



Teacher cognition of experienced Taiwanese university teachers of English

Kelly Shufen Chan

A thesis submitted to the University of Technology, Sydney

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

2015

Supervisor

Professor Alastair Pennycook

Certificate of Authorship

I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor is it being submitted as part of a candidature for any other degree. I also certify that this thesis has been written by me and that any help received in preparing this work, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

Acknowledgements

The period of study for this PhD has been a period of personal growth during which I received support and encouragement from a great number of individuals. First and foremost, I cannot find words to express my gratitude to my supervisor and mentor, Professor Alastair Pennycook, for his unwavering support and encouragement over the years. His guidance has made this a thoughtful and rewarding journey. His generous heart allowed me to make mistakes while he waited for my understanding to develop. Without his guidance and support this thesis would not have been possible.

Thanks are also due to all those who gave me support in the different stages of my doctoral candidature. These include Dr. Ross Forman and Dr. Kitty Te Riele for the insights they have shared. I also owe profound thanks to Maria Chisari, Mehal Krayem, Dr. Kate Bower, Sirinut Sawatdeenarunat and Stephanie Fletcher. I am thankful for their friendship and guidance. They supported me with a positive and ‘can-do’ attitude which helped me complete the thesis. I am grateful to the UTS Housing, especially Katie Hallam and the RN teams, for being enjoyable mates and enlivening my doctoral life.

I would like to thank librarians Dr. Patrick Tooth who answered my emails in regard to endnote questions and Jemima McDonald who assisted me in ordering the materials for my research. I owe my deepest gratitude to my editor Dr. Lorraine Shannon for her excellent editing. The level of professional expertise she offers is both comforting and reassuring. It is because of her that I am able to approach my writing and research on a much more scholarly plane. I would also like to thank the lecturers and students who took part in this study for generously sharing their time and thoughts. I have learned much through our conversations. Last but not the least; my thanks go to my parents and grandparents who have always been there for me.

Table of Contents

Certificate of authorship.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of tables, model, pictures and appendices.....	xi
Abbreviations.....	xiii
Abstract.....	xv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Overview: English as global English.....	1
Statement of the problem and the purpose of the study.....	2
Theoretical framework.....	4
Research methodology.....	16
The summary of the chapters.....	18
Research questions.....	22
Definitions of the terminology.....	23
Subject matter knowledge.....	23
General pedagogical knowledge.....	23
Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).....	23
Procedural knowledge.....	23
Teacher cognition	24

Teacher beliefs	24
Grounded beliefs (GBs)	24
Received knowledge (RK)	25
Teacher's teaching/practices	25
Contextual factors (CFs).....	26
Grammar Translation Method (GTM).....	26
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	26
Teaching approach.....	27
Teaching Method	27
Teaching strategy	28
Teaching technique.....	28
Chapter 2 The context: English and Taiwan	29
Introduction.....	29
The impact of globalization and English as a lingua franca	29
Reasons which led to the promotion of English teaching in Taiwan	32
Reform of English education	35
The teaching practice of English in Taiwan	38
Conclusion	40
Chapter 3 Literature review.....	41

Introduction.....	41
Effective teaching	41
Teacher cognition	45
Received knowledge.....	57
Grounded beliefs	63
Knowledge, beliefs and relationship with teachers’ practices	67
Contextual factors	73
Significance of the study.....	76
The framework of EFL teacher cognition.....	78
Chapter 4 Research Methodology.....	79
Overview	79
Theoretical framework and Research design.....	81
Data collecting procedures: classroom observation.....	85
Interview	87
Participants: Student participants.....	88
Teacher participants.....	90
Recruitment of experienced teachers	92
The research site	94
Data collection	104

Data analysis.....	105
Triangulation	109
Credibility and validity	109
Limitations of the study	110
Chapter 5 Teachers’ practices and teachers’ cognitions	112
Introduction.....	112
The importance of understanding teachers’ practices.....	113
The presentation of teaching strategies:.....	114
Authoritarian.....	114
Friendly	117
The presentation of content:	121
Motivational	122
Informative	125
The presentation of subject matter:.....	130
Grammar translation method (GTM).....	130
Communicative language teaching (CLT)	141
Conclusion	155
Chapter 6 Received knowledge, grounded beliefs and contextual factors.....	161
Introduction.....	161
Beliefs	163

Received knowledge (RK)	164
Received knowledge acquired from SLTE program.....	166
Grounded beliefs (GBs)	168
The influence of the apprenticeship of observation	168
Teachers' personal learning experience	184
Personal teaching experiences	187
Learning from the students	192
The notion of contextual factors.....	214
Standardized textbook and prescribed curriculum.....	216
Large class size	222
Segregated skills limited teaching	224
Examinations limited teaching approach.....	226
Lack of ongoing teacher development support	229
Conclusion	235
Chapter 7 The congruence or lack of congruence between teacher cognition and classroom practice	240
Introduction.....	240
Received knowledge inconsistent with practices.....	242
Received knowledge consistent with practices.....	248
Using RK to criticize GBs.....	251

