WESTERN TESOL PROGRAMS AND CONTEXTUALLY RESPONSIVE ELT IN CHINA

by

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MA (Ed), BS (Psych)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (Research)

Deakin University

March 2017
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I am very grateful for many people who generously encouraged and supported me throughout this research journey. I firstly acknowledge the contributions, guidance and kindness provided by my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Indika Liyanage. I appreciate the learning opportunity to work with him. My appreciation is extended to my associate supervisor, Dr Josephine Lang, for her ongoing encouragement, input, and support, which is a great value for me. I also thank Dr Claire Spicer for her supervision at the early stage of my candidature. I cannot express my gratitude to all supervisors for inspiring me, and for helping me enhance research ability and develop scholar identity during this journey.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ping Huang for her valuable advice, Liu Shujuan as a professional NATTI translator for translation help, and Dr Kate Hall and Ron Peek for providing academic language support. I also received lots of help from colleagues, staffs and other academics of the Arts and Education Faculty at Deakin University, and I greatly appreciated.

Many thanks to Dr Floriana Badalotti for detailed and professional proofread my thesis. Thanks also to Dr Laura Gurney for assistance with editing and helping me refine draft.

This thesis cannot be completed without the trust and contribution of research participants. Their insightful reflection allowed me to explore the research questions and to increase my research enthusiasm.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. I am deeply indebted for their constant support and unconditional love.
Abstract

With rapid globalization, education systems around the world face various opportunities and challenges in responding to domestic and international student needs. In particular, the demand for English Language Teaching (ELT) has created a significant international education market for Anglophone countries where more than 80% of the total enrolment of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programs comprises international students. This is a crucial phenomenon for both the countries providing these programs and home countries to which students return afterwards. At the centre of this phenomenon is the important question as to how well international students can apply the knowledge and skills gained during these overseas teacher education programs (TESOL) contextually responsively in students’ home contexts. This thesis explores this issue by focusing on a group of Chinese teachers of English who have undertaken TESOL qualifications in Western countries. Semi-structured interviews were used as the instrument of data collection. The findings show that whilst the programs undertaken by the participants were beneficial to them generally, certain important aspects were contextually irrelevant, and had limited impact on their teaching practice. In this thesis, these findings are discussed with a view to informing the current policies and practices regarding the offering of these programs in Western contexts and development of professional development initiatives within local educational institutions that employ graduates from these programs.

Key Words:

TESOL; Chinese international students; Contextual responsiveness; EFL/ESL teacher education; Professional development
Abbreviations and Glossary

CLT     Communicative Language Teaching
EFL     English as a Foreign Language
ELT     English Language Teaching
ESL     English as a Second Language
NNES    Non-native English Speaker
NNESB   Non-native English Speaking Background
TESOL   Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TTEP    TESOL Teacher Education Programs

ESL/EFL  English as a Second Language (ESL) refers to the place where English is an official language or a crucial public language about which students have considerable resources outside the classroom. English as a Foreign Language (EFL), however, is a subjects taught in class. The exposure to a language environment outside class is rare or even non-existent. For the teaching approach, methods and materials, there are differences between ESL and EFL.
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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Due to rapid globalization, education systems worldwide face both opportunities and challenges in acquiring international and global dimensions in order to respond to increasing student mobility. In this introductory chapter, I firstly present the background of my research project, outlining the concept and history of internationalization, the international education market, and international students. The statement of the problem is then addressed and research questions presented, followed by the focus of the study from the perspective of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teacher education. The significance of the study is then presented and a structure of the thesis provided at the conclusion of the chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Scientific and technological developments, along with processes of globalization, have reinvented the ways in which knowledge is accessed and acquired (Huang, 2016). This is particularly true of the higher education sector. The term internationalization has come into popular use in education contexts during the past three decades (Knight, 2004, 2015a). Contemporarily, education institutions seek to foster international, intercultural and global dimensions within all aspects of administration, teaching, research and expansion (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Anderson, 2003; Knight, 2001; Leask, 2004). These changes include an increasing tendency to internationalize educational curricula to accommodate the needs of local and international students (Huang, 2016). Internationalization processes have become a worldwide phenomenon and are of particular significance to Anglophone countries. International education, as a significant and beneficial export industry, contributes a significant economic profit to host countries. Higher educational institutions, as the central drivers of the international higher education market, have been and continue to be largely influenced by the profit-driven direction of the internationalization process,
leading to various reforms and changes aimed towards increasing participation in this competitive global market.

In this section, I outline the context of my research in the field of international education. Firstly, I introduce the concept of internationalization and the history of the internationalized higher education process. In addition, I briefly outline the scope of the international higher education market, with the contribution of international education as a beneficial export industry from a social-economic perspective. Finally, the motivations and expectations of international students are discussed, and the roles played by international students in the education market are highlighted.

1.1.1 The Concept and History of Internationalization

The use of the term *internationalization* has been popular in education since the early 1980s (Knight, 2004, 2015a). The definition of internationalization has evolved over the past three decades, changing from an emphasis on internationalized systems and services in higher education institutional contexts (Arum & Van de Water, 1992) to a broader meaning, which encompasses characteristics of internationalization at national, sector and institutional levels with international, intercultural and global dimensions (Knight, 2015a). The updated definition proposed by Knight (2015a) reflects the change of internationalization in new emerging discourses, including transnational, borderless, and cross-border education (Huang, 2016). As Knight (2015b) defines it, internationalization is the “process of integrating an internationals, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (p. 2), and manifests at the national, sector and institutional levels.

Scientific and technological advancements, along with processes of globalization, have reinvented the ways in which knowledge is imparted and acquired in the 21st century. Increasing tendencies to internationalize educational curricula to efficiently accommodate the needs of local and international students have come about, most notably in the last two decades (Brandenburg & Wit, 2011). The internationalization of educational curricula is generally underpinned by
academic, socio-political and socio-economic factors (De Wit, 2009; Huang, 2016; Knight & De Wit, 1995; Qiang, 2003).

Academically, the internationalization of curricula is undertaken to foster excellence in teaching, learning and research. Therefore, in this process, these dimensions are re-conceptualized to align with internationally recognized standards (Qiang, 2003). This in turn facilitates increased academic activity and inter-disciplinary research, which usually generates intense collaboration between institutions, both locally and globally (Harman, 2005). Socio-politically, the internationalization of curricula aligns closely with a nation’s security and ideological interests (Qiang, 2003) where internationalized education is regarded as a future diplomatic investment (Knight, 1997). Socio-economically, it targets both short-term and long-term profits to cater to the needs of international students, in order to attract more international enrolments and function competitively in the international education market (Huang, 2016; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2014; Qiang, 2003).

International education has a long history; exchanges of academics and researchers between universities were common in ancient India, China and the Middle East (Davis & Mackintosh, 2011). In the late 20th century, international education was typically synonymous with foreign aid (Australian Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Program, 1984). A recently released paper by the Australian Federal Government, *Australia in the Asia century: White paper* (Australian Government, 2012), called for a departure from discussions of education as aid or trade, to education as meaningful collaboration (Australian Research Council, 2011; Universities Australia, 2012). The concept of internationalization of higher education, however, involves a much broader scope (Knight, 2015b). A comprehensive understanding of the processes involved in internationalization of education can effectively result from a consideration of various dimensions: institutional, national and international, and accompanying intercultural and socio-educational phenomena (Huang, 2016).

Processes involved with internationalization of higher education, which can be examined from institutional, national and international levels, began in around
1985. At the institutional level, higher education institutions were encouraged to recruit international students to full-fee charging programs (Davis & Mackintosh, 2011) and to work intercultural and international dimensions into their activities. Related activities included increased collaboration in research, curricular development through the international movement of both students and staff/researchers, internationalization of curricula to impart a deep understanding of other cultures and enhance students’ foreign language competencies, and development of open learning programs between countries to expand onshore and offshore education exportation (Harman, 2005; Huang, 2016).

At the national level, higher education internationalization came about not only due to the lack of popularity of aid programs (Davis, Davis, & Mackintosh, 2011), but also due to increasing economic profits recognizing the commercial potential of international students. This led to a change in focus from aid to trade with the establishment of a series of government policies and regulations. Developed Anglophone countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, underwent higher education sector reforms and gradually developed an export industry to attract international students, most of whom came from developing countries with non-native English speaking background (NNESB) (Huang, 2016; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008).

At the international level, globalization began around the mid-1980s, depending mainly on the development of technology and communication. Instead of the traditional scholars’ visit/exchange, online education programs such as distance education and online open courses have emerged and are increasing in popularity (Kim & Bonk, 2006). In the past decade, other terms relevant to international education, such as transnational education, borderless education, and cross-border education, have arisen (Knight, 2015b). These terms refer to the different emphases on the relationships and diversities between and among various nations, communities, and cultures. In general, various terms used in international education represent the richness of meaning attached to internationalization (Huang, 2016).
1.1.2 The International Higher Education Market

International higher education, as a beneficial export industry, contributes a significant economic profit to host countries. For example, international students contributed almost US$27 billion dollars to the United States in 2014 (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2014), and the income from non-European Union students’ tuition fees in the United Kingdom higher education sector were about £3.5 billion in 2013/2014 (HESA, 2014). In Australia, higher education generates more than AUS$31 billion in revenue each year (Australian Government, 2014). Universities, as the central drivers of the international higher education market, are significantly influenced by the profit-driven direction that the internationalization process has taken and have been required to meet the needs of international students in order to participate successfully in the market (Huang, 2016).

In the Australian context, the international education market has become the fourth largest export industry and contributes to Australia’s economy and society in a multifaceted way. Economically, education and related services, including personal travel, consultancy services and correspondence courses, generate billions of dollars in revenue each year (Australian Government, 2014). For New South Wales and Victoria, international education contributed the highest export income of any industry in 2014, with the states earning AUS$5.8 billion and AUS$4.7 billion respectively (Productivity Commission, 2015). Australian education institutions are the direct beneficiaries of the international education market and the paid tuition fees from international students, and use these resources for teaching and research, infrastructure development, and human resource management. Revenue from international students also helps to fund domestic education and stimulate the participation of domestic students in higher education (Group of Eight, 2014). Besides their impact on educational institutions, international students’ financial contributions also widely affect communities. Firstly, this prominent export industry contributes, both directly and indirectly, to the creation of hundreds of thousands of associated job opportunities (Economics Deloitte Access, 2011). According to Deloitte Access Economics, for every 10
international higher education students enrolled in Australia, an estimated 2.9 jobs are generated (Economics Deloitte Access & Australia, 2011). Secondly, international education has significant positive impacts on tourism, attracting around 160,000 overseas tourists (including international students’ family members and friends) each year. It is estimated that these tourists spend approximately AUSS2,000 each during their stay in Australia (Group of Eight, 2014). Additionally, international education stimulates associated professional sectors, such as catering and real estate, and contributes to improving social infrastructure (Group of Eight, 2014). International students have also become a crucial source of skilled migration that addresses skill demands, thus rendering them a valuable resource for Australia’s long-term economic growth (Group of Eight, 2014; Productivity Commission, 2015). All in all, international education plays an important role in Australia, in a variety of industries.

1.1.3 International Students

An increasing number of students have chosen to study abroad in recent years. Student mobility has created a trend wherein students with NNESB from developing countries travel to developed Anglophone countries to undertake further education. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report in 2008, international students are defined as students who are neither citizens nor permanent residents of the host country, and who have obtained qualifications for entry into the host country’s programs of study from their home countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2008).

Over the last three decades, the global mobility of students has almost quadrupled. In 2008, the number of students studying overseas exceeded three million (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2010). In 2014, the global number of international student enrolments had grown close to five million (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2014). Based on current annual growth rates, it is expected that about seven million students will choose to study overseas by the year 2020 (Liyanage, Bartlett, Walker, & Guo, 2015). Among the destinations chosen by these
international students, the top Anglophone host country is the United States, with 16.4% of the total international students, followed by the United Kingdom with 12.3% of the total number (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2014). Australia ranks third with a share of 5.5% of the international student market (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2014). International students represent a significant portion of enrolments in higher education sectors. In 2014, the percentage of total higher education enrolments represented by international students reached 20% in Australia and the United Kingdom, about 12% in Canada and 4% in the United States (Atlas, 2014). For some programs, such as masters programs in TESOL, more than 80% of enrolments may be made by NNESB international students (Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008), indicating a significant percentage of overall enrolments in language teacher education programs has far-reaching implications for educational systems and providers (Huang, 2016).

Central Asia is the home of the majority of the global international student population. According to ICEF Monitor (2014), approximately 53% of international enrolments are from Asian countries (Huang, 2016). China, India, South Korea, Malaysia and Japan account for approximate 36.7% of the total number of international students (Green & Ferguson, 2015). China is the largest source country in the world – Chinese students represent more than one third of the total international student enrolments in the top three Anglophone destinations: the United States (Education, 2014), the United Kingdom (HESA, 2014) and Australia (Australian Government, 2012).

Due to immigration policies and job opportunities, an increasing number of international students choose to return to their source countries for practice following completion of their studies. Based on the latest data of the Chinese Ministry of Education, increasing numbers of Chinese students decide to return to China to pursue careers upon completing their education programs abroad. In 2014, more than 360,000 of about 460,000 Chinese international students returned to China, representing an increase of 3.2% from the previous year. The total number of returnees since 1978 has reached more than 1,080,000 and the return
rate from 1978 to 2014 stands at 74.5% (Chinese Government, 2015). The trend of returning has become a social phenomenon (Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2013; Kenney, Breznitz, & Murphree, 2013), and leads to both opportunities and challenges faced by international students and educational institutions (Huang, 2016).

International students have their own motivation and expectations for overseas study. Student motivation can be defined as the “students’ energy and drive to learn, work effectively, and achieve to their potential” (Martin, 2002, p. 35). Motivation highlights students’ individual roles in maintaining engagement in their education and is an important factor in determining academic success (Elton, 1988). Expectations are defined as preconceived ideas or strong beliefs that something will take place (Azmat et al., 2013). Both motivation and expectations are critical driving forces of behaviours and are recognized to significantly influence outcomes and achievement (Alderman, 2013; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Huang, 2016; Strecher, DeVellis, Becker, & Rosenstock, 1986).

The factors impacting on international students’ motivation are classified into two groups: push factors and pull factors. Push factors originate in the students’ source countries and include economic wealth, demographic factors and educational standards. Economic wealth factors, including family income and financial security, are particularly influential in international students’ decision-making (Azmat et al., 2013; Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007). Students with low socio-economic status show more motivation and higher expectations for education (Dhesi, 2001). Demographic factors mainly refer to the population and educational resources of source countries, which may contribute to a lack of education opportunities (Kreber, 2009) and fierce competition, consequently increasing the demand for overseas education. Educational standards mainly address education quality in developing countries. Higher education in source countries has been criticized for low teaching and research quality, and unsatisfied student learning outcomes, therefore encouraging students to look for overseas education opportunities (Azmat et al., 2013). On the other side of the equation, pull factors from host countries include university reputation, academic quality
and choice, social networks and opportunities for permanent residency. University reputation concerns the reliability of the host school in terms of teaching, research, material standards (Katiliute & Neverauskas, 2015) and the value of the degrees obtained (Davidson, Wang, & King, 2008). Academic quality and choice factors include the choice of programs and the quality of both programs and staff, which are influenced by the internationalization process to adapt to the needs of international students (Asmar, 2005). Social networks mainly refer to the support and assistance available for international students to successfully adjust to their new environment (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008) and have an important impact on their decision-making. The final factor, opportunities for permanent residency, concerns whether international students can gain permanent residency after graduation. This is possible in some cases, including in Australia. For example, Australia’s Skilled Migration program is designed to attract specific skill-shortages groups; however, they are not open to all international students. Subsequently, many international students return to their home countries to seek employment and professional development after graduation (Huang, 2016).

The expectations of international students generally centre on the quality of universities’ programs/services, the international experience, and future career opportunities (Huang, 2016). The quality of universities’ programs and services refers to academic support and general services. International students expect to improve their language skills and gain professional knowledge during their time abroad, requiring host universities to provide high standard educational and support services (Min, Khoon, & Tan, 2012; Prugsamatz, Pentecost, & Ofstad, 2006; Sherry, Bhat, Beaver, & Ling, 2004). Guided by this expectation, international students value suitable curriculum design, clear course objectives, quality teaching performance with a high level of presentation skills, detailed and prompt feedback from lectures and tutors, and good interaction between staff and students (Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995; Sherry et al., 2004). Other learning support opportunities, such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, critical thinking education, and writing workshops are also valued by international students (Andrade, 2006; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011), especially Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) with Eastern education backgrounds
(Durkin, 2008; Huang, 2007; Myles & Cheng, 2003). International students also expect host universities to provide social facilities and opportunities to help them engage in local life (Dalglish & Chan, 2005), and many hope to be taken care of by host universities and local communities (Sherry et al., 2004). Expectations related to their international experience include enhanced understandings of different cultures, improved cross-cultural knowledge skills (Deardorff, 2006) and friendships and networks with local peers (East, 2001). International students may also expect to develop new ways of thinking and behaving (Andrade, 2006; McClure, 2007). In terms of future career opportunities, international students expect that their qualifications will be recognized by potential employers, that their studies will improve their professional competencies, and that their time spent abroad will increase their chances of good employment (Dalglish & Chan, 2005; Min et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2004). Students also express their desire for job-training or work experience from their host countries (Scutter, Palmer, Luzeckyl, da Silva, & Brinkworth, 2011). Overall, these unique motivations and expectations require host universities to develop awareness of and responses to them in order to cater effectively to international students.

Over the past three decades, the higher education sector has evolved into a market-driven export industry (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Coinciding with the introduction of the marketing mechanism into higher education institutions, the nature of the relationship between universities and international students is now based on the economic process of educational service exchange (Coaldrake, 2001). According to Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006), from a marketing perspective universities are viewed as education service providers and international students as customers, co-producers and products (Arambewela, 2009). As customers, students are positioned as individuals who consume “a given product or service” (Arambewela, 2003, p. 2). In the context of international education, university education is viewed as a highly valued professional service offered to fee-paying international students, representing the service-recipient paradigm (Havranek & Brodwin, 1998). Although the status of students as customers has been questioned in light of typical commercial perspectives, such as the view that customers are always right and that their
desires must be satisfied (Singh, Grover, & Kumar, 2008), there is a general acknowledgement that international education has a profit-driven orientation that positions educational institutions as service suppliers and international students as target service-receivers in this marketing context (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Kotler, Fitzroy, & Shaw, 1980; Mazzarol, 1998; Russell, 2005; Singh et al., 2008). This customer conceptualization could also be analysed from a stakeholder point of view, wherein international students stand as key stakeholders, alongside funders, academic and non-academic staff and government, with an interest in education institutions (Houston & Rees, 1999; Singh et al., 2008). This would mean that institutions are obliged to match the needs of stakeholders in service delivery (Guolla, 1999), highlighting the recipient role of international students in the market (Huang, 2016).

