did half-a-year teaching practicum in a secondary school at the third year (of his undergraduate study)...The local school

tutor taught me a lot of practical knowledge too...During my teaching times, I observed some teachers' lessons. Some of them are good teachers whose teaching was very attractive and beneficial for student learning… (QI1:122-37) .

During the pre-INSET observation, the classroom atmosphere was relaxing for learning. Students were given opportunities to practice language use. When being asked any question, they could raise their hands to express ideas. The extract below illustrates this.

Extract 1

(After some group work, Qiang wants to check how students did the activity)

T: Well, I want some groups to present their dialogues.

(Some students raised their hands and volunteered to do the work)

Ss(shouting out): Me! Me!

T (smiling): Calm down, calm down. There is no apple today.

(Students burst into laughter)

T: So do you still wanna do it?

Ss: Yes! Yes!

T: OK. The first group...How about you? (pointing to one group of 4 students)

...

T: Very good. Well, we don't have much time for all of you. So sorry for that. But we can do such work next time, OK? (QO1:103-19)

Qiang used to award the students for their in-class performance twice a semester. In this episode he used "apple" –the awards he gave student as awards last time—as a joke to relax students. And this extract also indicated that the students were active in class and were competing to answer questions. It implied that the classroom atmosphere was supportive for student learning.

Qiang used English as the main teaching medium. Only when he asked students to translate Chinese sentences into English as language practice did he speak Chinese. During the whole lesson, Qiang used English in a clear way at a medium speed.

> Our school's English teachers are required to speak English in class...They (students) are second graders and are used to hear me speaking English in class because I've trained them since the beginning of the first year...Teacher's English is a model for them to follow (QI1: 4-11).

This showed that Qiang's classroom language use was influenced by the administrative requirement and his belief in the effect of teacher's language model on students. But he also admitted that:

> Sometimes I use Chinese...because some language points are not easy to explain in English and students might misunderstand if I use English...but I'm afraid student might rely on Chinese presentation...I use Chinese only for explanation because I still use English [for other parts of the lesson] (QI1: 12-16).

This indicated a conflict between Qiang's beliefs in the values of classroom language use. Using English for students' language learning and the effectiveness of Chinese presentation for language rules co-existed in his belief system.

7.1.3 Expectations of the INSET course

In the pre-INSET post-observation interview, Qiang also talked about his expectations of the INSET course.

When he was told he could take the chance to attend an in-service teacher training course, he hesitated a bit because he worried about the possible effect on the continuity of his teaching if he was away for one month. But the vice-head teacher of his school promised that a good teacher would take his job temporarily and

convinced him that there would be no problem for his class. So Qiang decided to take the INSET course.

First of all, his expectation of the INSET course was theory-learning:

> I want to learn some new theories about English teaching and learning… Since starting teaching I've never been trained systemically with new educational theories (QI1: 181-83).

For practice development, Qiang thought theories might help him analyse his own teaching theoretically and systemically:

> I know improving teaching is not an easy process…I need to use theories to analyse my teaching…just as the expert teachers (giving comments on contestants' teaching) in teaching competitions (QI1: 186-89).

And Qiang also wanted to gain more confidence in teaching according to the new curriculum:

> I want to improve my teaching…to gain more confidence to support the new curriculum. The government and school keep requesting us to teach according to the new curriculum standards…I hope I can gain adequate understandings of them and more ideas of how to teach under the circumstance of curriculum reform…so that I can teach more confidently (QI1: 199-205).

When talking about the expected effect of the INSET course on his development, Qiang talked about the need of theory-learning for his further promotion:

> I feel the pressure from the promotion criteria…No publish, no promotion…I want to publish some articles,… at least two…to meet the requirements for my next promotion (QI1: 236-40).

Therefore, Qiang's expectations of the INSET course were both intrinsic and extrinsic. Theory-learning for teaching improvement and gaining greater confidence were his internal motives. Enriching his own theoretical knowledge for future

research publication and promotion was the outside pressure within Chinese context where research publication is part of the promotion criteria for secondary school teachers.

7.2 Learning on the INSET course

In the first training phase Qiang felt generally satisfied with the training course:

> I think most of the lectures are useful… because I learned a lot
> from them and I hope they will help me change my practice (QI2:
> 4-5).

When talking about what impressed him, Qiang first mentioned his changed ideas of being an EFL teacher:

> Q: So you think your idea of being a teacher is changed?
>
> A: Yes. Changed a lot.
>
> Q: What do you feel now?
>
> A: (after the lectures on curriculum standards), I think the teacher is more
> of a guide than a foundation of knowledge…[the teacher] is someone who
> offers materials and environment for student learning…[and]shares
> knowledge with students.
>
> Q:Any other ideas?
>
> A: Of course the teacher also sort of manages the class and decides what
> the activities are going to be…because the theories of the lectures [on
> teacher knowledge] also told me what an EFL teacher needs to know is
> more than language knowledge and specific teaching techniques… it
> should be combination of a variety of different sorts of things (QI2: 10-
> 24).

This statement shows that the INSET lectures changed some of his basic ideas of EFL teacher and teaching, and stimulated him to think about his own ideas of the role of teacher and teaching practice.

But Qiang also articulated his other feelings about theory-learning:

> I think I need more time to understand them...Every time the
> lecturers are standing there keeping talking. I don't think I can

> follow them…[I feel it is hard] to understand all the content. (QI2:36-41).

His words suggested that the expository training methods the trainers used affected his learning.

In the workshops dealing with teaching practices, Qiang was interested in the principles and underpinnings of each method as well as the methods themselves.

> I learned some teaching methods in my undergraduate study and used them…but my use of the methods was… now I think, was more like an imitation… the workshops gave me some guidance to think about 'why' and 'how'… I can't say I understand all the information, but it inspired me to think (QI2: 102-07).

These words indicated that Qiang gained the awareness of exploring his rationale for particular teaching methods. It implies a development of his knowledge in teaching methods, at least an increase in his theoretical knowledge.

Qiang emphasized that the INSET lectures led him to take a look back at his previous teaching:

> With the lectures on teaching and theories, I can't help thinking about what and how I taught before...to make a comparison (QI2: 85-87).

Together with his words in the above two quotes, it was not hard to see that the INSET input stimulated Qiang to take a look at his prior beliefs and practices. In the lectures on teacher beliefs and knowledge, Qiang had been given chances to explore himself:

> They (the lectures on teacher knowledge and beliefs) are new for me. (I) heard others using these terms but never learned about them… The lecturers divided us into groups to talk about what we took as right in classroom teaching and what supported us to use our former teaching methods…This is the first time for me to do this …to get know myself (QI2: 156-61).

At the same time, Qiang thought the INSET not only provided lectures and workshops but also opportunities to communicate with other teachers:

> It is not easy to find such an opportunity to talk with other teachers although we work in the same city. We are from different schools and teach different students. Communicating with them can give me much practical information (QI2: 210-12).

At the end of the course, Qiang mentioned the usefulness of peer teacher communication:

> I also learned a bunch of practical stuff from other teachers…You can learn the theories that are going to give you guidelines but others' experiences will give you some more vivid examples for actual teaching…These examples can help me better in teaching (QI5:107-12).

After the first training phase Qiang read the notes he took and the hand-outs received again because he thought "they are important information and useful for improving my teaching" (QI5: 36). He also searched some other materials online for more reading.

> [The INSET course] is helpful for me to realize the importance of teacher professional development... I can feel the urge to change. I'll keep on learning after the training course (QI2: 151-55).

However, at the end of the study, Qiang stopped doing this because:

> [I'm] too busy with my work. My school wanted me to teach one more class next semester so I have to make preparation for that...I cannot do it by myself. I don't understand all of the (training) content…but I can't find any help from them (trainers) now (QI7: 268-72).

> I also feel the theories on teacher knowledge and beliefs don't relate to my practice closely…Yes, they are useful…but I think what I need is more about how to teach better… the theories are

> more about teachers themselves…I can change slowly…but my
> students are waiting for me to teach them better as soon as
> possible (QI7:284-90)

This showed that the environmental factors affected Qiang's long-term learning even though he was strongly motivated by the INSET course. Workload, lack of support from the INSET course and contextual pressures contributed to reducing his learning. At the same time, Qiang mentioned the lack of connection between some of his learnt knowledge and his practice. There may be some misconception of teacher professional development in Qiang, but his feelings reflected a gap between the INSET content and his actual needs in the classroom.

7.3 The impact of INSET on classroom teaching

This section highlights the impact of the INSET course on Qiang's professional life in relation to specific aspects of his explicit classroom teaching behaviour after the first training phase.

7.3.1 Lesson shape

In the pre-INSET observation, the starting step of Qiang's teaching was a lead-in where he led students to review the vocabulary in the unit presented on power point. Then he turned to the textbook and began to teach a reading text. The reading teaching employed the three-stage method (as described in the section 7.1.3). The whole lesson finished three sections of the unit and Qiang assigned homework in exercise books. For his lesson shape Qiang felt:

> This is what I usually do…Each unit is divided into three parts
> and each part includes several sections such as 1a, 1b and 1c.
> Most of the time I follow the flow of the textbook and finish
> three sections in one lesson…Lead-in is designed by
> myself…Assignments are sometimes the post-reading or
> "checking yourself" in the textbook and sometimes are from the
> exercise books (QI1: 32-37).

In the second training phase, Qiang tried to bring some change to his lesson. At the beginning of the lesson, he wanted to motivate the students and grasp their attention immediately.

> I just think sometimes it is not easy to grasp their attention after
> the lesson begins...maybe they still do not get over from other
> classes such as maths, physics...the lecturers told me students'
> attention is a guarantee for successful teaching...so I think I
> should do something to it (QI3: 27-33).

In the first observation in this training phase, Qiang's lead-in was a student duty report (a short talk by student on a self-chosen topic). The student talked three minutes and his topic was on the disgraced former local top politician. Although his words were simple, he used the words he learnt to describe the news he heard and wrote words they did not learn in class on the blackboard with their Chinese meanings. When students showed their interests in this, Qiang asked some students to express their own opinions after the duty report. Qiang articulated his feelings afterwards:

> Duty report is an example the lecturer presented for how to begin
> a lesson...other teachers who used it also thought it was useful.
> So I decided to try it in my lesson...I started it when I came back.
> I did a report for them (students) at the first time as an
> example...Of course I asked the ones whose English is better to
> do it this month, then the rest will also do it in turn. I hope good
> students can provide an example for others (QI3:37-43).

This attempt was a result of Qiang's learning on the course. He followed the examples demonstrated in the first training phase, which implies that the knowledge input triggered Qiang's change in his practice. With students' active response, Qiang developed duty report into a teaching routine:

> I developed it into a teaching routine...it is not only an activity
> to attract students' attention but also an opportunity for language
> practice...Students like doing it. It's interesting for them (QI4:8-
> 10).

Therefore, there was no significant change in his general lesson shape except some modifications to certain teaching steps. But the INSET input inspired Qiang to change the conduct of certain parts of the lesson. This change was developed into a

teaching routine after the INSET course, which indicated that Qiang's beliefs in the value of his prior lesson shape were strengthened and new beliefs informed by the INSET input (duty report) also confirmed.

Another concern Qiang had was how to make his teaching steps more effective for learning:

> The lecturers gave us the hand-outs on how to reflect on teaching. I often do it now... I usually follow the textbook for the main part of each lesson...but sometimes I feel some (textbook) sections are not suitable for my students. I should adjust it to make each teaching step helpful (for student learning) (QI3: 91-94).

> I still feel I should do some change...Speaking and listening are always arranged together for language practices. Students have already known this format... Some difference should be done (QI6:144-47).

This showed that, with increased knowledge from the first training phase, Qiang developed his awareness of exploring his own teaching and beliefs but no obvious difference was observed in practice. The INSET course thus impacted on his beliefs but not yet on practice.

For lesson shape, there was no significant change in Qiang's lesson shape but the newly routinized lead-in and his reflection on teaching reflected the change in his beliefs and practices. Beliefs informed by the INSET input triggered his critical analysis of practices and attempts for better teaching.

7.3.2 Teacher control

Before entering the INSET course, Qiang's ideas on teacher control focused on classroom management: how to keep classroom order and how to maintain students' interest in learning English:

> Students are teenagers and active in class. I need to keep them on their seats…but I still give them opportunities to attend activities and express their ideas. Tight control on them is not good…This is important in keeping their interests in learning English or they'll feel bored (QI1: 151-56).

In the INSET course, Qiang found support for his beliefs:

> The curriculum standards recommend student-centeredness. Teacher's tight control on students is no longer the ideal way to do this…Arranging some activities suitable for their characteristics is more important for their growth (QI3: 212-14).

> The new curriculum aims at developing students' characteristics, not only focusing on knowledge learning…So I think reducing teacher control is necessary for students' free language practice (QI5:74-76).

His use of students' duty report which gave students the freedom to choose their topic and content indicated this belief in the value of reducing teacher control (see section 7.3.1).

Interestingly, however, Qiang's presentations of grammar rules in both the fourth and fifth observations showed something else:

> Extract 2:

> (Teacher presented the sentence structure in 'Grammar Focus' in Unit 12 and asked some students to make new sentences only with the superlatives of the adjectives presented on power point.)

> T: Jason's and Trendy Teens are good stores. Jason's has the best quality clothing. The next sentence. You, please (pointing to a boy)

> S: Town Cinema is the cheapest. It has the friendliest service.

> T: Well. You forgot to use the word here (pointing to the word 'good' on power point)

> S: Oh, um... Town Cinema is the cheapest. It has the best service.

> T: Good. Sit down please. (QO3: 132-40)

Extract 3:

(Teacher is leading students to practice using "If I don't go to…, I'll …". He presented some words on power point: college, cinema, stadium, musician, soccer player, professor)

T: Good. Next one (pointing to a boy)

S: If I don't go to the stadium, I'll miss the soccer match.

T: Soccer match? We only have soccer player here.

S: Oh. But "match" is OK here.

T: We are using "soccer player" here. (QO4:237-43)

Both extracts showed that students were only allowed to use the words in their practice of new sentence structures and the results of students' work were similar sentences. In the fourth observation the words were not even the new words in the unit. For this Qiang expressed his reasons:

> The goal of this lesson is to learn the grammar rule…I want my students to memorize them when using…(for the similar sentences students made and not allowing them to use other words) it is good for them to get familiar with the rule soon... (QI6:211-15)

Qiang did not clearly explain why he did not allow student to use their own words. Theoretically student-centredness and controlled practice are not mutually exclusive. But Qiang's emphasis on grammar learning throughout the teaching process hindered students' free use of language and impacted on their understanding of grammar learning.

Overall, Qiang's beliefs in teacher control were still linked to the traditional teaching model: teacher deciding what students do in class. The INSET course proposed a flexible teaching model which allowed students to use language freely and, if not affecting the teaching goal, students' creative use of language should be encouraged. Qiang's teaching, to some extent, seemed at odds with this suggestion.

So the INSET input did not bring fundamental change to Qiang's practices in this issue. It was observed that Qiang's students were given opportunities to use English in class and the whole class seemed active, but Qiang still held the belief that memorization of set patterns using predetermined vocabulary led to effective learning. On the other hand, the INSET input increased Qiang's knowledge as he cited some received information to explain his practices in interviews, but his practices seemed incongruent with that.

7.3.3 Patterns of classroom activities

The INSET lectures and workshops presented some teaching activities and their underpinnings as examples for participant teachers to understand the requirements of the curriculum targets. Qiang said:

> These activities are very useful for my own teaching…The video clips demonstrated how the teachers used them. I can feel the whole process vividly…I'll try them in my class (QI2:121-23).

After returned to his classroom, the patterns of Qiang's classroom activities mainly included pair work and group work which remained the same to those in his pre-INSET observation. But Qiang felt more confident when using them:

> I only knew organizing students in pairs or groups was a way to manage the class…I learned a lot in the first training phase, especially in the workshops…I think I can now explain some of my activities theoretically (QI 3: 63-66).

> Group work is useful in organizing students in groups to finish one task at the same time... Students can also learn from each other (QI7:82-84).

His words indicated that he gained more confidence from the INSET course for his use of classroom activities. Although there was no significant change of the activity forms, Qiang believed the INSET input increased his theoretical knowledge of them and developed his confidence. The following extract is an example of Qiang's change in his teaching:

> Extract 4:

T: Now, please look at pictures in 2a. It's a pair work. You'll decide who is the best performer, right? But today I want to do some change to this. I want you to work in groups, not pairs. Can you do it?

Ss (several students): Why?

T: I want you to talk about the pictures and describe whose performance is the best. I guess you have some interesting ideas. Can you do it?

Ss: Yes.

T: Good. Let's do it in groups. (pointing to four students sitting together)You and him ….and him ….and her work together. (pointing to other four students)You four together. Right! (to the class) Now you know who you are working with?

Ss: Yes. Yes.

T: Good. Now let's do it. (QO3:283-95)

Qiang explained his rational afterwards:

I followed the flow of the textbook in this lesson but I want to do some change. Students are already very familiar with the textbook. They know each section. So I want to do something different from before to activate them in class or they'll feel bored…The INSET course wants us to change… I think students like this change (QI4:96-100).

This attempt indicated that Qiang, inspired by the INSET course, tried to bring change to his practice. In this extract, he adjusted the activity form in the textbook and turned a pair work activity into group work. From students' reaction, they welcomed this change. At the end of the work, Qiang felt satisfied with their performance.

However, some other observational episodes highlighted another factor influencing Qiang's choice of classroom activities. In the fourth observation, Qiang used a silent reading task for students to finish the reading and post-reading exercises (multiple choice), instead of the three-stage method used in his previous teaching. He articulated his thoughts on this:

> Because as a matter of fact the main objective of English teaching is…also related to the exam…there is reading comprehension test with post-reading multiple choice. So for this purpose (of exam) sometimes speaking practice has to give the way (QI6: 82-85).

The last observation further showed Qiang's concern about exam. Qiang used ten minutes to finish the last section of Unit 7 and moved to check students' work in exercise books. Except students' duty report, the lesson was teacher-dominated: teacher giving and explaining the right answers while students taking down notes. Qiang only asked questions such as "Which one do you choose?" to collect students' answers. The listening and speaking sections were omitted. He articulated his reasons afterwards:

> I have to spend time dealing with the exercise books…required by the school and students bought them. Most of the exercises are exam-oriented…It is useful for exams. I cannot put it aside…My goal is to check their (students') work and explain all the language points involved…Speaking and listening were not considered (QI7:9-15).

At the same time, Qiang mentioned another source of information that shaped his teaching:

> They (other teachers on the INSET course) told me they also did this in class…and they have to do this because of the exam [pressure] (QI6:90-92).

> I think it is workable…they told me they spent a lot of time on doing exam exercises…or my class might be less competitive [in exam] than other classes (QI7: 19-23).

This showed that Qiang's choice of classroom activity was also influenced by contextual factors. Here the main factor which influenced his decision was the exam. For example, the exam pressure determined the priority of language rules over speaking practice. This, to some extent, implies that in Qiang's belief, the importance of exam outweighs in-class language practice. Here another point worthy noting is that Qiang gained confirmation of his exam-oriented teaching from peer teachers on the course. How other teachers dealt with exam pressure guided his particular teaching behaviours. In this case, theories from the INSET course seemed less influential than contextual factors and practical advice from similar context even though Qiang reported an increase in his theoretical knowledge.

7.3.4 Teacher-student rapport

In the pre-INSET observation, Qiang used some positive comments to motivate his students, such as "good", "very good". In the second training phase, Qiang held on to this way and used his learning results to further explain his behaviour.

> The curriculum standards said… that is good for the development of students' affects (QI4: 36-37).

> Giving positive comments also help keep my passion in class. I don't want to lose my interest in teaching…Encouraging them is also an encouragement for myself (QI5: 175-77).

The fact that there was no change in his teaching showed that Qiang's belief in a relaxing teaching atmosphere was confirmed by the INSET input and the new curriculums standards. This also implied that his learning in the INSET course developed his knowledge on this issue and broadened his ideas, and such information confirmed his beliefs in the importance of keeping teacher-student rapport in this way. Thus it seemed his newly received information and prior beliefs worked together for his sustained practice.

In the second training phase and follow-up investigation, there was another interesting point worth noting: error correction, which reflected some change in Qiang's perceptions of how to establish teacher-student rapport. Among Qiang's observations, presentation of new grammar rules happened three times (QO2, QO4 and QO5). When practising the rules, he mainly used oral correction for students' errors. Although in his pre-INSET observation there was no grammar rule

presentation and obvious error correction was not observed, it is possible to explore the change in Qiang's cognitions in this aspect because after the first training phase he already realized the difference between his previous teaching and the new curriculum.

> Before [attending the INSET], I used to correct students' errors directly …Sometimes I felt dissatisfied, or even angry when they made errors after I explained the rules very clearly…But the lecturers told me it is better to correct students' errors only when the errors hinder comprehension…and they also emphasized the importance of cautious error correction in fostering classroom interaction…I should think about it more (QI3: 136-43).

In the second observation after Qiang returned to his classroom, he used a group work activity for grammar practice

> Extract 5:
>
> (Students are presenting their group work)
>
> S1: Who do you think is the funniest actor?
>
> S2: I think Mr. Bean is the funniest actor.
>
> S1: How about you?
>
> S3: I think Jim Carrey is the funniest actor.
>
> S1: Who is **funniest** actor you think?
>
> S4: I like Zhou Xingchi the most.
>
> S1: Right. Maybe we can watch some movies of them.
>
> T: Good. Very good. Sit down please. (QO3: 219-26)

In this extract, one student missed "the" for the superlative adjective. But Qiang did not mention that during or after their work. He stated his reason:

I think his (one boy) mistake is minor and did not impede communication in any way. So I did not correct it…I also gave them a "Very good" when they finished it. He felt happy…[Teacher] should consider [students' affective factors](QI4:116-19).

When talking about the reason why he made this change, Qiang felt the INSET lectures directed him to think of teaching in students' position:

If I do it (correcting students' errors directly), the next time they might get stuck in speaking because they had lost their confidence to do that…Students may have been demotivated in expressing their opinions in front of people (QI7:216-18).

The next observational extract showed Qiang's effort in this aspect:

Extract 6:

(Teacher is asking students to complete sentence-making exercise in 3b, Section B Unit 7)

T: Now the second one: "I get annoyed when people cut in line. When this happens, I…". Well, (pointing to a girl) can you finish this sentence?

S: When this happens, I will …will telling him to wait at the end of the line.

T: (repeating the sentence with a humorous tone) I will telling … him to wait at the end of the line.

S: Oh. I will tell him.

T: Yes. I will …(suggesting student to finish the whole sentence)

S: I will tell him to wait at the end of the line. (QO5: 142-49)

Qiang talked about why he did this afterwards:

> I repeated her sentence and wanted her to find the mistake by herself. If she wouldn't I will directly state that then. Fortunately, she realized it quickly… so I saved her face. It's a win-win situation (QI7:213-15).

It was clear that Qiang valued the importance of giving students feedback in an indirect way to encourage them to find out the errors by themselves, which reflected that fact that Qiang took students' affect into account when deciding his teaching behaviour. It is a development of his practices influenced by the INSET course. In addition, Qiang tried a strategy to create a humorous atmosphere for not discouraging students with their error. In this extract, when Qiang was repeating the student's sentence with mistake, he used a humorous tone and made the student and the others laugh. The whole class atmosphere relaxed and the student whose error was corrected did not feel any embarrassment.