Relationship among RK, GBs and classroom practice	255
Conclusion	262
Chapter 8 Conclusions: teacher cognition and language teacher education..	266
Prologue to the finale	266
The framework of EFL teacher cognition	268
Received knowledge and grounded beliefs	270
Contextual factors	274
Implications for teacher preparation and teacher development.....	277
Implications for language teachers	283
Future research	285
Appendices	287
Appendix 1: Information letter (for teacher participants)	287
Appendix 2: Teacher’s background	288
Appendix 3: Teacher’s individual Semi-interview questions.....	289
Appendix 4: Information letter (for student participants)	290
Appendix 5: Student’s background	291
Appendix 6: Semi-interview questions (student focus-group)	292
Appendix 7 Chinese data collection information.....	293
Appendix 8 Sarah’s Power Point Slides for listening/speaking class.....	299

Appendix 9 Reading text from Ian’s reading class.....	316
Appendix 10 Reading class of Emma and David.....	317
Appendix 10.1 Reading class of Emma and David.....	318
Appendix 11 Listening/speaking class of Matthew	319
Appendix 12 Reading class of David – Reading Comprehension.....	320
Appendix 13 Listening and speaking class of Hannah	321
Appendix 13.1 Listening and speaking class of Hannah.....	322
Reference List.....	323

List of Tables, Model, Pictures and Appendices

Chapter 4:

Student interviewees.....	85
Teacher participants.....	85
Teachers' gender & their age.....	86
Teachers' teaching status.....	86
Listening/speaking laboratory.....	92
Standard reading classroom.....	92
Pictures in the campus.....	93

Chapter 8:

8.1 The framework of EFL teacher cognition.....	262
---	-----

Appendix 1: Information letter (for teacher participants)

Appendix 2: Teachers' background

Appendix 3: Teachers' individual semi-interview questions

Appendix 4: Information letter (for student participants)

Appendix 5: Students' background

Appendix 6: Semi-interview questions (student focus-group)

Appendix 7 Chinese data collection information

Appendix 8 Sarah's Power Point Slides for listening/speaking class

Appendix 9 Reading text from Ian's reading class

Appendix 10 Reading class of Emma

Appendix 10.1 Reading class of Emma

Appendix 11 Listening/speaking class of Matthew

Appendix 12 Reading class of David

Appendix 13 Listening and speaking class of Hannah

Appendix 13.1 Listening and speaking class of Hannah

Abbreviations

1. ACTA: The Australian Council of TESOL Associations Inc
2. ET: expert teacher
3. EIL: English as international language
4. ELT: English language teaching
5. FLT: foreign language teaching
6. ESL: English as a second language
7. EFL: English as a foreign language
8. EU: European Union
9. FL: foreign language
10. ESL: English as a second language
11. ESP: English for specific purpose
12. EFL: English as a foreign language
13. GEPT: general English proficiency test
14. MOE: Ministry of Education
15. NESTs: native English speaker teachers
16. NNESTs: non-native English speaker teachers
17. NES: native English speaker
18. NNES: non-native English speaker
19. PK: pedagogical knowledge
20. SLTE: second language teacher education
21. SMK: subject matter knowledge
22. SOL: Speakers of other language
23. TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication
24. TESOL: Teaching of English to speakers of other languages

25. TE: teaching English

Abstract

English has become a lingua franca and English Language Teaching (ELT) is now a flourishing business worldwide. Within ELT, teachers whose first language is not English, constitute a rapidly increasing majority. However, their voices are seldom heard within mainstream global ELT culture. Hence, this research is a study of the professional practice of six experienced Taiwanese teachers of English engaged in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at university level in Taiwan. The study explores how teachers learn to teach from their years of teaching experience. It operates within an interpretivist paradigm and employs qualitative methods of lesson observation and teacher/student interviews.

It investigates how/what teachers do in the classroom, what teachers know, why teachers teach the ways they do, the sources of teachers' knowledge and beliefs and the relationship among their practices and their knowledge and/or beliefs. The data reveals a gap between teachers' beliefs and their practice. The findings show that teachers' understanding of (1) received knowledge (2) grounded beliefs (3) and contextual factors influence their practices. These components are all interwoven and interconnected. This study therefore discusses the complexity of these three major interlocking components from the findings of the thesis.

Teachers' cognitions influence what teachers do and the interaction between them and their students, and form their individual teaching practices. Each teacher's grounded beliefs have a greater impact on their practice than their received knowledge. Received

knowledge is mostly derived from overseas and is acquired by each teacher from SLTE programs. Received knowledge often contradicts but does not necessarily conflict with grounded beliefs which are the teacher's own, long-standing language learning/teaching beliefs that are situated where they work.

Contextual factors play a significant role in intervening between the received knowledge or received beliefs and practices. Contextual factors are perceived differently by each individual teacher; some teachers believe a grammar translation approach is the only effective approach in a large class; others amend CLT method to fit large class numbers and a teacher-centered local context. The results are relevant for teacher preparation, teacher development, language teacher educators, educational practitioners, scholars, TESOL organizations, policymakers and future research.