However, as co-producers who shape educational services (Houston & Rees, 1999; Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003), international students are not positioned as passive recipients but rather active participants in education, co-creating the quality and value of education together with institutions (Hennig-Thurau, Langer, & Hansen, 2001; Kotze & Du Plessis, 2003). In the competitive global international education context, international students are the key targeted customers that universities want to attract, and consequently, many changes are made to cater to their various needs. Several reforms in higher education sectors have been made in response to international students’ requirements. These include the development of new types of educational institutions and program pathways (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Hellstén, 2002), internationalized curricula with enhanced multicultural dimensions (Huang, 2006; Knight, 2004; Qiang, 2003), and the application of new technologies for online learning and distance/off-shore study (X. Liu, Liu, Lee, & Magjuka, 2010; Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Tu, 2001; Volery & Lord, 2000). From this perspective, the relationship between institutions and international students is not limited to that of providers and receivers, but should rather be viewed as a cooperation partnership, which determines the value of the educational service and balances the interest of both parties (Huang, 2016).
Lastly, within the broader scope of the human resource market, international students are also viewed as products with intellectual and labour benefits to be purchased by potential employers (Arambewela, 2009; Guolla, 1999). From this point of view, the knowledge and skills acquired by international students during their higher education programs should match the expectations of international and intercultural employers and lead to successful performance within diverse global employment contexts (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008; Stukalina, 2008). One of the main goals of higher education is to prepare graduates with sufficient abilities to enter the employment market and function satisfactorily (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Johnson, 2000; Lowden, Hall, Elliot, & Lewin, 2011). Moreover, in terms of the relationship between higher education and employment, when viewed from the profit-driven perspective, the value of higher education services mainly depends on their recognition within labour markets (Alexander, 2000; Teichler & Kehm, 1995). Consequently, there is pressure from both employers and international students for educational services offered by higher educational institutions to align with labour market expectations (Huang, 2016).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

With rapid globalization and increasing student mobility, education systems worldwide face various opportunities and challenges in responding to diverse student needs. This is particularly pertinent to English Language Teaching (ELT), which creates an enormous international education market, attracting English teachers to Anglophone countries for professional development. In line with these phenomena, international students enrolled in TESOL Teacher Education Programs (TTEP) have attracted increasing research interest (Liyanage, Walker, & Singh, 2014). The perceived importance of English language literacy (Liyanage & Walker, 2014b) has created a market driven agenda for international education both in the West and East. As English language competence is a necessary condition for overseas study, the preparation of English language teachers to meet increasing student needs for language proficiency has become a pronounced issue. A large numbers of institutions have been created to teach English as a Foreign
Language (EFL) / English as a Second Language (ESL) in response to the increasing numbers of students seeking to study abroad in recent decades. Of these students, many elect to study TESOL themselves and return to contribute to this growing industry. Studying abroad in Western, English-speaking developed countries is increasing in popularity for pre- and in-service English language teachers from developing East Asian contexts. Given their key future roles within language preparation programs, these students’ overseas study experiences play influential roles in the decision of future international students to study abroad. In the context of rapid development of international education and English language education, TTEP students act as the bridge to connect current overseas education with future international students, thus inhabiting significant roles in international education.

Although most English language teachers are non-native speakers of English, until two decades ago there was limited research focusing on this group (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). A persistent gap remains in the research concerning teacher education and teachers’ understandings of how Western TTEP curricula cater to international students’ local contexts. The challenges faced by higher education institutions and international students concerning the reconciliation of educational services with the needs of labour markets are particularly marked for NNES students who return home for work, in light of the differences between their educational and employment contexts (Alptekin, 1984). For universities as service providers, a key concern is how to internationalize curricula with international and intercultural dimensions, in order to provide contextually responsible educational services for international students from various backgrounds. For many international students, the decision-making processes which lead them to study abroad strongly relate to their future career prospects (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Brailsford, 2010). Moreover, in light of the consistent expectations expressed by international students – which influence satisfaction levels and the service gap (Min et al., 2012) – the provision of educational services to facilitate their pursuit of personal and professional development is a crucial challenge faced by higher educational institutions. Consequently, the local working experiences of students with overseas study backgrounds should be taken into consideration. As NNES
international students represent the majority of enrolments in language teacher education programs in Western host countries, and most of them plan to return to their source countries to become EFL/ESL teachers upon graduation, their stories of working in local contexts should be valued and analysed in order to explore the outcomes of their education for their teaching practice and career prospects (Huang, 2016).

This study addresses this research gap and contributes to understandings of the working experiences of NNES students following completion of Western TTEP after returning home. I have set out the following three research questions to guide the study:

**Primary:**

How contextually responsive is the knowledge gained by a group of Chinese teachers of English during a Western TESOL program?

**Secondary:**

1. How are the Chinese teachers with overseas TESOL qualifications accepted in local contexts?

2. To what extent do the knowledge and skills acquired during overseas education programs have a pragmatic function in the Chinese EFL teaching context?

**1.3 Significance of the Study**

This research project aims to investigate context responsiveness in TESOL teacher education via an examination of how Chinese international students apply the teacher knowledge and skills learnt in Western educational settings to an Eastern context. Through analysis of participants’ teaching experiences and examination of their application of practical knowledge in local educational settings, the research aims to deepen current understandings of the pragmatic function of Western TTEP. In addition, the research goals are to better understand
Chinese English-language teachers’ teaching experiences following their return home to work, to provide further examination of their application of practical knowledge in local school settings, and to provide guidelines for improving curricular internationalization in Western educational institutions to match the needs of international students working in a global context.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters, comprising the introduction, the literature review, the method, the combined results and discussion, and the conclusion. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the background of study and research questions. Chapter 2 (literature review) outlines general teacher knowledge and specific language teacher knowledge, introduces language teacher education from the aspects of professional development, and focuses on English teacher education and teaching practices in Western and Eastern contexts, which is the core of the research inquiry. Chapter 3 (method) presents the research design, methodological approach and framework, data collection processes with ethical issues. In Chapter 4 (findings and discussion) data are presented and discussed to respond to each research question. These findings are analysed in terms of key themes with regard to the contextual responsiveness of Western TTEP. Finally, in the conclusion chapter (Chapter 5) I review the research and findings, and offer implications for future practice concerning Western TESOL teacher education for international students.
Chapter 2 ELT IN WESTERN AND EASTERN CONTEXTS

2.1 Introduction

This study investigates the pragmatic function of knowledge and skills acquired during Western TTEP in Eastern educational settings, especially in the Chinese context. Contemporary and popular understandings of teacher knowledge, teaching practice, and teachers’ professional development in China and the West are essential to the investigation. This chapter reviews relevant literature related to these concepts to set the theoretical context of the study. The literature review is organized into five sections. The first section reviews general teacher knowledge, including content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and support knowledge. In the second section, teacher beliefs, teacher language awareness, and practical knowledge in English language teacher education are discussed. Following this section, a discussion of the field of language teacher education is presented, encompassing the definition and history of language teacher education, pre-service education, in-service professional development, and the associated issues and challenges. The fourth section of the literature review examines TTEP in the West, including the history and context of TESOL, current TESOL teaching practices, and issues and challenges. The fifth section concerns EFL teaching in China, involving a discussion of the history and context of EFL teaching in the country, current EFL teaching practice, and the issues and challenges faced by Chinese teachers of English. In the final section, the issue of contextual responsiveness of language teacher education programs is discussed. Existing literature addressing this issue calls for research on the pragmatic function of Western TESOL knowledge and skills as applied in Eastern contexts, thereby highlighting the research gap, which this study addresses.

2.2 Teacher Knowledge

Teacher knowledge, the core element of teacher education, is of crucial importance for the improvement of teaching practice and learning outcomes.
Responses to the question of what teachers need to know to practice effectively continue to develop with changing social development and, as such, are an ongoing area of research.

During the 1980s, influenced by the idea of “comprehension and reasoning, transformation and reflection” in teaching, Shulman (1987, p. 1) constructed a conceptual framework for teacher knowledge, encompassing sources and types of knowledge, teachers’ reasoning and decision-making processes, and implications for educational policy and reform. Accordingly, seven categories of teacher knowledge were identified: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and learner characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of “educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical bases” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8).

In the following sections, a discussion of content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and support knowledge is provided. Content knowledge refers to knowledge of the subject to be taught (Shulman, 1986). For language teachers, content knowledge includes knowledge of pronunciation, grammar, and pragmatics. High quality instruction requires extensive content knowledge to improve comprehensive content-based knowledge transfer (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008).

Teachers’ general pedagogical knowledge has been defined as “the knowledge needed to create and optimize teaching-learning situations” (Voss, Kunter, & Baumert, 2011, p. 952), including teaching goals, teaching procedures, and instructional practices and strategies. This construct is based on an assumed rationality underpinning teachers’ decision-making processes, involving factors such as teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and personal learning and teaching experience, which relate to knowledge of learners and educational contexts (Mullock, 2006).

The concept of pedagogical content knowledge combines both the knowledge of content and of general pedagogy, whereby students can access and attain knowledge by transforming the disciplinary content (Shulman, 1986). For
EFL/ESL teaching, popular teaching approaches and methods include grammar-translation, the direct method and audio-lingualism; presentation, practice and production; communicative language teaching (CLT); task-based learning (TBL), and the lexical approach. In recent years, with the development of information technology, the trend to integrate technology into pedagogical content knowledge became popular, contributing to development of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Koehler, Mishra, & Yahya, 2007; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Park & Oliver, 2008). Support knowledge refers to auxiliary knowledge used to facilitate teaching practice, including knowledge of digital teaching tools, and knowledge of history and geography (Chai, Koh, & Tsai, 2013). As language is embedded within social and cultural contexts, language teachers are required to have sufficient support knowledge associated with language use across settings in order to assist learners to develop their competencies to communicate in different contexts (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997; Shulman, 1987; Valencia, 2009).

In summary, teacher knowledge is fundamental for effective practice. Ideally, teachers with sufficient and appropriate professional knowledge are able to flexibly adjust their teaching practice to maximise students’ learning outcomes. Current policies require teachers to have integrated skills, necessitating linguistic, social, emotional and intellectual development (Valencia, 2009).

### 2.3 Language teacher knowledge

#### 2.3.1 Language teacher beliefs

Teacher beliefs, which concern the nature of knowledge and learning underpinning teachers’ decision-making, have been studied in order to better understand the factors underlying teacher practice (C. Kim, Kim, Lee, Spector, & DeMeester, 2013). Teacher beliefs shape teaching behaviours by influencing teachers’ perceptions, judgments and interpretations (Johnson, 1994). Teachers may hold different beliefs concerning the nature of teaching and learning processes. For example, some may promote practices, which revolve around
direct transmission of information, whereas others may hold constructivist understandings of teaching and learning (Xu, 2012). Teacher beliefs are shaped by both pedagogical and cultural contexts, and exert a strong influence on teaching practice.

Language teacher beliefs are considered to be a significant measure of professional growth and a crucial element in language teacher learning (Borg, 2011). Language teachers believes have attracted research attention for decades, and are considered “important and pertinent to understanding how languages are learned and taught” (Wesely, 2012, p. 98). They encompass beliefs about language and learning, learners, and teachers themselves. Generally, teachers’ beliefs in these areas will guide the way in which they structure learning opportunities for students, determine their expectations for learner behaviours and outcomes, guide assessment practices, and affect their self-efficacy and wellbeing (Zee & Koomen, 2016). For example, teachers who believe that language learning occurs when learners are provided with opportunities for meaningful interaction may highlight these aspects during their teaching, viewing learners as partners to the learning process (Xu, 2012). On the other hand, teachers who view language learning as a transmissive process, with learners acting as recipients of knowledge, are more likely to deliver classes that are teacher-dominated. In the interest of best practice, language teachers should also seek to develop their understandings of learners’ beliefs about language and language learning in order to avoid misalignment between learner expectations and teaching practice (Nhapulo, 2013).

Language teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers’ judgments of their capabilities to influence learning and bring about desirable learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy also place high expectation on their learners, which promote positive learning outcomes (Omotani & Omotani, 1996). Teachers with high self-efficacy are also more active than those with low-self efficacy in exploring new teaching methods and developing professional skills, and they also maintain higher levels of emotional wellbeing (Bandura, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Xu, 2012).
In summary, in the field of English language teaching, teachers’ beliefs on language, learning/teaching, learner/teacher can impact the effectiveness of learning/teaching performance. As concerns beliefs about learners, on the one hand, language teachers’ views towards learners can be various, such as seeing them as receptacles or partners (Williams & Burden, 2004). The perception of learners as receptacles may lead teachers to ‘fill’ learners with knowledge, and in this case the teaching practice will be teacher-dominated. On the contrary, guided by the belief that learners are partners in the learning process, teachers attempt to consider learners’ characteristics and individual variation in order to cater to their personal needs (Xu, 2012). Additionally, language teachers should be sensitive towards learners’ own beliefs about language and language learning. Nhapulo (2013) suggested that language teachers should be aware that their learners may hold previous beliefs about the process and difficulty of language acquisition, and the expectation of teaching methodologies and achievement. In respond to learners’ language learning beliefs, it is necessary for language teachers to identify learners’ beliefs, analyse and clarify their misunderstandings, and provide appropriate guidance and motivation to them, in order to maximize their learning outcomes.

2.3.2 Teacher language awareness

Language awareness is a key element in teachers’ language knowledge. According to Glasgow (2008), “it is expected that the language teacher will have a holistic understanding of the language being taught in terms of its components, cultural nuances and general use” (p. 322). The Association for Language Awareness (ALA) (2016) defines this term as “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use”. Language awareness covers various domains and involves dimensions concerning teachers, learners and language acquisition, including cognitive aspects like attention and noticing (Svalberg, 2007). In 1997, Thornbury defined teacher language awareness (TLA) as “the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enable them to teach effectively”
In this section, the relationship between TLA, language knowledge and teacher practice is discussed.

A considerable amount of literature investigating language knowledge generally focuses on two specific types - knowledge about language, or subject-matter knowledge, and knowledge of language, concerning proficiency (Andrews, 2007; Górska-Poręcka, 2013; Harbon, 2007; Luk & Wong, 2010; Svalberg, 2012). Knowledge about language held research attention in early TLA studies for more than 20 years. After the research shifted its focus to native speaking and non-native speaking trainees during the 1980s to 1990s, subject-matter knowledge and associated teaching issues have returned to the fore in recent years (Andrews, 2003). Tests examining language teachers’ subject-matter knowledge have been established in tandem with increased academic interest in developing professional standards. Bodies disseminating such tests include the British Institute of English Language Teaching (BIELT) and US National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (Andrews, 2003).

Knowledge of language refers to proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and classroom language assessment (Coniam & Falvey, 2007). A framework for the relationship between language proficiency, TLA and pedagogical content knowledge was introduced by Andrews (2003). In this conceptual framework, language proficiency includes psychomotor skills, strategic competence and language competence. There is an interconnected relationship between subject-matter knowledge, language proficiency, and pedagogical content knowledge (Andrews, 2001; Wright & Bolitho, 1993, 1997).

TLA has an important relationship with pedagogical practice (Andrews, 2001, 2007). TLA affects the ways in which teachers provide input, give feedback, highlight grammatical features, and reflect on learners’ understandings (Andrews, 2001). In order to improve teaching quality and maximize learning outcomes, it is necessary to take TLA into consideration, alongside the context demands of teachers’ work (Andrews, 2007).
An increasing amount of attention has been paid to language awareness in bilingual and multilingual contexts (Ellis, 2012; Garcia, 2008; Hawkins, 1999; James, Garrett, & Candlin, 2014; Jessner, 1999). In response to the assertion that “conceptualizations of language awareness in the current CELTA teacher-training syllabus and textbooks which are widely used in English-speaking teacher-training contexts seem to have moved in a monolingual direction” (Ellis, 2012, p. 17), there is a call for research on the potential contribution of NNES teachers’ first language and other languages. As NNES teachers represent the majority of English language teachers worldwide (Coskun, 2011), it is necessary to investigate the effects of bilingualism and multilingualism on their teaching practice. Studies have shown that learning experiences of English as foreign or additional language deepen NNES teachers’ understanding of learning process (Reis, 2011), which can benefit their students. NNES teachers with high levels of language proficiency can also be role models, motivating students to learn English as an international language (Higgins, 2003; McArthur, 2001). In bilingual and multilingual teaching contexts, NNES teachers are encouraged to view English as a culturally situated product, and to promote English learning by enhancing language awareness in a cross-linguistic and cross-contextual way (Reis, 2011).

2.3.3 Practical knowledge in ELT

Research on teaching has a long history and has traditionally focused on scientifically grounded indicators and process-product studies without consideration of teaching context (Verloop, 1996). Since the 1980s, research interest has gradually shifted to pay more attention to teaching context, taking into consideration complexity and practical matters in classroom teaching (Carter, 1990). Traditional teaching evaluation measurements are proposed should be replaced by a more comprehensive approach operating from an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Research into teachers’ practical knowledge subsequently emerged and came to be treated as a core element of teacher assessment (Verloop, 1996).

Practical knowledge concerns teachers’ knowledge of classroom conditions and the practical matters they need to consider in teaching practice in their own
educational setting (Gay, 2010). According to Johnston (1992), practical knowledge is generated through personal and professional experience, and is influenced by the co-relationship shaped between person and context (Goodson, 1992). Practical knowledge has been widely acknowledged as core content for teacher education and the literature on practical knowledge includes pedagogical content knowledge, subject matter knowledge, and teachers’ integrated understanding of pedagogy and environmental context (Borg, 2015; Edwards & Mercer, 2013; Gay, 2010).

The scope of practical knowledge encompasses a broader view of teaching practice as a comprehensive ecological system. With respect to English language teaching, Harmer (2007) viewed language as a sign of culture, which includes two aspects: embodying culture, and expressing and reflecting culture. He emphasized the role of context in teaching practice, identifying it as one of five key elements alongside content, linguistics, students and strategies (Harmer, 2007). Context encompasses geographic, conversational and social cultural factors. Geographic factors include institutional background, such as whether an institution is public or private; education objectives, concerning whether students are studying for domestic exams or foreign exams; the classroom size and arrangement; and available teaching resources, such as textbooks, blackboards, projectors and computers. Conversational factors refer to the students’ local conversational background, and social cultural factors refer to contextual educational and teaching cultures, such as the Socratic and Confucian cultures.

Content mainly refers to teaching materials, of which textbooks are a crucial component. Textbook content should be understood from the points of view of source culture and target culture. In NNES EFL/ESL contexts, both teachers and students represent the source culture, and the English language is the sign of target culture. Both cultures provide key content for student understanding and language learning. The content of teaching is also influenced by standards disseminated by the state, assessment practices, curriculum procedures, teaching time, parents and students’ needs, and the relationship between teachers and
students. All of these factors could be also classified as constituting the teaching background, and determine actual teaching practice (Harmer, 2007).

Linguistic factors mainly refer to the four main language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. These four skills, developed within specific situations and contexts, need to be taken into consideration for effective information delivery. Language factors also include what language(s) the teacher chooses to use in teaching practice, which may influence learning outcomes. Student factors refer to students’ characteristics, including gender, age, native language(s) and educational background. They also include students’ learning styles and strategies, and preferences for classroom participation.

Teaching strategies refer to the various approaches to language teaching. For English language teachers, prominent approaches include grammar translation, the direct approach, the reading approach, the audio-lingual approach, the silent way, dynamic immersion, the natural approach, total physical response and CLT (Carrasquillo, 2013). Each teaching approach has its own advantages and disadvantages and therefore teachers should be selective in using different teaching approaches and strategies according to their context and learners (Harmer, 2007).

In summary, language teaching is a complex practice influenced significantly by the teaching context. For English language teacher education, practical knowledge is crucial in all elements of teaching practice. Pre-service teachers should develop their practical knowledge and ability to be flexible to cater to students’ needs and thus maximize learning outcomes.

2.4 Language Teacher Education

In response to globalization and the internationalization of higher education, English as an international language plays a significant role in social-economic activities, and information and knowledge development at international, national and interpersonal levels. English language teachers, as the core element in the language learning process, play an important role in education systems.
Subsequently, researchers have expressed much interest in English language teacher education to meet the needs and requirements of students, labour markets, educational contexts, and national policies. In this section, English language teacher education is reviewed in four parts, concerning definitions and the history of language teacher education, pre-service education, in-service professional development, and associated issues and challenges.

2.4.1 Definitions and history

Although the TESOL field has been developing since the late 1960s, language teacher education is still a relatively young research field (Nemoto, 2013). Language teacher education refers to the process of learning to teach language, and “undergirds the definition of how … [language] teacher educators create professionals in our field” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 398). The goals of language teacher education programs are “to provide opportunities for the novice to acquire the skills and competencies of effective teachers and to discover the working rules that effective teachers use” (Richards & Nunan, 1990, p. 15).

Historically, in response to a lack of theoretical frameworks for language teacher education, researchers sought to identify effective language teaching by analysing teacher behaviours, teacher-student interactions, and learning performance (Chaudron, 1988). During previous decades, driven by scientific empirical investigations (Freeman & Richards, 1993), research focused more on “what teachers needed to know and how they could be trained than on what they actually knew, how this knowledge shaped what they did, or what the natural course of their professional development was over time” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 398). In separating the contexts of teacher education and teacher practice, the focus of programs became decontextualized. In addition, the lack of recognition of teacher beliefs, language awareness, and personal learning/teaching experience led to a disconnection between language teacher education and teaching practice. Consequently, the effectiveness of language teacher education programs came under scrutiny. Later research began to consider teachers’ cognition (Shavelson & Stern, 1981), personal variation (Chaudron, 1988; Pajares, 1992), and contexts of practice (Grossman, 1990; Kleinsasser & Savignon, 1992). Currently, research on
language teacher education is moving towards a broader understanding of language education in a global context (Jenkins & Leung, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

2.4.2 Pre-service education

Pre-service teacher education aims to provide knowledge and skills to prepare beginning teachers for professional practice. Curricula for pre-service education may cover training materials, pedagogies, learning experiences, and evaluation procedures (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Wright, 2010). These foci encompass particular orientations to teaching teacher knowledge, teachers’ roles, and the role of content and assessment.