Overall, Qiang's understandings of establishing teacher-student rapport expanded after the INSET course. His practices (error correction) indicated a change from his previous direct correction. This can be regarded as the effect of his increased knowledge of his teaching behaviour and his consistent effort indicated that new beliefs on this issue were formed and confirmed.

7.3.5 Classroom language use

Before the INSET course, Qiang had already formed his belief in his undergraduate study that the teacher's use of language (English) in class was a very important source for students' language learning. In his pre-INSET teaching, he mainly used English as the medium of instruction. At the end of the INSET course he still held on the belief:

> For English teacher it is a responsibility [to use English as teaching medium]…Students can benefit from it [for their language practice] (QI5: 47-48).

From his observations, Qiang did use English as the main teaching medium. But his belief in the value of using Chinese as he stated before the INSET course could also

be found in his practices. For example he used Chinese to explain the language points in the exercises in the last observation. Qiang articulated his feelings for this:

> Students expect us to teach them grammar rules…because of the exams. For me I prefer using Chinese when explaining some difficult linguistic rules because the lesson time is limited. Using Chinese makes it easier and takes less time. I want to save some time for students' practice (QI7: 43-47).

> I used Chinese to teach them (students) 'if' clause. This is an important but difficult sentence structure for them…I wanted to teach them the rule in an easy way and then provide them opportunities to use it in English…as you see, I organized them in groups…[it] is useful to enhance their learning (QI6: 63-68).

Therefore, Qiang's practices reflected the conflict between his beliefs in classroom language use. Importantly, he cited two reasons for using Chinese: meeting students' expectations and enhancing their learning results. It implied that, to some extent, his belief in the value of using Chinese as teaching medium was related to the contextual factors, especially to the way student learning was assessed. In previous quotes Qiang also mentioned students' goal in learning grammar was the exam. So it is safe to say, in reality, examinations are the biggest source of pressure both teachers and students have to endure and Qiang's beliefs about using Chinese as instructional medium were also influenced by it.

At the end of this study, Qiang mentioned the impact of the INSET input on this:

> The course gave me some clues to think more about my own ideas…both the lectures and informal communication with other teachers…I gained a clearer idea on the conflict [between ideal and reality]. I know it is not an easy problem to solve if the whole educational system does not change (QI7:55-58).

This meant that Qiang became aware of the tension between his conflicting beliefs: the ideal English learning model and realistic language learning context. In terms of the effect this conflict might cause on student learning, he felt that Chinese presentation might restrict students' learning:

>I'm afraid that students might rely on Chinese explanation of grammar rules…This might restrict their understanding of English. But the reality doesn't permit me to do that (using English for the whole lesson)…Students want to learn the grammar rules and gain high exam marks. Using English all the time might cause some obstacles in their learning and affect their engagement in lesson (QI7:60-65).

Being aware of the tension, Qiang made some effort in his practices from the perspective of keeping student's learning interest:

>They really respond to Chinese presentation…I'm not sure about the effect of doing this, but I have to go with what they respond to. If they think they learn from that, then I should do some of that but plus some opportunities for them to use in English…if students get what they want, they're more likely to learn (QI6:67-72).

Overall, Qiang's practices and words reflected his conflicting reasons for classroom language use: setting language model and meeting students' expectations. Although the INSET course did not bring any significant change to his beliefs, Qiang gained greater awareness of the tension between ideal teaching model and the contextual factors. It implied that Qiang had developed his understandings of the complexity of classroom teaching and explored his beliefs in relation to this issue.

7.4 Summary: Main developments and the INSET contributions

Qiang's learning experiences and his attempts of training input presented a story of change in flux where conflicts between informed cognitions and practice changes were clearly observed. Below I summarize the main impacts of the INSET course on his cognitions and practices.

7.4.1 Main developments

First, Qiang reported an increase in his theoretical knowledge which was also one of his learning expectations. During learning, his active attitude positively helped him in the construction of new knowledge and beliefs although his grasp of some theories was at times unclear. However, such knowledge increase did not fully meet

his need for teaching. As he articulated at the end of the course, there was a gap between the theories learnt on the course and his actual teaching. Practical information for better teaching was needed.

Secondly, Qiang developed his awareness of his existing beliefs and practices. During his teaching back in his classroom, his exposure to learning theories and teaching methods enabled him to become aware of and question his beliefs and practices, and analysed his teaching with reference to the theoretical underpinnings he received. His developed awareness in turn deepened his understandings of the teaching context through further thinking.

Thirdly, conflicts between Qiang's beliefs in certain teaching aspects (such as classroom activities and classroom language use) emerged when Qiang tried to apply the INSET input in the classroom. Qiang's concern for contextual factors seemed to be more influential on his pedagogical decisions and led to the incongruence between his particular teaching behaviour and reported learning results on the INSET course (such as increased awareness of reducing teacher control, belief change on classroom language use). This implied that the reported changes in beliefs and practice only existed at surface level and Qiang's core beliefs and practices did not change.

7.4.2 The INSET contributions

The INSET course seems to have contributed to changes in Qiang's cognitions and practices.

Firstly, the INSET course provided opportunities for learning. The INSET lectures and workshops in the first training phase provided both theoretical and practical information ("theory-learning" as Qiang defined it). For Qiang, this information deepened his understandings of the new curriculum, enriched his language educational theories, and broadened his ideas of teaching methods with their underpinnings. Meanwhile, communicating with other participant teachers gave him much practical suggestions on actual classroom teaching. Various kinds of information led to an increase in Qiang's knowledge theoretically and practically which motivated him to explore his beliefs and practices.

Secondly, the INSET course stimulated Qiang's self-exploration. Exposure to learning theories and teaching ideas in the INSET enabled him to become aware of and question some of his beliefs and practices. The INSET seemed to have helped

Qiang to make some of his beliefs explicit, begin questioning them and restructure them, such as his reflection on the link between teaching steps and exploring the tension between his beliefs and reality. At the end of this study, Qiang still felt self-exploration helped his reflection on his own teaching.

Thirdly, the gap between INSET input and reality confirmed Qiang's beliefs about context. As Qiang mentioned in interviews, the gap between the INSET content and the contextual constraints emerged as conflict between his reported learning outcomes and reality when he had to make a choice for teaching. Other teacher's practical advice and the real-life problems he encountered had pushed him to consider more about how to deal with the actual situation rather than how to apply the new knowledge. In turn, this reinforced his beliefs about the power of the context. Therefore the impact of INSET was diminished when practical issues were involved (such as exam pressure and textbook coverage).

Chapter 8 Case of Fen: Resistance to change

In this chapter I present the findings of the fourth of the five case study teachers, Fen.

8.1 Background information

8.1.1 Teaching career background

Fen finished her four-year undergraduate study in a university in Chongqing but her major was in English, not in English education. Before becoming a junior secondary school English teacher, she had not received any initial teacher education. When finishing her undergraduate study she wanted to be a translator or interpreter, but her parents insisted that teaching was a good job for women because it was comparatively safe and stable. Thus Fen entered a local secondary school. Before the INSET course, she has been an English teacher for 11 years and had mentored some novice teachers as an experienced teacher.

The school Fen worked in was a challenging secondary school with a comparatively lower student graduating rate to major senior secondary school. As she said in the pre-INSET interview: "more than half of my students are slower in learning English…than the ones from the major secondary schools" (FI1:103-105) , so she had to pay much attention to helping them deal with the basic language knowledge as well as keeping them interested in learning English.

At the beginning of her teaching career, Fen was mentored by an experienced teacher:

> In the first year of my career, the school allocated me an experienced teacher as a mentor. I observed her classroom teaching several times and she shared with me a lot of her own experiences. I read her lesson plan, used her teaching materials…I learned a lot from her…All her suggestions could be directly used in my class (FI1: 130-36).

So Fen's prior ideas and practice of teaching were strongly influenced by other teachers. The way she learned to teach was based on observing other teachers. Fen also mentioned her own teaching as a source for her learning to teach:

> My own teaching experience is also a good source for me to
> learn how to deal with my students. I analysed my teaching and
> students when problem emerged (FI1: 140-41)

So Fen's prior understandings of EFL teaching mainly came from other teachers' observable practice as well as her own teaching experience rather than from formal theories.

Before this research Fen had attended two educational research projects in her school on classroom management. Since 2005 she had participated in two short-term in-service teacher training courses. She did not feel satisfied with the training course because she felt "the course content seems so far away from my actual classroom"(FI1:82).

8.1.2 Pre-INSET classroom teaching

Fen's pre-INSET teaching information mainly came from the classroom observation and post-observation interview before the INSET course. This pre-INSET information provided a basis for the subsequent exploration of the impact of the training course.

In the pre-INSET observation, one of the obvious characteristics of Fen's teaching behaviour was following the flow of the textbook. The lesson observed was the second part of the unit 2. After leading the students to review the vocabulary and sentence structures learned last time, Fen directly asked the students to open their textbooks and turn to the page where they stopped last lesson. The direction Fen gave was "Last time we finished the 2a (the sequence number of the exercise in textbook), we'll continue with 2b today" (FO1: 17-18).

In the rest of her lesson, Fen strictly followed the flow of the textbook. But she skipped a conversation activity (pair work) after the listening and, instead, she led the whole class to read out the dialogue they just listened. When asked the reason why she turned the conversation practice into whole class reading-aloud work, she explained the reason in terms of students' language level:

> Most of them feel reluctant to speak English…It is kind of waste
> of time to do conversation practice in groups. I don't think they
> will actually do it. (FI1: 36-38)

Another reason why Fen decided not to do pair work was that she thought whole-class activity was easier for classroom management, with which she did not need to spare time and energy to check whether students were using English or not since she was not sure all her students would really use English to finish the conversation practice, "I don't need to monitor them strictly (in whole class reading-out activity)" (FI1: 41). The other classroom activity form evident in her teaching was teacher-student question and answer. All questions were asked by Fen and the students called by her gave their answers. The whole process was clearly under Fen's tight control.

The focus of the lesson was on vocabulary and language points in the reading text. Fen mainly used Chinese to explain them and used English at times to give some classroom teaching directions.

During the whole lesson, Fen's responses to students' reactions, such as their answers to her questions and whole class reading-out, mainly included "Good" and "Very good". This showed that Fen used positive words to encourage her students in class. As she explained in the post-observation interview, Fen felt it was very important to encourage her students:

> Most of my students are not as good as those in the major secondary schools. Their interest in learning English is comparatively lower. I want to keep their attention in the class and…won't give up…I have to use some positive comments to encourage them (FI1:174-77).

8.1.3 Expectations of the INSET course

In the pre-INSET interview, Fen explained her reasons for attending the INSET course.

First, when she was told by the head-teacher in her school that there was a chance for her to attend an INSET course, her first reaction was to say no because she thought the former short-term in-service training courses she attended were not closely related to her actual teaching practice. But the head-teacher convinced her that this INSET course would be much better, so Fen decided to attend it.

For herself, Fen wanted to learn some theoretical knowledge on EFL teaching as well as teaching methods to improve her own teaching practice.

> I want to learn some new theories on language teaching and
> useful teaching methods suitable for my students…I know the
> new curriculum standards proposed more requirements for
> English teaching. I want to how I can meet the new requirements
> (FI1: 198-202).

In addition, a certificate of attendance was Fen's another expectation of the INSET course. Because the certificate issued by her first training course helped in her last promotion and she wanted to be further promoted to a senior teacher which was an equivalent to associate professor in university next year, she thought the certificate from a national training project, if there was one, might help with her next application. At the end of the INSET course, Fen received a certificate of attendance but she doubted whether it would work for her promotion because she heard about some change in the promotion policies.

8.2 Learning on the INSET course

This was the third time Fen had attended an INSET course, so she did not show any particular excitement or anxiety when entering the course. But in the interview at the end of the first training phase, Fen articulated her worries:

> After two or three days I felt very worried. I haven't received
> any formal pre-service teacher training, all what I know about
> EFL teaching is mainly from what I see and read by myself…(it
> is) not systematic …(I do) not know as much as other
> teachers…In some lectures I felt I could not understand the
> contents …and learned very slowly (FI2: 6-12)

When asking about what she learned in the lectures, Fen said:

> It's hard to say what I learned in the lectures. I learned
> something new but I don't think it can change me…I took down
> some notes of the lectures, such as the kinds of knowledge
> teachers should have, the views teaches should develop for the
> new curriculum and so on…If I have time, I'll try to read them
> again(FI2: 15-21)

This showed some difference between Fen's stated pre-INSET expectation and learning practice in the training course. In the pre-INSET interview she said she wanted to learn some theories to improve teaching practice but when learning on the course she did not show much enthusiasm for it. In her other words, she illustrated her specific concerns on theory-learning:

> I feel the need for theory learning in myself, but I'm afraid what the lecturers told me is not so relevant with my actual teaching practice. All the things they give me seem like an ideal of classroom teaching but too far away from reality…They just told me what to do. But I don't know how to do it (FI2: 21-25).

> I don't like most of the lectures [on teacher professional development]. Why do so many theories seem too far away from my actual classroom teaching? …Even though they are related to the new curriculum, I still feel I don't' need to learn all of them (FI2: 27-30).

This clearly showed that Fen's negative attitude to the theory-based training content was related to the gap between theories and reality. It seemed that she only wanted theories of how to teach language (such as teaching strategies) rather than theories on teacher knowledge, beliefs and similar issues. And the way the trainers used to present new knowledge also seemed ineffective in helping her to develop ideas of how to apply it in practice. As illustrated below (see section 8.3), theoretical input did not bring about any obvious change to Fen's prior knowledge at the end of the first training phase.

When talking about the workshops, Fen gave some positive comments:

> The workshops are very useful…The lecturers analysed each method and showed us some video clips which provided me direct model to follow…Peer group work provided opportunities to work with other teachers…I think I learned a lot in the workshops (FI2:41-46)

Fen's words showed that, compared with theory-learning, she was more interested in gaining practical information which was directly related to actual classroom

teaching. From her previous learning experience, it was easy to find that Fen's learning on the INSET course was influenced by how she learned to teach at the beginning of her career. Practical information, especially the information which could be directly used in her classroom for specific problems, was what Fen was really looking for. This was confirmed from her further statements in the interview:

> What I think most useful also includes what other teachers shared with me after the lectures…(The INSET course is) a good chance to communicate with other teachers. We all know the current situation of EFL teaching in Chongqing…We talked a lot when we are free… When I told them my problems they gave some very useful advice… (It is) very suitable for my class (FI2: 49-56).

This showed that Fen was influenced more by other teachers' practical opinions (e.g. her mentor's suggestions) than by theoretical input. Why Fen believed in this was mainly, as she mentioned above, due to other teachers' understandings of the actual teaching context and her expectations of solving specific problems in her own classroom. Therefore, theoretical information did not bring any development to Fen's prior knowledge but the practical information from workshops and peer teachers satisfied Fen's expectation. As she also positively commented on the video clips for teaching demonstration, it could be concluded that, to some extent, Fen still relied on direct imitation to improve her teaching.

When talking about the challenges she had to encounter in teaching, Fen said:

> I know the new curriculum standards proposed many new challenges to teachers…the lecturer analysed the requirements for teachers…focusing on vocabulary and grammar is not enough now… old ideas [and methods] should be changed (FI2: 73-77)

Her words showed that she realized the challenges to her former teaching and the need for practice improvement. But she did not mention the challenges for teachers. Together with her lack of interest in the theories on teacher professional development in lectures, it seemed that Fen had not developed her ideas about the importance of teacher development and her view of practice changes seemed to stay

at surface level. In this case, it was thus not surprising that no change could be found in her later observations and interviews, which will be discussed in following sections.

At the end of the whole INSET course, Fen said:

> I think I now know more about classroom teaching, from teaching methods to some educational ideas…In the second training phase I applied some of them in my teaching…but I still feel helpless with the reality. I cannot change it (FI5: 17-21).

This showed that the reason why Fen did not make any change to her teaching after the INSET course was attributed to the contextual factors. The following sections on specific aspects of her teaching practice will provide a detailed account of these factors.

8.3 The impact of INSET on classroom teaching

8.3.1 Lesson shape

In the first observation during the second training phase (school-based learning), Fen made some change to her teaching, trying not to follow the flow of the textbook (that is what she did in the pre-INSET observation). She used a lead-in to start the lesson where she used PowerPoint to present pictures and led students to review the vocabulary in the unit. After starting the main part of the lesson, a reading text of the unit, Fen used some classroom activities to organize students for learning, among which one group work was designed by Fen herself. At the end of the lesson, Fen assigned homework to students. From the basic teaching steps and students' in-class feedback, her lesson looked carefully designed and successfully implemented.

> I designed this lesson according to what I learned in the first training phase… in the workshop, I realized that my previous lesson were not complete in terms of the basic teaching steps… So I did not just follow the textbook. I used some classroom activities in my teaching (FI3: 17-21)

In this observation, it was clear that the INSET input informed Fen's understanding of lesson shape and motivated her to bring change to practice. Her feelings reflected

a development in her knowledge on lesson shape although she did not say that explicitly.

In the second observation in this phase Fen kept this lesson shape. But in the post-observation interview, she mentioned her doubts:

> In order to make this lesson seem complete, I spent more much time in preparing it…I'm not sure I will afford the same time for this in the future (FI4: 9-11)

This became true in the follow-up investigation where Fen returned to her previous way, following the flow of the textbook and ended her teaching when lesson time was up. No carefully designed lesson shape could be observed in the last two observations. In the final follow-up observation, Fen ended the lesson in the middle of the text. In the post-observation interviews, Fen articulated her feelings:

> I feel much more pressure on preparing a lesson as proposed by the training course…I've got used to it (the previous way)…Students did not feel any uncomfortable…Changing it is not easy (FI7: 5-9).

> This semester is very busy…I don't have much time to do it (FI7: 11-12).

The fact that Fen gave up bringing change to her lesson shape implied that the INSET input did not change her practice on this aspect effectively. The change she made in the second training phase could be taken as her attempt for change but lacking sustained effect. Fen did not talk much about her beliefs about lesson shape but emphasized the influence of contextual factors on her decision

> Next year student will be in the third year, a very important year for their entrance examination to senior secondary school. What I should do this semester is to enhance students' language knowledge for the exam. Although there is a reform of the exam, vocabulary and grammar are still the basis… so I have no other choice but focusing on them (FI7: 15-19).

> Students' test scores are related to teachers' bonus, especially the
>
> entrance tests to senior secondary schools (FI7: 22-23).

This showed that Fen's beliefs about the influence of other factors strongly affect her classroom behaviour, including students' exam scores and her financial interests. Because of these factors, Fen gave up attempts at making changes to her lesson shape. In this case, these factors can be considered as constraints on teacher development.

8.3.2 Teacher control

In Fen's pre-INSET observation, teacher's dominant position was very clear, both in teacher presentation and teacher-student interaction. During the whole lesson, students were sitting quietly and following Fen's directions to answer questions. There was no opportunity for them to work with peers. Fen explained this:

> My students are not as good as those in the good schools…I have
>
> to use my power to keep them in control (FI1: 27-30)

The INSET lectures on new curriculum standards introduced the requirements for teachers to return freedom to students and provide them with opportunities to use language freely. Fen had different ideas about this and thought strict classroom management was good for her teaching:

> I know the new curriculum wants to improve level of EFL
>
> teaching. But in my class I cannot put it into practice… My
>
> students are naughty…(they) might lose control once I don't
>
> keep an eye on them (FI2: 111-115).

Therefore during the observations in the second training phase, Fen continued this traditional teacher-centred method even though she attempted group work in her teaching. The following extract is an illustration of this:

> Extract 1
>
> (Fen asked students to do a group work in 1a "number the
>
> pictures with the right descriptions" in Section B, Unit 10)
>
> T: OK. Time's up. Have you talked about that?

Ss: Yes.

T: What is your answer? (asking one student)

S: 1,5,2,4,3.

T: No. I don't think so. (asking another student)

S: 1,5,4,2,3.

T: Yes. This is what the pictures shows, right? Do you think so?

Ss: Yes. (FO3: 72-79)

It was clear that Fen focused on checking the right answers after the group work which in nature was an opportunity for students to practice language. Rather than checking students' group work result, she only asked questions for the right answer (just the numbers rather than how they described the pictures). It seemed that Fen just organized the class in the form of group work but what she really did was still a teacher-student one-way interaction. The fact that she did not pay attention to the real effect of group work on student learning reflected that she still believed in the traditional role of teacher in class even though she tried to make some change. This showed that the INSET input did not inform her prior beliefs on this issue.

In the follow-up observations, Fen's teacher-dominated teaching was more obvious since she returned to the pre-INSET teaching. The only classroom activity was teacher-student question asking and answering. Fen even skipped the group work included in the textbook. When asked why she did not try to conduct less controlled activities, Fen explained that:

> Q: I noticed that you skipped some classroom activities designed in the textbook. Why?
>
> A: Some of them (students) feel reluctant to speak English… I have to use my power to make them speak English (by asking questions).
>
> Q: Yes. I saw some student were called to stand up and answer your questions.
>
> A: Yes. I have to…put some pressure on them to make them feel the necessity of learning English (FI6: 52-60)

Fen thought students' lack of interest in English learning was the reason why she could not loosen her control over them. "Keeping an eye on students" was a traditional educational view in China, which had been criticised as putting teachers at the position of babysitters. But from Fen's practice, she still believed in its effectiveness in teaching. Comparing with her pre-INSET teaching, Fen's previous beliefs on teacher control in EFL teaching and learning remained the same and were still strongly influencing her practice.

8.3.3 Patterns of classroom activities

The activities learned in the INSET course did provide Fen with some useful information on classroom language teaching:

> As the activities I used before the course were very traditional, the new ones I learned in the course are really different [from what she used before]…in the patterns, the ways how teachers used them… especially the language requirements for the teacher is very high (FI2: 58-62)

In the second training phase, Fen tried some change in her teaching. In the first observation in this phase, she let the students read the text by themselves for five minutes with two leading questions she designed. When students finished reading, Fen asked individual students to answer the questions. Then Fen divided the student into groups of four to finish the post-reading exercises in textbook, a multiple choice exercise. When doing this, students were allowed to discuss and Fen walked around the classroom to see how they were doing it. For this change, Fen explained:

> In the workshops (in the first training phase), the lecturers and other teachers talked a lot about the three-stage teaching of language skills, so I want to have a try…I did ask them (her students) to read it before my teaching. But they did not need to answer any question. Now I want to do something different… asked them question first and…find answers by themselves (FI3: 44-50).

In the second observation in this phase, Fen also organized students in groups for classroom activity (see extract 1 in section 8.3.2). But she checked students' work

by focusing on collecting answers rather than practicing their language. It is not hard to say, to some extent, that Fen did not fulfil the real goal of group work.

Furthermore, after the INSET course, Fen did not conduct any other attempt in follow-up observations. When being asked about it, she attributed the reason to her students:

> I know how important it is to use classroom activities. But in my class…students' language levels are not high enough to do it. In group works, they cannot use English to finish the task, they sometimes even used Chinese… My students are also naughty. It is easy to lose control when I let them do classroom works by themselves (FI6: 32-36)

For this problem, Fen complained that the training course did not provide enough practical information for her to apply in her teaching effectively.

> Yes I believe the training is useful for some teachers. But I have already forgotten some (of the training contents)…they are not suitable for my own class… Different teachers have their own headaches when facing realistic problems (FI7:51-55)

This showed that Fen did not feel satisfied with the INSET course in terms of the gap between the content and her reality. Fen's attitude toward this was a reflection of her firm beliefs of learning to teach from direct practical information. From her words in interviews, contextual factors seemed to take the dominant role in her pedagogical decision making as well as a strong power leading to her reluctance to change.