During the 1990s, second language teacher education evolved to include reflective practice (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Wallace, 1991), a synthesis of teacher knowledge, teacher learning, teacher thinking, and pedagogical content knowledge in the language teacher education content (Wright, 2010), and the promotion of method support (Huling, 1998). Currently, language teacher education programs aim to develop reflective and collaborative teachers, with an emphasis on “language awareness-raising, collaborative learning, reflection and learning from experience” (Wright, 2010, p. 267).

There is a debate associated with the representation of practical teaching skills and academic knowledge in teacher education programs. The distinction between practice and theory leads to a distinction between teacher training and teacher education programs. Teacher training is based on specific teaching contexts to provide learning opportunities for early career teachers to observe experienced teachers’ practice and peer teaching (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Richards, 2008). Teacher education programs focus more on academic knowledge and theories. However, teacher education has been criticized for failing to develop teachers’ practical skills (Richards, 2008).
2.4.3 In-service professional development

In-service professional development is considered as the keystone for educational improvement (Dede, Ketelhut, Whitehouse, Breit, & McCloskey, 2008). Teacher professional development is about “teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth” (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). Teacher professional development is responsive to social-cultural factors, institutions, policy environments, and educational systems and reforms (Boardman & Woodruff, 2004; Borko, Elliott, & Uchiyama, 2002; McIntyre & Kyle, 2006; Sandholtz & Scribner, 2006). For teachers themselves, studies show the changes teachers in the areas of teacher cognition, beliefs and practice that technical knowledge was improved (Ponte, Ax, Beijaard, & Wubbels, 2004), teachers’ expectations of student achievement gained sustainable development (Timperley & Phillips, 2003), and different teaching practice regarding student self-regular learning were produced (Hoekstra, Brekelmans, Beijaard, & Korthagen, 2009).

Teacher professional development aims to develop teachers’ cognition and practice (Avalos, 2011). Participation in professional development may enhance teachers’ knowledge and contribute to improved practice, as well as having a significant effect on their beliefs towards student achievement (Borg, 2011; Timperley & Phillips, 2003; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Researchers suggested that high quality teacher professional development should be planned and designed “based on a carefully constructed and empirically validated theory of teacher learning and change” in order to “promote and extend effective curricula and instructional models – or materials based on a well-defined and valid theory of action” (Yoon et al., 2007, p. 4).

2.4.4 Issues and challenges

Second language teacher education is affected by both internally initiated change and external pressures (Richards, 2008). The former issue refers to the “teaching profession gradually evolving a changed understanding of its own essential knowledge base and associated instructional practices”, while the latter one is
influenced by globalization tendencies and the changing status of English as an international language, calling for accommodation of the “demand by national educational authorities for new language teaching policies, for greater central control over teaching and teacher education, and for standards and other forms of accountability” (Richards, 2008, p. 1).

The key challenge faced by language teacher education is to create a coherent model applicable to English language teachers working in a global context. Although teaching and learning is understood to be situated within specific contexts (Carrier, 2003; Eun, 2001; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008), language teacher education programs lack cultural and educational responsiveness. As most English language teachers work in non-native English speaking contexts, the establishment of contextual responsiveness is a key issue for language teacher educators.

2.5 Western TESOL teacher education

2.5.1 History of TESOL

TESOL has a long history in the West (Howatt & Smith, 2014). The field evolved within two recognizable stages – modern language teaching in the West, and ELT within and beyond Western contexts.

Modern Western EFL teaching first manifested in European schools, and focused on emulating the teaching of classical languages. It was influenced by the growing demand for English literature, philosophy, and theology in the European continent (Howatt & Smith, 2014). The associated teaching methodology applied a bilingual, grammar-based approach, known as the grammar translation method (Dodson, 1967). However, developing conceptions of the importance of spoken language led to changes in teaching methodologies as speech came to be viewed as the essential foundation for language activity (Howatt & Smith, 2014). In the USA, the conversation-based natural method was subsequently developed and widely implemented (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Linguistics teaching also started during this reform time. The reform period, which focuses on language-spoken
skills, has significant impact on following periods of language teaching history (Howatt & Smith, 2014).

ELT within and beyond Western contexts developed throughout the twentieth century, orienting around the scientific period (1920-1970), and the communicative period (1970-2000 and onwards) (Howatt & Smith, 2014). During the scientific period, progressive-thinking language teaching perspectives expanded from the West to the East with the development of ‘situational language teaching’ (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 44). Language teaching in the West gradually came to emphasize the scientific basis of teaching, borrowing from academic fields such as psychology and resulting in teaching practices oriented around correct language formation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The communicative period arose in response to criticisms of these approaches, centred on meaning-focus, and personal and contextual relevance (Howatt & Smith, 2014). Thus the objective of language teaching moved from “the acquisition of well-rehearsed skills” to “real-life communication” via the application of the communicative approach (Howatt & Smith, 2014, p. 88). As English became an international language, an internationally valid language assessment system was created by the Council of Europe. Other changes include the establishment of the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which highlight the value of purposeful language use (Mureșan & Ursa, 2014; Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet Gómez, 2009). Associated teaching methods are currently in wide use (Ellis, 2003; Richards, 2005).

2.5.2  Context and language education

ELT education derives from Western origins, and is embedded in comprehensive English-speaking-community contexts. Among the contextual factors, the inseparability of language and culture stands out, especially the common educational philosophy, shared widely in Western contexts. Brown asserts that “A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or cultures” (Brown, cited in Jiang, 2000, p. 328).
In this section, I will discuss constructivism, a fundamental educational philosophy in Western culture, which has had a significant impact on Western ELT practice.

**Cultural context - Constructivism**

According to Loyens and Gijbels (2008), the core concern of constructivism is consideration of how individuals co-create meaning. As such, constructivism emphasizes the value of collaborative learning. The constructivist tradition emerged from Socratism. As Socrates himself left no written records, his philosophic and pedagogic ideas are traced primarily from the accounts of other sources, such as Plato’s dialogues, Xenophon and Aristotle (Pihlgren, 2008). Although there are debates concerning which of Socrates’ doctrines are authentic, Plato’s dialogues and the records from Xenophon and Aristotle provide a description of Socrates’ dialogic method, which has been developed as the source of constructivism and contemporarily influences Western educational practice.

Socrates is famous for the statement that “an unexamined life is not worth living for man” (Pihlgren, 2008, p. 27), and he aimed to encourage individuals to examine their lives through questioning. Socrates emphasized the personal characteristics of questioning and argued that opinions should not depend on authority, common sense or tradition. He adopted the process of *elenchus*, referring to investigation, to his questioning method in order to discover knowledge and a desirable way of living (Vlastos, 1991). Socrates asked, analysed and presented analogies to his interlocutors to clarify understandings and discover knowledge. The central idea of elenchus is that, although no answer or result may ultimately be achieved, knowledge is developed and discovered through this dialogic process, the aim of which is enlightenment (Pihlgren, 2008). The role of questioner requires sufficient knowledge and experience to interpret messages and connect ideas, provide assistance to others and control the process of elicitation by asking pertinent questions (Jackson, Haroutunian-Gordon, & Rehage, 1989). In summary, Socrates’ questioning method developed from
dialogues and focused on question-based interaction with individuals who hold different opinions, oriented towards the goal of knowledge elicitation.

From a pedagogical perspective, the Socratic questioning method is viewed as a constructivist approach (Akinde, 2015; Lam, 2011; Meyer & Land, 2013). According to constructivists, new knowledge is constructed based on prior knowledge and conceptions, requiring teachers to address misconceptions and facilitate students’ development of new knowledge instead of teaching through direct instruction (Fensham & Gunstone, 1994). The Socratic questioning method emphasizes the importance of preconceptions in the learning process and is considered the origin of modern inquiry-based learning, which includes four key steps for teaching practice: eliciting preconceptions, clarifying preconceptions, testing hypotheses, and accepting or rejecting hypotheses (Lam, 2011). The first step is to ask learners a question – a question that is based on everyday life or that proposes a contradictory idea to their own preconceptions. Then, by using clarifying questions, teachers encourage learners to explain their preconceptions using specific examples in their context. Later, as learners are eliciting and clarifying their preconceptions, they create hypotheses or propositions based on these, which will be challenged or tested by further critical thinking and counter arguments. Finally, following examination and interrogation of their hypotheses and propositions using counter examples, learners decide to accept or reject their preconceptions (Lam, 2011). Through the examination of fallacies and the presentation of counter-arguments, learners’ misconceptions are resolved and new conceptions are formulated based on their learning (Akinde, 2015). During this process, learners are encouraged to examine their opinions and knowledge frequently and cultivate critical thinking (Boghossian, 2003) for independent lifelong learning.

Based on the constructivist approach, learners should be responsible for their learning. As proactive participators, learners are encouraged to independently discover and explore knowledge in a learning process, while teachers should provide assistance to facilitate learning when needed. Language learners are encouraged to develop their proficiency via collaborative, cooperative and
interactive language use with peers. In this process, teachers are required to focus more on meaning exchange instead of grammatical form and error correction. Teachers work as organizers to provide language resources and to design teaching activities to create a student-centred learning environment (Liyanage, 2003).

2.5.3 Current TESOL teaching practice

Current TESOL practice recognizes English as a global language, with variations in the ways in which it is used in different contexts (Canagarajah, 2015). Social and ecological elements embedded in language are also valued. Language teachers attend to attention individual variation among students, such as underlying identities, beliefs and ideologies, learning preferences, and personal engagement with the language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). There is also a significant tendency to consider the local teaching context in an ecological way (Guo & Beckett, 2007; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). In terms of pedagogical practice, CLT has become a popular language teaching approach in Western contexts (Nunan & Carter, 2001). CLT emphasizes how language is used (Harmer, 2007), and is oriented toward the goal of communicative competence. It is concerned with the meaning and use of the language in the real world rather than structure or grammar (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT is communicative in purpose, and is designed in a way to encourage students’ desire to communicate. It focuses on content instead of form and encourages students to use a variety of language structures, free from teacher intervention (Harmer, 2007). CLT is learner-centred and challenges traditional teacher-centred approaches such as grammar translation.

Western language teaching focuses on students’ communicative language ability, fostered within a communicative classroom environment to maximize learning outcomes. Various communicative activities have been developed to help students engage in practical contexts, such as information-gap, reasoning-gap and opinion-gap activities (Harmer, 2007). In these contexts, English language teachers are required to manage student interaction, elicit student input, give instructions and check understandings. Particular emphasis is placed on eliciting skills, as teachers work as facilitators to assist students to develop knowledge (Hedge, 2001). Six
key aspects of language learning are emphasized: vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, speaking and writing. Details regarding teaching strategies suggested for each of these aspects are discussed in the following sections.

As Hedge (2001) explains, the connotative meaning of vocabulary items refers to users’ attitudes and emotions informing selection and interpretation of words, and includes both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations between words in particular sentences and contexts. Various practical teaching strategies for vocabulary, such as word/mind maps, semantic feature analysis (Araghi & Moghaddam, 2013; Sökmen, 1997), and read-retell-summarize, emphasize elicitation from context and help students with situational use of vocabulary.

Grammar teaching, according to Scrivener (2005), is oriented toward several goals. Teachers should endeavour to expose learners to enough target language input via listening and reading, encouraging students to note how specific terms are used in texts within given contexts. Furthermore, teachers should give students opportunities to understand the form, meaning and use of items and practice using them in a safe environment. Students should also be encouraged to use new grammar when speaking and writing for communication in order to consolidate their understanding and recall (Scrivener, 2005). In terms of grammar teaching strategies, Hedge (2001) emphasizes that grammar should be contextualized and may be presented in both deductive and inductive ways. Deductive teaching of grammar involves presentation and explanation of the grammar rule in question before students are able to practice using it. Inductive teaching involves providing students with enough examples of the rule to allow them to recognize it by themselves, and providing them later opportunities for practice (Felder & Henriques, 1995; Shaffer, 1989).

In terms of listening, in Western English language classrooms, teaching activities are based on bottom-up and top-down processes (Kelly, 1995; Tsui & Fullilove, 1998). For bottom-up processes, listening practice concerns the sounds, vocabulary, syntax and discourse markers contained in listening materials. A top-down process involves encouraging students to attempt to establish meaning using their prior or schematic knowledge and contextual cues. Listening activities are
generally based on a questioning method to facilitate students’ attempts to understand the meaning of texts on their own, while the role of teachers is to support knowledge discovery (Hedge, 2001).

According to Hedge (2001), the purposes for reading include obtaining information, following instructions and maintaining contact with others, all of which are utilized in social interaction. In order to read effectively, learners need linguistic or systemic knowledge, and schematic knowledge. Linguistic or systemic knowledge includes syntactic and morphological knowledge, whereas schematic knowledge refers to general world knowledge, sociocultural, and genre knowledge. This prerequisite knowledge emphasizes the important role of context (Ghadessy, 1999; Lucas, 2010). In the classroom, students should be given opportunities to read a range of texts, to adapt their reading style according to purpose, and to build knowledge of the language and schematic knowledge for interpreting meaning. Typical reading approaches including pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading activities (Alyousef, 2006). During these activities, teachers may use tasks such as brainstorming, discussing and retelling to engage students in an elicitation process and develop new knowledge in a communicative way (Olson, 1991; Robb, 1996; Stuart & Volk, 2002).

Specific techniques are also employed to foster students’ productive skills of speaking and writing. Two teaching approaches are used to foster students’ speaking skills: the indirect approach and the direct approach (CELCE-MURCIA, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997). Activities associated with the indirect approach include information gap activities and problem-solving tasks, which require students to practice speaking; on the other hand, the direct approach, which is also known as the systematic approach, aims to foster explicit awareness. Popular activities include role plays to encourage student to perform roles in pairs or groups based on real life situations (Hedge, 2001).

Hedge (2001) also discusses two mainstream teaching approaches used to teach writing: process writing and writing as a product. Process writing focuses on the thinking, planning, drafting, discussion, and revision stages of students’ writing, normally undertaken in pairs or groups. The writing as a product approach focuses
on the structure and the language of different text types, including science reports, procedures, factual information texts, and argumentative and persuasive texts such as essays (Hertzberg & Freeman, 2012). Students are required to write based on the characteristics of each text type. In this way, students cultivate the ability to analyse different texts or genres, and produce their writing according to different contexts (Hedge, 2001).

Communicative language ability consists of linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and fluency (Hedge, 2001). Linguistic competence revolves around learners’ ability to accurately pronounce words; utilize grammatical forms; apply appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation to express meaning; build vocabulary and acquire script and spelling rules, and achieve accuracy in syntax and word formation. Pragmatic competence relates to the relationship between grammatical forms and functions – competent language users know how to use stress and intonation to express attitude and emotion, learn the scale of formality, use the pragmatic rules of language and select language forms appropriate for the topic and listener. Discourse competence concerns turn taking, the use of discourse markers, opening and closing conversations, understanding and reproducing contextualized written texts in a variety of genres, correct use of cohesive devices and the ability to understand authentic texts. Strategic competence concerns the ability to take risks in spoken and written forms, the use of a range of communication strategies and mastery of the language needed to apply these strategies. Fluency concerns the ability to deal with information gaps in real discourse, process language and respond appropriately with a degree of ease and with reasonable speed in real time (Hedge, 2001).

In summary, current mainstream TESOL practice in the West follows a communicative approach, which emphasizes how language is used, and focuses on students’ communicative language ability in real-life situations. However, CLT has not only been applied in Western contexts, but has also been introduced to non-native English speaking countries in the East, including China and India.
2.5.4 Issues and challenges

Within CLT, there are two sub-approaches: process-based and product-based approach. Process-based CLT highlights the creation of classroom processes to facilitate learning procedures and improve communicative competence, which includes content-based instruction and task-based instruction. Content-based instruction has been defined as “the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teaching the language itself separately from the content being taught” (Krahnke, 1987, p. 65). However, implementation issues faced by content-based instructors surround the extent to which content is sufficient for language skills development. Another issue is associated with language assessment. Questions concerning what should be tested and how have been the object of debate (Richards, 2005). On the other hand, task-based instruction is a response to the assertion that “language learning will result from creating the right kinds of interactional processes in the classroom, and the best way to create these is to use specifically designed instructional tasks” (Richards, 2005, p. 30). Challenges faced by task-based instructors include the creation of valid criteria to select and sequence tasks, assessing effectiveness, and evaluating outcomes, especially in examination-oriented contexts (Richards, 2005). Product-based CLT focuses more on learning outcomes than processes, and encompasses text-based and competency-based instruction. Text-based instruction revolves around mastering different types of text to improve communicative competence (Feez & Joyce, 1998). However, as this approach leaves little room for personal expression, it may lead to repetition and low motivation (Richards, 2005). Competency-based instruction has been widely used with adults for “work-related and survival-oriented” purposes (Richards, 2005, p. 41).

Recently, CLT has begun to focus more on the social context of teaching/learning practice, and to promote holistic learning by linking educational settings with the outside world and developing practice in line with specific learning goals (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). The key challenge faced by this popular Western teaching approach is identifying effective responses to globalization and the status of
English as an international language. As CLT has been introduced to Asian countries, the question of how to embed culturally relevant content into English language curricula to cater to the needs of language learners poses a challenge, which calls for further research.

### 2.6 EFL Teaching in China

#### 2.6.1 History of Chinese EFL teaching

The impact of globalization on education systems has led to a shift from elite education to mass education, decentralized governmental education systems, and development of transnational education, especially in the Asia Pacific (Zhao et al., 2010). The special global status attached to English has also been given a special place in Asian educational systems (Crystal, 2012). Following the Cultural Revolution and the introduction of the Open Door Policy in 1978, China embraced a national modernization program to stimulate domestic development, based on Western advanced scientific and technological knowledge. English became a necessary key to accessing advanced knowledge and came to be viewed as a vital precursor for national modernization and development (Hu & Adamson, 2012). English language education is promoted nationally in China to enhance national revitalization and competitiveness. As a result, English has been a compulsory subject at all levels, from primary schools to higher education, since the late 1970s (Adamson, 2004; Adamson & Morris, 1997; Hu, 2005b).

#### 2.6.2 Context of Chinese EFL teaching

**Educational context**

The following figure depicts the Chinese education system.
In China, based on the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China implemented in 1986, primary school education is universal and is considered the first phase of basic education nationally (Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007). Children across the country have the right to receive compulsory education, which starts at the age of six or seven and lasts for nine years in most provinces (Nanzhao et al., 2007). In the compulsory education system, most urban primary schools are sponsored and guided by the government, which provides money for equipment, teachers’ salaries and educational resources (Lei, 2004). Due to rapid economic growth and educational democratization, the Chinese educational system has experienced a radical transformation from centralized planning and financing of education to various formats for schooling since the 1990s (Tsang, 2000). The government encouraged the establishment of private schools via the Private and Non-governmental Education Promotion Act. A system to inspect and monitor primary education has been developed at both state and province levels,
and there is increasing local community participation in the primary school sector (Nanzhao et al., 2007). To work as a primary school teacher, practitioners must obtain a teacher’s certificate, which requires the candidate to be a Chinese citizen and to meet certain ethical, practical and academic requirements. Schools have annual quotas set by the state or province education commission for employment of teachers and support staff (UNESCO, 2011).

The primary curriculum comprises academic subjects and practical activities including Chinese, mathematics, English, basic science, arts, music and physical education (Lei, 2004), as determined by the educational authorities of provinces under the control of the central government (UNESCO, 2011). English education in primary schools first appeared in seven economically developed provinces in the late 1980s (Hu, 2005b). With significant economic growth in the 1990s, China enjoyed rapid social development and English came to be considered as a key factor to enhancing national competence in a global era (Hu, 2003). In 2001, the Ministry of Education (MOE) promoted nationwide ELT at the primary school level, beginning in Grade 3, and developed a curriculum outline for primary English (Hu & McKay, 2012). English as the preferable foreign language maintains a significant role in language education in the Chinese primary school sector (Chang, 2006). Goals for teaching at this level mainly focus on developing students’ learning interests and developing a basis for further study (Zhou & ITO, 2011). Primary students are required to achieve Level 2 English proficiency based on the national rating scale.

The history of Chinese higher education can be traced back to 1895, with the foundation of Beiyang University. Before 1949, Chinese higher education was based on a Western-oriented university model. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the higher education sector progressed according to the Soviet Union’s model and some comprehensive universities were reformed into single disciplinary universities (Duan, 2003). In 1979, the Reform and Opening Policy led Chinese higher education into a new era, during which higher education came to be positioned as a channel for social mobility and personal development (Ngok, 2007). In line with decentralization and marketization trends, a more pragmatic
approach to education shaped higher education development, which resulted in the establishment of various schooling formats (UNESCO, 2011), the launch of massive education (Duan, 2003) and the development of international education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In 1999, the first specific legislation, Higher Education Law of People’s Republic of China, was implemented to regulate higher education in the country (UNESCO, 2011). Although higher education institutions now have more power for self-operation than previously, they are still administered by the state education policies and provincial governments, which maintain a significant influence on high-education affairs (Nanzhao et al., 2007; Tsang, 2000). Following curriculum reform in 2001, various majors are offered to students with compulsory and elective courses with academic and practical structures (Xu, 2004). To work in universities, practitioners must meet academic requirements as well as citizenship, ethical and practical criteria. Higher education institutions still have annual quotas set by state or province education commission to employ teachers and staff (UNESCO, 2011).

In response to economic globalization and the Open-Door Policy, vocational education and training (VET) in China has been developing since the late 1970s. As graduates were considered to lack specialized knowledge and skills when they entered the labour market, China realized the importance of educating skilled workers and urgently called for a new VET system to cultivate prospective workers with necessary professional skills, as well as ideological and cultural knowledge. In response to the growing requirement, the Vocational Education Law, which aimed to accelerate the reform and development of Chinese vocational educational system, came into force in 1996 (UNESCO, 2011). An effective vocational education system has since been developed to flexibly cater to the needs of China’s rapidly changing economic and social environments. The VET system comprises secondary skill schools, vocational high schools, and vocational higher education institutes (Velde, 2009). The Chinese VET system experienced rapid expansion in recent years by creating relationships with all vocational education institutions, linking students with job placements, and cooperating with international VET institutions (Han & Singh, 2004). Vocational programs are normally two to three years in length, focused on a variety of
discipline areas to prepare skilled workers in various fields. In order to work in a vocational college, prospective teachers must be college or university graduates, and must meet the same citizenship, ethics and professional requirements as primary and university teachers. Vocational institutions are controlled by the government and receive considerable financial support (Nanzhao et al., 2007).

In higher education English is generally a compulsory course for non-English major student (Du, 2002). College English has been taught in China for more than 30 years. As Chinese English education has been criticized as “deaf and dumb English” (Du, 2012, p. 1), in 2002 the Chinese MOE launched a reform to emphasize the importance of communicational competence by improving college students’ English listening and speaking skills. Five years later, the College English Reform Program (CERP) was established to again highlight communicative skills and to develop students’ English competencies in a well-rounded way (Chen, 2011; Du, 2012). Aims for higher education English learning are to develop students’ ability to use English in professional and social contexts, and raise intercultural awareness for international activities (Zhou & ITO, 2011). Students must attend four to five hours of English study per week, and may also choose elective courses for two additional hours. The Chinese MOE also provides College English Tests (CET) for university non-English major students. CET 4 and CET 6 assess students’ English knowledge, listening, reading, writing, and translation skills. Although students’ performance on CET 4 and CET 6 are no longer related to their academic degrees, this testing system still has a significant impact on college English education.

English courses offered in vocational colleges are similar to those provided in universities for non-English major students. Although ESP education began around 40 years ago, it has developed rapidly in recent years as a branch of Chinese ELT for vocational college students (Aiguo, 2007; Shen, 2008). Students are required to undertake professional English for four to five hours per week and meet the English Curriculum Basic Requirements specifically designed for vocational students in 2000. This requirement sets out the English knowledge and skills that vocational students should master, including translating business
documents, to cultivate their language ability to work in professional contexts (Zhou & ITO, 2011). Vocational students can also sit CET 4 and CET 6, as well as other unified English exams like the Public English Test (PET), which may be valued by potential employers. ESP courses continue to develop rapidly and expand to be learnt at multi-educational levels in China. With the development of global trade and exchange, there is an increasing need for a qualified labour force with well-developed English knowledge and skills.

**Cultural context – Confucianism**

Confucianism, which informs education practices in Eastern contexts, differs from the Socratic method in its assumptions, methods and aims. Confucianism was defined as ‘The School of the Scholars’, referring to a religious and philosophical tradition created by Confucius and his followers (Adler, 2011). Confucius transmitted old values and traditions during the period of Spring and Autumn in ancient China (770-221 BC) (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009). He is also considered the first teacher in Chinese history (Hung-Ming, 1915). Confucius’ teachings, including his thoughts on politics, society, morality, education and religion, served the feudal ruling class to control the ruled class and fundamentally influenced every aspect of individual life in China, as well as in other countries including Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Hung-Ming, 1915). The development of Confucian values largely depended on the promotion of governments, and Confucianism was first identified and established as an official philosophical system by the Han Wu Emperor (Fung & Bodde, 1997). Subsequently, knowledge of the Confucian classics (i.e. The Analects & The Book of Songs) became a compulsory component in the selection of Chinese government officials and critically shaped the examination system in China. Confucian culture still dominates the educational system in modern China, although the traditional Confucian classics have not been taught since the May Fourth New Culture Movement (Dan, 2008). For more than two thousand years, the Confucian doctrine has remained mainstream in China.

The themes of Confucianism may be understood through the prescription of various relationships between people with unequal social status and the
subsequent development of behaviour norms. Confucianism sets out five key relationships: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009). In each of these relationships, the former individual has greater power in the relationship than the latter, with the exception of the friend-friend relationship. The Confucian doctrine also comprises elements and virtues to guide individuals’ behaviours. The five elements of the Confucian doctrine are humanity, righteousness, ritual, knowledge and integrity, called *Wu Chang* (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009), the key social norm that people should follow. There are also various virtues, such as loyalty, filial piety and continence, which regulate behaviour and traditionally contributed to the maintenance of feudal control (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009). Of all the virtues, humanity and righteousness are considered to be the foundation of relationships in the Confucian system (Hung-Ming, 1915). Another key idea relating to personal development is *Jun Zi* (Chinese translation; “perfect man”), which refers to the perfect person, a combination of saint, scholar and gentleman who serves as a moral guide for others (Fung & Bodde, 1997). Individuals aspiring to be *Jun Zi* are to be humanistic, knowledgeable and brave, with an emphasis on self-cultivation (Sun, 2008). A so-called golden rule in Confucianism is, “what I do not wish others to do to me, I do not wish to do to others”, symbolizing key behaviours promoted by Confucianism (Woods & Lamond, 2011, p. 676).

In Confucianism, individuals are viewed as teachable (Dan, 2008); with personal efforts and the efforts of parents, teachers, and peers, individuals may improve their level of education and morality in pursuit of *Jun Zi*. Three key educational thoughts on students, teaching strategies and teaching goals exist in the Confucian doctrine (Dan, 2008; Fung & Bodde, 1997). Firstly, there should be no limit placed on access to education. Education should be offered to all students who want to learn, regardless of their social class, economic condition or intellectual level. Based on the principle of equal access to education, the educated people was expanded in ancient China and opportunities were provided to people with lower social status to move to higher positions, which had a significant impact in the country. Secondly, in terms of teaching strategies, Confucius emphasized that teachers should pay attention to students’ personal strengths and needs to
maximize their potential and use inspiring teaching strategies to help them develop their own perceptions, understandings and knowledge. He also focused on knowledge application, arguing that students should apply what they learn in different contexts. The ability to do so is considered evidence that knowledge has been fully understood. Lastly, the aim of education is to cultivate people with humanity and righteousness, to become Jun Zi and ultimately serve their community and country (Dan, 2008; Fung & Bodde, 1997). Confucius and his teachings have played a significant role in the Chinese education system and continue to influence current educational practices.

In modern China education culture focuses on practice (Mei Li & Bray, 2007), influenced by the teaching of Confucius regarding the teachability of all students and the role of education in allowing individuals to achieve higher social status (Marginson, 2006). It is underscored by the belief that, with enough practice, students may progress and achieve their learning goals. The main teaching approach in China is based on instructionism, involving direct and explicit instruction to learners. Subsequently, learning processes ultimately depend on teachers, rather than on the learners themselves (Lam, 2011). A positive outcome of this practice is that students are required to work hard to make progress and achieve high academic performance. As a result, students are encouraged to not give up easily and to strive hard for success. However, this practice has led to the widespread implementation of the cramming method of teaching and use of the rote learning strategy, both of which place students under considerable pressure and lessen their ability to deal with practical problems flexibly in different contexts. The examination system has become the determinate driving force in China which influences all aspects of education, including content, teaching strategies and evaluation of teaching (Liyanage et al., 2015). Current educational practices in China have a highly utilitarian function and strongly emphasize the outcomes of examination. This exam-oriented educational culture generates advantages and disadvantages for students and, as such, warrants careful consideration (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Kong, 2011; Pan & Block, 2011; Xiaozhou, 2001; You, 2007).
Based on Confucian educational philosophy, the teaching/learning environment in Chinese language classes gives teachers more power to control the learning process by giving directions, which learners passively receive and follow. Consequently, learning is based on teachers’ explicit instruction, and the primary learning resources are the teacher and textbooks. Teachers offer instruction through grading and sequencing content, as well as offering clarification and error correction, creating an individualistic, rather than cooperative, learning environment (Liyanage, 2003).

2.6.3 Current EFL teaching practice in China

With rapid economic growth and the emerging tendency to study abroad in Western educational institutions in recent decades (Adamson & Feng, 2009), China has experienced an ‘English fever’ leading to increased enthusiasm and efforts to master English for personal and professional use (Liyanage & Walker, 2014a). As a result of the increasing popularity of English, questions of effectiveness in language teaching and how to ensure high levels of student proficiency have arisen in the literature, accompanied by discussion concerning appropriate teaching approaches.

The Grammar-Translation Method and Audiolingual Method (ALM) dominated Chinese ELT from 1956 to 1990, underscored by the Chinese MOE English teaching syllabus. The first ELT syllabus issued in 1956 by the MOE emphasized the political ideological function of ELT from a political orientation, which weakens the pedagogical aspects of language learning. The recommended traditional ELT method was the Grammar-Translation Method. According to proponents of the Grammar-Translation Method, learners acquire skills to successfully translate between the target language and their first language by mastering grammatical rules (Silver, Hu, & Iino, 2002). Accordingly, this teaching method is based on systematic analysis of grammar rules and sentence structure. Language is treated at sentence level, and students’ reading and writing skills are prioritized. Accurate language use is one of the main goals of instruction, which is highly depends on teacher. As the name suggests, this teaching approach mainly depends on teaching vocabulary and grammar, and practicing translation
between students’ first language and the target language (Griffiths & Parr, 2001; Harmer, 2007). The approach predominantly centres on rote learning and memorization (Silver et al., 2002).

The later 1963 MOE syllabus positioned English as an important tool for international interaction and exchange. It stressed basic but systematic English knowledge and skills, and suggested the ALM was an ideal teaching approach. The ALM was influenced by behaviourist theories of language learning, which adopted a stimulus-response-reinforcement model (Harmer, 2007). It was argued that, with positive reinforcement and repeated/substitution drills, language learners would develop good habits in language use (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

Unlike the Grammar-Translation Method, the ALM is an oral-based approach. Grammar is taught inductively and teaching practices focus on allowing students to memorize language patterns and dialogues. Accurate pronunciation, grammar and fluency are considered to be of high importance, achieved via drilling techniques including imitation, repetition and memorization (Silver et al., 2002). The ALM is a teacher-centred method wherein teachers act as model language users, and students are positioned as passive recipients who are only required to follow the teacher’s directions (Griffiths & Parr, 2001; Silver et al., 2002).

During the Cultural Revolution, an ELT syllabus was issued to coincide with the ‘Four Modernizations’ program, with a mix of the Grammar-Translation Method and ALM. In 1986, a new syllabus was published which focused more heavily on economic, rather than political, motivations for language learning. English became a subject of a nine-year compulsory education program in 1988 with introduction of new grammatical and vocabulary items in teaching content (Silver et al., 2002).

The two preferred teaching methods under these syllabi, Grammar Translation and the ALM, shared similar characteristics including teacher-centredness, a focus on linguistics, use of memorization in teaching practice, and little or no consideration of context. Consequently, under these teaching approaches, Chinese students faced difficulties in developing flexibility in the use English in a variety of communicative situations.
In response to the desire for more contextually specific, flexible English teaching in China, the current Chinese ELT syllabus, issued in 2005, promotes the accommodation of students’ needs from an ability-oriented teaching perspective (Silver et al., 2002). The new syllabus prioritizes the cultivation of students’ interest in English language learning, and strives to develop their creativity and communicative competence across the macro skills, laying a foundation for further English study (Silver et al., 2002). The syllabus also seeks to develop students’ respect for and understanding of other nations’ cultures and traditions. Based on this guide, the preferred teaching method used in Chinese ELT classes has shifted to CLT. The CLT method was introduced to Chinese classrooms in 1992 by the State Education Commission (Silver et al., 2002). However, although CLT has been advocated and encouraged in mainland China since the 1990s, the vast majority of primary school teachers still adopt a very ‘weak’ version of this approach, and transmissive, teacher-centred instructional practices still have considerable status and popularity.

2.6.4 Issues and challenges

The lack of popularity of CLT in China has been highlighted by various researchers (G. Hu, 2002, 2005a; W. Hu, 2010; Liao, 2000), and ascribed to a variety of factors. Prominent amongst these factors are the socio-educational context and history of the country (Hu, 2002, 2005a; Liyanage et al., 2015; Yu, 2001).

The features of CLT, including the prioritization of comprehensibility over accuracy (Harmer, 2007), are considered by some to contradict the demands of the Chinese educational system, which requires students to build accurate grammar knowledge and strive to obtain high exam scores. In China, education has historically been viewed as an essential way to accessing higher social status. Presently, key high-stakes examinations, such as ZhongKao and GaoKao, represent pathways to higher education (Fang & Warschauer, 2004) and thus significantly influence students’ futures (Liyanage et al., 2015). Subsequently, achieving high scores has become a critical focus and primary motivation for students, parents, and teachers (Fang & Warschauer, 2004). Consequently, the
centrally administered examination system dominates the ELT curriculum and drives language-teaching practice in China. For EFL teachers, adopting CLT practices may attract criticism if students obtain low scores on their exams due to insufficient exam preparation in classes.

Another impediment to implementation of CLT in China is the size of classes and lack of teaching resources. According to Zyngier (2014), in 2010 the average number of students in Australian public primary school classes was 23.2. For other Western countries, including the UK and Finland, the number was around 20. However, the average number of students in Chinese classes is around 60 (Yu, 2001). Large classes lead to constraints in applying interactive approaches like CLT, which involve pair work, role-plays and project work. While Chinese EFL teachers may walk around their classrooms to monitor discussion, they have very little time to provide individualized feedback to learners (Yu, 2001). As Bate (2010) suggests, any class with more than 25 students will be problematic for the application of communicative teaching. The lack of teaching resources in China must also be taken into consideration. Many Chinese teachers are only provided with textbooks, chalk and blackboards (Adamson, 1995). This lack of materials is particularly pronounced in rural areas (Hu, 2005a).

Implementation of CLT in China is also complicated by differing socio-educational cultures. Based on Western education models and Socratic philosophy, CLT is learner-centred and egalitarian. In contrast, in Eastern education cultures, teachers and students do not share equal status in classrooms and learners are required to follow teachers’ directions and receive knowledge (Hu, 2002; Yu, 2001). As most teachers grow up with Confucian education, they may be reluctant to change roles in response to CLT (Hu, 2002, 2005a). Students may also be reluctant to participate in activities (Xu & Chan, 2015) and unwilling to take on a higher level of responsibility for their own learning.

Overall, despite educational authorities’ attempts to promote CLT in China (Hu, 2002, 2005a), traditional instructional methods still predominate in teaching practice, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless, it is important that CLT is not abandoned entirely, as students’ communicative ability should not be sacrificed
for high exam scores. Rather, the accommodation of both goals may be feasible via a combination of traditional teaching methods with the CLT approach to improve teaching quality. In doing so, students may not only be motivated and interested in classroom activities, but may also master language knowledge more quickly and obtain high scores for their exams. Another key issue is the provision of support to EFL teachers to allow them to build their knowledge of a variety of teaching approaches and methods, in order to negotiate appropriate teaching practices according to their local school context (Yu, 2001). No particular method for English teaching is perfect, and CLT is no exception. As a result, resultantly, EFL teachers should develop their flexibility to apply various teaching methods according to their local context in order to maximize teaching and learning outcomes.

2.7 Contextual Responsiveness of ELT Programs

With increased interest in learning English throughout the world, numbers of students are growing in NNES contexts. This phenomenon has contributed to the establishment of a very profitable international education market in English-speaking countries and has created significant demand for qualified English language teachers to work in institutions around the world. The provision of appropriate language teacher education programs, taking into consideration teachers with diverse contextual and personal backgrounds, has subsequently attracted concern (Canagarajah, 2006; Liu, 1998; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008; Liyanage, Diaz, & Gurney, 2016; Liyanage et al., 2014).

Presently, the majority of English language teachers are NNES who work outside English-speaking contexts. Researchers identify the differences between NES language teachers and NNES language teachers from different perspectives (Butler, 2007; Clark & Paran, 2007; Moussu & Llurda, 2008), suggesting that there is a need to take the specific features of NNES teachers into consideration when providing teacher education. Liu (1998, p. 3) argued “in spite of their different backgrounds and needs, these students are usually given the same
training as their native speaker peers”. Teacher beliefs also vary between individuals, and have significant effects on teaching practice (Xu, 2012).

Significant cultural differences between Western and Eastern contexts are also relevant factors affecting teacher education. Based on two different educational philosophies, educational practices in Eastern and Western contexts differ significantly, influencing teaching practice in school settings. The knowledge and skills required for effective teaching in one education context cannot be simply transferred into another. In the Chinese context, communicative instructional practices are not favoured by school teachers (Hu, 2002), as they work against the demands of the Chinese educational system and socio-educational traditions, and are difficult to implement in practice. A previous study examining contextual responsiveness in TESOL teacher education highlighted prevalent issues with applying Western program content to other educational contexts (Liyanage et al., 2016), emphasizing that the key challenge faced by language teacher education program designers is to create a coherent model, which can be applicable for English language teacher working in global context.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the context of the study has been presented. As globalization and the status of English as an international language have led to rapid increases in the numbers of NNES pre- and in-service teachers studying TESOL in English-speaking countries (Brady & Gulikers, 2004), provision of education services that facilitate international students’ pursuit of personal and professional development is a crucial challenge faced by higher educational institutions. However, little research has addressed contextual responsiveness in language teacher education (Liu, 1998; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). In the following chapter, I discuss the method used to investigate the above research questions, including the process of data collection and analysis.
Chapter 3 METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the research reported here was to explore the contextual responsiveness of Western TTEP. In this chapter, the design of the research project and processes of data collection and analysis are presented. This includes description of and justification for the data collection instrument, presentation of participant demographics, theoretical underpinnings informing the study, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Qualitative Design

Creswell (2012) proposed the nature of inquiry shapes the research design and the involved research procedures. As this research project aims to understand the pragmatic function of Western TESOL programs by analysing the post-participation experiences of Chinese teachers of English, the inquiry is qualitative in nature, which is characterized by exploring and understanding an issue (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (1994, p.24) defined qualitative study is “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.”

According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011, p. 7), qualitative research involves “the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest”, and is based on the assumption that meaning is negotiated from different perspectives and contexts. The philosophical roots of qualitative research are phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, which view people’s interactions with the world as based on their own perceptions of reality (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). The main characteristics of qualitative research include data collection within natural settings, the primacy of participant perspectives, acknowledgement of the researcher as a data gathering instrument, subjectivity, emergent design, inductive data analysis and reflexivity (Hatch, 2002). These characteristics refer to the
flexible, evolving and natural essence of qualitative research, catering to the “pluralization of life words” in societies (Flick, 2009, p. 12). Qualitative research is based on the assumption that the world has many concurrent meanings and aims to explore individuals’ experiences to enhance understanding and generate theory. For qualitative researchers, research problems and methods evolve with their deepening understanding of the research topic. Qualitative research generates non-numerical narrative and visual data, and participants typically have extensive interaction with researchers (Gay et al., 2011).