8.3.4 Teacher-student rapport

The INSET course proposed that creating a pleasant and supportive environment in the classroom would motivate students' English learning. Building up a proper teacher-student rapport was essential in this aspect. At the end of the first training phase, Fen said that she knew the importance of teacher-student cooperation in class:

> Of course it is important. Many people have already talked about that. Teaching and learning is a mutual process. Without the

support from each other (teacher and students) no classroom teaching can be successful (FI2: 34-36)

In terms of her practice, Fen felt she did this well:

It's necessary to help students feel good in class. This is important for me. I need students' support (FI3: 61-62).

They feel happy when being asked to answer my questions (after listening to a dialogue)… They raised their hands to answer the questions…(FI4: 101-02).

I think I did it well (in the right way to motivate students)…Students more or less used English in class…in my understanding this is the rapport between teacher and students (FI7: 92-94).

But observational data indicated Fen's practice in this aspect needed further analysis. Just as discussed above in the sections on classroom activities and teacher control, Fen took a teacher-fronted position in the class and students seemed at the place of being monitored and managed. In teacher-students question asking and answering activities, Fen asked questions while only the students whose names were called could answer. Other students just stayed on their seats, seemingly ignored. What the INSET course suggested for teacher-student rapport was a whole class environment good for learning, Fen's behaviour seemed not effective enough for all the students. Fen expressed her ideas on this:

My students are not like the ones in better schools. Their interest in English learning sometimes makes me feel frustrated… Sometimes I have to use my power to control them. Being friendly to them does not always keep them in order (FI7:97-100).

Furthermore, observational data illustrated how Fen punished poor student performance. For example:

Extract 3

(After a word dictation, Fen asked students to get their spelling checked by neighbours. When students doing that, some of them talked aloud)

T: Be quiet! Be quiet! Don't speak so loudly, OK? After you checking your work, I want some of you to tell me how many words you wrote are correct. (one minute later) How many of you wrote all the words right?

(less than one third students raised their hands)

T: Who got five words right?

(some students raised their hands)

T: I've told you to memorize the words last time. You did not do it well. Before the end of today's school, you must copy each right word twenty times and I will check it before your dismissal. Tomorrow I'll have another dictation. Clear?

(FO6:4-11)

This clearly showed that Fen believed in using the teacher's power to keep students under control. Although Fen said she felt she did well in establishing teacher-student rapport, her behaviour presented the incongruence between her words and practice. Based on the INSET input, Fen articulated her agreement with it in interviews (see the first quote in this section), but this agreement did not inform her practice. From her practice, on the contrary, Fen's beliefs about teacher-student rapport were rooted in the traditional views of knowledge transmission and punishment-based teaching. The INSET lectures on the new curriculum standards particularly compared the traditional and newly proposed English teaching and criticized the traditional teaching and its negative effect on student learning. Fen's beliefs and practice did not change , though, according to such views.

8.3.5 Classroom language use

From the pre-INSET observation to the follow-up investigation, Fen used both English and Chinese as teaching medium. As Fen stated, the main purpose of using Chinese was for the convenience of explaining language points:

> In this class I used Chinese to explain how to use 'I have…' and 'You should…'. Because they are important sentence structures students should grasp as required in the curriculum standards, …I think it (using Chinese) will help them understand it easily (FI1:61-64)

> …Chinese is much better in explaining to them (students) how to use them ("Were there…?" " Did you see…?" and "Did you go…?"). As you see just now, I first used English to introduce them but students gave me more response when I did it again in Chinese (FI4:32-35)

Fen's statement showed that she believed that using Chinese could help her present teaching content clearly and improve students' learning, which implied that she saw teaching English as providing students with stated knowledge. From all the observations her beliefs in this did not change at all.

However, from some observational episodes, some other factors were found from Fen's use of Chinese. For example, in the first observation in follow-up investigation, Fen asked students to finish a vocabulary practice in the textbook based on their understanding of an email. The following is how Fen conducted it:

> Extract 2

> (Fen asked students to read the email by themselves and then asked some students to read it out sentence by sentence)

> T: (called s student) Read out the first sentence please.

> S1: (read the text) Thanks for sending me the snow globe of the monster. I love it.

> T: (asked in Chinese) What does monster mean?

S1: (answered in Chinese) Guai Wu.

T: OK. The next one (called another student).

S2: ….

…

T: Next one (called another student).

S7: (read the text) I have a big one with bears in it and another one with …um…pen…penguins (S7 met some difficulty reading the word "penguin").

T: (said in Chinese) What does this word mean?

S7: (answered in Chinese) Qi'e.

T: (said in Chinese) Now read after me, penguin, penguin, penguin. All of you, penguin, penguin, penguin. Now you again, penguin. Remember now?

S7: Yes. (FO4: 83-112)

This observational episode showed that Fen did not only use English for introducing linguistic rules or language points but also in regular instruction. In this extract, Fen's purpose was to help students remember the pronunciation of a word. From other lesson observed, there would not be any problem for Fen to use English for the Chinese sentences in the extract. But she did not do that. This suggested that Fen's beliefs in knowledge transmission outweighed her beliefs in the importance of using English as instructional medium. Regarding her articulation in previous sections on her lack of change in practice, her beliefs on this issue were also related to the fact that English was seen in the wider context as subject based on knowledge to be imparted and the learning results were evidenced by exams. Therefore it was not surprising to see that the INSET input on teachers' in-class language model did not affect Fen's beliefs and behaviours.

In the interview at the end of the INSET course, Fen talked about her ideas on classroom language:

> [From the INSET course I learned that] EFL teachers should provide students a language model… Teacher's language proficiency is very important…but sometime I don't feel confident about my English…What I'm most familiar with now is just the textbook…[so there are] some difficulties to present grammar and language rules in English…Most of my students are not good at English…They have already got used to use both Chinese and English in class (FI5: 79-86).

This showed that Fen was conscious of her own language proficiency as well as students' English level. She agreed with the INSET input on using English as classroom medium but felt less confident to do it, which showed that due to her lack of confidence in her proficiency, the new theoretical knowledge seemed less likely to bring about changes in her teaching. So the gap between what the INSET course disseminated and what Fen felt to be the case in her own setting resulted in her unchanged practice.

8.4 Summary: Main developments and the INSET contributions

The above sections presented Fen's unsatisfying feelings about the INSET course and highlighted her strong resistance to change. I now summarize the main impacts of the INSET course on Fen's cognitions and practices.

8.4.1 Main developments

First, Fen's learning outcomes were evidenced in her reported increase in theoretical knowledge and deeper understandings of some aspects of teaching, such as classroom activities, and the use of classroom language. What Fen valued most as her learning outcomes were the practical tips obtained from other teachers which she thought were immediately applicable to her teaching. This also showed the reason why Fen preferred informal learning during the first training phase.

Second, Fen expressed her dissatisfaction with some parts of the training content, mainly the theories on teacher professional development. It was hard to find the evidence of her endorsement of these theories in interviews or observations. That is

to say, the proposed ideas on teacher professional development did not inform Fen's beliefs on what teachers were and what roles teachers played. In her observations, her teacher-centred approach reflected this issue.

Third, Fen's observations showed that most of her prior teaching remained unchanged which signalled the lack of impact of the INSET course on her practice. Although she made some attempts of new ideas, such as using communicative classroom activities, these attempts did not last into her post-INSET teaching and no fundamental change in line with the new curriculum could be found. It was inferred that the INSET course did not bring change to Fen's beliefs on teaching and hence no sustained change in practice.

Fourth, contextual factors were often mentioned by Fen as constraints on her change, such as students' proficiency and exam pressure. In her articulations, these contextual factors worked powerfully than new knowledge and were the main basis for her pedagogical decisions.

In sum Fen showed reluctance to change due to her reported gap between the training content and her beliefs on the effect of contextual constraints. The INSET course seemed ineffective in bringing change to her classroom teaching.

8.4.2 The INSET contributions

The contributions of the INSET course on Fen's learning can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, The INSET course informed, to some extent, Fen's knowledge of teaching. The INSET course provided theoretical information on teaching and learning. Fen reported some changes in her knowledge on classroom teaching and some of the new ideas had been attempted in teaching. But Fen's feelings of the training input showed the gap between it and her reality.

Secondly, although the INSET course provided formal learning activities, Fen valued more the opportunities to communicate with other teachers. In terms of Fen's knowledge change, she obtained information, mainly practical tips, from other teachers. Compared with the INSET content, Fen valued the practical tips more because she thought they were useful and workable in her actual context. Peer teacher communication took place outside the formal training lectures. This seemed

to be an unanticipated effect of the INSET course. Fen's ideas on such informal learning, to some extent, represented teachers' actual needs for practice development.

Thirdly, the gap between INSET content and reality hindered Fen's change. As mentioned above, unchanged practice was a significant learning outcome in Fen's case. The gap she perceived between content and reality seemed to be important for this result. On the one hand, Fen felt the INSET input on teacher professional development was not related to her teaching. On the other hand, her strong beliefs on the contextual constraints confirmed her perceptions on the irrelevance between input and reality. These contributed to the fact that Fen forgot most of the content at the end of the course and no fundamental change could be observed in her practice.

Chapter 9 Case of Tan: Change with dejection

This chapter presents a detailed account of the findings of the last participant, Tan.

9.1 Background information

9.1.1 Teaching career background

Before becoming an EFL teacher in junior secondary school, Tan finished her undergraduate study in a normal university in Chongqing. But Tan's major was translation, not EFL teaching, so she did not receive any pre-service EFL teacher training before entering the job. When becoming a teacher in a local challenging secondary school, an experienced teacher, as a mentor arranged by the school, helped her learn to teach for half a year. Her colleagues also gave her advice and suggestions on teaching in teaching section meetings and classroom observations. When she met problems she often turned to her colleagues for help. Tan thought these activities formed her ideas on EFL teaching. So support from colleagues helped Tan grow into an EFL teacher in her school.

Before the INSET course, Tan had taught junior English for five years and once was awarded the annual good teacher in her school. She did not have any experience of in-service training.

9.1.2 Pre-INSET classroom teaching

In the pre-INSET observation, Tan started her lesson by reviewing sentence structures. Individual students were asked to stand up to answer her questions. This form of question asking and answering was used a lot for the rest of the lesson. The other form of interaction was whole class choral activity. Tan explained the reason for this as "collect[ing] students' answers to my (teacher's) questions" (TI1:45).

In the whole lesson, Tan strictly followed the textbook and finished Section A in Unit 5. But she did not use all the activities presented in the textbook. For example, she changed the group work of "inviting your friends to your party" into a sentence structure practice in the form of teacher asking questions and students giving answers. Her reason for this change was:

> My school is not as good as others and the students are also
> comparatively not good…Their interest in learning is not high. If
> I ask them to speak in groups they might chat in Chinese…They
> (other teachers) told me the school emphasises on student
> behaving well in class, or I might lose control of the class
> (TI1:36-42).

Tans' words showed that her decision-making was highly related to classroom order. Her concern for classroom control could be seen in her employment of classroom activities. This could be regarded as a signal of teacher-centredness in her teaching.

In Tan's pre-INSET observation, there was a teaching section for grammar focus. Tan introduced the sentence structures deductively by presenting them explicitly to the students and explained them in both English and Chinese. When asked why she taught this way, Tan thought she learnt it from observing other teachers:

> I observed some teachers' teaching (in her school). Most of them
> used this method…Some have much more experience. They
> know which (method) is better for our students…I just followed
> their ways (TI1:72-75).

But Tan also articulated her confusion:

> I felt their ways are old… just like how I was taught before, and I
> know this is not good (in the new curriculum). But I'm not as
> experienced as them and I have to show my respect to them...
> Because I'm not trained as teacher before, I don't know how to
> tell them my ideas clearly. They won't believe me. So I just
> follow what the chief (of her teaching section) told me (TI1:78-
> 84).

This showed that what influenced Tan's teaching was not only other teachers but also her lack of confidence due to her prior learning experiences and her current status in the school. The absence of initial teacher training in her learning experience contributed to her not being able to convincingly articulate her ideas on teaching, and less teaching experience implicitly hindered her ability to question other teachers' suggestions.

9.1.3 Expectations of the INSET course

Tan was excited when she received the message that she would attend the INSET course because she thought:

> The training course should be a good chance for me to learn…about English teaching. I haven't been trained as an English teacher before. I hope I can learn a lot in it (TI1: 111-13).

When asked what she wanted to learn, Tan's first response was theories of language teaching and learning:

> Of course I want to learn some theories of (English) teaching. Theories are the guidance of good teaching in my learning experiences, theories are always considered as important when starting to learn something new (TI1: 125-27).

The second thing she wanted to learn most was teaching methods:

> Teaching methods are useful, like the axe for cutting wood…Good method help solve teaching problems. With good teaching method, I will teach more effectively… Students will also like the lesson with good teaching method (TI1: 132-36).

Specifically Tan wanted to learn how to use classroom activities in teaching:

> I observed some teachers' teaching in other schools…They used activities to organize their classes very well. I want to do that in my classroom (TI1:138-40).

Tan's words showed that she believed in the value of theories and teaching methods, which was related to her pre-INSET views of what teachers needed to learn and what worked the most for successful teaching.

In the interview, Tan also expressed her intention of developing as a professional:

> I want to teach better and gain better understandings of my teaching…Being an expert teacher is my dream. I have a long way to go and I hope I can make it…I really hope I can learn a lot in this national-level training course. The learning results

must be helpful for my future teaching and career development…To be realistic, I hope what I learn in it can help me write some articles for publication (TI1:148-54).

But when talking about teacher professional development, Tan articulated her confusions about the term:

I don't have a clear idea of teachers' professional development…I heard this term before but in reality …most of my colleagues' focus is on promotion, publishing articles and attending teaching competitions…I feel this is not what professional development really means. This training course might give me answers (TI1: 157-62).

This indicated the instrumental view of professional development among teachers fostered by the current cultural norm where assessment system focuses on "visible" achievements. The influence of this system on Tan's learning and change will be analysed in following sections.

A higher level of language proficiency was also what Tan wanted to gain in the INSET course:

[I've] been away from university for years. I feel my English is not as good as before. I need some formal training to improve it… It would be fantastic if there are some experts to help improve my speaking (TI1:207-10).

9.2 Learning on the INSET course

In the first training phase, Tan expressed her interest in the training content because she felt everything seemed new to her:

I don't have any in-service training or other formal training experience before… I found there are so many things I don't know (in the INSET course). What I can do is just try to learn as much as possible (TI2:04-07).

What impressed Tan most was that she felt many challenges to her previous teaching in the lectures on the new curriculum standards:

> Q: what do you feel about the training?
>
> A: I feel so challenges to face now! I really feel how difficult it is to be an English teacher (in new curriculum)…
>
> Q: Have you felt that before?
>
> A: No. It is the first time I feel so much pressure on my job…Before coming here, one could be regarded as a qualified teacher if he or she had abundant language knowledge. This idea deeply rooted in my mind… Just like what I often heard before, if your English is not good, you have no right to stand on the teaching platform. However, here (in the training course) I realized that teachers should not treat themselves as the only source of knowledge in the classroom (TI2:20-38).

Tan thought this was her "biggest change" (TI5:56) inspired by the INSET course because she felt what she believed about being an English teacher was challenged. In the lectures, she learned that what made a qualified English teacher was not easy to understand:

> Reflective skills, teaching skills, educational views…so many things to take into consideration for English teachers…Also need to understand the new curriculum standards and try to figure out what they require teachers to do. Being an English teacher is not an easy job (TI2:39-45).

But Tan still showed her willingness to learn about the ideas promoted by the new curriculum and to integrate these into her teaching:

> The requirements of the new curriculum…we have to follow. I think I will have to implement them… No matter how much I know about them now, I will try to learn more and apply them in my teaching. This is a necessary step for change (TI2:52-56).

In her interview, Tan said the training input, especially the lecture content, really worked on her self-exploration of prior teaching as well as previous ideas on language teaching and learning. For example:

> These ideas stimulated me to think about how I taught before…The new curriculum proposed the use of task-based language teaching. But I found my use of activities seemed not enough. This is what I need to change in the future (TI2:72-75).

Beside classroom activities, Tan also mentioned the use of modern teaching technology, adapting teaching materials, and using formative assessment on students' learning. She thought she should learn them all for her classroom teaching. But her learning outcomes did not provide evidence that she had an understanding of the complexity of what all these entailed in practice. A detailed analysis of it will be presented in the following sections.

In terms of educational ideas, Tan thought the lectures broadened her prior views and she felt that some of her views on teaching and learning were challenged:

> The lectures taught me a lot...I found my ideas are out of date…I should not teach as same as I did before. I used to believe that more language input can help students learn more. But the new curriculum proposes students to learn autonomously and collaboratively. What teachers need to do is not giving students what they need to know, but guide them to find it out… (TI2:80-86).

This showed that Tan started to explore her previous teaching in terms of her educational views and what she believed effective in teaching was challenged. From her words, her belief being challenged was a result of receiving and accepting the training content, especially the new curriculum requirements on classroom teaching which were explicitly stated in the lectures as direct information. So the effect of knowledge increase on beliefs can be sensed in Tan's training experience.

Meanwhile the difficulties Tan met and her unclear grasp of the training content were indicated in her interviews. For example, she used "knowledge" to refer to most part of what she learned in both the lectures and workshops although the

lecture on teacher knowledge did give detailed explanation of the concept and its categories, which however did not reflect how it was used in the lecture on teacher knowledge.

> I learned a lot of knowledge…What the lecturers and other teachers told me are valuable knowledge for me…but I don't understand them…when the lecturers are standing here [giving the lecture], I can't follow them (TI2:164-67).

> How to use the knowledge is still a problem. I need to think over and try to understand them better (TI2:201-02).

Tan's words not only indicated her difficulties in theory-learning but also showed the fact that how the teacher was trained also influenced her learning. Tan articulated her preference for informal learning with other teachers, which suggested that the trainer-centred method was not effective for her:

> The workshops are more useful. Watching teaching video clips, discussing with other teachers…are very interesting and useful. I like talking with them. They are more experienced than me and their students are better than mine. Their ideas can surely help me understand the actual classroom…Of course the lecturers and teachers from major schools are also very good…But their words sound more like giving lectures. I still prefer chatting with other teachers in private (TI2:132-38).

During the second training phase, Tan's classroom was visited by a trainer once. Her feelings also reflected some problem related to the INSET course:

> She (the trainer) did not say anything…I can only remember she encouraged me to make more attempts…nothing else…To be honest, I don't know what she wanted to do [when observing my teaching] (TI5: 123-26)

Tan's words showed that she felt dissatisfied with the trainer's responses and indicated the inappropriateness of support provided for teachers, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 10.

Some incongruence between Tan's pre-INSET expectation and actual learning experience was sensed in terms of her preference of practical tips. In the pre-INSET interview she expressed her strong feeling for theory-learning while her motive for learning during the training course seemed more practice-oriented. Some of her words reflected this more clearly:

> As a teacher, I want to know how to teach the students better…
> in a direct way…Yes, some teaching tips should be better
> (TI2:142-45).

Therefore, this showed that Tan's real motive for the INSET course still focused on how to improve her classroom teaching in a more practical and straightforward way.

Another issue worth noting was Tan's concern about professional development. Before the training course, she expressed her enthusiasm for professional development. However, Tan articulated some different feelings at the end of the course:

> This training took me one month away from my family...My
> baby is still very young. I have to spend much time with him
> every day...I'm afraid I cannot afford the time and energy (for
> further learning) (TI5:278-81).

This, to some extent, illustrated Tan's reluctance to keep learning. Beside her worries of the expense of personal life, her daily workload seemed also putting more influence on her feelings:

> A:…Comparatively I'm younger than some other teachers in my
> school. So the administration wants me to teach one more third
> grader class next year because the current teacher is pregnant and
> will take a leave soon. I'm asked to take over her job.
>
> Q: How many classes are you teaching now?
>
> A: Now I'm teaching two classes and will teach three next year.
>
> Q: What's your idea about the increased workload?

A: I don't think I will have any time to learning or spare attention to myself. The third year is the busiest. All students and teachers focus all attention on the entrance exam (to senior secondary school) (TI5:285-90).

Tan's words reflected her concerns for the possible effect of keeping learning or developing on her personal life or teaching career. At the end of this study, she did not think she could overcome these factors:

I don't have time to do that but sometimes I read the notes taken in the INSET course. I know keeping learning is good for me. But the reality doesn't allow me to do that… (TI7:363-65).

9.3 The impact of INSET on classroom teaching

9.3.1 Lesson shape

In the pre-INSET observation, Tan started her lesson by reviewing sentence structures "Can you come to my party?", "Yes, I can." and "Sorry, I can't". She presented them on PowerPoint slides and asked students the Chinese meanings of them. Then some students were asked to make sentences following them. In the post-observation interview, Tan talked about her rationale for doing this:

They (the sentence structures) are important language points…in the textbook…and they often appear in exams…so I think reviewing is good to reinforce their (students') memory (TI1:05-10).

This showed that Tan emphasized students' memorization of language rules in terms of knowledge acquisition and exams. Her other words further indicated that her lesson seemed largely driven by this goal:

I almost use it every time…Words and grammar rules are the main content (in the revision)…I want my students to remember them better (TI1: 13-15).

Affected by the first training phase, Tan tried some other ways to start her lessons. For example, in the second observation, Tan used a pair work as lead-in where she showed students some pictures of famous sports players and organized students to

make a short conversation with neighbours. In the third observation, Tan used the cartoon pictures in "Just for Fun" at the end of Unit 11 to start the lesson. From the forms of the activities, Tan changed her previous approach to starting a lesson. There was no straightforward work for language knowledge memorizing any more. But Tan's focus of using these activities was still on knowledge acquisition as will be discussed in section 9.3.3.

After the lead-in Tan followed the textbook flow and conducted her lesson with the steps presented in textbook. This seemed the same as her pre-INSET teaching. However Tan felt her ideas on lesson shape were changed by the training course and she started to think about the whole lesson:

> The training lecture on lesson design helps me form up a sense
> of whole lesson…Following the textbook is what I observed
> from other teachers in my school. In reality we have to finish one
> textbook each semester…Sometimes I just end in the middle of a
> section when time ends…That's what I try to change now
> (TI3:64-69).

It was a common sense in Chinese teachers that each lesson should finish a certain amount of teaching content with a beginning and an end to make it as a whole in shape. Clearly this applied in Tan's view of a whole lesson. In her lessons, the efforts she claimed to complete each lesson as a whole could be observed. In the last minutes of her third observation, she reviewed the newly-learnt language points and asked several students to repeat them and made some sentences. At the end of this lesson, she also set an assignment (two sections in the exercise book) as a reinforcement of students' memorisation of language rules. Tan felt she did better than before in terms of the whole lesson shape:

> I made a summary of it (the lesson)…the start and ending make
> the lesson complete. This is good for students to gain a clearer
> idea of what they learned today (TI4:121-22).

In the fourth observation, Tan's concern on lesson shape could be found in her using impromptu assignment to end the lesson:

> The time ended when I only explained the language points in the text...I planned to finish the text. To be honest what I wanted them (students) to do was to finish the post-reading exercises but I couldn't do that since I haven't finished the reading text… The assignment was an impromptu decision because I felt I should assign some homework for students to connect the lessons. (TI6:221-27).