Qualitative research generally comprises a series of stages. Firstly, the goal of the study is selected in order to explore and develop a deeper understanding of a situation, problem or phenomenon. A literature review is undertaken to justify the problem and state the research question in a general way. Data collection, which relies on a relatively small number of participants’ insights and includes their personal perspectives, is then undertaken to explore the research problem. Data analysis is then undertaken to develop meanings and themes. Lastly, the research is written using evaluative criteria and flexible structures, accompanied by a consideration of researchers’ subjective reflexivity and bias (Creswell, 2002).

### 3.3 Phenomenography

Various research approaches fall under the banner of qualitative research (Gay et al., 2011). For my research proposal, I have selected phenomenography to investigate the experiences of English language teachers working in the Chinese context. The phenomenon under investigation here is a group of English language teachers’ experience of the utility of a training course that they completed in an English-speaking country (Western).

The phenomenological approach is based on an interpretive point of view to understand phenomena. The meanings which individuals assign to phenomena and their interactions with them are the focus of this research (Luttrell, 2010). The phenomenological approach stems from the assumption that individuals construct their own conceptual worlds and give subjective meaning to events in their lives – consequently, researchers should approach the meanings of the object of study
from participants’ perspectives and not impose their own preconceptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Phenomenological research emphasizes the value of direct experience and views behaviour as determined by subjective experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz, as the founders of phenomenology, significantly influenced the theoretical foundation of this research approach (Cohen et al., 2007). Husserl proposed that transcendental phenomenology, which concerns the essences of things in everyday life without cultural and symbolic structures, sets people free from the usual pre-conceived way of understanding the world that is taken for granted. Schutz, however, claimed that people make sense of the world through a process of typification, through which they develop the concepts of ideal type from personal experience with biographical locations and social context. Schutz labelled this existential phenomenology (Cohen et al., 2007). These two philosophies both share to some degree the importance of understanding the subjects from participants’ perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

This research approach is widely used in education with the combination of both interpretive/hermeneutic methods and descriptive/phenomenological methods to investigate people’s experiences (Hatch, 2002). Interpretive/hermeneutic methods pay attention to individuals’ interpretations of the ‘text’ of life while descriptive/phenomenological methods concern description of individuals’ orientation to lived experience (Hatch, 2002). The main methods of phenomenological research include protocol writing, interviewing, observing, studying literature and art, and examining diaries, journals, and logs (Van Manen, 1990). For my research project, in order to understand teachers’ experiences, the most appropriate data collection instrument is the interview.

3.4 Phenomenographic Framework

Phenomenography as a research specialization evolved from empirical studies and shares the principles of phenomenological approaches, emphasizing the perception of individuals’ subjective realities and their experiences. Phenomenographic research aims to describe, analyse and understand individuals’ experiences with and understandings of various aspects of their worlds (Marton,
The common focus of phenomenography as a research program and a research tool is to describe people’s experiences. Although the phenomenography developed from phenomenological approaches, the specific characteristics of phenomenography are as follows. Firstly, there are two perspectives to interpret the world, labelled as first-order and second-order perspective (Marton, 1981). The former perspective focuses on description of various aspects of the world, while the latter emphasizes description of people’s experiences of various aspects of the world. Phenomenography is based on the second-order perspective to investigate individuals’ understandings of various aspects of their worlds. Phenomenography focuses on the ‘essence’ of phenomena, referring to common and dominant meanings. Although people may hold various conceptions and interpretations, it is acknowledged that there are limited ways to understand a phenomenon, which represent the mainstream experience that is worth studying. In addition, phenomenography investigates how people experience and interpret a specific phenomenon, which can be perceived and conceptualized. Lastly, phenomenography is not only concerned with what reality or a phenomenon would look like, but also considers how people conceptualize and experience it, which includes cultural background consideration and individuals’ perspectives (Giorgi, 1975; Marton, 1981).

Phenomenography has particular ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Svensson, 1997). As a research method, phenomenography has two main characteristics – explorative data collection and contextual analytic data analysis. Explorative data collection acknowledges the uncertainty of generalizations of meaning, but can have variations concerning the delimitation of the object’s conception and meaning. This kind of data collection aims to both find the general conception of the object and the delimitation of the conceptions, which has been ignored. Phenomenographic interviews focus on individuals’ conceptions of a specific object or phenomenon, sensitive to exploration of interviewees’ delimitations of and experiences with the phenomenon in question. Contextual analytic data analysis concentrates on differentiating parts of the data analysis. In the context of the interview, this phenomenographic data analysis process involves comparison between participants’ responses, classification of
conceptions and development of categories for comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Svensson, 1997).

Phenomenographic research has specific data analysis procedures. I followed the seven coding steps suggested by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991), i.e. familiarization, condensation, comparison, grouping, articulating, labelling, and contrasting, to analyse interview data. For the familiarization step, the transcripts or protocols were carefully read several times in order to become familiar with their content in detail. In this step, mistakes within the transcript were corrected and the transcript completed. The second step, condensation, requires a more focused reading in order to select significant statements or dialogue made by the interviewees to deliver the message of a certain phenomenon. For the third step, comparison, the selected statements or dialogues are compared with each other to find sources of variation or agreement, followed by grouping similar answers together in the following step. For the step of articulating, the researcher attempts to describe the essence of the similarity within each group and regroup the similarities several times. For the next step, labelling, the researcher aims to construct a suitable linguistic expression in order to denote various categories. In the last step, the researcher compares different categories by analysing their similarities and differences (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991). By following the seven steps of data coding, a deeper, personal understanding could be developed and a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon could be gained. For my research project, I focus on the transferability/applicability of knowledge acquired during Western TTEP.

### 3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are the primary data collection instrument used in qualitative research (Hatch, 2002). A research interview is described as a dialogue which aims to explore individuals’ perceptions, attitudes and understandings of an object of inquiry (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011). Interviews are a popular instrument due to their potential for flexibility. They allow interviewees to express their perceptions and understandings of research issues, and also
provide them with opportunities to explain the reasons underlying their thoughts and behaviours. As interviews are interactive, researchers can flexibly adjust their questions to respond to interviewees’ answers and therefore gain more relevant information. Furthermore, as interviewees’ answers are unpredictable, researchers may explore broader and unforeseen information relevant to the research issues. Interviewees’ contextual backgrounds can provide valuable information resources to better understand the reasons underpinning their perception and actions. Interviewees are also offered opportunities to clarify ambiguous research questions, which may lead to more accurate answers (Menter et al., 2011).

However, despite these advantages, there are also some disadvantages in interviewing which need to be taken into consideration. Interviews are time-consuming research and may necessitate material and financial resources. Furthermore, as they are a form of social interaction, the characteristics of both interviewers and interviewees may influence the interview process, and hamper the reliability and validity of research results. The socially interactive nature of interviews may also limit the research topics, as some sensitive topics may be difficult to discuss face-to-face. Interviews may also involve ethical risks, which require researchers to prepare carefully. Conducting interviews requires skills and experience. Interviewers need to be able to build rapport and trust with interviewees, avoid influencing interviewees unconsciously, control the interviewing procedures, and deal with unexpected situations (Menter et al., 2011).

There are several types of interview - semi-structured interviews, and closed and open question interviews. Different types of interviews address different research needs. In semi-structured interviews questions are designed by interviewers based on theoretical structure, which can control the coverage of the research topic to gain insights (Drever, 1995). For my research project, as I hope to understand a phenomenon from individual experience, the semi-structured interview is selected as an appropriate instrument to broaden understandings of people’s conceptions, and therefore gain a rich comprehension of the particular phenomenon.

In conclusion, my research project is based on a qualitative approach by using a phenomenographic framework to conduct semi-structured interviews. The content
of teaching experience is complex, therefore using quantitative methods, such as scales or questionnaires, would only allow insight into some specific features of participants’ experiences. Secondly, participants’ teaching experience informing application of knowledge to the local context is personal and may be based on their own settings. This personal experience can be fully analysed using a phenomenographic framework to understand their experience and the phenomenon comprehensively. In order to investigate conceptions of overseas study experience, participants need to be able to discuss their opinions and experiences in a relatively free manner. For this reason, the semi-structured interview is selected as the most appropriate research tool for the study. Lastly, the context factors underlying the research questions should be holistically considered rather than studying isolated aspects independently of the situation. As teachers’ teaching contexts may be varied, it would be difficult to evaluate their personal experiences with a particular given measure. Applying a qualitative methodology by adopting a phenomenographic framework to conduct semi-structured interviews for the proposed research project can maximize the research outcomes of this study.

In the following section, I will outline the participant pool, the data collection instrument and procedure proposed analysis, and the relevant ethical considerations for this research project.

3.5.1 Participants

The research participants are three Chinese English-language teachers who have gained Western English teaching qualifications at postgraduate level. For my research project, participants were recruited through public schools by posting research flyers publicly, with explanation of research purposes and planned activities. Based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, I then purposively selected teachers for the interviews with no screening process. The detailed demographic information of three English teachers is as follows.
### Teacher profiles

In this section, I will provide the three participants’ profile in the aspects of gender, age, language, education, teaching experience, and overseas study experience. The table below contains a brief overview of the three teachers’ demographic information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daisy</th>
<th>Celina</th>
<th>Qi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (in years)</strong></td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>18-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native Language</strong></td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin)</td>
<td>Chinese (Mandarin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Language</strong></td>
<td>English - moderate to high level</td>
<td>English - high level French - low to moderate level</td>
<td>English - high level German - low level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education</strong></td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-study Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td>3 years Public primary school Urban area</td>
<td>2-3 years University Urban area</td>
<td>6 years Vocational college Urban area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overseas Study Experience</strong></td>
<td>Australia Master of TESOL 1 year No overseas teaching experience</td>
<td>Ireland Master of English Higher Education 1.5 years With overseas teaching experience</td>
<td>Australia Master of TESOL 1 year With overseas teaching experience (0.5 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-study Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td>1.5 years Public primary school Urban area</td>
<td>7-8 years University Urban area</td>
<td>1.5 years Vocational college Urban area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Teaching Experience</strong></td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table, all three participants are young female English language teachers working at public schools with different school levels in urban areas of China. They are NNES in that their native language is Mandarin Chinese and English is their additional language. They all have postgraduate qualifications in TESOL obtained from English-speaking Western countries. During their overseas study, only Celina and Qi had teaching experience. Celina worked as a teaching assistant at a University English Language Institute for about three weeks. In the language class, there were about ten students, mainly from Asian countries, and they took English preliminary course before commencing undergraduate study. Her role was to organize events to introduce Chinese culture, and to teach
academic writing with other teaching assistants and tutors. Qi worked at a private education institute for about five months. Her job was to teach an English course for NNESB students to prepare for VCE exams. All of them had at least two years of teaching experience in China before studying overseas, which indicates that they had a prior understanding of ELT in China. When they returned home, they went back to work at their previous local schools, and with at least one and half years teaching experience they are currently considered as experienced teachers.

3.5.2 Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. For the semi-structured interviews, I used an interview protocol to ask prepared, open-ended questions, which were carefully designed and related to practical teaching matters, to interview participants in Chinese. In this case, using participants’ native language can create a positive rapport and comfortable setting in which they may fully express themselves. Interviews were 40 to 90 minutes in length.

I designed 11 main questions to understand their personal teaching experience. I first asked for interviewees’ demographic information to get a brief picture of them, such as their gender, age, language ability, education level, and teaching experience. I also asked about their working context, in regards to school location and type. Secondly, I asked about the acceptance of their overseas certificates by their local working context; this concerned the value of overseas certificates compared with domestic certificates, which is in response to the research question ‘how Chinese teachers with overseas ESL/EFL qualifications are accepted in local contexts.’ Then, I asked them what they learnt from their overseas English teacher education program, and whether or not the overseas study experiences influenced their current teaching practice. By asking these two questions, I aimed to answer the research questions ‘to what extent the knowledge and skills acquired during overseas education programs have a pragmatic function in the Chinese ESL/EFL teaching context’. In addition, the interview questions about their current teaching practice were also intended to deepen understanding about teachers’ teaching experience, which provided a detailed picture to illustrate the underlying reasons of teachers’ chosen teaching practices and the potential difficulties they faced.
when applying Western knowledge and skills to their local context. The last interview question was to let teachers reflect on their overseas teaching experience and whether or not they would recommend such training to others.

3.5.3 Data Collection

All aspects of the research reported in this thesis were conducted as per Deakin University’s guidelines for conducting educational research involving human participants. In order to select participants, I contacted my college alumni in China (Sichuan Normal University Alumni) via email and WeChat to have them display a flyer created for the recruitment of participants. The interested participants contacted the researcher directly as indicated in the flyers. Enclosed in the email reply were a copy of the plain language statement to view and a Consent form to sign. Consent was received by reply email with signed Consent Form to indicate the agreement to participate. During the interview, I informed participants again of the purpose and procedure involved in the research. I advised them that data would be anonymized and that they might withdraw their consent to participate at any time.

I used WeChat (like Skype) to conduct the semi-structured interviews. For the data translation, as I conducted semi-structured interview in Chinese to create a positive rapport and comfortable setting for participants, in this case, interviews had been audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following transcription of the Chinese data, the checked transcripts had been carefully translated into English. A NAATI professional translator provided help in the translation process to avoid meaning distortion. The technique of Double-Translation was used in the translation process to avoid meaning distortion.

For data collection and storage, the data had been collected in re-identifiable form. The audio recording was transcribed as anonymous. In analysing the transcripts, participants’ names had been removed and codes had been used to refer to the participants. No information gained from the interview could be linked to any particular person and all details were kept confidential.
3.5.4 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, I followed the seven steps outlined by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) for phenomenographic data coding and analysis. I first read the data thoroughly and compared answers given for each question. Based on the existing theoretical literature and in line with the research questions set out for the study, data were analysed and classified into corresponding patterns in order to construct categories. Related patterns were then combined and catalogued into sub-themes. After constructing sub-themes, a pattern of responses and a comprehensive view of the subject matter were established.

3.6 Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sourcing and wring up of the literature review</td>
<td>Feb 2015 - Jun 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Confirmation</td>
<td>Feb 2015 - Dec 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation Date</td>
<td>11th Dec 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining ethical Clearance</td>
<td>Dec 2015 – Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of Participants</td>
<td>Jan 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Jan 2016 – Feb 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>Jan 2016 – Mar 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of Findings</td>
<td>Apr 2016 – May 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of the Thesis</td>
<td>Nov 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained and justified why the research project based on qualitative design and phenomenography approach by selecting semi-structured interview method. The details of participants, instruments, data collection and data analysis have been described and the involved ethical issues have been discussed. I also addressed the research limitations and trustworthiness considerations. The next chapter presents research findings and discussion.
Chapter 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses data from semi-structured interviews conducted with three in-service Chinese teachers of English. Data selection and presentation processes are discussed first, followed by a detailed analysis and discussion of the key themes arising from the interview data in relation to the research questions. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary of the key research findings.

4.2 Data presentation issues

In this chapter, the interview data are presented in terms of each participant’s responses to the three key research questions. Each participant is framed in terms of their responses and how they adapted/adopted or abandoned the skills acquired during their overseas study experience to suit their current local school contexts. Before presenting and discussing the key findings, the issues of data selection and presentation are addressed, followed by participants’ reported understanding of a Western TESOL qualification, knowledge, and skills. Information regarding their current teaching practice, as well as their personal perspectives that inform decision-making, are then provided. Finally, participants’ reflections and concerns relating to their Western TESOL study experiences and applications of English teaching in the Chinese context are presented and discussed.

Interview data are presented based on the phenomenological principle of “to the things themselves” (Bruce, 1994, p. 54), which requires that descriptions of phenomena remain faithful to participants’ interview data. As the analysis process of phenomenography can be described as “an interplay between the researcher’s understanding, the nature of the phenomenon being studied and the style of the available data” (Bruce, 1997, p. 104), there is a reliability issue for interview data regarding the challenge of the the accuracy of reporting.
The presented interview data have been questioned for generating or reflecting a particular author bias (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013), i.e. that the researcher would select data that can be used as evidence to support their particular arguments. In order to address author bias in selecting and presenting interview data (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013), four options are available. The first one is for the researcher/interviewer to focus on the experience of the interviewees and limit any pre-existing views of the issues under study. The researcher is also required to follow the principle of horizontalization, which involves treating all the information supplied by the participants with equal value (Bruce, 1994). The second option highlights the coding process, where the researcher should maintain a focus on the collective experience instead of individual description when coding data (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012), and search for conceptual variations across interview transcripts and the inter-relationship structure, so as to achieve a sense of the representativeness (Åkerlind, 2002). The third option focuses on data presentation. When quoting an interviewee, researchers need to convince their readers that the quotation can represent the average intensity and direction of the response. The last solution emphasizes the importance of reporting any uncertainty in the results.

As the interview and coding processes cannot be completely free of subjective factors from both the researcher/interviewer and interviewee(s), it is imperative to acknowledge incomplete responses, inaccurate memories or misstated facts and to represent the data in the way that respects its original form as much as possible. By doing that, the readers are given the opportunity to incorporate their own interpretation of the data and to have a fuller picture of the phenomenon (Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013). However, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 11) describe data presentation as “an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action”. Hence, oral data from the interviews were transcribed into a set of systematic written data, which have been edited to be more readable and to convey meaningful information to the readers. The repetitive verbatim transcripts have been edited to a polished coherent style without loose ends and ramblings (refer to Appendix 4: Sample of interview transcription). To make sure that the edited versions remain faithful to the
meaning of original statements, language advisors have been involved in the process of checking transcripts for accuracy to avoid meaning distortion.

As interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and had to be translated into English for thesis writing, there was again the issue of potential researcher bias and subjective interpretation that needed to be addressed. In this case, a translator with NAATI certification assisted with the translation process to minimize researcher bias and subjective interpretation. The translator has verified all the cited quotations in the thesis, and the phrases with specific cultural meanings have been explained in detail within their particular context, by providing the original expression in Chinese (refer to Appendix 5: Sample of interview translation).

4.3 Findings and discussion

In this chapter, the approach taken to represent the data themes is to examine the two sub-questions of the key research question. Then, informed by this data analysis, the overarching research question of the study is examined.

4.3.1 Research question 1

How are the Chinese teachers with overseas TESOL qualifications accepted in local contexts?

The analysis of the three participants’ interview data uncovered eight conceptions of teachers’ TESOL qualification acceptance. These conceptions were categorized into two meta-categories: employment-oriented and value-oriented, which are
represented in Figure 2. The following section indicates teachers’ detailed understanding of Western TESOL qualification acceptance for each meta-category. Based on the seven steps of phenomenography data coding and analysis (Dahlgren and Fallsberg, 1991), the outcome space represents phenomena uncovered by whole sample group, followed by participants’ individual conceptions. In sum, this section explores the phenomenon of Western TESOL qualification acceptance in the Chinese school contexts.

4.3.1.1 The employment-oriented conception

![Diagram of Employment Requirements]

Figure 4.2 Requirements of employment

As mentioned in the literature review (refer to Figure 3), the most important requirement to become a qualified English teacher in China is to acquire a teacher’s certificate through training in and examination on teaching skills, which could be obtained from the Teacher Education Program at the Chinese Normal University. Other requirements include Chinese citizenship, following the code of professional ethics, and an academic requirement. Besides these requirements, schools have annual quotas that are set by the State and Province Education Commission, which require teachers and support staff employed by schools to pass a comprehensive independent examination (Nanzhao et al., 2007; UNESCO,

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i.e. for teaching at primary school level, teachers should be graduates from secondary normal schools or above; for teaching at higher education institution level, teachers should be university graduates or postgraduates; for teaching at vocational college level, teachers need to be graduated from normal college or other universities and four-year colleges or above.
Based on these Chinese educational and teaching requirements, only having a Western TESOL qualification is not sufficient to be accepted into a Chinese school as a certified English teacher. This was also reflected in the data. The three participants felt that their Western TESOL qualifications offered a very limited advantage on securing employment, as the qualification was considered to be a sufficient, but not necessary condition to meet local teaching requirements.