Her words showed that the listening assignment was not designed beforehand but her newly formed idea of "whole lesson" triggered her to make a quick decision to compensate the fact that she did not complete the expected teaching. Tan's reaction, to some extent, showed that she developed her beliefs about whole lesson teaching. Although her practice did not fully indicate her understandings of what components whole lessons include and her ideas on leading a whole lesson might only remain at a surface level, her attempts to change indicated the impact of the training course on her both belief and behaviours.

9.3.2 Teacher control

In Tan's pre-INSET observation, it was easy to find her tight control over the class in both language knowledge presentation and classroom activity implementation. Tan's teacher-centred teaching mainly came from her concern about classroom management:

> They (students) are naughty. Some of them are not interested in learning…It is easy to lose my control over them if I don't keep my eyes on them all the time (TI1:38-40).

This showed that in Tan's eyes, keeping students under her control was necessary for smooth classroom teaching.

During the first training course, the lecture on reducing teacher control and increasing student-centeredness in language classroom inspired Tan to take a look back at her prior teaching. She said:

> This is totally new for me and broadened my ideas on how to deal with my students. I know my (prior) teaching is traditional but I feel helpless to make any change…As the new curriculum

standards proposed; tight teacher control in class was what traditional teaching needed. It is no longer useful in the new curriculum…What I need to do, I think, is to give student more time and opportunities for free practice (TI2:114-19).

In the second training phase, Tan's attempt to reduce her control could be observed in her using more classroom activities and giving students time to finish them.

Extract 1:

T: OK, let's look at the 3a.

Ss: Blank-filling?

T: Yes. See it?

S1: Ah?

T: Anything wrong?

Ss: We haven't learned it.

T: I know it. This is the second part of the text. Today I want you to work in groups to read it first and try to fill in the blanks. Understand?

(Several students said yes. Most of them kept silent)

T: We have already learned the new words, right? The first part is not difficult, right? So I'm sure you will understand the second part very easily. Do you think so?

Ss: Yes. Yes.

(Then teacher gave some time for students to finish the group work) (TO3:137-49)

In the post-observation interview, Tan talked about her ideas of doing this:

>This is my attempt of autonomous learning…a bit risky to have
>students learn the new content by themselves. But I think it is a
>good try because I feel students are interested in it…This is
>useful to motivate them to learn by themselves…As you can see,
>after the activity, I asked them to do tell me which word they
>chose. I can obviously feel their enthusiasm. Maybe this is the
>first time I let them do this. Some students are very active while
>some are not. But question asking and answering went very
>smoothly (TI2:151-59) .

This was an attempt Tan made to give students opportunity to learn new content in groups. She felt satisfied with the result because she got the expected goal: active learning environment and smooth teaching process. So she thought she would "try this other times" (TI4:162). In the interview after the second observation, Tan also expressed her ideas on reducing teacher control:

>I like watching them (students) working with their group
>members. It's not just an activity but a time for them to solve
>problems. I can feel some students like getting engaged in such
>work (TI3:153-55).

During the second training phase, Tan's confidence in teaching increased with her reducing teacher control in class. Just like she said:

>This is also good for me. No need to keep my eyes tight on each
>student…Believe them and let them do it. I think this is what the
>new curriculum really wants us to do (TI5:114-16).

It seemed that Tan believed in the value of reducing teacher control on improving student learning. However, after the INSET course, Tan's teaching seemed to return to her pre-INSET practice. Teacher control increased almost to her previous level and the use of classroom activities dropped.

>I found students kind of lost their interest in doing these
>activities…I also found some students did not really grasp the
>language points. They made errors in their homework. I have to

use some extra time to correct them…But lesson time is limited (TI6:171-75).

Sometimes some students do not really do the group work. They chat in Chinese or do something else…I don't mean reducing teacher control caused these problems. I just think teachers still need to use the authority they have to achieve our goals (TI7:140-48).

Tan's words showed that she was still very concerned with accuracy-oriented knowledge acquisition and classroom order more than reducing teacher control and giving students freedom for language practice, just like what she did before the INSET course. Her main concerns reflected the impact of traditional teaching which guided her pre-INSET teaching and which was still deeply rooted in her beliefs about teacher control.

From the whole process of Tan's change, it can be seen that her new belief in reducing teacher control was generated when she was inspired by the INSET input and got confirmed in the second training phase when her attempts reached her expectations. But this new belief was constrained in the after-INSET practice due to her considerations of the reality. This indicated that her new beliefs based on theory-learning were less powerful than contextual factors. When encountering practical problems, the new beliefs had to give the way to Tan's concerns with reality. From my observation of her lessons, her solution was a traditional teacher-centred approach.

9.3.3 Patterns of classroom activities

Learning to use classroom activities was one of Tan's expectations of the INSET course. In her pre-INSET observation, she only used teacher-student interaction to conduct her teaching. In the first training phase, the lectures and workshops on classroom activity design and implementation attracted her attention and aroused her interest in trying out some practical changes (see the interview quote in section 9.2).

When returning to her classroom, Tan made efforts to use activities in her teaching, mainly pair work and group work. In the second observation, she used two group works and one pair work. In the third observation, there were also two group works. The following two observational extracts illustrated Tan's use of these activities.

Extract 2:

(Teacher used a pair work in lead-in with some pictures of famous sports players on slides)

T: Still remember the question we learnt yesterday?

Ss: Yes. When was he born?

T: Good. Here I have some other pictures. I want you to make some new sentences with your neighbours. OK? One asks questions and the other answers. Understand?

Ss: Yes.

(Teacher gave students around two minutes to work in pairs and asked two pairs of them to perform their short conversation).

T: Do you remember now?

Ss: Yes.

T: (pointing to sentence on slide) When was he born? Repeat it!

Ss: When was he born?

T: He was born in …

Ss: He was born in…

T: Good. Now let's look at …. (TO2:4-18)

Extract 3:

T: Now, look at 2c please. It's a pair work, right?

Ss: Yes.

T: You will talk with your neighbours. But please pay attention to the examples. "Could I use your computer?" If yes, How to answer it?

Ss: Yes. You can.

T: How to say no?

S1: No, you can't.

S2: Sorry, You can't.

T: Good. We should say "Sorry", right? If you want to do something, what sentence do you use?

Ss: "Could I"

T: Yes. OK. Now I'll give you five minutes to do this pair work. (TO3:74-85)

In both extracts, students were given time to work together and Tan thought these activities were communicative:

I used these communicative activities to begin my lesson for the purpose of motivating students in a communicative way…I learned this in the training (lecture). It is believed to be good for students' learning language communicatively (TI3:14-17).

They (students) practiced their English in the activities…I think their use of English is a process of communicating...Maybe there is much room to develop (TI4:83-86).

Her words showed that she believed in the positive effect of using communicative activities in her teaching. But the fact that she kept emphasizing the use and memorization of language rules showed that the focus of the activities were still on knowledge acquisition. And during the activities the way Tan used to remind students to pay attention to language accuracy, to some extent, shifted students' attention from communication to language rules. This was not in line with the

implementation of real communicative activities as presented in the INSET course. Therefore, Tan's reported communicative teaching was still in nature traditional teaching which was just modified with some activities in communicative forms. This indicated her unclear grasp of the nature and principles of these activities and traditional knowledge-acquisition-oriented ideas still worked in her teaching.

After the INSET course, Tan's use of classroom activities reduced to only one group work in the fourth and fifth observations respectively. Teacher-led classroom interaction returned to its dominant place. Tan articulated her rationale for this:

> The activities introduced in the course are interesting. But in my class, students' language levels vary a lot. I feel difficult using them in my classroom…because some (slow) students are unable to finish it (TI6:177-80).

> I also found some students did not participate in their group members' talk…Their language level are comparatively lower than others. But I don't want them to feel frustrated (in such group works) (TI7:142-44).

Tan's words showed her concern on how to deal with mixed-ability class, especially small-group work mixed with good and slow students. In the INSET course, group work was introduced as a constructive way to deal with students' collaborative learning, but Tan seemed to be more concerned about students' engagement. With this idea, Tan found teacher-centred teaching could help her in a direct way to achieve her goal:

> In this way, I can ask every student to answer my questions…(In the fourth observation) I particularly asked one student (a boy) to answer the post-listening questions because I know about his language level and what he needs to improve. By doing this I can immediately get his reaction (TI6:185-90).

This showed that Tan's teacher-centred teaching was still driven by knowledge acquisition. Tan focused more on students' immediate reaction to her teaching rather than students' actual learning activities. Although the new curriculum standards proposed collaborative learning, Tan's teaching did not benefit students in this way.

Another noteworthy issue was Tan's grammar teaching. In the first training phase, she talked about her feelings about the training input on grammar teaching:

> I explained the grammar rules most of the time. Students just listened to me and took notes…I know this is traditional. The lecturer showed me how to teach grammar inductively…The teacher (in the video clip) used it very well. I want to use it in my class (TI2:151-154).

This showed that Tan, influenced by the training lectures, started to believe in teaching grammar inductively. Compared with her previous teaching, she felt she should bring some change to her classroom:

> I think it (focusing on form) is necessary…but now I'm thinking more about how to teach grammar in context as opposed to isolated grammar presentation…The new curriculum requires teachers to presenting grammar in target sentences as a context…I've changed my view on that in the training course (TI2: 156-62).

This showed that she realized the different requirements for grammar teaching in the new curriculum. Although she still felt traditional grammar teaching was useful for language accuracy, the training input triggered her to think from another perspective and generated a belief in teaching grammar inductively.

However, in her teaching, the incongruence between her stated beliefs and practice could be easily observed. The way she used for grammar teaching was explicit grammar presentation. For example, in the third observation, she "put up some example sentences, elicited the rule and gave them (students) some practice" (TI4:55-56) when teaching how to answer "Could you please…?". In the fifth observation, Tan presented the "Grammar Focus" in the textbook on a PowerPoint slide and led students to read the sentences out. And then she explained the Chinese meanings of each sentence in an isolated way.

So Tan used teacher-presentation frequently in grammar teaching. The opportunities given to students for practice afterwards aimed at checking students' grasp of the new rules and reinforcing their memory. Tan articulated her rationale:

I think I was running out of time…Doing it (teaching grammar explicitly) saved me much time for other parts of the lesson (TI4:90-92).

It (explicit grammar teaching) is easy to arouse students' awareness that they are learning grammar. They know grammar is an important part in their learning… Without clearly pointing out we are learning grammar, they do not see it (the grammar work) when I'm explaining the text…because they don't have the awareness to find it in the text (TI7:63-68).

Tan's practice and explanation reflected that she still believed in the effectiveness of explicit grammar teaching although she stated her beliefs in grammar teaching had shifted to inductive teaching. This incongruence indicated the tension between the proposed grammar teaching and practice in reality. Contextual factors, like what Tan mentioned such as time limits and students' learning awareness, influenced her actual teaching behaviours. On the other hand, this also implied a lack of practical knowledge in Tan that presumably she would have to design inductive activities herself and this called for certain skills which she may not have developed during the course.

9.3.4 Teacher-student rapport

As discussed above on teacher control, Tan valued classroom order a lot in her pre-INSET teaching. Teacher-student interaction was limited to question asking and answering. In the first training phase, Tan talked about what she learned about this issue:

The lectures on classroom management inspired me. I think perhaps I've been used to keeping everything under my control and neglected students' feelings…Students' affective factors should be taken into account when planning a lesson (TI2:196-99)

In the workshops the lecturers showed some video clips of how to use teaching methods in classroom. Tan watched them and felt the need to change her teaching:

Watching the videos (presented by lecturers as teaching examples), the students are very active (in classroom activities).

I'm just thinking how I can do this. I want my classroom to be
like this...My students may not be as good as them (students she
saw in the videos) in English…I want to have a try (TI2:208-12).

Becoming aware of the need to change showed that Tan was stimulated by the
training input. Her words showed that the training input inspired her to think about
what she did not notice before and provided a new perspective from which to look at
her teaching. Her reaction indicated her agreement with what she learned and the
video presentation further aroused her desire for practical change in her own
classroom. This could be seen as the emergence of a possibility worthy trying out as
a result of the impact of the training input.

After the first training phase, Tan made attempts to change her teaching for a
supporting environment for students' learning in class. Besides pair work and group
work as discussed in section 9.3.3, Tan integrated some entertaining elements in her
teaching.

Extract 4:

(In a sentence-level gap-filling work, teacher asked one student
to give the answer)

T: What do you think? Is it right?

(Some students said yes while some said no)

T: OK. Let's see it is right or wrong.

(Teacher clicked the mouse and a "crying face" appeared.
Students burst into laughter.)

T: So I think it's wrong. Well, who'd like to give the right
answer?

(Teacher asked one student and the student gave the answer)

T: Now, let's see it's right or not?

(Teacher clicked the mouse again and a "smile" appeared on the slide)

Ss: Yeah, right!

(For the rest of the exercise, teacher used the "facial expression" to indicate right and wrong answers) (TO3:155-67)

In the post-observation interview, Tan felt satisfied with using this way to activate students:

Students are excited at them (the 'facial expressions'). I know they are using these expressions when on their cell phones. So I chose to use them as a way to make them feel relaxed and shorten the distance between me and them. Then they'll feel English learning is not boring (TI4:161-64).

In the fourth observation, Tan used another way to support a relaxing classroom atmosphere:

Extract 5:

(In Section B, Unit 6 "How long have you been collecting shells?", teacher presented some pictures to ask student what they like to collect.)

T: What do you think of it? Is it what you like to wear?

S1:Um…maybe.

T: Isn't it beautiful? How about you? Do you like it?

S2: Um…It looks out of fashion. I won't wear it.

T: Really?

(A boy shouted out "Laoshi (teacher), you are out [fashion]!" and other students burst into laughter)

T: What? I'm out? Hahah… Do you think I'm out?

(Some students said no and some said yes)

T: Huhuh…OK. I feel so sad you told me I'm out.

(One student said aloud "outman")

T: Outman? Huhuh… (Outman is similar in pronunciation with the Chinese name of Altman, a cartoonist robot famous in China)

(Students burst into laughter again)

(TO4:22-37)

In the post-observation interview, Tan did not feel any embarrassment of being called "outman" in class:

> I know they (students) are making a joke. That's fine…We laughed together. It's funny but useful…It's unnecessary to keep a 'teacher face' all the time…I want them to relax in class so they can feel happy when learning…I think it's also a good way for me to move closer to them (TI6:212-17).

In another interview Tan also mentioned her efforts in this respect:

> I chatted with them sometimes after class… What they are interested in, what movies they are watching, what popular words they are using now, etc. I need to know what they are thinking about. Then I can find out what I can use in class to attract their attention (TI7:308-311).

Her words showed that she developed her belief in the positive effect of good teacher-student rapport in classroom teaching and learning. This was a change from her pre-INSET teaching, inspired by the INSET course. Just as she said she made efforts to collect students' interest after class, it indicated that her belief in the effectiveness of this aspect got confirmed and her practice became improved.

9.3.5 Classroom language use

In pre-INSET observation, Tan used both Chinese and English when teaching. Her reason for doing this was for the students' easy understanding:

> The average language level of my students is not as high as that in other better schools. They need Chinese to help understand the language points (TI1:182-83).

In her other observations, Tan continued using English and Chinese when teaching. For example:

> Extract 6:
>
> (After presenting how to answer "how long did he…?", teacher asked several student to make sentences.)
>
> T: How about you?
>
> S: He hiccupped 69 years and 5 months.
>
> T: He hiccupped (paused) 69 years and 5 months (in a rising tone)
>
> S: Oh, no, no. He hiccupped for 69 years and 5 months
>
> T. Yes. (in Chinese) There should be a "for" before 69 years, right? Remember it, please. (TO2:198-204)
>
> Extract 7:
>
> (After a listening activity, teacher used a group work to describe a map in 2a, Unit 9)
>
> T: Well. What we are going to do is to work in groups of four. (in Chinese) Look at the map, please. Do you see it? Just now we listened to the tape and circled the places you heard. What you need to do next is to talk about where you have been, what you

want to go, and how you are going to get there. (in English)
Clear?

Ss: Yes.

T: (in Chinese) I hope you can finish this work within 5 minutes.
(in English) just five minutes. And I will ask some of you to
perform your work. OK?

Ss: OK.

(Then students started to do the group work) (TO5:82-91)

These extracts showed that Tan's use of Chinese as teaching medium focused on
emphasizing language rules. When correcting students' errors, Tan used Chinese to
remind students how to use the rule in the right way. But when organizing classroom
activities, Tan also used some Chinese to give students directions. In the post-
observation interviews, Tan articulated her rationale:

> Chinese is easy to understand. My purpose is to help my students
> understand and be able to use the rules and after that I can enter
> the reading text. Or I won't finish the unit this week (TI3:72-74).

> You can see, students respond to Chinese explanation more
> quickly. I think this is related to their language levels…At
> present, they are (English) learners. Using Chinese is to help
> them learn English. When their English is improved to a higher
> level, whole English teaching will be possible. I don't think I
> should do that now (TI7:206-11).

Therefore the reason for Tan's use of Chinese as teaching medium was related to
external factors: lesson time limits and students' language level. Tan felt that other
teachers shared her perspectives here:

> Sometimes I don't think I can express (in English) as fluently as
> Chinese… The new curriculum wants every teacher to only use
> English in class. But in the teachers I ever observed most of them
> did not do that…I don't mean I can't do that. I just think it takes

> much more time to prepare (teaching in English) before
> class,(TI5:135-140).

At the end of the INSET course, Tan expressed her feelings about her training experience. Some of her words also indicated some other reasons for her classroom language use:

> I feel a bit disappointed that there is no language lesson. I want
> to improve my English…Sometimes I don't feel confident of my
> English, listening and speaking are not as good as before…Better
> English level is good for me to organizing the class (TI5:143-46).

Her words indicated some internal factor affecting Tan's using English as the sole teaching medium: lack of confidence of her own English proficiency and her reluctance to spend more time to prepare lessons.

Therefore, the combination of both external and internal factors contributed to her use of Chinese as one of classroom languages after the INSET course although she was aware of the requirement of the new curriculum on classroom language use.

9.4 Summary: Main development and the INSET contributions

Tan's story presented the incongruence between her cognitive changes and actual classroom teaching. As she mentioned in interviews, her practice of new teaching were constrained by some external factors which also influenced her motivation for more attempts. Below I summarize the main impacts of the INSET course on Tan's cognitions and practices.

9.4.1 Main developments

First, Tans' feelings about her learning experiences during the INSET indicated her endorsement of the new knowledge received on the course. As noted above, it was Tan's first in-service training experience. The theories and approaches in the INSET course seemed new to Tan and met her training expectations on theory-learning. Exposure to INSET lectures and workshops enabled her to realize the challenges to her prior ideas and practice of language teaching and set a wider basis for her self-exploration. The fact that Tan used what she learned to analyse her specific teaching

behaviour (such as using group work for classroom practice and setting a relaxing classroom atmosphere) in post-observation interviews reflected this change.

Secondly, Tan developed her awareness of the challenges posed by the new curriculum. With the increase in her knowledge, she became aware of her teaching and started to question her prior beliefs and routines, such as taking insight into inductive grammar teaching and teacher control. When returning to actual classroom, the attempts and efforts she made for practical change reflected her increased awareness to support the new curriculum although some changes did not last after the INSET course. Theory-learning provided some underpinnings for her self-exploration and informed her prior beliefs. Some new beliefs were thus generated although most of them were not well developed or fulfilled in her actual classroom teaching.

Thirdly, an unclear grasp of some training input and/or uncritical acceptance of the training input influenced Tan's practical attempts at classroom change. Tan embraced the training input with enthusiasm but when realizing the input in practice she met difficulties and had to return to her prior teaching for solutions. This was why her attempts at using communicative activities seemed to be focusing on language rules. Her failure in some attempts implied that there was gap between what she learnt and what she could do. Learning theories at a surface level did not necessarily lead to successful practice. On the other hand, her theory-learning reflected a traditional attitude to learning: uncritical acceptance of new knowledge, which led to the ignorance of the gap between theory and reality and missed the feasibility analysis of the theories into practice.

Fourthly, due to Tan's learning and observed practice, incongruence between stated beliefs and practice emerged. Tan felt that the increase in her knowledge and awareness informed her beliefs in relation with the new curriculum, especially some beliefs different from prior ones, and new beliefs were therefore generated. In interviews, Tan reported the challenges to her previous teaching and the need of practical change for the new curriculum. When returning to classroom, her decisions about implementing the new curriculum were indeed shaped by her beliefs informed by the training course, such as implementing whole-lesson teaching and establishing positive teacher-student rapport. However, these beliefs did not lead to changes in all aspects of her teaching and some of them were not powerful enough to shift Tan'

orientation according to the new curriculum. Tan's persistence in teaching grammar deductively and using teacher-dominated classroom interaction were evidence of her deeply rooted beliefs outweighing the new ones.

Fifthly, contextual factors affected Tan's continuous change. A number of contextual factors seemed to have powerful influence on Tan' application of her learning outcomes during the INSET course, such as mixed-ability students, increased workload, lesson time limits and examinations. From Tan's observations and interviews, these factors worked on Tan's pedagogical decisions on lesson planning, employment of communicative activities, choice of instructional medium and, most importantly, attention paid to knowledge impartation. The impact of the contextual factors outweighed her newly formed beliefs or ideas informed by the INSET input and contributed to her unchanged practice. In addition, her consideration of the expense of personal life and increased workload limited further learning after the INSET course.

9.4.2 The INSET contributions

This section summarizes what contributions the INSET course made to Tan's learning and teaching.

Firstly, the INSET course provided opportunities for Tan's knowledge enrichment. Tan's interviews indicated that the explicitly stated information in the training lectures and workshops led to an increase in her knowledge about the requirements of the new curriculum and the proposed ideas in language teaching. She was interested in the lectures on new curriculum requirements, theories on language teaching and teacher development and the workshops with practical guidance for certain teaching methods. Information obtained from other teachers (she also called it "knowledge") provided her with more insightful ideas to take a look at classroom teaching. So in general, the INSET course gave her a theoretical basis upon which to reflect on as well as a framework for exploring her teaching.

Secondly, the INSET input informed Tan's prior beliefs and generated awareness of change. For example, Tan's belief in classroom order was informed by the training input on reducing teacher control for student-centred classroom teaching and constructed her new belief in the value of motivating student learning through giving more time and opportunities to students for language practice. Accordingly Tan reported the generation of new beliefs, such as her belief in inductive grammar

teaching, taking students' affective factors into account for classroom management. However, from her practice, these new beliefs did not have powerful impact on her teaching behaviour.

Thirdly, the INSET course failed to provide sufficient support for Tan's change. Tan did not feel her learning was really supported by the course since she did not receive any suggestions when she met problems in theory-learning. The trainer's visit to her classroom in the secondary training phase did not make any sense to her attempts to implement practical change either. Therefore, the INSET course did not meet her expectation in this respect.

Fourthly, the INSET course did not provide any support for Tan's continuous learning. The lectures on teacher professional development encouraged teachers to conduct continuous learning and development. Tan articulated some factors influencing her learning and felt unable to overcome them to continue her learning. But the course immediately stopped the provision of suggestions on how to overcome these difficulties after it ended.

Chapter 10 Discussion

10.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the five case studies in relation to existing literature about the impact of INSET provision on teacher learning. I will start by discussing the features of the teachers' acquisition of knowledge on the course and the change in their practice and reported beliefs, as well as the contextual factors influencing teacher change. I will also discuss the conceptualization of teacher change under the impact of INSET and the cultural change called for by the broader curriculum reform.