Two teachers agreed that TESOL is the most relevant major that matches the academic requirement to teach EFL in Chinese context, which is quite obvious. For the rank of host universities, one teacher mentioned that she thought only graduates from Top 50 universities could benefit from the institution’s reputation in job seeking. Although there is no standard of ranking, the phenomenon of appreciating famous and high-reputation universities is very common in China; it is called ‘elite school complex’ and is embedded in Chinese culture (Done, 2011; Xiong, 2008; Zhu, 2010), significantly influencing the recruitment process (Ge, 2014; Huang & Wang, 2007; Peng, 2013). She reflected:
Frankly speaking, in terms of education qualification, the value of overseas education [and Chinese domestic education] are about the same. Except if it is exceptionally famous institutions, or universities ranked within top 50 [in the world], like Cambridge University and University of Edinburgh, which are strong in their literature and language departments. The value of qualification from other university [with normal ranking] is about the same [compared to Chinese domestic qualifications]. (Interview 2, lines 13-14).

For the teacher’s local school context, one teacher mentioned that employers would value qualifications based on the school’s resources. Qi explained in detail that the value of overseas qualification could be conditional, as it depends on the particular workplace. She said that

work background is not simply academic background. Some workplace value your overseas education qualifications while others do not. You have a Masters degree, and we do not have many teachers with master degrees here [in local school], then... that is it. I have a full-time [teaching] job and a part-time one right now. The employer of my part-time job recognizes my overseas study experience and TESOL qualification to some extent, but the full-time role values more your seniority, teaching experience, teaching outcome and recognition from the students. (Interview 3, lines 13-16)

Qi’s comment on teacher resources in the local school context refers to the school’s strategic plan that the staff profiles could contribute considerably to the school ranking. Therefore, there is a possibility that a staff member’s master degree qualification could contribute to increase the school’s rank, thus being valued and appreciated from the school’s perspective. As for the overseas study experience, this is the graduate attribute implied by the overseas qualifications that could be an indirect influence or have an impact on recruiting, which includes oral English skill improvement, self-growth, and development. One teacher said the English speaking ability she demonstrated during the recruitment interview might be the reason why she was employed, which is the result of overseas study
experience. All teachers mentioned that having an overseas study experience could help self-growth and development. Celina believed that having an overseas qualification carried perceived implications for personal growth and development, which might impress others and impact employment opportunities indirectly. She said:

Certainly our major is relevant to English Language. If you have studied, had internship or have training experience in a country that uses English as her first language, people believe it is significantly helpful for self-improvement. (Interview 2, lines 15-16).

However, from the students’ perspective, it is the teachers’ actual performance – not the overseas qualification itself – that the students recognize and appreciate. In Qi’s case, she mentioned that her students enjoyed her current class environment more than before and there was a significant increase in class attendance and participation. This change shows that her overseas qualification has indirectly contributed to her popularity among students in the sense that it helps improve her actual teaching performance.

As summarized in Figure 4, for the employment-oriented perspective four conceptions in regard to Western TESOL qualifications have been identified that might have an impact on employment. According to the interviews, all three teachers expressed their doubts that having a Western TESOL qualification can have more value than a domestic qualification in terms of likelihood to obtain employment. As these four conceptions have been identified to influence recruitment process, whether or not a Western TESOL qualification is an advantage for teachers in finding a teaching job is not made explicit in either government/school policies or by recruiters. However, the values that underpin the overseas qualification – such as professional knowledge of the study major, the host university’s rank and reputation, and various graduate attributes – are generally believed by the participants to have contributed to the success of their job seeking despite the qualification itself being more likely to be considered as an additional value than a determinant.
4.3.1.2 The value-oriented conception

Value-oriented conceptions position Western TESOL qualifications acceptance as a phenomenon, which has been influenced by relevant contextual levels in the Chinese educational settings. As represented in Figure 5, four conceptions are included in the value-oriented category; they are the school/faculty level, colleague level, student level, and curriculum and education system level. Three teachers mentioned the conception of school and faculty level generally. Two teachers from primary school and vocational college pointed out that their school would not value their educational background and qualification. However, schools would evaluate their current teaching practice by public course\(^2\) performance, students’ exam outcome, and recognition. Daisy described the school’s evaluation in detail:

> For example, if the school principal wants to know about a teacher’s teaching performance, in other words, how are his classes doing in test

\(^2\) Public class, 公开课, is a formal public activity of teaching demonstration with clear organization, planning, and targeting a specific group of people. Each class has clear themes and teaching task. Not only students will participate in the class, but also school leaders and other teachers will attend the class. It is a beneficial research activity for teachers to demonstrate teaching practice and share teaching experience.
performance, final exam performances, how are his three classes doing, what is the average grade of the classes, then it will affect the annual review evaluation and his salary… … however, for your superiors, the school principal or the guidance director, how they think of your teaching performance depends on the ‘public class’, the accolades you receive for the public classes. So when we say ‘public class’, is in fact teaching demonstration outside of your school. That is the aspect. How he reviews you, how he thinks of your teaching performance, it depends more on the ‘public class’ performance. (Interview 1, lines 312-319)

The university English teacher mentioned that her faculty prefers to let young teachers with overseas study experience teach new or advanced courses, particularly those related to intercultural communication, and listening/speaking skills. In contrast, teachers with domestic qualifications are far more likely to be placed to teach translation units. After completing her master degree in Ireland, the faculty assigned her to teach an additional listening unit for English major students as well as the previous general English unit. This point indicates that the faculty perceives Chinese domestic education qualifications as linked to the ‘old-fashioned’ learning style, which focuses on grammar and rote-learning and is criticized as ‘deaf and dumb English’ (Du, 2012, p. 1), while Chinese universities are now on their way towards reforms and modernization (Zhou & ITO, 2011). This example shows that as a proof of professional development, a Western TESOL qualification helps re-positioning that teacher within their professional environment, which can be an advantage for their career development, and therefore, is a positive sign of acceptance by faculty. At the colleague level, Celina and Daisy reflected in their interviews that they did not feel that colleagues valued their teaching practice more highly, such as teaching methods and activities, because of their Western TESOL study background. Daisy explained this phenomenon in detail:

Our School arranges two English teachers to teach one grade as a team, and then the two teachers can communicate and remind each other in regards to teaching materials. For example in our case, it is more often the
experienced teacher supervising the new teacher. The experienced teacher will guide and teach the novice one. Because I am still considered as a novice teacher, the experienced teacher will normally remind and guide me, and then we will discuss how to run the class. (Interview 1, lines 283-286)

From Daisy’s description, it shows that her colleagues value teaching experience over educational qualification background. Compared to Celina’s context, in Daisy’s case the other teaching staff are not convinced that Western qualifications will prepare novice teachers to be work-ready. Concerning the student level, Qi shared her experience about students’ recognition in an indirect way. She said that previously students had no interest in English and often skipped class. However, students paid more attention in class and the attendance increased after she applied the teaching methods learnt in a Western TESOL program as her teaching experience increased. This change reflected the importance of the relationship between teachers and students, and of a relaxed class environment to improve students’ interest (Cai, 2011). To some extent, students’ change of attitude reflects the value of Western TESOL education.

Lastly, three teachers mentioned the curriculum and education system level. Daisy reported that the English curriculum and education system in China requires teachers to follow a fixed teaching structure, which is quite different from the Western system; therefore, she did not have much freedom in her teaching practice and no one seemed to care about her overseas educational qualification. The other two teachers mentioned that, although teachers have freedom to include some additional content if they have the time, they still have to follow the curriculum in regards to design lessons. Generally, teachers maintain the view that their Western TESOL qualifications are not highly valued by their local school setting.

In summary, all three English teachers face the reality that their Western TESOL qualifications were not readily accepted when they went back to their local Chinese contexts. This acceptance has been conceptualized at both recruiting and teaching stages: a Western TESOL qualification can hardly be considered as a
significant advantage to obtain teaching jobs in China, and also, their local school settings do not value highly their overseas TESOL education background. Yet, there is some ‘value-adding’ to the teachers, which is dependent on the local context. The value is more nuanced and often implicit rather than direct and explicit.

This frustration mainly comes from teachers’ local contextual factors. National/local teacher recruiting requirements and process, rank and reputation of teachers’ host university, local school setting, colleagues and students, and English curriculum and the general Chinese education system are the factors which impact on the acceptance of teachers’ Western TESOL qualifications. This phenomenon exists in the contexts of primary school, vocational college and university in China, and is faced by teachers directly when they return to their local context. The underlying causes of this phenomenon can be partly traced in Chinese Confucian culture, which directs the relationship between people from various social statuses; for example, the new teachers should obey the senior one’s directions (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009). Influenced by this cultural background, the school setting and their colleagues would place more value on teachers’ seniority and working experience, which hinders the acceptance of new ideas and knowledge; in turn, this negatively influences newcomer teachers with an overseas education background.

In addition, from the perspective of international education, this is also not a positive phenomenon. It is a loss for education receivers, like Chinese local schools, which may not take full advantage of Western TESOL education values after a significant investment of time and money (Du, 2012). For education providers, like Western host universities, the value of provided education services has not been highly recognized by education receivers (Australian Government, 2012), which may further influence students’ decision-making on overseas study and consequently impact international education market development in a negative way (Colby et al., 2003; W. Johnson, 2000; Lowden et al., 2011). Consequently, although there is little doubt that Western TESOL qualifications benefit teachers’ professional and personal growth to some degree, difficulties
associated with their acceptance by some workplaces should not be ignored. Further attention is required to develop a more supportive environment for teachers and to maximize the value of the investment.

4.3.2 Research question 2

*To what extent do the knowledge and skills acquired during overseas education programs have a pragmatic function in the Chinese EFL teaching context?*

This section first presents data on what teachers learnt in their Western TESOL programs, followed by a discussion of the extent to which they actually applied the learnt knowledge and skills in their current Chinese EFL teaching practice. In this way, the pragmatic function of Western TESOL programs in Chinese contexts can be more clearly understood. From the education-oriented perspective of what teachers learnt in Western TESOL programs, twenty-four conceptions were identified that relate to two mega-conception categories: Teacher Knowledge and Teacher Beliefs. The second application-oriented perspective examines pragmatic function from two angles, namely (1) the things teachers actually applied and (2) those they could not apply. This includes twenty-eight related conceptions. Detailed data analyses and diagrams are provided below.

4.3.2.1 Education-oriented conceptions of Western TESOL programs

![Figure 4.5 Education-oriented conceptions](image)
The education-oriented conceptions explore teachers’ understanding of what they learnt from the Western TESOL programs (Figure 6). Based on their language teacher education (see Chapter 2, section 2.2-2.3), teachers’ conceptions can be categorized into two higher-order categories: teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs. This section outlines each category by sub-oriented conceptions explanatory including diagrams and discussion.

**Teacher knowledge-oriented conceptions**

Based on the category of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987) mentioned in the literature (see Chapter 2, part 2.2), all the conceptions related to teacher
knowledge had been classified into four groups: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and support knowledge (Alexander, 2000; Teichler & Kehm, 1995). For example, for the conceptions of SLA and discourse analysis, although they are related to the ‘strategy’ of teaching, what teachers mentioned is knowledge of language at the theoretical level, and therefore, I coded them into this latter category. Below are the detailed findings and discussion.

With regard to content knowledge, four conceptions were uncovered: grammar, second language acquisition (SLA) theories, pronunciation, and discourse analysis (Figure 7). As for grammar, two teachers mentioned this conception. Daisy held the idea that a Western TESOL program does not pay much attention to grammar, especially grammar correction in the teaching practice. From her perspective, grammar would only be taught to senior students in the Australian education context, and is not regarded as important as other language content in teaching practice. Qi’s personal experience, however, was that in one unit she learned linguistics for language teaching, which focuses on English grammar. For content on grammar, she thought this unit helped her to review what she had learned before in China. Some dilemmas were clarified and some incorrect forms of usage were corrected. This unit made her pay more attention to grammar.

Only one teacher, Celina, highlighted the SLA theories conception. She said she did not learn any systematic theoretical knowledge when she was an English-major undergraduate student in China, but learned theories on SLA, language cognition, and input and output when she was in Ireland. Pronunciation was only mentioned by Qi, who said the linguistic unit included some content on pronunciation. Finally, discourse analysis was only mentioned by Qi, who believed that this knowledge was helpful in terms of analysing long articles.

Overall, two teachers referred to grammar as part of content knowledge. Conceptions of SLA theories, pronunciation, and discourse analysis were also mentioned. As discussed in the literature review part (see Chapter 2, part 2.2), teacher knowledge is the key part of teacher education. However, an unexpected answer was that Celina said her English education program did not teach detailed knowledge of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover,
teachers did not recall much content knowledge from their Western TESOL programs. Grammar was a key conception addressed in the content knowledge-oriented group.

With respect to pedagogical content knowledge, four conceptions were found: CLT teaching approach, assessment and evaluation, teaching resource selection, time and class design management (see Figure 7). Daisy pointed out that her TESOL program emphasised a CLT approach, in which she was taught that Western English language learning should be based on dialogue and involve a communicative process, instead of focusing too much on grammar. For assessment and evaluation, Celina pointed out that she learnt how to assess and evaluate students’ performance and teachers’ performance:

> It integrates with the second language... As our native language is Chinese, and English is our second language. [In Ireland, assessment and evaluation] mainly incorporates second language acquisition, cognition of second language, and theories regarding language input and output. It mainly relates to learning theories in these aspects. Also, I learned and was guided by theories in regards to language cognition. (Interview 2, lines 230-232)

For teaching resource selection, Qi mentioned learning it in an indirect way. She had mainly learnt and practiced this part of pedagogical content knowledge in China beforehand. When she was in Australia, she found out about selecting teaching resources from the Internet, which made teaching materials richer than what just using a textbook could provide. Finally, time and class design management knowledge were mentioned by all three teachers. Daisy and Celina agreed that they mainly learnt this knowledge from a theoretical perspective. Qi believed the class should be managed to create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.

With regards to pedagogical content knowledge, time and class design management was the key idea referred to by all three teachers, with the other three conceptions also addressed to a varying degree. Overall, for this kind of
knowledge, it seems that teachers agreed on mainly learning theories instead of practical skills.

*General pedagogical knowledge* has been taught, either directly or indirectly, via such practical activities as discussion, brainstorming, role-play game, mini lesson practice, presentation and picture explanation, through which learners can experience, interpret and acquire the principles of educational pedagogy. More specifically, all six conceptions were addressed separately. Daisy mentioned discussion, brainstorming, role-play games, and mini lesson practice. The first three conceptions were addressed in an indirect way, but the last one was highlighted. Concerning discussion, she understood it should involve different, sometimes opposing ways of thinking with no fixed answers. As for brainstorming, Daisy said that compared to an English class in China, what she learnt about brainstorming activity in Australia was characterized by producing different answers. In relation to role-playing, she understood this activity to be completing or developing a dialogue, and then performing it, like a play, with exaggerated expressions and props. All three conceptions emerged when she compared the TESOL program with English teaching practice in China. As for the mini lesson:

> Let me think, I remember we practiced in conducting mini lessons, which was like mock class. Each student was given 15 minutes to just talk. Other students would evaluate your lesson based on the presentation, and also make recommendations and suggestions. [This activity] mainly tried to imitate all the possible situations that could happen in a [real] classroom, and it questions different aspects to test you or discuss how to handle problems together. This kind of lesson could only be called a mock class, with some teaching skills that can be applied to a real class. (Interview 1, lines 260-263)

By contrast, Celina addressed the presentation conception involved in general pedagogical knowledge. She learnt this activity by doing a presentation herself. Based on a small class size, each person would do a presentation to introduce an issue relevant to the key theme of the lesson. Qi, in turn, highlighted the picture
explanation activity, which made a deep impression on her. She learnt how to match the picture with the learning content and context.

In sum, three teachers showed an understanding of pedagogical content knowledge, involving different aspects, and were aware of this knowledge when talking about their current teaching practice in China.

With regard to support knowledge, only one conception was indicated by all three teachers: intercultural knowledge. For Daisy, her understanding was that intercultural knowledge is critical and should be internalized. She also mentioned mainly learning this kind of knowledge her from overseas living experience instead of the TESOL program:

For example, a unit taught by Alex [alias] called social linguistics mainly covers global linguistics, languages and cultures from different countries. Actually, the learnt knowledge should be digested and internalized, and after that, what you apply is not what you learnt, but from your internalization. It is not teaching, and it is hard to teach you should do this or that; I don’t think it’s so rigid. Knowledge should be internalized and it will only be yours after this process, and then, you teach in your own way. So it is hard to say what [the TESOL program] teaches me or not. (Interview 1, lines 263-267)

When studying abroad, possibly how culture and background affect you are up to your own perception, in fact everyone experiences culture shock differently when going abroad. You could feel it is very different [from what it is like in China]. So, I think the bigger difference is not how the teacher teaches and what teacher teaches in class, but how you feel and perceive [in class]. Or it is dependent on your daily living experience, or the interaction with your classmates, local or international friends, it comes from your interaction with them and life abroad, it is from your own observation and feelings. So it is really hard to say you learnt the culture in class. (Interview 1, lines 189-192)
Conversely, Celina reported that intercultural knowledge had been embedded in a class activity, like a presentation. As each student was required to do a presentation to introduce their own culture, she learnt about cultural differences from her classmates’ presentations. Qi mentioned one unit, called ‘class culture’, where she learnt about intercultural knowledge:

> There is a unit called class culture, which relates to cross-cultural research, which I think influenced me a lot. … For example, a translation for colour, as different countries have different languages and different cultural backgrounds, the translation for a simple colour, blue, can produce many different versions. The different backgrounds of translation can reflect the culture of different countries. (Interview 3, lines 94-97)

Generally, intercultural knowledge appeared as a more separate category from the other three categories, as an additional, supporting form of knowledge. Daisy highlighted the importance of internalization and off-class experience, whereas Celina learnt this knowledge indirectly from a class activity, and Qi believed the relevant units helped her deepen her understanding of intercultural knowledge. However, it seems that students are left to their own devices to acquire such crucial knowledge while negotiating the new learning environment, whereas intercultural knowledge was purposefully integrated and clearly articulated in the course of study, especially for the application in teaching practice.
As illustrated in Figure 4.7, in the category of teacher beliefs, nine conceptions were identified, which were classified into three mega-orientations: language and learning oriented, teacher oriented, and student oriented. Language and learning was indicated by all three teachers, but in slightly different ways. Daisy claimed that language should be acquired from daily dialogue and communication, which involves meaning and thinking. Her belief is that a language is a communication tool that can express ideas and which should be understandable. The foundation of language learning is communication and less attention should be paid to correcting grammar. Celina indicated that language should be learned in an immersive language environment. Qi highlighted the pragmatic function of
language learning; that is, students should use it in context. Qi also learnt that language is a communication tool to be learnt through practice. These conceptions of language and language learning are different from the conventional perceptions in China, which leads to further conflicts between teachers and the general Chinese ELT context.

In other words, two teachers mentioned that English is a language tool with communication as its main function, and both of them pay less attention to grammar. One teacher emphasized the importance of language learning in an immersive language environment, and another highlighted the situation of language practice. One aspect to notice here is the important distinction between acquisition and learning, of which teachers are aware. Whereas language acquisition means to develop language ability through a subconscious process in a natural language environment, language learning involves more attention to instruction and teaching language rules in a conscious way (König, Blömeke, Paine, Schmidt, & Hsieh, 2011).

The next two categories identified were the teacher-oriented and student-oriented conceptions. Only Celina hinted at the teacher-oriented conception, by saying that the teacher should be a supporter in language teaching, which is in conflict with the traditionally perceived role of teachers in classrooms (Lam, 2011). In turn, the student-oriented conception was addressed by two teachers. Celina explains she had learnt to respect students’ needs:

I think it’s to respect students’ individual opinions. You can easily ignore some tiny details in life. For example, Chinese people tend to say ‘shall we’, while Western people are more used to say ‘may I’. It is [the difference] between collectivism and individualism. Firstly, I will fully respect my students as individuals, as I believe everyone has his own opinions. And then I want to encourage him [the student] to speak up and express himself. (Interview 2, lines 259-262)

In Celina’s case, respecting students’ needs might be a value that Western programs have brought about so that Chinese teachers contest the conventional way of rote learning which, to a certain extent, is still being exercised in Chinese
schools (Silver et al., 2002). In the case of Qi, she mainly considered students’ needs, focusing on the practical use of language as a tool for communication.

In short, what did the three teachers learn from their Western TESOL programs? Most of it appears to be theoretical knowledge (of which they cannot recall much), but not substantial practical skills/practice. Teachers addressed several conceptions about what they learnt from their Western TESOL program and most of these conceptions were uncovered in an indirect way. This included the identification of two mega-conceptions of teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs. However, four issues should be taken into consideration. Firstly, four key conceptions were addressed by more than one teacher, namely grammar, time and class design management, intercultural knowledge, and language as a communication tool. Among these conceptions, language as a communication tool was the only conception that the teachers held a very similar view of, whereas they meant slightly different things with the other conceptions.

Secondly, two teachers mentioned that they mainly learnt theory from the TESOL program instead of practical knowledge and skills, yet were unable to provide detailed information or examples of such theories. Thirdly, related to this, is all three teachers appeared to have some difficulties in recalling the learnt knowledge and skills directly. They said they had forgotten or could not provide detailed information about the theories they mentioned. This applied to most of the conceptions referred to when they discussed and compared things with their current teaching practice.

Finally, the findings indicate the potential absence of two important components in participants’ TESOL teacher training. Language teacher education programs normally tend to cover teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, teacher language awareness, and practical knowledge (Borg, 2011; Borg, 2015; Edwards & Mercer, 2013; Gay, 2010; Shulman, 1987; Thornbury, 1997), yet the elements of language awareness and practical knowledge – crucial for teachers’ further teaching practice – were not mentioned by teachers.
4.3.2.2 Applicable conceptions of Western TESOL program

As my research question is about the extent to which teachers apply the learnt knowledge and skills from their Western TESOL programs to their current teaching practice, this section presents the analysis of the interview data concerning teachers’ views on whether the knowledge and skills were applicable or non-applicable (Figure 4.8). The applicability perspective includes fourteen conceptions about the things teachers thought were useful for their current teaching practice (see Figure 4.9). By contrast, teachers also indicated knowledge and skills they had learnt that could not really apply and explained the underlying reasons.
Fifteen conceptions were uncovered that showed how teachers applied the knowledge, skills, and beliefs to their current teaching practice to various extents. Conceptions related to teacher knowledge-oriented could be classified into four groups: content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and support knowledge (Alexander, 2000; Teichler & Kehm, 1995). Conceptions related to teacher belief were grouped into three main categories: language and learning, teacher-oriented and student-oriented. What follows is a
detail description of the extent to which teachers were able to apply the learnt knowledge, skills, and beliefs to their current teaching practice.

In terms of teacher knowledge, eight conceptions could be identified to demonstrate teachers’ application.

For the content knowledge, Celina pointed out that SLA theories were helpful for class design. As she explained:

It integrates second language acquisition here [in Ireland], which mainly studies related theories, such as second language cognition, language input and output. It’s predominantly learning about theories. Also, it guides you in terms of learning theories of language cognition. It has [learning content] about how to plan your curriculum design, which was mentioned when introducing the theories. It integrates many theories in one unit, and then during assessment and evaluation, it tells you how to evaluate students’ performance. What kind of function and impact the students’ performance and reaction would have on curriculum design could be reflected during evaluation, so this kind of feedbacks would constantly impel you to change your teaching design. (Interview 2, lines 230-238)

For the knowledge of discourse analysis, Qi said what she learnt helps her to analyse paragraphs and give feedback to students to write in a more logical way. She gave the following example:

I think these units could only help guide my teaching practice in an indirect way, as I cannot teach all the knowledge I learned from the unit of ‘Discourse Analysis’ to my students. I can only teach them what to do in a word or two. For example, asking students to write a 400-word paper, many students have no idea how to write it and feel overwhelmed. Then, I will tell them what to write in first, second, and third paragraphs. Or let them know what can be put into the first, second and third paragraphs, and they can organize the contents by themselves. This is not just about
writing papers, when they are engaging in expressing language, for example answering an specific IELTS question, they can respond to the question with their understanding and opinion of the question. So that it may strengthen their logical thinking. Then when I mark assignment and give feedback to students’ writing, I will tell them [the relationship] between this section of texts and previous section of texts, or whether it is irrelevant to the topic required. If it is not relevant, I will tell them to delete it. Also, the logical relationship between sentences, which the previous sentence must relate to the next sentence, and the next sentence must be closely linked to the previous sentence. If not, there will be a lack of logical relationship between sentences. I basically would tell them these [knowledge] simply. (Interview 3, lines 28-40)

As such, two applicable conceptions were addressed for the content knowledge – SLA theories and discourse analysis – whereas the other two conceptions (grammar knowledge and pronunciation knowledge) were not emphasized. The key application focuses on SLA theories and discourse analysis, as teachers used this knowledge for teaching design and helping students, finding it very useful for their current teaching practice.

For pedagogical content knowledge, all three teachers mentioned the usefulness of a CLT approach (see Chapter 2). Daisy highlighted the importance of the CLT approach used in her current teaching class. She said her teaching practice has been significantly influenced by the CLT approach because she focuses on the meaning instead of grammar correction. She thought of language as a communicative tool; consequently, the first thing to do when learning a language is to speak. In her view, it is arguable that people must have input before output, but when students start speaking, teachers should not require students to speak correctly, rather they should grow their confidence in using the language to communicate ideas.

Celina held a similar understanding as she also use CLT approach in her class. She explains it in detail:
Qi also said she choose the CLT approach instead of traditional grammar-translation teaching methodology for her class teaching practice. She highlighted the importance of communication and message delivery instead of grammar correction. She reported that she used to focus on reading and writing skills before, but now she pays more attention to listening and speaking skills, in order to improve students’ understanding of situational meaning.

For the knowledge of assessment and evaluation, Celina mentioned that she would pay attention to students’ feedback about her teaching performance, such as how to get their feedback, whether or not the feedback is reasonable, and in response to the feedback, what she as a teacher should do to improve her teaching.

For the knowledge of class design management, Qi mentioned that a successful example in her current teaching practice is to apply the Western class management into her local class. She explained it in detail below:

It is the overseas teaching model. I apply the overseas teaching model into my [Chinese domestic] class; to make students feel relaxed, enjoyable and happy to learn. …It is that during class students are carefree, they can speak whenever they want to. Teachers direct the class through questions, instead of lecturing. [Students have] more freedom. Currently, I even allowed students to eat, eat breakfast, drink water, walk freely in my class, and put on music during discussion. (Interview 3, lines 181-186)

Overall, in terms of pedagogical content knowledge, four education-oriented conceptions were mentioned, with three of the four conceptions being highlighted in the application-oriented categories, including a CLT approach, knowledge of assessment and evaluation, and class design management. Among these three conceptions, a CLT approach is the most important one, as all three teachers
mentioned this conception and are using it in their current teaching job. On the one hand, one thing to bear in mind is that the CLT approach was already introduced in Chinese ELT in 1992 (Zascerinska, 2010), and has been advocated and encouraged in the education system from primary school to higher education. Hence, knowledge of a CLT approach is not new for teachers, and therefore, it is hard to conclude that the application of CLT approach is solely a learning outcome of the Western TESOL programs the teachers attended.

On the other hand, although CLT approach has been introduced and encouraged in the Chinese education system since 1992, there is still a discrepancy between policy and practice (Li, 2010). It is not uncommon that language classrooms are somehow teacher-centred and do not nurture student’s creativity as well as autonomy in their language acquisition. Therefore, it might be insufficient to conclude that Western TESOL programs lead to the application of CLT in actual teaching practice by all Chinese teacher graduates; however, for the three participants of this study, their overseas programs are believed to significantly contribute to their motivation and endeavour to use CLT in their language classrooms.

For the general pedagogical knowledge, Celina shared her experience of how to adapt the Western small-class size activities into her large class size context:

I feel doing presentation, especially group presentation is a method always being used these days. We [one class] have 40 to 50 students, it is impossible to do personal presentation, we can only do group discussions. As long as team members did discuss, interact, express their opinions, and then exchange, share their ideas, and eventually develop a group idea among themselves, which is not to convince one another but to incorporate all their points together, they can still learn something in this way.

(Interview 2, lines 252-255)

Qi also mentioned the application of picture explanation. She learnt how to combine pictures and text in the unit of pedagogy in the globalized language classroom from the TESOL program. She thought the previous teaching method,
that let teachers teach first and students practice later, was “too boring”. She currently combines pictures with students’ situations to teach grammar. This method influenced her significantly, and led her to try to achieve flexibility in her teaching format.

In all, for the general pedagogical knowledge, six education-oriented conceptions had been mentioned before, but only two activities had been actually used in teachers’ current practice. One of them, the presentation activity, had been adjusted in order to be suitable for the large class size context in a Chinese school.

For support knowledge, Qi mentioned that cultural knowledge raised her awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences, and therefore, she let her students pay more attention to the use of language in practical situations and proper cultural contexts in order to develop their intercultural awareness and sensitivities. For her teaching practice, she highlights different ways of thinking to encourage students to pay attention to different cultural backgrounds and to develop their cross-cultural awareness; when students are using English, they should be more careful and respect others’ customs.

In all, for the support knowledge, although all three teachers mentioned intercultural knowledge as something learned in their TESOL programs, only one teacher said she actually uses this knowledge in her class to support students’ understanding and use of English.

In terms of teacher beliefs, the conceptions were classified into three categories, language and learning-oriented, teacher-oriented, and student-oriented.

For the language and learning oriented, Daisy believed that language learning should focus on meaning, not grammar correction. She thought if teachers correct students immediately, the latter would experience frustration, which can definitely have a negative influence on language learning. Consequently, students may feel language learning is a difficult process, and not very stimulating. In her class, she seldom let students experience negative feelings. Whenever students speak, especially the quiet ones, she reports feeling a sense of achievement; it does not matter whether students speak correctly or not, it is more important to her that
they can convey the right meaning and let her understand. She emphasized that a language is just a communicative tool and that many native speakers might make grammatical mistakes when they speak. Qi shared a similar understanding of language learning. She paid more attention to students’ understanding of language in a specific situation, and highlighted the importance of listening and speaking skills instead of reading, writing, and translation. One key issue is that teachers believed in not focusing too much on grammar at all learning stages, not just in the early stage; in their view, students would learn the technical grammar skills once they gained confidence in using English. For these reasons, all teachers thought correction was not important for students. Qi also believed English is a language tool for her students and that the key point is practice. She explained this in detail below:

It is that it values more on training in grammar, which was a typical domestic teaching method [In China]. But now, I pay less attention on grammar, emphasize on teaching the context, and focus on practicality of language. [Students] must speak more, it is okay even if they make mistakes. Even if the grammar is wrong, as long as it does not affect it being understood, I think it is fine. This grammar mistake can be tolerated and not necessarily have to be corrected. (Interview 3, lines 43-46)

For the teacher-oriented conception, Celina believed that a teacher should be a supporter in the learning process. For her teaching practice, Celina shared with me that her current class mixed the teacher-centred and student-centred approaches, which depending on teaching contents and teaching activities. Sometimes, the class would be run by teachers to deliver knowledge to students, while at other times, the class would be run by students participating in group activities. As such, Celina occasionally sees the teachers as supporters or facilitators to supplement a more teacher-centred approach.

For the student-oriented conception, Qi thought her teaching ideology changed before and after TESOL program. In this respect, she believed language learning should focus on students. Before completing the TESOL program, her class was teacher-centred, but what she learnt from TESOL education program was to
highlight students’ role in the learning process. She also stressed the practical function of language usage. Her class is now student-centred, meaning that students dominate the learning process, and have about 30 minutes to learn by themselves (although guided by the teacher) in a 40-minute class. The teacher works as a facilitator to guide and direct students. Celina also shared her experience, namely that she would respect students’ opinions and encourage students’ to fully express themselves without judgment.

In sum, teachers addressed fifteen conceptions related to learnt knowledge and skills that they saw as applicable to their current teaching practice, as summarized in Figure 9. Conceptions regarding content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are the key ones teachers used, while conceptions in general pedagogical knowledge and support knowledge were less transferable to their actual teaching practice. In this study, teacher beliefs showed a strong impact on teachers’ current teaching practice. All three teachers pointed out they made some changes after the TESOL program, and they believed the new teacher beliefs significantly influenced their practice.
The conceptions of not applicable knowledge also have been classified into teacher knowledge-oriented and teacher beliefs-oriented. These are summarized in
Figure 11. Below is an examination of why teachers are unable to apply certain learnt knowledge, skills, and beliefs into their Chinese school contexts.

As concerns *content knowledge*, grammar knowledge is one of the crucial ones, and two teachers addressed grammar conception in the education-oriented category discussed earlier. However, Daisy described how, unlike middle schools, primary schools seldom teach grammar, which depends on students’ cognitive development level. She mentioned that mostly, primary school students develop grammar awareness from reading and speaking, which is an indirect approach through immersive learning experience. She would seldom point out grammar rules, and would not summarize them or teach students systematic conceptions about grammar. At primary school level, as the curriculum does not give spaces for explicit grammar teaching, students are only required to develop a sense of grammar from expression. Qi is another teacher who had mentioned grammar knowledge, but she said she paid less attention to grammar knowledge and grammar correction, although she admits that the former does play an important part in assessment. In these cases, learnt grammar knowledge is not so valuable for teachers’ current teaching practice as they minimize the grammar impact on students’ language learning in their classes.

As for knowledge of pronunciation, Qi acknowledged pronunciation knowledge helped her realize why some students could not pronounce English well, and also deepened her understanding of the importance of place of articulation (to pronounce correctly). However, she reflected that it is difficult for her to apply this knowledge in order to help students.

But I find in actual teaching [the pronunciation] method is not effective. . Reason being that students have been affected by their native language considerably. For example, the area where I am is Sichuan, where students have been strongly influenced by their dialect. When correcting students’ month shapes, I am not only correcting their English pronunciation, if they cannot speak their mandarin well, which makes it more difficult for them to pronounce English. (Interview 3, lines 22-26)
As such, because of the local school setting and students’ native language/dialect background, teachers found it difficult to effectively use knowledge of grammar and pronunciation in their current teaching context; this influenced negatively the ‘speaking’ area of language teaching, and teaching outcomes consequently.

For the pedagogical content knowledge, Celina mentioned that she mixes the CLT approach with Grammar-Translation in her class. She explained that she chooses the teaching methodology based on teaching content. For the translation practice, she would choose the Grammar-Translation methodology and correct students’ grammar mistakes in a direct and detailed way by highlighting the key points, instead of letting students discuss by themselves. In this case, CLT is not the only teaching approach the teacher uses, which might not be suitable for some teaching content, and only if the teacher applies it flexibly. Another conception is teaching resource selection, mentioned by Daisy and Qi. In Daisy’s case, the curriculum is highly prescriptive, requiring teachers to strictly follow the textbooks and teachers’ books when preparing teaching content and class activities. In Qi’s case, she thought there were numerous factors that have an impact on teaching resource selection in China, such as student preference, and teachers have limited right to choose textbooks.

This raises a critical question of whether or not students are mature enough and fully capable of providing constructive and objective feedback with regard to learning materials. Although it is important that students’ voice is heard and their feedback is taken into account, depending too heavily on students’ likes and dislikes may discourage teachers to invest their expertise during the process of curriculum development. She described this in detail below:

For example what teaching materials were chosen this term, how do students find it, if it is good, it will be continued next term. If not, then we won’t use it. There are other societal interpersonal factors. For example this publisher offers more commissions than others, the school will choose this material. There is a possible that textbooks could change every year. (Interview 3, lines 111-113)
Upon reflection, for pedagogical content knowledge, teachers also had some difficulties in applying a CLT approach and with teaching resource selection in their current teaching context. CLT could not be used for all teaching content, but was merely one of several approaches that could be used in some situations. For the teaching resource selection, various external factors influenced what materials teachers were able to use. Although teachers learnt how to select and collect teaching materials from their Western TESOL program, the local school and education contexts somehow disempowered teachers and limited teachers’ freedom to select teaching materials on their own, making it difficult for them to apply related learnt knowledge and skills into their real teaching context.

For the general pedagogical knowledge, three teaching activities conceptions were addressed to show the difficulties teachers faced to enact these activities to a real class. The three teaching activities are the discussion, brainstorming, and role-play. For the discussion activity, Daisy explained it in detail below:

It’s different from what we learnt in Melbourne. For the same teaching activity, like discussion, as we were undergraduate students and had basic language skills, our discussion involved collisions of thinking and there was more than one answer. However, for primary school education nowadays, it focuses more on the level of knowledge that whether students can speak or not, there is no much thinking involved but just answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Though it is so-called ‘discussion’, it’s much more limited and no divergent thinking process involved, just reaching a conclusion. For example, after the teacher asks a question, only a few students raise hands and want to answer, while the majority of the class has no idea of the right answer. It is because the question has a standard answer, in this situation, the meaning of discussion becomes of teaching the ‘not good’ students for the sake of ‘good’ students to get answers, instead of involving any thinking in it. Therefore, for the same teaching activity - discussion, but having [the nature being different between Western and Chinese], I increasingly find the Chinese method becoming more of a formality. (Interview 1, lines 33-39)
For the activity of brainstorming, Daisy held the same feeling that the result of students’ brainstorming activity was limited by teaching content without any real divergent production. For the role-play activity, there is also a difference between what she learnt from the Western TESOL program and what she was currently practicing. She explained below:

P1: Because story-telling teaching involves lines with fixed dialogues, students are mainly required to read them out. Lots of students cannot read out loud with facial expressions. This is the role-play activity in China. It is possibly different from the traditional role-play that requires creating dialogues.

I: When you say ‘the traditional role play’, are you referring to the role-play learnt in your overseas education?

P1: Yes, that’s right. (Interview 1, lines 50-52)

Generally, the teachers found conceptions within general pedagogical knowledge somewhat difficult to apply. Effectively implementing such activities as discussion, brainstorming, and role-play in the Chinese classroom is no easy task. A major reason is the mismatch between students’ current language level and the language requirements of the tasks. These learning activities are to help students improve, to take them from where they are to where they should be. Learning activities are generally not aimed at students who have already reached the required level. Therefore, the teacher has to carefully consider the students’ language level instead of ‘importing’ the activities from overseas programs without appropriate adaption. Also, class time is limited, thus being insufficient for repeated practice, which provides students with opportunities to correct their errors and improve their performance. Furthermore, there is a potential cultural factor underlying this difficulty, in that the Chinese education system does not encourage trial-and-error. Students only answer when they are certain their answer is correct, as giving the wrong answer is seen as a threat to their self-
image (Xu & Chan, 2015). Consequently, the application of such knowledge was limited.

For the support knowledge, Celina faced the difficulty that students cannot fully understand some aspects of Western culture, which made her attempts to apply intercultural knowledge in her class challenging. She believed students did not totally understand the cultural background and Western customs behind the language use, as they do not live in that particular social context. She explained that when it was time for a Western festival, such as Halloween or Christmas, teachers would ask students to carve pumpkins, and teachers would introduce background information about Christmas Day.

However, most students did not seem to care about the origin of these festivals and the reason to celebrate them. For most students, Christmas means no more than going out for dinner with friends and decorating a Christmas tree. They may understand teachers’ introduction about these events, but not fully understand the particular context or origin of these events. As a result, students are not personally interested in Western festivities or how they relate to a Western context, and, for this reason, it is challenging for teachers to provide intercultural knowledge to support students’ language learning and achieve desirable teaching outcomes.

For the teacher belief-oriented conceptions, the application problems also have been categorized into three sub-orientations, which include language and learning-oriented, teacher-oriented and student-oriented. Below, detailed information about what teachers feel are the difficulties and the underlying reasons are given.

In the category of language and learning, Daisy mentioned the conceptions of language acquisition and learning in immersed language environments. She believed language should be acquired instead of learned in an immersive and natural language environment. However, the reality in China is that English is a foreign language with limited language opportunities outside the classroom for students. She realized that students could not acquire but only learn the language, which caused her frustration. Daisy explained this issue in detail below:
Some teaching methods and ideas I learnt in my overseas education, certain ideas, but especially methods, which allow acquiring language as a communicative tool, they are hard to apply for my current teaching practice. As the primary schools these days do not have environment for this [language], there is no way to acquire the language. For example, the weekly class content and the strength of English input is not enough for acquisition. Therefore, it is mainly learning instead of acquisition. I find these are two systems [Western ELT and Chinese ELT], and therefore it is hard for application in reality. (Interview 1, lines 18-21)

Celina shared the similar opinion about the immersive language environment. She felt what students lacked was an immersive language environment where they could practice what they learnt from class.