10.2 The characteristics of teacher knowledge growth

The first research question considers the extent to which the INSET course influenced the teachers' knowledge in terms of the training input. Although there is no commonly agreed conclusion on the best way to evaluate teacher learning on an INSET course, it is widely accepted that the extent to which teachers' knowledge growth makes sense to their practice can be examined in terms of their learning experiences and practices (see, for example, Wyatt, 2009; Zhao, Coombs & Zhou, 2010; Wyatt & Borg 2011; Wood, 2007; Ben-Peretz, 2011). This section summarizes the characteristics of the teachers' knowledge growth in terms of their learning experiences on the course together with the impact of knowledge learning on their observed practices.

10.2.1 Traditional culture-rooted notion of knowledge growth

One of the outstanding characteristics of the teachers' knowledge learning was their concern for theories. In the pre-INSET interviews, the teachers mainly expressed an expectation that they would learn theories of language teaching. During and after the first training phase, the teachers cited some of the explicitly imparted theories in the lectures as their learning outcomes. The reason for such a focus can be attributed to their former experiences of teaching and learning under the Chinese traditional culture.

As Feiman-Nemser (2008) states the knowledge, skills, and commitments teachers need to learn derive from a conception of accomplished teaching. For decades, the

necessity of teachers' mastery of professional knowledge has been illustrated in both pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes in China (Hu, 2002). The traditional Chinese model of teaching, influenced by Confucian thinking on education (Biggs, 1996; Hu, 2002), has been viewed throughout history "more as a process of accumulating knowledge than as a practical process of constructing and using knowledge for immediate purpose" (Hu 2002:34), with the learners being treated as "empty-vessels" or "pint pots". Thus the teachers' views of knowledge in this study were also conceived in terms of adding to the quantity of their knowledge. According to this idea, what and how much teachers know is generally believed to determine what and how much students may learn as well as how well teachers might teach in classrooms. It is thus not surprising to understand why the INSET course spent a large amount of time on the provision of theoretical or conceptual knowledge than on discussion of practice and why the teachers cited some conceptual knowledge received in the lectures as evidence of their knowledge learning in interviews. For example, all the teachers thought they understood more about the new curriculum and the promoted approaches from the theoretical perspective. Yuan and Qiang thought they received more messages on why communicative language teaching could promote student learning. Shi and Tan stated they began to understand teacher professional development when coming back to teach in their own classrooms. From their statements, the increase in their knowledge specifically focused on conceptual knowledge or propositional knowledge imparted by the trainers. From the theory of teacher knowledge categorization, the kind of knowledge they considered as growth is *Knowing About* (Malderez & Wedell, 2007) or content knowledge (Shulman 1987, Tsui, 2011) (see section 3.7.1).

In the second training phase, this exposure to the theoretical information and the INSET requirements of applying it in practice seemed to have some effect on the teachers' teaching practice, such as using the theories of communicative language teaching when planning lessons, and adapting theories for after-class reflection. It initially seemed the teachers were likely to integrate the theories with their practice and develop them into practical knowledge for steady practical improvement (Wyatt, 2009, Mangubhai *et al.*, 2004). At this stage, the teachers referred to some of their learnt theories in interviews when reflecting on their teaching and articulating personal feelings on their attempts to change their teaching.

However, the lessons observed after the INSET course indicated their return to the former role as knowledge transmitter who insisted on accuracy, which meant that the theories were quickly rejected by the teachers. Four teachers (Qiang, Tan, Shi and Fen) almost totally abandoned the theories imparted on the INSET course and only one teacher (Yuan) expressed his intention to further his theory learning. This result is close to that of Lamb's (1995) research which examined the impact of an in-service teacher education programme on a group of Indonesian language teachers and found the INSET course input had simply been lost and the limited take-up was reinterpreted by teachers themselves according to their own beliefs and concerns for the context. Sim (2011) also found such a result in one of his participant teachers who received theoretical input on an INSET course and did not present any change in practice. He concluded that the reason for this was partially due to the conflict between the newly promoted educational values and the traditions of a different culture of learning (Littlewood, 2007). From the cognitive perspective of learning, conceptual frameworks are expected to be developed into which new information can be integrated and learners should be able to apply the available information and skills (Donovan, Bransford & Pellegrino, 1999). However the knowledge learning of the teachers in this study represented a lack of integration of new and prior information for sustainable practice change. The ways of learning theories for pure knowledge increase failed to transform *know about* into *know how* and then eventually *know to* (Malderez & Wedell 2007).

I would like to argue that the traditional cultural view of learning still worked on teacher learning on the INSET course. The teachers in this study only took in the theoretical knowledge as learning content but failed to internalize and/or transform it into their own cognitions with practical values (see section 10.2). From the perspective of its impact on teacher change, the INSET course did not have any meaningful effect on teachers' ability to accept new information and use it to examine or change long-established assumptions. A shift in the cultural notion of teacher learning and in the role of the planning-design-process of teacher education programme is needed if the desired INSET goal is to become reality.

10.2.2 Informal learning

Another characteristic of the teachers' knowledge learning on the INSET course is their appreciation of the information informally exchanged with other teachers rather than the formally imparted training input. Apart from the expectation of theoretical

knowledge discussed above, it is interesting to find that all the teachers expressed their intentions of gaining practical information or tips from other teachers. In the interviews during and after the course, they emphasized the usefulness of this kind of information in their practices.

First, among the teachers' comments on their learning outcomes was their emphasis on the practical messages from other teachers. The way they collected such information was through informal interactions with other teachers, such as their talk after lectures and casual chat in free time. The focus of the exchanged information was teachers' personal feelings and tips on various aspects of classroom teaching. As I described earlier in the introduction to the INSET course (see chapter 2), there was very little structure imposed on the learning methods of the participant teachers throughout the course despite the formal training lectures and workshops. After the lectures, they were essentially in control of the direction taken in their informal learning activities, the topics that were discussed and the problems that emerged. In this sense, the teachers had ownership of their informal learning process. From the interview data, the participant teachers worked cohesively with a shared sense of purpose as they rallied around on multiple occasions where they shared ideas and insights in support of each other for better understanding of practical issues. More importantly, they engaged in authentic problem-solving as they shared difficulties, made conjectures, created possible solutions, and evaluated each other's teaching. For example, the teachers mentioned their discussion after a lecture on certain aspects of classroom teaching where Yuan and Qiang gained confidence in their prior lesson shape through discovering that other teachers adopted similar practices. Similarly, Fen and Tan felt listening to other teachers' ideas informed their understandings of their own actual classroom conditions. This echoed Bartlett & Leask's (2005) statement that it is important for teachers to share and discuss their ideas of teaching, especially their practices, with fellow professionals: "It is by doing this that they can refine their teaching methods, discover new approaches and compare how others have tackled similar situations" (p.292). Accordingly the teachers strongly confirmed the effect of such feedback on their practices. Yuan, Qiang and Fen stated that they liked the information from other teachers because their prior use of classroom activities and teaching practices were confirmed.

All the teachers valued the opportunities to share ideas with others because they felt they learned more about the current context and how to work within it to meet the

social expectations of English teaching. Their responses showed that peer discussion and evaluation had meaningful impact on their understanding of teaching and learning and they also obtained some practical tips for teaching. This result was similar in Wilson and Demetriou's (2007) findings of new teachers' informal learning: teachers felt valued and supported when receiving positive response on their prior teaching which boosted their confidence. Although their participants were new teachers and the ones in this study were experienced, the ways they engaged in informal learning activities were similar in organization and implementation. Just as Wallace and Mulholland's (2011) stated that the orientation of teacher knowledge learning was for practice change, the teaches' attitude towards informal learning in this study showed that the change they wanted to make was in specific teaching behaviour rather than in the growth of theoretical knowledge which seemed distant from their daily work. The factors on the INSET course contributing to this result will be discussed in following section.

Another significant result of the teacher learning was related to the teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of information received on the course. Just as the teachers' observation data showed that they mostly returned to their prior routines after the course (see section 10.2), the reasons they provided were closely related to their conceptions of the irrelevance of theory for practice. Qiang and Shi clearly stated their ideas of teaching were supported by other teachers rather than the theories. Tan admitted her teaching was much more influenced by more experienced teachers. Fen directly expressed her dissatisfaction of theory-learning but valued the information or practical tips gained from other teachers for immediate effect in practices. The teachers' explanations were mainly about their understandings of pedagogy which is usually categorized as practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1981; Gholami & Husu, 2010; Golombek, 2009; Borg, 2006). The role of practical knowledge in changing practice has been studied by a number of researchers (Tsang, 2004; Arıoğul, 2007; Chen, 2005) and the development of teachers' practical knowledge within INSET has also attracted research attention (Wyatt, 2009; Abdelhafez, 2010; Wyatt & Borg, 2011). Most of these studies found that teachers' practical knowledge changed under the influence of the training input. The role of input on teachers change was recognized. But this study did not present similar results. As discussed above, the teachers' learning experiences were not shaped by theory-learning. Gaining practical information from other teachers became an

important form of their learning activities through which their knowledge developed rather than the theories imparted in the lectures. As they mentioned in interview data, during this informal learning process, they also made connections between theory and practice and evaluated the extent to which the training input could be related to actual classroom teaching. Thus their informal interactions, with their shared concern for specific contextual conditions, provided support for their rejection of research-based theories in practice, especially when they encountered the constraints of the actual teaching context (see section 10.3.1).

The underpinnings of the teachers' informal learning can be analysed, as Lamb (1995) suggested, in terms of the mental parameters within which the teachers conceptualized the teaching and learning process and what determined their interpretation of the training input during and after the INSET course. Experienced teachers often take how and why they do things in classrooms for granted (Eraut, 2004; Wilson, 2013) and the importance of teachers' conscious or unconscious beliefs on their practice has been recognized by researchers for decades (see, for example, Borg, 2006; Phipps, 2007). Teachers' individual theories of teaching and learning have a strong determining effect on their particular behaviour in classroom. Regarding what the teachers took as support for their post-INSET practices, it seemed that their prior beliefs about effective teaching were confirmed by other teachers and the limited impact of the INSET input on their prior lesson framework seemed common among them. The impact of INSET on the teachers' belief change will be discussed in terms of their specific teaching behaviour in section 10.2.

Therefore I would argue that the theoretical input from the INSET course apparently did not contribute to encouraging the teachers to construct new visions of teaching and learning. The teachers' informal learning confirmed their already well-developed beliefs in their decision making. Their context-specific concern for classroom teaching reflected in their informal learning activities was one of the main reasons for them to reject the theoretical information for practice change.

10.2.3 Summary
This section discusses the teachers' learning outcomes regarding their learning input and process. The findings present the fact that teachers were learning as passive recipients of the INSET input as well as the gap between the INSET design and teachers' learning preferences. The teachers valued more about informal learning

activities rather than formal training forms and their informal learning activities played an important role in determining the extent to which the INSET course changed their knowledge and practice. The gap between INSET expectations and teachers' learning outcomes can be attributed to the INSET course design and existing notions of teacher learning which will be discussed in section 10.3.

10.3 Changes in the teachers' practices and stated beliefs

This section examines the characteristics of the teachers' practice and belief change obtained through interview and observation. The findings provide answers to the research questions on the extent to which the teachers' practice and beliefs were changed by the INSET course.

10.3.1 Limited pedagogical change in classrooms

The observation of the teachers' lessons took place during the second training phase and six months after the end of the INSET course. The extent of the teachers' practice change was observed generally in the sequence of first, making attempts to integrate new ideas during the second training phase; and then reverting to the traditional teaching approach when they returned to their classroom at the end of the course.

Although the teachers recognized the importance of the ideas about the curriculum reform and teacher professional development introduced during the INSET course, they reported difficulties in implementing the new curriculum because of a lack of operational strategies for putting the training input into practice. For example, Qiang and Tan felt it difficult to conduct the learner-centred approach which was promoted by the new curriculum and introduced on the INSET course, Shi and Fen encountered students' language problems when using communicative activities and felt unable to solve them. This echoed Wang's (2015) investigation that teachers' training needs are "less theory and more practical techniques" (p.137). The teachers' informal learning and preference for practical tips in the first training phase clearly represented this.

As a means of disseminating the curriculum reform, the INSET course paid much attention to introducing a number of innovative ideas promoted by the new curriculum. Most of them seemed opposite to the traditional teaching approaches, such as conducting student-centred teaching through reducing teacher control, and

building teacher-student rapport through effective communicative activities. But the classroom observation data showed a significant mismatch between these new ideas and the teachers' real teaching after the course ended. Their lesson structures illustrate this point. In both the second training phase and post-course period, they still basically followed the *lead-in, knowledge presentation, practise and assignment* process which was believed to be effective in knowledge transmission in traditional views of language teaching (Zhang & Liu, 2014). This was not in line with the constructivist procedures promoted on the INSET course with the aim of developing students' language abilities rather than solely focusing on language learning. Although the INSET course did not deny the usefulness of the traditional approach when teaching language rules, it recommended a combination of the useful aspects of the traditional approach with communicative methods.

In other aspects, the teachers' changes in post-course teaching stayed at a surface level with typical features of traditional approach, mainly reflected as teacher-centred, textbook-centred and test-centred (Adamson *et al.*, 2000) supplemented by some minor communicative elements (Yan, 2012). For example, the teachers (Yuan, Qiang, Shi) continued to use some communicative activities for students' in-class language practices after the course. In the second training phase, all the teachers were expected to teach communicatively and to use pair and group work to organize students' language practice. During their attempts, they also made efforts to reduce teacher control and tried to conduct student-centred classes although some of their attempts seemed incompatible with the real meanings of communicative teaching. However, after the INSET course, most classroom activities took the form of pair and group work but with focus on language knowledge drills. The time spared for pair and group works also decreased a lot and most of the lesson time was characterized by lockstep type of teacher-student interactions, just like the lessons observed by Yan (2012) which also presented a mismatch between the teachers' actual teaching and the new curriculum. The employment of communicative activities in the classroom seemed just like a minor supplement to their traditional knowledge accumulation-oriented approach. This is different from the four UK teachers in Andon & Leung's (2014) study who developed their sense of communicative teaching and planned student-centred lessons after learning in a teacher education programme. Their use of communicative activities was believed to be mostly compatible with the real

meaning of communicative approach. In this study, the fact that there was no real communicativeness in language teaching (such as authentic exchange of personal ideas rather than mechanical dialogue practice) in the teachers' practices indicated that the observed in-class pair and group works were just conducted at a superficial level.

Within the lessons, the teacher generally took the coverage of textbook content as the main goal, such as vocabulary and grammar, and consequently classroom language practices (such as listening and speaking) were gone through briefly and quickly. When interactions occurred occasionally, the teachers' control over class was clearly observed. Only the students being chosen could gain the chance to speak and the teachers' movement space was also confined to the front of the classroom. "Spontaneous discourse was rare" (Tomlinson & Bao, 2004: 99) and negotiation of meaning among the students could not be observed. Therefore it is clear that the ideas of student-centred teaching, reducing teacher control for more student practice and using communicative activities for authentic language use, as analysed in case studies, were hardly reflected in the teachers' post-course practices with the teachers' emphasis on knowledge acquisition and the employment of traditional teaching techniques.

The teachers' use of Chinese as teaching medium provides more evidence of the teachers' mostly unchanged practice in their post-INSET teaching. The INSET course proposed English as the leading language of instruction. But the teachers' choice showed that Chinese as well as the blend of Chinese and English were commonly used for teaching, especially when teaching language elements. The use of English was rare. And when English was used, Chinese equivalents were often used to ensure students' understanding of the meaning (Yuan, Shi, Fen). When grammar rules were involved, the context-free translation practice between Chinese and English occupied a substantial part of time (Qiang, Shi, Tan).

Hence, it is not surprising to conclude that most of the teachers' teaching still followed the traditional knowledge acquisition-oriented teaching as discussed above although some of their teaching procedures presented some minor changes (such as Yuan and Qiang continued to use students' presentation and duty report in lead-in). This indicates a conflict between teachers' post-INSET teaching and the INSET goals.

Regarding how the teachers' applied their learning outcomes in practice, it is also safe to infer that imitation played an important role in their practice change, especially their use of the techniques introduced on the INSET course. When attempting a change, the teachers seemed constrained in their application to using a single method or technique by "copying" what they had observed from the demonstration lessons in the first training phase. For example, their use of communicative activities focused on how to conduct them in pairs or groups rather than exchange of personal ideas between students. That is to say, a broad set of assumptions (such as providing exposure to authentic input, opportunities for meaning interaction) about using a communicative approach might have been neglected (Andon & Leung, 2014) due to teachers' own considerations of classroom teaching. In this way, a conflict between teachers' practices and the proposed pedagogy in the new curriculum emerged.

Meanwhile, since the INSET course is the place where teacher learning took place, the way that the course content was delivered to the teachers needs to be considered. As mentioned in section 10.1, the teachers, as passive learners, were only exposed to a single approach or method demonstrated by the trainers and encouraged to attempt it. This training model, to some extent, contributed to the teachers' negative feelings of the INSET course and hence their implementation of the promoted pedagogy. For the teachers on a short-term intensive INSET course, their former methods did not disappear when the new one came along. There might be not enough time and opportunities for them to develop proper awareness of the effectiveness of the new methods. The teachers' attempts observed in the second training phase seemed more like uncritical imitation of the proposed teaching on the INSET course. Akbari (2008) points out that abandoning an existing method and adopting a new pedagogy places heavy demands on teachers, especially in the current post-method era where context rather than method, is taken as the starting point for pedagogical decision-making (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Bax, 2003). The knowledge, skills and confidence needed for appropriate adaptation of a new method "could take teachers several years to develop, and would be impossible to impart on short…teacher education programme" (Andon & Leung, 2014: 61). Therefore, a short-term INSET course like the one in this study is unlikely to result in teachers being able to conduct appropriate applications of the recommended

method or approach for their actual classrooms, and thus it is unsurprising that the teachers returned to their formerly established routines.

10.3.2 Unchanged beliefs

It is clear that, from the discussion of the teachers' limited uptake of innovative ideas in their practices, they still believed in the effectiveness of the traditional approach in their classroom teaching which seemed inconsistent with the innovative ideas introduced on the INSET course and the ultimate goal of the curriculum reform for the development of students' overall language abilities.

Previous research on teacher cognition has recognized the impact of teachers' thoughts and beliefs on their teaching practices (Borg, 2015; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Paiares, 1992; Woods, 1996) and some researchers have provided evidence that teachers' employment of new teaching methods after teacher education programme might be limited due to their beliefs. For example, Lamb (1995) concluded that teachers' beliefs controlled the process of teachers' interpretation of INSET course input and final adaptation and/or rejection of the input in their classroom teaching. Assalahi (2013) also found that teachers' use of grammar translation method was still alive in classroom teaching due to their beliefs about the value of explicit grammar teaching rather than the communicative teaching approach promoted by their in-service training course. The observed practices in this study also showed that teachers' prior beliefs about the traditional approach remained unchanged and were still strongly connected with teaching practice.

Initially, the teachers reported some change in beliefs due to their endorsement of the new ideas in the first training phase (see section 10.1), including the proposed views of language teaching by the new curriculum and the challenges posed by the curriculum for their prior teaching. For example, Yuan stated, the new curriculum was intended to develop student' basic language knowledge as well as their abilities for language use, such as appreciating western cultures. A general willingness was expressed to experiment with the new ideas and techniques to support the new curriculum as the teachers' reported an increase of awareness of change. The teachers also experienced self-exploration of their prior beliefs as well as previous teaching experiences in lectures led by the trainers, such as trainer-guided reflection on lectures, and the teachers' reflection on their attempts to use the new approach, and they reported an increase in their awareness of the

challenges they encountered as they tried to support the new curriculum, as well as some existing beliefs being moderated according to the proposed teaching goals of the new curriculum. Yuan, Qiang and Tan emphasized that they would exploit the textbook creatively instead of slavishly. Yuan, Qiang and Shi also stressed that they would try to employ more student activities in class. All five teachers acknowledged the necessity of transforming passive student learning into active learning and develop students' abilities to be responsible for their own learning. Phipps (2009) investigated the impact of a part-time in-service course on teachers' beliefs and also revealed increase in awareness of the challenges the teachers encountered and the application of new teaching techniques. With such awareness development, the teachers in his study questioned their former beliefs and practices.

During the second training phase, the teachers' reflection on their practical attempts highlighted bi-directional interaction (Richardson, 1996) between their reported belief changes and practices, where their attempts were directed by changed beliefs and some of the changes were confirmed (such as Yuan and Qiang's employment of student work in lead-in, Tan's use of pair and group work for classroom language practice). A seeming consistency emerged between the teachers' reported belief changes and their application of the INSET input. Some researchers found that such consistency became stabilized and steadily developed into teachers' teaching routines. For example, in Wyatt's (2009) study in Oman, the teacher Sarah's beliefs and practices were transformed with exposure to theory on an in-service training course and she gradually achieved congruence between them after attempts to use the teaching methods promoted on the course. Erlam (2014) investigated the extent to which some Malaysian English teachers were able to implement, in their Malaysian classroom, the ideas and theories that are introduced during their New Zealand training. The findings indicate that the teachers made attempts to implement a learner-centred approach during the training and became able to incorporate more learner-centred approaches into their lessons afterwards with their modified beliefs. However, the teachers in the current study presented opposite results, since this temporary consistency did not develop into their post-course teaching. Their reported belief changes informed by the training input did not work as a powerful force for fundamental practice change.

Another feature of the teachers' belief change in this study is related to the competition within teachers' belief systems for influence on teachers' practice.

When the teachers were required to apply innovative ideas in the second training phase, their feedback reflected some modification to their existing beliefs. This is similar to the situation of Lily, a teacher in Mak's (2011) study who experienced conflict between prior beliefs and expected change in teacher talk when applying communicative activities against her former beliefs. In this study, the strength of the teachers' former beliefs was weakened as a result of their attempts to use new methods and techniques. For example, when using pair and group work for classroom practice, Yuan and Qiang admitted the advantages of saving time and stimulating students' participation. Their reported increase in awareness of different teaching strategies seemed to have positively motivated them to continue attempts throughout the second training phase.

Yet, the teachers' belief change in this study also presented features echoing the findings of studies on the multi-dimensional nature of teachers' beliefs (e.g. Chan, Tan & Khoo, 2007; Hermans, van Braak, & Van Keer, 2008) which show that teachers' beliefs exist within a complex network which is made up of core or fundamental beliefs established as a result of teachers' learning and teaching experiences and other more peripheral ones coming from new knowledge or information. Within this network, fundamental beliefs may exert a strong influence over and even override other peripheral beliefs (Farrell & Kun, 2008; Pajares, 1992; Phipps, 2009; Malderez & Wedell, 2007). As mentioned in the literature review on the socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning, researchers have provided theoretical support for the construct of teacher learning/change as a process of teachers' enactment of innovative ideas. Teachers' enactment of innovative ideas extends beyond individual teachers' inclusion of (new) knowledge within themselves, and also needs support from knowledgeable others (e.g. other experienced teachers, teacher educators) to help change the core of their practice and beliefs as response to reform. Vygosky's (1978) work on "zones of proximal development" (ZPD) supports this perspective by emphasizing the social dimensions of learning and the ways in which tools (such as the INSET course) mediate the learning. Based on these theories, understanding the change of the teachers' beliefs is never a simple process. Although the teachers made attempts, there still existed a gap between their beliefs and the proposed new ideas on classroom teaching. For example, their traditional images of teachers as sources of knowledge and authority in class overrode completely the proposed image as

facilitator for student learning in the new curriculum, especially when classroom management issues and new language element presentation were concerned. Therefore, their subsequent application of the new curriculum seemed to be hindered by their former beliefs. The influence of their newly formed beliefs is likely to reduce once their perceptions of the unfeasibility of the introduced ideas is confirmed as they encounter difficulties and problems and are unable to find any support to work out solutions. In terms of the influence of different beliefs on teachers' pedagogical decisions, I would argue that the reason for the teachers' limited implementation of the new curriculum is closely related to the strength of their former beliefs (e.g. beliefs about teachers' role in transmitting knowledge, language accumulation-oriented learning) which outweighed the ones newly formed on the INSET course (e.g. beliefs about learning through authentic communicative activities, learner-centred teaching).

When looking into the factors contributing to the strong influence of the teachers' former beliefs, socio-cultural factors seemed to be powerful because, these beliefs, as the teachers reported in the interviews, were usually built up from their previous learning and teaching experiences over years. When being encouraged to adapt and incorporate communicative teaching into their routines, the challenges the teachers encountered were not the methods themselves but the underlying values and beliefs, "carried" by the methods and reflecting the Western culture wherein the communicative teaching approach originated (Hu, 2002; Sakui, 2004). There was thus a conflict between teachers' long-term held cultural core beliefs and recently arrived, borrowed peripheral ones. Teachers' belief change is definitely much more difficult than mere application of a certain approach. Evans (2000) points out that when facing complex change, people inevitably experience discomfort or a feeling of loss due to the challenges to their established patterns, practices and assumptions by which they have lived. This explains why it seems so difficult for teachers to make ongoing changes to their established routines.

I want to argue here that the competition between teachers' former beliefs and new beliefs implies that teacher learning and change is a process of exploring the social values embedded in teachers' own views of language teaching and learning. Due to the teachers' unchanged socio-culturally rooted beliefs, it is not hard to understand why their reported beliefs change seemed superficial, without the power to trigger fundamental change in their post-INSET practices. To encourage teachers to

explore and change their beliefs, the complexity of belief change and the dialectical relationship between belief and teaching context should be taken into account by teacher education policy makers and teacher educators as the preconditions for possible effective change.

Given the features of the teachers' belief change presented above and the INSET course as the context for teacher learning, a further weakness of the INSET course is also reflected. Tomlinson (2003:2) argued strongly for a teacher development approach within a teacher education programme suggesting that the aim of such programmes should be to develop a "multi-dimensional awareness" and "the ability to apply this awareness to their actual contexts of teaching". The observed INSET course implementation and the teachers' feelings indicated the absence of this feature. With its focus on imparting research-based theories, insufficient training time and energy was spent on assisting the teachers to make connection between their social context and the training input for effective and stable development of new practices. Yuan & Lee (2014) found that teacher learning is a process, based on their investigation on pre-service teachers' belief changes, which extended the connection between prior and new constructs of teaching and learning. In this study, some of the teachers' prior beliefs were confirmed by the trainers and other teachers. However, with their realization of the challenges posed by the new curriculum, they seemed unable to make the connection between prior beliefs and newly received ideas. They saw them as completely separate and so could not see any way, even partially, integrating them. Their classroom teaching showed that no effort was made to strike a balance between them and combine them together as a step forward to the curriculum reform and thus no fundamental changes in the teachers' core beliefs could be reflected in their teaching practices. Malderez and Wedell (2007) have suggested two maxims ("begin and end with experience" and "get out before you put in") and presented the relationship between teacher education and teacher change. The "begin and end with experience" maxim emphasizes that teachers learn *from* experience and learn *for* future experience. The relevance between experience and training content is what teachers value the most. The "get out before you put in" maxim indicates the importance of helping teachers articulate their own thoughts before telling them what they are required to learn. These two maxims have the implication for exploring teachers' established beliefs before and during teacher learning and the connection between teachers needs and

INSET provision. However, the theory application approach in the INSET course in this study apparently contrasts with the maxims. What beliefs teachers brought to the course had not been investigated by the trainers and all formal learning activities were filled by the talk of trainers. To summarize the above aspects discussed, I would like to argue that the absence of integration between the teachers' prior and newly formed beliefs (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000) contributed to the teachers' limited uptake of training input into their practice.

10.3.3 Summary

The findings of this study highlighted the occurrence of the teachers' surface change in both practical change and reported belief changes. It confirms the powerful influence of teachers' beliefs on their pedagogical decisions as well as the extent to which they implemented the new curriculum. As a result of the interaction between the teachers' old and new beliefs, the effect of socio-cultural factors (such as the INSET culture and social values regarding English teaching) on teacher change were also discussed and found to play an important role in affecting the teachers' uptake of new ideas and methods.

10.4 Factors contributing to the lack of teacher change

Informed by a socio-cultural perspective (Johnson, 2006; 2009), teacher learning is understood to be not only an internal psychological process that takes place in the teachers' minds, but also a process influenced by the physical and social contexts in which it occurs (e.g. Richards, 2008; Borg, 2015). Before discussing the wider contributing factors to teachers' limited uptake of the INSET input, I want to briefly outline the relationship between teacher learning and influential factors (see figure 10.1).

At the heart of figure 10.1 is what sections 10.1 and 10. 2 have already discussed about teachers' knowledge learning and belief change. In this study, they interacted with each other: knowledge learning informed belief change and beliefs influenced knowledge construction. The result of that interaction was teachers' initial superficial change but limited implementation of the new curriculum in the longer term. Connected to them with blue arrows are the external factors, inside and outside the INSET course, which were mentioned by the teachers in interviews. Both the INSET factors and the wider socio-cultural environment were reported to be much

more influential on the process of teacher learning than the INSET course itself and contributed to the push-pull process (Fullan, 2007; Park & Sung, 2013) of teacher learning, with the outsiders (e.g. policy makers, teacher trainers) pushing and the insiders (teachers) resisting. This section aims at identifying the factors that influenced the teachers during and after their learning on the INSET course.
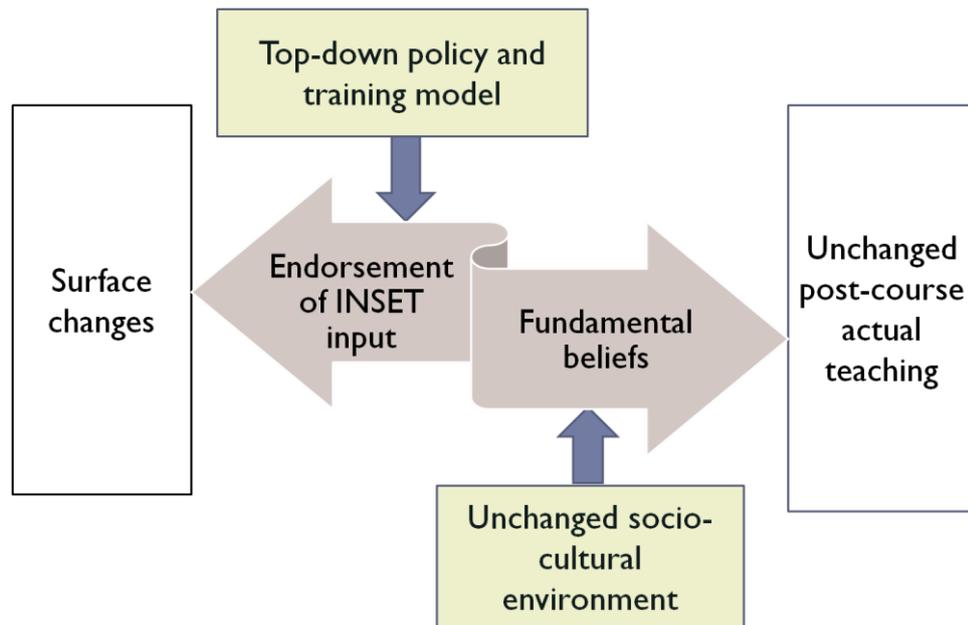

Figure 10.1 A general picture of the factors contributing to teacher learning

10.4.1 The teachers' local classroom conditions

In the second training phase, the teachers frequently mentioned their local classroom conditions as constraints on their application of the new curriculum. These external variables represent the many influences on teachers which are outside their control. They include:

- students' limited language proficiency to finish communicative activities;
- limited lesson time;
- coverage of textbook;
- large class;
- current knowledge-oriented testing system

These have been identified as very important by a number of research studies when examining the impact of teacher education programme on teacher change (e..g.

Lamb, 1995; Sim, 2011; Wedell, 2009; Levin, 2003; Hoban, 2002; Jones & O'Brien, 2014). The teachers' personal domains of knowledge, beliefs and practice (including teachers' learning outcomes) can be seen as surrounded and heavily influenced by these factors (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Jones & O'Brien, 2014).

Among the factors listed above, exam pressure seemed to be the most influential when teachers made instructional decisions because of the traditional notion of "exam success as the most important measure of the success of secondary education" (Wedell, 2009: 152). High-stakes exams exert many direct influences over what the teachers decided to do in classrooms. For example, the teachers failed to meet the INSET course expectations to conduct learner-centred teaching and attend to the need of individual students in class. The reason why they still employed whole-class teacher-fronted teaching most of the time was related to their pragmatic concerns about the knowledge-oriented tests. Due to this concern, the established traditional cultural view which emphasizes collectivism encouraged them to teach the class as a whole because they had to consider the majority of the students (possibly the whole class), not just for keeping class order but, more importantly, for the general learning outcomes of the whole class, mainly the test results. The external pressure from exams and internal core beliefs (collectivism) shore up the teachers' fundamental beliefs on the effectiveness of whole-class teacher-fronted approach with which the students who did not understand and needed individual attention were regarded as being the exceptional. Most of the teachers' effort was on how to keep the priority of their students' average test scores over other classes. Furthermore, although on the INSET course the teachers were encouraged to adopt communicative approach, they (Yuan, Qiang, Tan) still found it difficult in the actual teaching context to pay attention to most students' individual needs within a several minute classroom activity (usually no more than 5 minutes because of the limited time to cover each lessons' content). The teacher trainers only provided theoretical principles and some teaching examples, but feasible solutions in the teachers' actual teaching settings were left for the teachers themselves to work out and no training time was spent on helping them to do so. In the dilemma between making more efforts to experiment with the innovative ideas and paying attention to language elements for up-coming test, the teachers undoubtedly chose the latter; especially since their performance evaluation is related to students' test results. Researchers (Hu, 2002; Wu, 2001; Wu, 2005; Cheng & Wang, 2004) have identified the current testing system in China as

one of the main causes, perhaps the single most powerful one, for many English teachers' resistance to curriculum innovation. The findings in this study further evidenced it. With the unchanged pressure from the existing exam system, it is not surprising to find that the teachers felt unable to translate the innovative ideas into actual classroom teaching since the gap between the innovation and the realities still existed and they felt helpless to solve it. Also in terms of teachers' practical benefits, their pragmatic concern derived from the major role played by test results in their performance assessment by administrators. I want to argue that if this testing system persists, the new curriculum may not go far since teachers will continue to "walk the old path with new shoes" no matter how many new ideas they receive in teacher education programmes.

From the local contextual factors the teacher articulated, another point needing to be taken into account is that the findings pictured a context where various factors interact with each other and form a network within which the teachers' practices and beliefs were heavily influenced.

As the teachers described, when making decisions on whether to use communicative activities for students' classroom practice, they had to take all the factors listed above into consideration. As the time for each lesson was fixed (usually 40 minutes), they had to consider if they could cover all the language elements prescribed in the textbook (which might be part of the next exam) if they spent some time on doing communicative activities. Students' language proficiency had to be taken into account as well when designing classroom activities. It was thus felt to be risky for the teachers to ignore any one of these factors or the relationship between them when making instructional decisions. Freeman (2002) states that "in teacher education, context is everything" (p.11). If trainers just start from where they imagine teachers to be, without understanding of the interaction between the "ecologically created concerns" (Richardson, 1990: 16) and teachers' needs within their contextual network, then expecting change in the teachers' belief and practice is bound to be problematic. Furthermore, in terms of the expected shift in educational goal from knowledge accumulation to ability development, unless there is comprehensive change to teachers' contextual networks and a shift in training provision, it is unlikely that the support necessary for teacher change will be

appropriately provided, and the hoped for meaningful professional development will be difficult to achieve.

10.4.2 Constraints of the INSET course and the wider context

The findings of this study on the teachers' limited change in their beliefs and practice also indicated that, if conditions for teacher change are not provided, teachers may indeed revert to their traditional teaching approach so minimising the impact of teacher education. It is therefore necessary to pay closer attention to the design of the INSET course as well as to the general context in which it was designed and implemented.

As pointed out by Freeman (2009), the design of SLTE, including its process, is a crucial variable in influencing teachers' beliefs and learning. A number of features have been identified by researchers as facilitators of its effectiveness for teacher professional development. I would argue that these features emerge from discussions of training models and strategies (e.g. Cheng, et al., 2009; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Malderez & Wedell, 2007) and from recognition that any teacher education programme takes place in and is influenced by its overall socio-cultural context (e.g. Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Wright & Beaumont, 2015; Jones & O'Brien, 2014). Borg and Albery (2015) suggested a set of principles to underpin the effectiveness of in-service teacher education in language education and teacher education more generally (Table 10.1):

- acknowledge and build on teachers' prior experience, beliefs and knowledge;
- position INSET as a developmental activity not a deficit-oriented one;
- develop theoretical and practical knowledge in an integrated manner;
- recognize both public and personal forms of teacher knowledge and their contributions to teacher learning;
- provide opportunities for teachers to learn collaboratively;
- avoid methodological prescriptivism;
- promote reflective practice;
- provide opportunities for active and experiential learning;
- model "good practice" through the way trainers work;
- elicit formative and summative feedback and use this to inform course

> delivery and design;
> - provide sustained contextualized opportunities for teacher learning.

Table 10.1 . Principles for good practice in INSET (adapted from Borg & Albery, 2015)

The observation of the INSET course and the teachers' feeling about their learning outcomes reflected the absence of the principles above. Generally the findings exposed that the INSET course displayed the features of the Applied Science Model (Wallace, 1991) where knowledge and skills are transferred from trainer to trainees and gives rise to the metaphor of teacher educator as transmitter of knowledge (Swan, 1993). Two salient features of this model proved the inefficacy of the INSET course: its theory-practice divide and the teachers' passive role on the course. The academic orientation of the INSET course was identified by its focus on the delivery of theoretical information promoted by the curriculum reform (see sections 2.2 and 2.3). However, the teachers' feelings of their learning outcomes indicated that this orientation was problematic because of its lack of connection between the teachers' prior beliefs and knowledge and its irrelevance for the teachers' actual contextual factors mentioned above. Constructivist theory sees learning as a process of interaction between existing knowledge and new experience (e.g. Johnson, 2006; Richardson, 1997). In teacher education, participant teachers, as learners, have substantial practical experiences as well as established beliefs about teaching and learning grounded in experiences. The process of teacher learning on teacher education programme is "reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods or materials" (Johnson & Golombek, 2002: 2). However in this transmission-based model, the teachers were viewed as passive recipients of theoretical information, which has been evidenced by the teachers' learning experiences on the INSET course. The role the teachers can play in their own development was omitted or neglected (Widdowson, 1997, Edge & Richards, 1993; Woodward, 1991; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012).

Meanwhile the trainers' role in the INSET course also reflected the over-reliance on experts. The programme designer and trainers were believed to be experts in language education due to their research work and publications but "they may not have much first-hand knowledge about classroom realities, what teachers already know, or what they might want or need to know" (Malderez & Wedell, 2007: 46).

The trainers in the INSET course were from the university, some of them teaching the course of language teaching methodology to undergraduates which was related to teacher training while others were just teaching normal language courses, such as writing and reading, seemingly external to the field of teacher education. It was very likely that they have subjected their lecture focus to theoretical knowledge and conducted their training work in the way of giving an academic lecture. They failed to consider the actual teaching contexts and the real process of teaching teachers to teach. However, under the influence of the Chinese traditional perspective of "knowledge is power", the trainers' academic authority had helped them to maintain their superior position as experts in relation to the participant teachers. Therefore, due to the distance in hierarchy, the teachers lacked the power and rights, to negotiate with the trainers over course content, design and implementation and had to learn the context-free theories as the course required (the teachers' expectation of theory-learning before the course also indeed reflected this traditional notion). Meanwhile, findings indicated not just that the teachers' actual contextual realities were ignored; but also that the (quantity and quality of) support the teachers received was determined by the trainers. For example, in the secondary training phase, each teacher's lesson was designed to be visited by the trainers at least once. But the visits paid by the trainers to the teachers were very limited due to the trainers' own workload in the university. Only two teachers' (Shi and Tan) lessons were observed in this study. In addition, the trainers' comments mainly focused on encouraging the teachers to continue experimenting and giving tips on using certain techniques. No systemic evaluation methods were used and no formal feedback sheet was given to the teachers for further reflection. The teachers reported that the trainers' visit seemed tokenistic and did not make any sense to their practice, and their application problems remained unresolved.

Teacher development is a life-long process of growth which "may involve collaborative and/or autonomous learning" (Crandall, 2000: 36). With the development of research on teacher development regarding the cognitive characteristics of teacher change, a key aspect suggested by researchers (e.g. Graham *et al.*, 2014; Urmston & Pennington, 2008; Yan, 2012; Opfer & Pedder, 2011) is that teachers should have opportunities to be engaged in the process and actively reflect on their practices within actual context. The trainers in the INSET course, as mentioned above, failed to take this point into account when designing

and carrying out the training course. In fact, the role of the outsider (trainers) was emphasized as well as the training content, whereas the role of the insider (teachers as learner) was neglected. Therefore I argue that the transmission-based training model caused an imbalance in the relationship between the trainers and teachers which made effective and productive learning impossible/difficult and so contributed to the teachers' perceptions of the irrelevance of the training input to their actual teaching context. Such top-down course design and implementation emphasized the trainers' priorities to focus on the academic field and overlooked the needs of teachers as learners and curriculum implementers. These findings imply the need for awareness-rising among teacher educators about teachers' reality. How and how much teacher educators know about teachers' realities, in this case, determines the success of teacher training courses.

Another significant issue related to the inefficacy of the structure of the INSET course is that it was a short-term one-off event, after which the teachers were offered no follow-up support for implementing the new curriculum. The teachers were first gathered together in the university to finish the four-week theory-learning training phase and then returned to their own classroom to apply their learning outcomes. That meant that the expectations of policy makers were that the teachers would be able to implement change in their practice after just four weeks of learning. The findings on the teachers' limited change add further evidence to existing research, showing that short-term in-service training courses are unable to bring about a radical change in teacher behaviour in a short time frame (Tomlinson, 1988, Cortez, 2013). Zhang and Liu's (2014) investigation specifically indicated the similar phenomenon among Chinese EFL teachers. It studied the beliefs of around 900 Chinese junior middle school EFL teachers after the curriculum reform had been conducted for over a decade and found the traditional views of language teaching and learning still existed in the teachers' belief system, despite various efforts to change their views through in-service training courses provided at different levels. The teachers in this study maintained that they had not enough time to test their understandings of the innovative ideas and to inquire about the implementation process. Furthermore, it was almost impossible for them to get help and support from the trainers when confronted with difficulties and problems in actual classrooms. So I would argue that the INSET course seemed more a means of

serving institutional bureaucratic needs (Dalziel & Sofres, 2005) than a genuine attempt to help teachers develop professionally.

The potential value of continuing professional development is well-established both in general education (Goodall & Britain, 2005) and English language education (Mann, 2005; Hayes, 2014). Teachers' needs for professional development might be partially met by certain forms of teacher education such as content knowledge learning. But if the goal is fundamental changes to their beliefs and long-term established teaching behaviour, then any professional development must take place over a much longer period with constant input as well as accessible support. It is naïve to think that teachers can quickly master the understandings and skills required to implement a new curriculum, because any implementation is subject to a constant process of adaptation and modification, as teachers find a balance between the goals of the new curriculum, their own skill and understating, and their actual classroom contexts (Fullan, 2007; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Burns & Richards, 2009). I would thus argue that the lack of enough time and follow-up support for the teachers is one important weakness of the INSET course leading to its limited impact on teacher change. This implies that teacher education should be understood as a continual learning process where the nature and characteristics of teacher learning are emphasized and teachers are provided with efforts to help them cope with difficulties in local implementation process.

The INSET course, as a means of promoting the implementation of the new curriculum in secondary classrooms, was carried out within the broader context of curriculum innovation. The findings of this study also indicated a number of cultural tensions (Wedell, 2003) as potential barriers for teacher education and teacher change.

The first is related to the cultural orientation of the curriculum innovations. The curriculum innovation proposes a shift from traditional knowledge transmission-oriented teaching approach to learner-centred and ability development-oriented approach. This calls for the change of some culturally rooted assumptions of educational practice in Chinese society. As Hu (2002) puts it, the Chinese culture of learning is in conflict with the new approaches in several important aspects, including philosophical assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, perceptions of the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, the

learning strategies being encouraged and the qualities being valued by teachers and students. The teachers who are accustomed to the top-down classroom structure would find it difficult to fully understand the need for these shifts in pedagogy (Harris et al. 2009). However, in this study, the INSET course did not practise what it preached. Instead, it used the old top-down model to try to persuade teachers to abandon that model. It is not therefore surprising that the teachers still felt it difficult to implement constructivist ideas about teaching and learning promoted by the new curriculum, such as learner as active constructor of knowledge, and seeing themselves as reflective practitioners. It is also safe to predict that the teachers' perceptions of these ideas still remain as abstract theories because of the lack of any experience of how to put them into reality.

In addition, the new and traditional approaches encourage different learning strategies (e.g. verbal activeness vs. mental activeness), and they reward different qualities in students (e.g. independence and individuality vs. receptiveness and conformity) and they value different classroom etiquette (Hu, 2002; Yang & Wu, 2008). These shifts seemed opposite to the values of the traditional socio-cultural hierarchy within which those of lower status should show their respect to those of higher status. In language education and education in general, teachers and students are usually regarded at the lowest layer of the pyramid of social power and treated just as the implementers of the curriculum designed by those who are believed to have more professional knowledge, academic achievements and administrative power. Fullan (1993) suggested that teachers are central to long-lasting changes in any attempt to improve education. If they are to change their passive roles in the educational reform process, a socio-cultural shift, not just in teacher education practice but also in educational policy making, seems necessary. Therefore, I would like to argue that change ends to be system wide and cannot be left to teachers.

10.4.3 Summary
This section indicated that the effects of top-down cascade strategies (Wedell, 2005) of curriculum reform are usually weakened by the educational authority's limited understanding of the grassroots needs. It confirmed that the effectiveness of any curriculum reform relies on teachers feeling able to actually implement it in their school contexts, and suggests the needs for curriculum developers to take into account key factors in the local contexts in which the innovations are to be operated in order to establish harmony between the policies and the realities which affect

teachers' teaching, such as class size, time available, teachers' workload, testing system, and teacher expertise (Yeung, *et al.*, 2014). It suggests that curriculum development and its expected teacher change are both involved in an ongoing process which entails "process thinking" instead of "project thinking" in curriculum reforms (Sahlberg & Boce, 2010). A gradual process and democratic approach to leading and managing change, which emphasizes the reduction of managerial activity, and the increase of support to teachers at both macro- and micro levels, may be more effective. I would argue here that the weaknesses of the INSET course in this study largely led to its inefficacy for teacher learning. The existing transmissive, theory-driven and authority-centred teacher training model was ineffective due to its inadequate consideration of the sociocultural constraints under which the teachers worked. Teachers' falling back on the traditional approach can be attributed to their marginal, inferior and passive roles within the education system (Troudi & Alwan, 2010). In section 10.4, I will conceptualize teacher learning in Chinese conditions in terms of the factors which serve as catalysts for teacher change.

10.5 Conceptualizing teacher education

A great deal of research points to the importance of teacher learning for enhancing the quality of classroom teaching and learning in classrooms (Pedder & Opfer, 2014), and the role of teacher education programmes in helping teachers develop.

The findings of this study have shown that teacher learning in an INSET course context involves on-going dynamic interaction between cognitive, experiential and contextual factors from the INSET course and broader curriculum innovation (see figure 10.2 below). Teacher learning is stimulated by teachers' exploration of their beliefs and practices and further facilitated by the exposure to research-based theories and alternative practices.
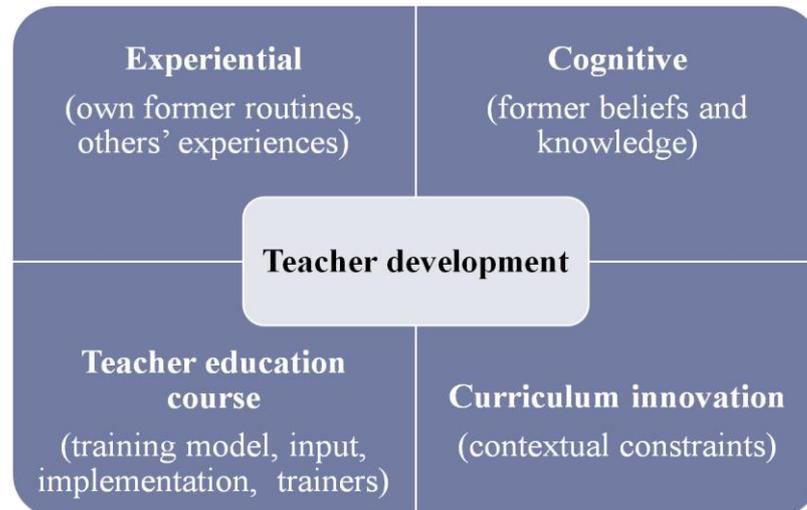
Figure 10.2 Factors affecting teachers development in this study

The factors outlined above mediate the extent to which teachers use ideas learnt from the teacher education course in their everyday teaching. Thus, the extent to which teachers are able to incorporate an aspect of new practice into their daily teaching depends on: (a) whether it conflicts with teachers' existing beliefs and whether newly formed ideas are able to outweigh the "old" beliefs; (b) whether teachers have the awareness and knowledge as well as practical skills to apply new ideas and practice in actual classrooms; (c) whether the INSET course provides appropriate input and support for teachers to teach differently; (d) whether what the teachers are expected to change is in line with curriculum constraints and learner expectations, and whether the current context is suitable for such change. In the discussion below I seek to conceptualize effective teacher learning in China in terms of these factors.

10.5.1 Teacher learning as catalyst for teacher change

The findings of this study indicate that the transfer of the INSET course input to teachers' classroom practice does not take place automatically, or may not even take place at all. Thus, although the INSET course emphasized the value of meaningful teacher change for curriculum innovation, each of the teachers presented limited INSET impact on their teaching practice. This echoed the findings from other studies of in-service teachers engaged in short intensive INSET course (Kurihara & Samimy, 2007; Lamb, 1995) which showed limited uptake of training input as teachers tended to maintain their previous routines.

So this confirms that cognitive change and practice change are distinct processes and that one does not necessarily imply the other (Almarza, 1996). The observed changes in the teachers' cognitions and practice support previous research results

(e.g. Woods, 1996; Jones & O'Brien, 2011) that teacher learning is a non-linear process which is highly complex and unique to particular individuals and contexts. Some preconditions thus, are required to facilitate teacher learning.

Firstly, dilemmas or contradictions play an important role in raising teachers' awareness of challenge. For Qiang and Tan, feeling unable to apply student-centeredness in their classroom generated their awareness of the challenges promoted by the curriculum innovation. As they articulated in interviews, they were forced to explore their beliefs and practices based on received knowledge and to consider the new methods promoted on the INSET course. Research results in general education and ELT have highlighted the importance of dilemmas in teacher learning (e.g. Korthagen, 2004; Hollingsworth, 1989; Woods, 1996; Zheng, 2013). Woods (1996) argues that teachers' beliefs evolve through the resolution of conflicts between their beliefs, theory and their practical classroom experiences. The role of the INSET course is thus one of helping teachers explore and question their existing beliefs and practices while it imparts theories and new methods to participating teachers. Critical reflection on existing beliefs and practices, as researchers found (Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Korthagen, 2004; Tsui, 2003), is the basis for teachers to develop awareness for change and move beyond their previous beliefs and practices. Meanwhile, providing support and encouragement for such exploration and questioning is one of the key roles of an INSET trainer, which will be discussed in section 10.4.2.

Secondly, changes in teachers' beliefs involve confirmation or reinforcement of their existing beliefs. All teachers admitted they had deepened their understandings of their previous teaching because the INSET course provided theoretical underpinnings for belief exploration. Although they still adhered to their previous beliefs and no fundamental changes were observed to their core beliefs, the teachers' articulations of their beliefs and the relationship between their beliefs and classroom practices reflected the exploration process they experienced due to the influence of the INSET course. This is similar to Borg's (2005) suggestion that belief changes may take the form of confirmation or reinforcement of existing beliefs. Phipps (2009) demonstrated evidence that such changes are extremely powerful in influencing teachers' practices.

Thirdly, this study also highlights the need for teachers to realize the tensions/conflicts between their beliefs and aspects of their practices. In this study, teachers' established behaviours were developed from the early stage of their careers and reinforced when they felt they worked successfully over years. So when the teachers were considering the feasibility of change in practice, they felt uncomfortable to change or adapt these routines (Calderhead 1996; Phipps, 2009). The tension between teachers' core and peripheral beliefs was presented by the conflict between their choice of traditional teaching and new approach. Although the INSET course encouraged experimentation in the second training phase, the teachers' post-INSET practices still mostly featured traditional approach, unlike Freeman's (1993) finding that tensions helped teachers develop their practice. Here, I don't mean to define tension as positive or negative for teacher change. What this study portrays is that tension serves as a valuable catalyst for teachers to rethink the underpinnings directing their pedagogical decisions. Teacher educators should bear this in mind, acknowledge the tensions emerging between teachers' former understandings and training input, and provide support for teachers to explore the tensions as well as opportunities for collaborative discussion as recommended by Phipps and Borg (2007).

The above three aspects suggest that teacher change through formal learning through INSET depends on the interaction between the learning activities they engage in and their own prior knowledge, beliefs and practices (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Another issue thus emerges: what kind of INSET course is suitable for effective teacher learning and what social conditions support teacher learning since it is also a social event? In the following section I will examine on this question.

10.5.2 Conditions for teacher learning that support change in China

As discussed in section 10.3, the content and process of the INSET course in this study presented features of the Applied Science Tradition (Wallace, 1991) with over-reliance on experts and research-based theories when the teachers were required to learn a predetermined set of knowledge and skills by policy makers and teacher educators. The disconnection between training input and the teachers' real needs seems to be the most obvious reason for the inefficacy of this training model. Nowadays, such top-down SLTE models are still in use in many short-term teacher-training courses around the world (Hayes, 2012; Malderez & Wedell, 2007). It is unfair to say this model is totally not useful in teacher education. In a country like

China with a large number of secondary EFL teachers from different schools in different areas, this top-down model is perceived to be necessary for various reasons, such as effectively utilising the financial support from government and the logistics of gathering teachers for collective learning within a certain context, providing learning opportunities for those who are constrained by their daily workload and need official permission to leave their classroom for professional leaning, avoiding teachers to pay for the cost of their own leaning. In government-run teacher training courses, participating teachers do not need to worry about these problems. Under the national education reform, such opportunities provide teachers with the opportunity to become acquainted with innovative ideas related to changed curriculum and proposed teaching approaches. From a theoretical perspective, such opportunities are thought to be helpful for teacher change. For example, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) claimed that the introduction of new teaching methods and their underpinnings can, with help from the trainers, help teachers to make their beliefs or tacit assumptions explicit and thus help them understand what they do and why they do it.

However, the reductionist approach and unreflective stance (Diaz-Maggioli, 2012) so common in this training model also seem to be responsible for teachers' limited uptake of training input in their practice. The highly centralized model, which assumes INSET course can provide teachers with all that is necessary to function effectively throughout their teaching lives, limits the potential for teachers to fully understand the complexities of teaching (Freeman, 1993). The findings, in common with other studies, show dissatisfaction with the impact of this approach due to the de-contextualized and generic nature of training content (Muijs et al. 2014), teachers' dependence on external activities led by others rather than their internal growth (Timperley, 2011), and the classroom being viewed as the place for the application of new knowledge to occur rather than a place for localizing the theories (Freeman, 2009; Borg, 2015).

Another feature commonly lacking in this training model is the provision of opportunities for collaborative learning between teachers. Research on SLTE has proposed that if teachers can really engage in deep processing of teaching and learning issues and open discussion where their pre-existing assumptions about teaching are possibly explored and challenged (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Lee, 2014), this can help their professional development. The findings of the teachers' informal

learning demonstrate that peer teacher communication and reflective activities in teacher education programme are likely to have a stronger impact on teacher change than theories and principles (see section 10.3). There are also some studies showing that this kind of teacher learning is an essential pre-condition for teacher professional improvement and school development through its positive influence on both teachers and students (e.g. Garet et al. 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Day & Leitch, 2007).

Concerns about sustained support for teachers also featured the success of INSET. One of the contributing factors to the teachers' failure of adopting the new curriculum in this study is related to the limited support they received from the course. In this study, when the teachers stepped out of the course, there was no more support to help them apply innovative ideas when encountering problems. The teachers complained about it a lot in post-INSET interviews. Hager and Hodkinson (2009) theorized learning as a holistic process and propose that learning has no fixed endpoint and "learning is never complete" (p.633). This is true with teacher learning as their teaching has to evolve alongside their professional lives and within policy changing context. Therefore, it is necessary for the INSET designers to recognize that further support activities are desirable and they need to keep in mind that teacher professional learning cannot be accomplished in a one-off event.

Drawn on the issues discussed above, some suggestions on INSET course design are generated in the following:

● Identifying teachers' needs before course design

The most obvious problem related to the lack of long-term INSET impact is the gap between the course and the teachers' actual needs. For an in-service language teacher training programme, like the one in this study, the participants are generally experienced teachers. Their actual needs and expectations for the INSET course were closely related to their work experiences and the context in which they work (see section 10.3 for detailed discussion). To achieve the training goal for teacher development, understanding teachers' needs within their particular context seems to be the basis for effective course design. Malderez & Wedell (2007) made clear statement about this that accurate identification of teachers' needs is an essential feature of successful programmes. Understanding what teachers really need and how

they want their needs to be met always takes a core part of the answer to the question "what impact a training course might have".

Thus how to identify teachers' actual needs seems an important issue before designing an INSET course for teacher trainers and course designers. For experienced teachers, their needs might cover a wide range of issues according to their specific teaching environment, teaching and learning experiences, workload, and student levels and so on. The course designers and trainers could create some opportunities to visit secondary schools and arrange with experienced teachers to learn about their work and life, through which some data can be collected through carefully planned investigations, including teachers' current classroom conditions, teachers' feelings of implementing the new curriculum, teachers' reported difficulties in their current teaching, and so on. Some kinds of fieldwork would also enrich the course designers' views on what teachers really need in reality, such as visiting teachers' classroom, interviewing their views of language teaching. By knowing more about the reality of English education in secondary schools, they might develop the awareness of connecting the training goals with the actual teaching context and providing possibly proper aid to participating teachers with practically effective suggestions. The relevance between training content and teachers' needs can therefore increase through this bottom-up shift in training model and INSET courses would appeal to teachers more.

When starting course design, the focus should be on how to "engage teachers in inquiry about the concrete task of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection, and provides them with the opportunities to make connections between their learning and their classroom instruction" (Borko *et al.*, 2010:549). The teachers' dissatisfaction with the pre-determined training content and process strongly reflected the necessity of establishing connection between the course content and teacher learning. What seems to be more relevant to the success of an INSET course is the perceived relevance and usefulness of teacher training course with respect to teachers' daily work (van Veen, Zwart & Meirink, 2012) rather than designing the course in an isolated way.

● Linking theory with practice

The effectiveness of an INSET course is obviously related to its content. In terms of teachers' experiences and their practical concerns, the content of an INSET course

should be related to classroom practice, more specifically to subject content, pedagogical content knowledge and student learning processes as well as the changed curriculum requirements. This is in line with the findings from research into features of effective teachers who are thought to master the subject content and be capable of explaining this content to students in a way that students do understand and learn (Scheererns & Bosker, 1997).

In literature on teacher education and professional development, both theoretical and practical components are important in forming the knowledge base for teaching. It is not wise to suggest that one be promoted at the expense of the other (Borg & Albery, 2014). For an INSET course under the educational reform, the theoretical dimensions seem necessary when introducing new ideas to teachers. Therefore the issue worthy consideration here is rather how the two dimensions of teacher knowledge can be integrated productively. For INSET course designers and trainers, a challenge they face is how to help teachers perceive designed theoretical input in relation with their practice meanwhile not affecting their focus on practice. Such integrated approach to theory and practice in INSET course design implies that teachers have the opportunities to consider the implications of theory, such as the proposed reform ideas for practice and evaluate theories in the light of their own practices.

In this study, the teachers complained that the INSET course was too theoretical. This should not be interpreted that theory is not relevant to teachers' work. Rather the problem relates to the manner in which teachers' experience and theory are connected. This challenges the course designers who still depend on the traditional transmission-based training model. Increasing their awareness of practice-oriented course design seems essential to achieve the shift to development-constructivist training model.

● Providing opportunities for active and inquiry-based learning

The findings of this study also reflected another feature of effective INSET course that teachers should be encouraged to engage in learning actively. The teachers' reluctance of learning on the course also implied that course designers should not only take into account what teachers learn but also how to facilitate teacher learning on the course as opposed to passive learning (e.g. listening to a lecture).

Active learning, suggested by van Veen, Zwart & Meirink (2012), can take form in observing expert teachers or being observed by other teachers followed by feedback and discussion, or reviewing student work. For INSET course like the one in this study, such forms of active learning can be designed and implemented in workshops where teachers can take active role of learning from each other.

Nowadays, active learning is more and more understood as similar to inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based elements can be incorporated in the design of INSET course, such as analyzing student data, performing research activities with respect to practice-related content, and observing problems of student learning and their difficulties in implementing innovative curriculum. In this aspect, inquiry-based learning does not necessarily mean that teachers should do research work themselves as the concept "teacher as researcher" proposes. Rather, on the INSET course, teachers can be encouraged to engage in the learning context and learning activities and take the learning as an opportunity for self-exploration of both cognitions and practices, which is considered the departure point of teacher change.

- Encouraging collaborative learning

Providing opportunities for collaborative learning is seen to be one characteristic of effective professional development initiatives (Walter & Briggs, 2012). Hayes (2012) highlighted the lack of opportunities for collaborative learning as a factors for the limited impact of INSET in South Korea. Darling-Hammond (2013:150) suggested that "teaching improves most in collegial settings where common goals are set, curriculum is jointly developed, and expertise is shared. In fact, research shows that student gains are most pronounced where teachers have greater longevity and work as a team". The teachers in this study also reported their preference of communicating with each other for context-based practical tips over being given lectures. In this sense, INSET course can be enhanced by opportunities for teachers to learn collaboratively rather than only individually.

Collaborative learning can take many forms with the purpose of improving teachers through the process of communicating with each other, such as talking about their work, articulating their beliefs, and engaging in group work with shared information (Borg & Albery, 2014). To take a more concrete example, the teachers in this study were required to explore their teaching and beliefs. Without having opportunities or space to share their reflections in a group setting, their view of teaching and learning

might be still insular. Collaborative learning also values discussion (Wright & Bolitho, 2007) whose real value is attached to both its process and outcomes.

Collaborative learning requires a certain level of facilitation skills of the trainers, which should be taken into account when designing a course. On INSET course where teachers are required to complete learning activities, some attention to how discussions are guided towards the pre-determined goal seems essential during training sessions. In fact, the trainers' role as facilitators and contributors to teachers' interactions has a major influence on the extent to which collaborative learning will be productive (Borg & Albery, 2014).

● Training duration

Time span has a substantial influence on teachers' learning results. "Professional development is likely to be of higher quality if it is both sustained over time and involves a substantial number of hours" (Garet *et al*., 2001: 933).

It is difficult to identify an exact "tip-ping point" since the sustained training impact depends on various factors such as the time both trainers and teachers can afford. Researchers suggested different lengths of training time. Yoon and colleagues' (2007) research showed support for at least 14 hours of training, Desimone (2009) suggested a minimum of 20 hours while Supovitz and Turner (2000) indicated a minimum of 80 hours of training for teacher behavioural change to occur. In this study, the formal training time for the teachers was four weeks which was thought not enough for them to change their previously established beliefs and teaching routines. However, it is not necessarily good if too many hours are provided. All their findings suggested that only when a substantial amount of time is designed and allocated according to training content and the features of teacher learning can the training impact be effective.

In terms of the impact of theory-learning on teachers' understandings of language teaching and their practice, more time (here I mean more than the four-week training time in this study) provided for the teacher would be better for them to develop insights into the theories and build connection with their practice rather than giving all training sessions as separate one-off events. When deciding the training length, the designers should take into account the amount of training content and carefully consider the time needed for teachers' inquiry, especially the time teachers need to

build up connection between the theoretical information with their context-based practice.

● Follow-up support

To achieve long-term training impact, follow-up support beyond the short training span should be highlighted in terms of conditions that teachers need time and opportunities for supported try-out. As learners and implementers of new ideas and teaching approaches, teachers might make mistakes which are inevitably part of learning. The INSET course should take the responsibility to provide the support needed during and after the course to make teachers feel comfortable and confident to make continuous attempts and internalize into their routines.

The teachers in this study expressed their aspiration for ongoing feasible support from the INSET course. Yan and He (2014: 12) made suggestions on specific ways to meet teachers' needs: providing on-the-job training, organizing research collaborations, opening teacher forums, participating in collective lesson planning, giving demonstration classes, holding group discussions, supervising teachers' reflective teaching and action research, establishing technology-enhanced communication networks and so forth. These practical supports would not only develop teachers' professional competence of balancing quality-oriented and examination-oriented education, but also, more importantly, construct professional development networks and resources accessible to teachers irrespective of their cohort, time, mode, region and background, which is the ultimate goal of professional development aiming at improving overall professional levels of teachers.

● Modelling proposed teaching through trainers' work

Constructivist theories on teacher education propose that teachers can learn the approaches to teaching and learning which they are encouraged to implement through trainers' model. In INSET course teachers are influenced not just by the content they engage with but also by the way teacher trainers behave. For example, in this study, teachers were encouraged to adopt students-centeredness when teaching but they complained that they could not feel any hint from how they were trained as they were still being treated as pure recipients. Thus it is reasonable to imagine that if the trainers could have illustrated this in their own work the teachers

should have understood this notion much better. In the educational reform, the teachers are also encouraged to teach in a way that is responsive to their students' needs and to use formative assessment, then such notions should be evident in the INSET course. The suggestion here is that obvious mismatches between what teachers are encouraged to do and what the trainers do should be avoided. This implies that INSET course trainers "should be fully aware of the principles that underpin the course and educational reform as well as the extent to which their own behaviours and ideas are consistent with them" (Borg & Albery, 2014:5). This closely connects with the issue that trainers should practice what they preach, which has been considered a principle for INSET course by Borg (2013) based on his case studies of two trainers.

The above suggestions aim at improving INSET course in terms of its content design and process. To achieve effective training outcomes and implement the INSET course in a productive way, some other relevant and important issues also need much attention. The following covers the one involved in this study.

The first concerns the role of teachers in learning activities (who they are) and the support provided for them (what and how they learn). In current literature, teachers' pedagogical behaviour is thought to be influenced by various factors: national educational policies, school administrators, parents and students, and existing assessment system (Yan, 2012; Wang, 2015; Yang & Wu, 2008; Gao, Barkhuizen & Chow, 2010). Under the context of educational reform, some of these are changing. When encouraging genuine teacher professional development, it is presupposed that teachers are perceived as high-status professionals whose skills and understandings need continuous updating (Hargreaves, 2000; Malderez & Wedell, 2007).

However, in the current Chinese reality (see sections 3.3, 3.5.3 and 10.3) a mismatch between the rhetoric of teacher education and the practical contextual constraints and the current social-political views see the teachers' role as that of a perpetuator of the status quo. Hence, a paradox (table 10.2) for professional development emerges with teachers being expected to engage with professional learning activities as active constructive learners showing critical and reflective attitudes to the training input, while actually being prevented from doing so due to contextual constraints within and outside the teacher education environment.

Table 10.2 A paradox of teachers' roles in training programmes

Teachers' current roles in China	Teachers' proposed roles for professional development
• Technical implementers of prescribed curriculum • Passive recipients of new knowledge • Subjects of change • Passive followers of educational policies	• Professionals with their own perceptions of teaching • Constructors of knowledge • Agents of change • Empowered active participants of curriculum development

Research on INSET course impact in other countries (Hayes, 2012a, 2012b; Carl, 2005; Prieto, 2004; Park & Sung, 2013) also highlights similar situations. To achieve the expected teacher learning goals from this perspective, Wedell (2013) calls for a major cultural change in which the change partners who are responsible for planning and providing teacher development opportunities (e.g. MoE, teacher trainers) should begin to listen to, be receptive to and trust teachers' perceptions of their needs, based on what is happening in their classroom. Only when teachers are respected as professionals will their voices become an important contributor to decisions about the content and process of teacher development provision.

One of the key factors in any such move towards teacher empowerment is the role of the INSET trainer. The findings indicate that teachers' just being treated as recipients of training input does not lead to their new practice. As table 10.2 shows, teachers' active roles as agents of classroom change (Chen, 2005; Fullan, 1993) and curriculum implementers should be taken into account by trainers before the course and during the training process. The above suggestions on course design also pose challenges to current trainers' work and implies the adjustment of current hierarchical distance between trainers and teachers. Diaz-Maggioli (2012) has made suggestions on changing teacher trainers' role as expert to mediator. Although the suggestions aim at the development of pre-service teacher education programmes, they also seem to apply to current INSET trainers in the context of this study. Diaz-Maggioli's (2012) propositions on trainers include:

- Organizing opportunities for teacher learning to happen;

- Mediating teachers' process of concept formation by helping them to disclose their naïve understandings and by promoting interaction of these understandings with scientific concepts; and

- Helping teachers integrate the different domains of professional knowledge so that they can develop adaptive expertise in teaching and learning.

(adapted from Diaz-Maggioli, ibid: 38)

According to the above propositions, trainers' traditional role as knowledge transmitter is apparently challenged. A shift of their role seems now a prerequisite for the success of INSET course. Providing opportunities for trainers' professional development is perceived to be an important support for trainers' such change.

Meanwhile another issue concerning trainers in this study is also worthy addressing. In this INSET course, most of the trainers were university academics. Due to their various backgrounds, some of the trainers' research fields were not language education or teacher education, and most of them had limited contact with the reality of secondary school teachers' classroom. A gap between teachers' reality and trainers' understandings is often observed in literature (e.g. Yan, 2012; Hayes, 2012). This gap implies the necessity for university-based teacher trainers to build a close connection with teachers if they expect to achieve expected training goals and lead to meaningful training outcomes in teachers' classrooms.

Along with a number of conditions for both teachers and trainers, some factors at macro level also need to be in place for successful teacher learning and professional development. Here I use the term macro to refer to the wider institutional conditions, such as the INSET course holder (universities) and, MoE, all of which have a role in teacher education and curriculum innovation.

If the teachers who are used to traditional teacher-centred approach are suddenly expected to implement externally imposed changes that imply changes to their beliefs and behaviours, this can amount to a culture change for all of them (Wedell & Malderez, 2013). The earlier discussion (see section 10. 3) suggests that there is a gap between the goal of new curriculum standards and what practising teachers can do in current reality. Some Chinese researchers have noted that this gap led to confusions about and even rejection of the new curriculum among teachers (Yang & Wu, 2008; Li, 2008). Visible supports for teacher professional development such as

regular training course at different levels are provided but support to change the culturally rooted underpinnings of teacher change still seems lacking.

Like Wedell's (2013) suggestion that curriculum changes which demand more communicative classrooms often fail to consider cultural aspects about the role of teaching and learning, the curriculum innovation in China, such as communicative language teaching and learner-centred approach, has "been criticized as being overtly driven by Western theories, too strongly oriented towards academics and the elite, and too far removed from actual school and classroom practice" (Liu & Fang, 2009: 408). The findings presented that the teachers felt within the current socio-cultural norms and assessment system students' learning had to still be focusing on knowledge acquisition and exam performance, which was contradictory to the demands of the above two propositions (see section 10.3). At the same time, the current curriculum design and implementation also adopts these top-down cascade strategies. The lack of communication between the educational authority and the grassroots level has led to the distance between curriculum innovation and school context. This is also true with teacher education which features the typical top-down model. Together with other research (e.g. Yan, 2012; Hayes, 2012), this study suggests the need for policy makers and teacher educators, to take into account key factors of the local contexts to establish the balance between policies and the reality of classroom teaching, such as class size, lesson time limits, learning materials, especially assessment practice which seems to influence all other constraints (see section 10.3). A large-scale shift in current social expectations of English language learning is also expected as parallel support for teacher change, including changing the established beliefs of parents, school administrators and regional authorities.

In this study, INSET course provision is part of the national education reform. The above discussed aspects help to provide a national picture of teacher education in China. In terms of the educational system hierarchy, the support from the higher level seems to have much more powerful influence on the change of teacher education and teacher change. Here some recommendations are made for Chinese educational administrators who have the power to promote teacher learning and curriculum innovation at both macro- and micro-levels:

- Consulting bottom-up demands rather than hurriedly sponsoring more traditional teacher training programmes while at the same time expecting

teachers to think and teach in new ways. Understanding the nature of teacher learning and treating Chinese EFL teachers as active agents of learning and curriculum change is a prerequisite for teacher professional development programmes to be effective. Teacher learning should not be equated with traditional classroom learning. Sufficient engagement in training activities featuring teachers' specific teaching contexts over an extended period of time is necessary for teacher education programme to achieve expected goal.

- Shifting the focus of current teacher performance evaluation system from students' exam scores to a development-oriented view. Since the new curriculum standards propose a combination of summative assessment with formative evaluation rather than solely dependence on exam-based summative assessment, teachers should therefore no longer be judged solely by their students' exam scores. The teacher performance assessment system should take into account other sources of information, such as students' feedback on teachers' classroom teaching, teachers' self-development portfolios, and peer observation notes. Meanwhile the support from school administrators should also be encouraged in providing opportunities for peer cooperation between teachers and building favourable school for teacher learning and communities of practice.

- Offering teachers access to a variety of teacher development programmes for continuous on-the-job learning, such as forming a network of teacher education programmes at local levels for all in-service teachers with resources based on teachers' needs and time available (Gu, 2009). Within such a system, teachers can possibly gain more access to negotiate the reform ideas within actual context together with other teachers and develop localized understanding of the new curriculum. School administrators should encourage teachers to participate in such on-going training courses and provide support for their participation in terms of time and funding.

- Promoting collaboration between universities and schools in Chinese educational system (Wang & Zhang, 2014; Yan, 2011). University-based teacher training course is common around the world. Government and school administrators should support such joined in-service training because communication developed through the process can benefit both teachers and teacher trainers. Teachers learn updated information and trainers gain more

insights into the realities of secondary school education. This may lead to better communication between teachers and trainers as well as mutually productive results of INSET.

10.5.3 Summary

This section has discussed the evident lack of teachers' voices in education and decision-making processes in China and suggested that teachers' empowerment through participating in professional learning activities to diminish the contradiction between the reality and proposed professional development. The conditions for effective teacher learning in China were also discussed, including course design and process, trainer development, sustained support. Several recommendations for educational reform at both macro- and micro-levels were made.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will first provide a brief summary of the findings, and then suggest the original contributions that this study makes to the research field. A section considering the limitations of this study will follow. And finally, I will introduce some recommendations for further research which have emerged from this study.

11.2 Summary of findings

In this study, my aim was to investigate, from the perspective of participating teachers, the underpinnings, processes and impact of an INSET course on EFL teacher learning under the wider context of educational reform in China. The findings confirm that the limited impact of the INSET course on teacher learning is caused by the nature of short-term teacher education courses (from course design to training process) and highlight that fundamental issues, which might hinder or facilitate the effects of training, need to be addressed to enhance the long-term impact of such initiatives.

The findings regarding teacher learning and changes to practice reveal that a one-off INSET course could hardly meet the needs for teachers' fundamental change in response to the new curriculum requirements. The mismatch in conceptions of learning on INSET course between the course designers and teachers was revealed. Course designers adhered to research-based theories and expected to stimulate teacher professional development. However, teachers expected training (including theory-learning) to be a process of problem-solving which could help them with effective solutions to deal with particular instructional problems, especially those arising from the challenges posed by the new curriculum. The INSET course aimed to generate long-term impact in terms of teacher change, while teachers' own accounts of their attempts to adjust their practice and their feelings illustrated that their learning outcomes were very limited and even confusing, and had little sustained effect on their actual teaching. Therefore the focus of such INSET courses should not be primarily placed on delivering the knowledge about the theoretical underpinnings of educational reform and theories on language education to teachers,

but instead consider how to enhance long-term impact on teachers in terms of changing their ideas and practice. Such a shift of INSET course focus entails first understanding what is needed for context-appropriate teacher development and setting priorities accordingly.

This study also makes suggestions on enhancing the quality of INSET course delivery through integrating training and follow-up support. A number of supportive measures would be necessary, including relevant training topics, workable theory-informed solutions for actual teaching problems, available ongoing support from the trainers and appropriate trainer development. The need for alignment between teacher education activities and the available governmental support is also highlighted in order to make teacher learning a valuable experience rather than a mere administrative obligation.

This study argues that teacher learning involves a process of systemic re-culturing which presumes changes to current views of teachers and teacher development within the educational system and socio-cultural environment. Central to such change is a commitment to teacher empowerment, which should be achieved through individual teachers' participation in professional learning activities and being supported by an ongoing systemic adjustment of existing beliefs, attitudes and norms, rather than mere change to an individual INSET course.

11.3 Contributions of this study

This study explored the teachers' learning experiences and the changes they underwent during and after the INSET course rather than their immediate judgment of the input at the end of the INSET course . The findings based on a longitudinal research process presented the complex and dynamic characteristics of how teachers learned to change over time, which supported the construct of teacher learning as a social event rather than a one-off event. And these findings also provided understandings on how to bring about long-term impact of teacher education on teachers.

When revealing the characteristics of teacher learning, relevant contextual factors were also highlighted inside and outside the INSET course. Such research perspective and analysis is needed for research on teacher learning and teacher education. Although the factors were analysed within the context of China, the

findings can inform the teacher education initiatives more generally in similar contexts like China.

From the methodological perspective, this longitudinal study focuses on teachers' perceptions of their learning and change over time, the employment of research methods which are able to elicit teachers' visible and invisible data seems important to develop a complete picture of teacher learning on the INSET course and their application of new knowledge in actual teaching. The choice and appropriate implementation of research methods in this study also provide a methodological example for further studies of the impact of INSET.

11.4 Limitations of this study

The finding concerning teachers' views about the INSET course and its impact are limited to the teachers' feelings and opinions articulated in interviews and their teaching in observations. In order to establish a complete picture of how teachers perceived the training they received and how their lessons were planned, a wider range of data might have benefited the findings, such as teachers' reflective writings, or developmental portfolios. Although the data involved in this study was collected at different stages in the process and could help triangulate the findings, richer data could have been obtained if more time had been available.

This study did not involve teacher trainers as research participants and their views are lacking in the analysis. Their perceptions about the INSET course design and process could have enriched the findings if they were in this study.

There were also some practical constraints on data collection, especially the observations. The decision of the lessons for observation was determined by the availability of the researcher and participants. It might be the case that the participants did attempt to develop their teaching to model the curriculum for a particular lesson (such as a topic-specific lesson) but were not observed due to the limited number of observations.

The research approach (case study) and research context (China) might limit the generalizability of the findings in other research contexts and large-scale investigation. But some characteristics of teacher learning (such as awareness increase, input-based knowledge change) and the INSET process (such as top-down model, transmission-based approach) may have referential value for other studies.

11.5 Suggestions for further research

Further research is needed in the fields of teacher education and teacher professional development to explore the impact of INSET courses on teachers because impact can be defined and studied in a range of ways and researchers might give different considerations to the way they operationalize it (Borg, 2015). Although a number of studies have been conducted (see chapter 3), there is still a lack of longitudinal studies exploring the extent of teachers' engagement with professional learning activities, their practices and changes as well as their views on professional development.

Limitations of data collection in this study can also be regarded as providing potential for further in-depth research. The data involved in this study only represented teachers' perspectives without touching upon other stakeholders' perspectives. In further research the inclusion of a wider range of data sources, such as trainers, school administrators, policy makers, could be taken into account to provide a richer picture of the factors contributing to teacher education and professional development from a wider perspective.

The Chinese national training project consists of a variety of courses at different levels (see chapter 2). There is still a lack of research into their impact on teachers in different areas and at different levels as well as teachers' perceptions in relation to their professional development and contexts. Furthermore, trainer development has been scarcely studied in China. In-depth research on trainers' perceptions of teacher education and their impact on teacher learning and development seem to be necessary for the development of teacher education programmes.

In addition, since student-centredness has been promoted as the core of education reform, the impact of teacher learning on students' learning outcomes should attract more attention. But there is still little research explicating the links between teachers' professional learning and student outcomes (Borg, 2015). More empirical evidence on understanding students' voices on teacher learning will be helpful to develop the framework for examining how teachers' professional learning influences student learning and provide support for the development of teacher education programmes.

11.6 Personal reflections

I would like to conclude with some reflections on the whole journey of this study. Choosing this topic not only derives from my own interest but also from the need of being a teacher educator. Going through this research process has made me more aware of the characteristics of the context and the difficulties teachers face when they are required to implement the educational reform as well as the weaknesses of current INSET model in facilitating teacher professional development. During the research process I strongly realized that, even though I thought I was familiar with the context before the start of this study, the implementation of any educational reform needed to be analysed through the eyes of research enquiry, such as critical views on educational policies and systemic analysis of the challenges imposed on teachers. As a teacher educator, I also realized the need for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of teacher education regarding course design and implementation, and the need for the awareness of shifting traditional training views to facilitating teacher professional development.

This study also means a lot for me as a researcher. During the four-year research process, I have been given access to abundant knowledge with regard to the nature of educational enquiry, interpretive and scientific research methodologies, and communicating educational research, which provided me with a solid background of the educational research tradition. This study journey also helped me develop my general knowledge and skills as a researcher, such as identifying priorities, working under stress and time pressure, engaging in intellectual discussion with my supervisors and colleagues to get my ideas across, time management, skills of problem-solving, specific research design, data generation and data analysis skills. Academic seminars and conferences provided me chances to develop my presentation skills as I had to illustrate my ideas to different audiences who might not be familiar with my work. Doing this study also developed my skills of academic reading and writing. In addition, the research process helped me realize that doing educational research is not a straightforward process. Even though the researcher is familiar with the research context, there are certain difficulties and challenges that have to be encountered. Awareness of challenges and preparation for dealing with them seem as important as other skills when doing the research work. All these skills and awareness will benefit me in conducting further research work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research information sheet

The purpose of this letter is to request consent from you to participate in my research: *Understanding the impact of INSET on experienced teacher learning: A case study in a Chinese context*. I am conducting this study as part of my PhD study in TESOL teacher education and will look closely at how you learn in an INSET course and what changes may take place in your teaching. The findings in this study will help me to develop understanding in how experienced teacher learn in the training course and how they change under the impact of INSET. You will be asked to do the following:

1. Be observed and interviewed before the training course starts;
2. Talk about your feelings and comments on your learning at the end of each training phase which will last about 40-60 minutes;
3. Be observed two times in the third training phase after you return to your own school and two times after the completion of the whole training course. After each observation, there will be an interview to share your ideas about your teaching;

*All the interviews will be audio-recorded and observation video-recorded.

I will observe the following guidelines for the interviews and observations:

1. Your name will not be disclosed during the research and will not appear in any written reports or publications;
2. If you will participate in this study, you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason;
3. During interview if you do not wish to answer any particular question or questions, you are free to decline;
4. The results obtained from the study will not have any influence on your learning in the training course;
5. The interviews will be audio-recorded. You will be given a copy of it together with the transcripts for your confirmation if you want;
6. The classroom observation will be conducted in your own classroom. If you do not wish to be video-recorded, you are free to decline;
7. All the interviews and classroom observations will be carried out without any judgmental purposes.

If you would like to participate in my study, kindly fill out the consent form below, sign and date it, and hand it back to me via e-mail or in hard copy. Should you require further clarification at this point or anytime during the research, please do not hesitate to contact **Li Ming** on +86-13637907068 or e-mail at devyli2011@hotmail.com.

Appendix 2: Sampling short interview

1. Do you have to teach your lessons during the whole training course?

2. Will you do some other work during the training, such as part-time job? (I promise the answer can be a simple "yes" or "no" if the potential participant feels sensitive to this question.)

3. If you are willing to participate in my research, I will speak to you at the end of each training phase. I know there will be a week for you to have a rest at intervals. Do you think it is OK to have the interviews during the week?

4. If any emergency occurs (i.e. any other participant has to change the time for physical conditions), the interview time will have to be adjusted. Do you think it's acceptable if the interview time needs to be rearranged?

5. I will observe your classroom teaching before, during and after the training course. These observations will be video-recorded. Do you think it will be fine with your work? If no, what are the problems?

Appendix 3: Informed consent form

Consent to take part in *Understanding the impact of INSET on experienced teacher learning: A case study in a Chinese context*

	Please initial box
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated (*DD/MM/YY)* explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	
I understand that my information will be held and processed for the following purposes: ● To be used anonymously for internal publication for a PhD project and submitted for assessment with a view to being published in academic journals/conferences. ● I understand that quotations from the interview and observation may be used in writing up the results of the research and that these will always be anonymous and not attributed to me in any way.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the researcher should my contact details change.	
I understand that the interview can last over 40 minutes, and will be audio-recorded and classroom observation will be video-recorded.	

Name of participant		Name of researcher	
Participant's signature		Researchers' signature	
Date		Date	

Appendix 4: Pre-INSET post-observation interview schedule

Section One: Stimulated recall interview after observation

1. Why/Why not do you use English as the main medium in your class?
2. What is your main teaching method in the classroom?
3. Why do you think the method you used is effective?
4. What do you think is important in English language teaching?
5. What problems do you think you have in classroom teaching?

   (Some other probing questions will be asked based on the observation)

Section Two: Participants' expectations for and attitudes to INSET course

1. Why are you taking the INSET course?
2. What are you hoping to gain from the training?
3. Do you want the training course bring some differences to your professional practice? If yes, what kinds of difference do you want?
4. Have you ever participated in any in-service training? If yes, what do you think about it?

Appendix 5: Examples of interview transcripts in Chinese and English

Yuan's pre-INSET interview in Chinese:

24　Q: 在课堂上，你在教动词的过去式时使用了学生之间的配对活动。你这样做的原因是什么？

25　A: 对于英语学习而言，我认为要给学生提供听说的机会。这对于激发和保持他们的学习兴

26　趣是很有必要的……嗯……英语学习目标是真实使用嘛，所以我希望我的学生可以通过运用来

27　学习英语，而不是死记硬背。

28　Q: 谢谢。我注意到你在讲解阅读文章的时候，采用了三步骤的方法。在"阅读中"步骤中

29　也使用了配对活动。你经常这样教学吗？

30　A: 是的。它们很容易操作，我也能够很容易地观察到学生在活动具体做什么。另外一个原

31　因是我在教学中用到这些活动已经有很长的时间了。在我以前的实习和刚开始工作时就观察

32　到很多老师都在用这些活动。所以在我刚刚开始当教师的时候就开始运用这些活动来教学了。

The translation of Chinese interview transcript in English:

21　Q: I saw you used pair work when teaching the past tense of verbs. Why did you do

22　that?

23　A: For language learning, I think we should provide students chances to talk and

24　listen. It's good for motivating them and keeping their interests in learning…erm…the

25　goal of learning English is of course to use it in real life. So I want my students to

26　learn through using the language, not just rote learning.

27　Q: Thank you. When you were teaching the reading passage, I also noticed you used

28　pair work in while-reading stage. Do you often use such activities?

29　A: Yes. They are easy to conduct and I can easily monitor what students are doing.

30　The other reason is that I have used them for a long time. In my pre-service teaching

31　practicum and after entering this school, I observed other teachers' lessons and

32　found that they were all using this method. So I also use it since the start of my

33　teaching career.

Appendix 6: Example pictures of observation

Lead-in activity (student presentation)
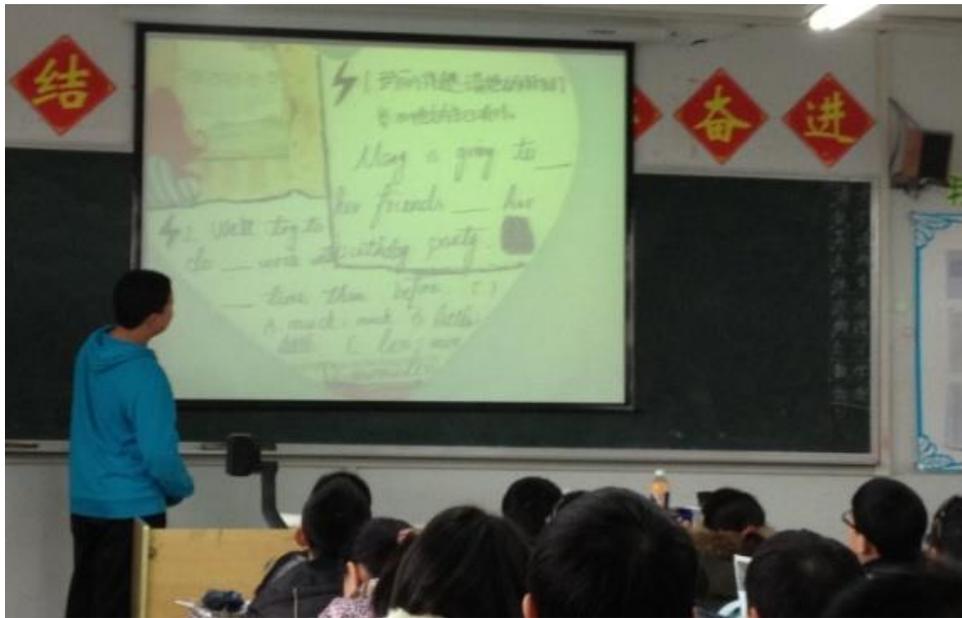
Teacher-fronted teaching for grammar quiz

Appendix 7: Textbook example

2a Listen. Peter asks his father if he can do four things. What does his father say? Check (✔) "yes" or "no".

Peter wants to ...	Peter's father says ...		His father's reasons
go to the movies	__ yes	__ no	I have to go to a meeting.
stay out late	__ yes	__ no	You have to clean your room.
use the car	__ yes	✔ no	I need to eat breakfast.
get a ride	__ yes	__ no	You have a test tomorrow.

2b Listen again. Why does Peter's father say "no"? Draw lines to the reasons in the chart above.

2c PAIRWORK

Student A, you are Peter. Ask if you can do things. Student B, you are Peter's father. Say "yes" or "no". If you say "no", give a reason.

> A: Could I use your computer?
>
> B: Sorry. I'm going to work on it now.
>
> A: Well, could I watch TV?
>
> B: Yes, you can. But first you have to clean your room.

Grammar Focus
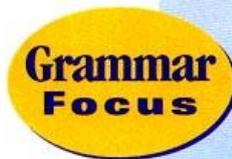
Could you please clean your room?	Yes, sure.
Could you please do the dishes?	Sorry, I can't. I have to do my homework.
Could I go to the movies?	Yes, you can.
Could I use the car?	No, you can't. I have to go out.

66 UNIT 11 · Could you please clean your room?

Appendix 8: Example of observation field notes

Shi

10/10/2012 Pre-INSET observation

Teaching objective: sentence structure

Textbook: Section A, Unit #3

Lead-in: Dictation of new words (why?)
        (S-S checking)

Grammar focus: Could you please ... ? | Yes, sure.
        Could I ... ? | Sorry, I can't

for communication?
    ← S-S pair work / group work (Why just imitating?)

        Teacher walking around to check Ss' work (why?)

Listening activity: only two Ss were asked to answer questions
                           (why?)

Both Chinese and English

More teacher-fronted activities (than s-s work) (why?)

Assignment: Grammar quiz (Knowledge acquisition - focused?)

Appendix 9: Example of analytic memos

(The terms in italics are the categories which emerged from the interview and observation on which the memos were based)

Pre-INSET observation analytic memo of Qiang

1. The teacher started his lesson by reviewing vocabulary and sentence structures, which featured the *traditional educational view of knowledge accumulation*. What is his rationale for using this? How did he feel this helped the language learning process?

2. *Lesson shape*: the teachers mainly followed the textbook flow in terms of language elements introduction and practice activities. Why did he think this useful for students' learning? What potential change can he make to it?

3. *Classroom activities*: the teacher used group work for students to imitate the dialogue in listening practice. Why did he use this controlled practice and what effect he wanted to achieve in student learning by doing this? What are the teachers' beliefs about classroom activities?

4. *Classroom language use*: both Chinese and English were used when teaching. What is the rationale here? What beliefs did the teacher hold for this?

Pre-INSET interview analytic memo of Qiang

1. *The expectation of theory-learning*: the teacher seemed to expect knowledge increase through learning theoretical knowledge on the INSET course but his words also expressed his interest in gaining practical tips. How will he feel about theory-learning on the course? How will he manage to learn both theories and gain practical tips? Which kind of knowledge seems more important for him? He mentioned his past experiences of learning to teach consisted of formal pre-service training and learning from other teachers. What impact of his learning experiences might have on his learning?

2. *Classroom activities*: the teacher seems confident with his use of classroom activities (such as teacher controlled group work, setting inspiring atmosphere). The source for his confidence was based on his pre-service learning and observing other teachers. How will he deal with proposed change from the new curriculum to his current teaching if these activities are challenged?

3. *Teachers' beliefs about teaching* seemed to be based on his learning and teaching experiences. What roles they play in his learning on the INSET course? What influence of theory-learning will have on his beliefs? What influence of the challenge from the new curriculum will have on his former beliefs?

Appendix 10: Example of analytic nodes by Nvivo