All three teachers addressed the exam-oriented evaluation conception in both direct and indirect ways. All primary school students need to take exams. Daisy reported that students are tested for every two units, and at the end of each term. In addition, their learning outcomes are evaluated by reading tests and classroom performance. For college students, Celina explained that the school exam system covers classroom performance, homework results, off-class tasks, and final exam. Furthermore, there are College English Tests (CET) Band 4 and Band 6 to examine students’ English levels, which are related to increased acceptance by graduate schools and employment.

The CET test covers the language skills of listening, reading, writing, and translation. The speaking skill is not compulsory exam content, meaning that students can choose whether to take the speaking test or not. In this situation, college students focus mostly on exam preparation, and English learning is exam-oriented. Vocational college students have a final exam for each term, CET Band 4 and Band 6, and Public English Test System (PETS). For professional English students, if they need a qualification certificate, they also need to take a specific English test. Because the exam-oriented education and evaluation system does not include a compulsory speaking test, and English learning and teaching in China
are mainly directed by examination, both teachers and students are under pressure to get a high score in exams, instead of developing communicative skills.

For the teacher-oriented conception, teachers mentioned that in real Chinese classes, the teacher-centred teaching style should not be ignored. Daisy and Celina both addressed this issue. Daisy mentioned that although teachers have been encouraged to organize a student-centered class in China for many years, in reality the majority of classes are still teacher-centred. The key underlying reason is the assessment method in China, which values correct answers much more than critical thinking or problem solving skills. She explained this issue in detail below:

P1: I teach, in a traditional sense I am the disseminator of knowledge. The so-called guide [is not common], because there are fixed answers, teachers [in China] just direct students to reach the correct answers, there is too little [critical] thinking process involved. Hence, there is more learning for the language. It is solely personal opinion. (Interview 1, lines 89-91)

P1: …It depends on particular situations. After I raise a question, if the student gives a deviant answer, I rarely say ‘you is wrong’, more often I’d say ‘you can think about it’. Or I will invite other students to answer it until the correct answer is given. I will give more encouragement, and let him know that particular answer is much more correct. This is the case. It is often like this. (Interview 1, lines 95-97)

P1: … As I have mentioned before, the situation of our current knowledge, it is not very disseminative, a question could get different answers, it is more like the example of 1+1=2. (Interview 1, lines 101-102)

P1: …But it is more of a factual thing, it rarely needs me to give much explanation for [the underlying reasons for the question],

I: Can I take it as, it in fact has a tendency of rote learning, because it is this kind of answer, it doesn’t require any underlying correction.

P1: That’s right. (Interview 1, lines 103-105)
In Celina’s understanding, the class cannot be only student-centred, and teachers should not just be supporters, but also leaders who will direct the learning process. Therefore, she used a mixed teaching approach with both teacher-centred and student-centred strategies to run the class.

For the student-oriented conception, Daisy thought of students in her class as input receivers instead of output producers, and as being the centre of the learning process. She described it in detail below:

[Particularly, for second language], if students don’t have input and there must not be output. So, if students don’t understand ‘input’, then there won’t be any output. Especially for a second language, the time of coming into contact with English is very limited in a week for them, then it’s very easy to forget, and they do not review back at home. It’s very hard for students themselves to have output and being able to speak at primary school level. (Interview 1, lines 79-81)

… Currently it is that, for communication, it is necessary to have input for communication, which is non-existing right now. Student only has his/her first language, and how can you make him/her communicate [in English]. When communicating, he/she will use his/her mother tongue. Because student has very limited input [stored], so it is very difficult to let student communicate by himself/herself. Therefore, they are doing more learning and I am teaching a process [of how]. (Interview 1, lines 114-117)

The difficulty faced by Daisy shows that the activity is above the students’ English level. Even when teachers are required to strictly follow the prescribed activities in textbook, there are always ways to adapt the level of difficulty. In Daisy’ case, her struggle implies the lack of practical skills to adjust the activity to suit her students.

In summary, the above section contains interview data presentation about what teachers learnt from the Western TESOL program, and also, to what extent they apply the knowledge and skills to their current teaching context. Below, I will
summarize and discuss participants’ comments from the education-oriented category and the application-oriented category, based on Figure 4.11.
Figure 4.11 Application-oriented conceptions of Western TESOL program
Figure 4.11 shows all the conceptions mentioned by teachers as what they learnt from Western TESOL programs. The conceptions in purple are what they can apply, while the conceptions in white colour are what they cannot apply. The conceptions in yellow colour are mixed, in that some teachers can apply them to their current teaching practice, but others find they cannot.

For education-oriented category, based on frequency, time and class design management knowledge and intercultural knowledge among the teacher knowledges are the key collective conceptions, addressed by all three teachers. This is followed by grammar, as mentioned by two teachers, with the others only being mentioned separately by individual teachers. Interestingly, more than half of these concepts appeared in a rather indirect way, and teachers seemed to have a difficult time recalling exactly what teacher knowledge they had learnt from TESOL programs directly. Teachers also learnt teacher beliefs towards language and learning, teacher’s and student’s role in learning the process. For the language and learning-oriented group, six conceptions were identified.

The conception of language as a communication tool was shared by all teachers, which resulted in the emphasis on language’s pragmatic function, practice, and context. For the teacher- and student- oriented group, teachers mentioned the change from a teacher-centred teaching style to a student-centred one. This repositioning of teachers and students very much contradict the long-standing perception of teacher as the ‘boss of the classroom’ and student as the ‘receiver of knowledge’ in Chinese educational context (Lam, 2011). On the one hand, this new perception of both the teacher’s and the student’s role would create tension between teachers with current Chinese teaching context. On the other hand, it would also pave the way for the increasing popularity of learner-centred teaching, which focuses more on students’ ideas and needs (Silver et al., 2002). Generally, from the interview data towards education-oriented conceptions, teachers reported that they learnt teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs from Western TESOL programs, and that their beliefs towards language and learning had been significantly influenced. This echoes previous research findings that language teacher beliefs are a considerable measure of professional growth in language teacher learning (Xu, 2012).
For the application-oriented category, from the perspective of teacher knowledge, only eight out of the fifteen conceptions about knowledge and skills are actually used by teachers in their current teaching practice (see Figure 4.11). One of conceptions was adjusted to accommodate the local class settings, and the other six mentioned that knowledges and skills do help teachers to better teach in their local context. Content and pedagogical content knowledge have been identified as the key knowledges that could be applicable for teachers. Interestingly, teachers acknowledged that they benefited from theories to deepen their understanding of English language teaching, even if they were not able to recall these in much detail during the interview.

As concerns the non-applicable teacher knowledge, the pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge have been identified as the key knowledges that teachers found most difficult to transfer. The application of the former is limited by local school and curriculum requirements, such as having to follow the given textbooks and teaching resources to prepare teaching content without much freedom to choose other materials (UNESCO, 2011). For the latter one, the key difficulty is in keeping the core nature of teaching activities in the Chinese class context. Due to students’ English levels and education requirements, Chinese ELT keeps the forms of activities like discussion and role-play without thinking process involvement (Silver et al., 2002), which is the nature of communicative learning. Teachers addressed this issue, viewed it as a problem, and felt frustrated about this reality. Generally, the main underlying reasons for the struggle of teacher knowledge application appeared to be Chinese school and education requirements, students’ characteristics, and different cultural contexts.

From the perspective of teacher beliefs, of the learned nine conceptions from a Western TESOL program, seven had been applied into Chinese ELT teaching practice. As concerns the orientation of language and learning, teacher, and student, the most significant change in beliefs about language and learning is exemplified by two teachers mentioning how they are now paying more attention to the pragmatic function of language, used as a communicative tool, with less emphasis on grammar correction (Harmer, 2007). The findings showed that
teachers held ideas about how language should be learnt, and they agreed that the Western communicative learning is the most appropriate strategy for language learning. Because teacher beliefs work as a mediator to shape teaching behaviours, interpret learning and teaching information, they play an essential role to deepen the understanding of teaching practice (Silver et al., 2002).

According to Kim et al., 2013, if teachers believe language learning is a communicative process with meaningful interaction based on social/cultural contexts, their teaching approaches may highlight aspects such as meaning exchange, personal differences, and the interpretative process to understand reality. In this case, three teachers’ teaching practice can be understood based on their conception of the nature of language learning. For the non-applicable conceptions, language acquisition in an immersive language environment had been highlighted. As English is a foreign language in China, students have limited language resources to access, especially outside the class (Hu, 2005a). English classes within the education system are the main English input that students have, which makes language acquisition difficult (Adamson, 1995). In this case, the interview data show that there is a conflict between what teachers believe to be the ‘right way’ and what they actually do in reality. Teachers acknowledged this reality and deplored the fact that students in China lacked an immersive English environment.

The conceptions of CLA approach, time and class design management, and intercultural knowledge are complex, as some teachers can apply them while others cannot. This phenomenon could be understood based on teachers’ experience, the freedom they had, and students’ variation in English levels and interests. This phenomenon indicates the lack of practical and reflective teaching skills to transfer the knowledge into a real class (Liu & Zhang, 2014; Luo, 2007; Wen, 2014; Yuan, 2012; Zhang, 2015; Zhao, 2013). Moreover, it remains questionable whether the application of a CLT approach is a direct learning outcome of having followed a Western TESOL program (Silver et al., 2002).

Generally, for the pragmatic function of Western knowledge and skills, the findings show that the Western content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and support knowledge could to some extent be applied in Chinese
ELT classes, while general pedagogical knowledge involved the most difficult application due to Chinese school, curriculum and student context. Compared to teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs showed significant changes, especially the beliefs towards language and learning. The findings clearly demonstrated teachers’ language and learning beliefs had been considerably influenced by Western TESOL programs, and effectively impacted their current teaching practice. From both educational and applicability perspective, teachers’ beliefs have evolved considerably, which implies teachers’ professional development, and the impact of Western TESOL program.

4.3.3 Research question 3

*How contextually responsive is the knowledge gained by a group of Chinese teachers of English during a Western TESOL program?*

The previous two questions are the secondary questions to answer the primary research question of my research study. I will summarize and analyse interviews based on previous two research questions to answer how contextually responsive is the knowledge gained from a Western TESOL program. In this section, the analysis and discussion have been classified based on two perspectives; contextual influences of application struggles, and the language teachers’ dilemmas.

4.3.3.1 Contextual influences of application struggles

![Figure 4.12 Contextual-oriented conceptions of application struggles](image-url)
As concerns the contextual influences of application struggles, the interview data has been classified based on teachers’ school settings, which include primary school-oriented, university-oriented, and vocational college-oriented conceptions, and the summarized key conceptions (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.12-4.13). The following details what difficulties and struggles teachers faced when their Western TESOL certificates and knowledge had been valued and applied into local school context.

Table 4.1 Contextual factors of struggles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Primary school-oriented</th>
<th>University-oriented</th>
<th>Vocational college-oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher recruit requirement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school context</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank of host university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class time</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large class size</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' English level</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students’ interests</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam-oriented education system</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of language environment</td>
<td>✓</td>
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Based on previous interview presentation and discussion, nine factors had been identified that influenced the Western TESOL certificate and knowledge being accepted, valued and applied in the primary school context and university context respectively, and seven factors in a vocational college context.

The common contextual influences in terms of the acceptance and value of Western TESOL certificates are national and local teacher recruit requirement and local school context. As explained before, there are several requirements to be a qualified English teacher in China (Nanzhao et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2011), and as such a Western TESOL qualification is considered as a sufficient but not necessary condition to meet the recruitment requirements. The local school context factor emphasized how the local school settings accepted and valued teachers’ Western qualification, from the point of view of the school’s evaluation system and of teacher resources. According to the interviews, schools pay more attention to students’ exam performance, students’ recognition, and staff teaching experience and seniority, than academic qualifications like Western TESOL certificates, which have not been highly valued by schools. Besides, from the perspective of school reputation, as staff profiles have a strong relationship with
school ranking, the local schools’ teacher resource will determine whether or not a teacher’s TESOL master degree could be an advantage for recruitment.

Other influencing factors include colleagues and rank of the host university. Because of Chinese Confucianism culture (Dan & Tyldesley, 2009), which highlights the relationships between people with unequal social status, the education system places more value on teachers’ seniority and experience; therefore, this reality could hinder the recognition of novice teachers, even those with advanced professional knowledge. Furthermore, influenced by Confucius’ teachings about the role of education in enabling individuals to achieve higher social status (Marginson, 2006), people value top-ranking schools more highly. In this case, one teacher mentioned that only graduating from one of the top 50 universities worldwide could be recognized as having an advantage and benefit in the recruiting process.

For the contextual factors associated with application struggles, five key influences had been uncovered, which include curriculum, large class size, students’ variation, exam-oriented education system, and lack of language environment. The curriculum refers to the fixed English education system, which includes textbook, teaching the material, teaching content, teaching process, and teaching activities. It was revealed from the interviews that teachers are not granted sufficient autonomy to apply the knowledge and skills gained overseas, as well as personal initiative in their teaching. The curriculum is decided by external experts, i.e. the MOE, and teachers (who are the actual curriculum implementers – are not involved in the process of curriculum development (Minglin Li, 2010). Although at the vocational college and university levels teachers are given a certain degree of freedom to modify the syllabus, such modification is limited to additional content or material only during extra class time.

The factor of large class size is a reality that cannot be neglected. Compared to Western small class sizes, because of China’s large population the average number of students in a classroom is around 60 (Yu, 2001). This contextual reality challenges the application of Western teaching approaches, such as the CLT approach (Bate, 2010). Furthermore, the finding implies that teachers lack transfer
and practical skills to adapt their teaching approach to current class settings. A teacher from a primary school admitted that large class sizes in China is a key issue, due to which she cannot give individual attention to each student, finds it difficult to manage them, and her class cannot be wholly student-centred. University teachers also held the same feeling that it is impossible to organize teaching practice in a large class, although she personally prefers teaching in small classes. In her context, she tried to encourage all the students to be involved in class activities by adapting group work instead of personal presentation.

Student diversity, not only in terms of English level and interests but also of native language background, generated great influence on teachers’ pedagogical practice. With limited input, students’ English levels, especially at primary school stage, are not good enough for them to have output with thinking involved. The repetition and rote learning is the main teaching approach in this context, which leads to a teacher-centred approach, a typically Chinese teaching and learning style (Lam, 2011). Additionally, multicultural knowledge is not paid due attention, resulting in difficulties for students in interpreting context-specific circumstances and in understanding the language used. The lack of student interest in Western cultural content subsequently leads to teachers’ hesitation and disinterests in using Western-oriented teaching content. Furthermore, students’ first language negatively influences their foreign language learning, resulting in teachers’ difficulties in effectively applying pronunciation knowledge.

As concerns the factor of the exam-oriented education system, all three teachers mentioned how the exam-oriented education system evaluates both teachers’ and students’ performance. At primary school level, exams are the main assessment tool, which related to students’ performance evaluation, future education opportunities, and teachers’ performance evaluation and salaries. At both university and vocational college level, although teachers’ salaries are not directly linked to students’ exam scores, teachers’ teaching performance would still be influenced by students’ exam performance. Students are also under pressure to obtain high exam scores in exams such as CET 4, CET 6, and ESP in order to attain a professional certificate, further education opportunities, and to enhance
their job-seeking potential. One key issue which should not be ignored is that the exam-oriented education system is the driving force in China; current teaching practices have been highly influenced by this system and derive a significant utilitarian function from it (Liyanage et al., 2015). In this reality, teachers faced challenges to apply a Western teaching style to help students perform well in the Western examination system.

For the lack of language environment factor, teachers agreed that as English is just a foreign language in China there is no enough input for students to acquire language as they would in a Western style. Because of the difference between first language acquisition and new language learning, the input in terms of quality and quantity both limited new language learning (Al Ghazali, 2006), and further influence teaching techniques to be more instructive, instead of being a cooperative learning process (Liyanage, 2003). Primary school teachers emphasized this factor as it leads to the typical Chinese teaching style, which involves strategies such as rote learning and teacher-centred delivery; this causes difficulties in applying the learned Western TESOL knowledge and skills to teachers’ practice. For the higher education level, although students’ English levels are higher than the primary school ones, teachers still deplored this reality. As more and more English language teachers have overseas study backgrounds in higher education settings, and students can easily access Western educational resources via the Internet, the key point for English learning is to create a language environment to help students practice in a real-life context. This factor could be considered as the key that influences Chinese students’ English learning.

Another influence is also class time, as the primary school teacher stressed that the scheduled class time, 35 minutes, is just enough to complete the set teaching tasks and can hardly allow time to design extra teaching activities.

In summary, although Western TESOL programs are acknowledged to improve teacher learners’ professional ability, promote personal growth, and have been recommended to other language teachers by all three participants, there are still some application issues that cannot be ignored. One point that bears mentioning is that the Western CLT approach was introduced and promoted to Chinese
classrooms in 1992, and the new English syllabus stressed students’ communicative competence and the development of students’ intercultural awareness (Silver et al., 2002). However, the reality is that CLT is not popular in Chinese contexts, where the traditional teaching and learning style still holds considerable status (Hu, 2002, 2005a). The findings show the underlying reasons of why it is challenging to adapt the Western teaching style to the Chinese context. Consequently, as influenced by contextual factors of general language environment, government policy, Chinese Confucianism culture, education system, local school/class context, and student variation, teachers at primary school level, university level, and vocational college level all faced challenges and struggled to apply their Western TESOL knowledge and skills to their current teaching context.

4.3.3.2 Language teachers’ dilemmas

Besides the above analysis on pre-application difficulties (see Figure 4.13), there is another interesting issue that needs to be taken into consideration, which is the appropriateness of post-application Western ELT style to the Chinese context (Figure 4.14). The conceptions of language teachers’ dilemmas refer to the conflict teachers faced when or after they or others apply Western TESOL knowledge and skills to their Chinese school context. According to the interviews, five conceptions had been identified, which include conflict within themselves,
conflict with colleagues, conflict with students, conflict with parents, and conflict with the Chinese education system. Below, detailed information is given to deepen the understanding of the dilemmas and situations teachers encountered in their Chinese teaching context.

As concerns conflict within themselves, teachers doubt themselves and this decreases self-esteem. One teacher from primary school reported thinking she did not teach particularly well, as she is dominant in the class and her teaching style is teacher-centred. She felt that the student-centred, teacher-support teaching style is the ‘right’ way. However, she positioned herself as a very traditional knowledge deliverer, which challenges her self-cognition. Therefore, teachers like this develop frustration and confusion. It is worth noting that the reality teacher faced is that students at primary school level have very limited output and English class is their main input source, which requires the teacher to be instructive in order to guide students. In addition, the large class sizes make using the communicative teaching method impossible in a real situation (Bate, 2010) and create difficulty for a teacher to manage the class. Therefore, there is no need for teachers to feel as though they are not teaching well only because they cannot adopt a teaching method which is inappropriate in Chinese teaching context.

Conflict with colleagues is related to the different understanding of grammar correction. One teacher mentioned this conflict when she argued with her colleague. From the point of her colleague, he believed he could give his students the most accurate use of language, even though his language and pronunciation are not native speaker-like. In contrast to this idea, the teacher held the view that this idea is not appropriate, as language should be communicated. When students speak in English, teachers should not require them to speak correctly and correct them immediately, which could frustrate students and decrease their confidence in learning English. She also claimed that, as language is just a communication tool, which focuses on meaning delivery, many native speakers’ grammar is also often not correct; therefore, there is no need to learn grammar in such a set way for Chinese students. The other two teachers also addressed this idea, i.e. that language teaching should pay less attention to grammar knowledge and grammar.
correction. As the Chinese education system requires students to build accurate grammar knowledge and achieve high scores in written exams, CLT’s prioritization of comprehensibility over accuracy is not appropriate in the Chinese education context (Harmer, 2007). In other words, the conflict between colleagues reflects the gap between ideal teaching approaches and reality.

For the conflict with students, this issue derived from the example of an experimental project mentioned by Daisy. In this project, local government, private educational institutions, and primary schools accumulated their resources to create a Western English teaching and learning environment in the Chinese context, with native English speaking teachers, Western English curriculum, CLT teaching approaches, and high-performing students with a high level of English. However, some students still faced difficulties in this Western learning style and questioned the effectiveness and appropriateness of the application of this kind of English teaching and learning model in China. The first dilemma can be summarized as limited learning: some students doubt if they can really learn from this program. As the demands of the Chinese educational system require students to build accurate grammar knowledge and get high scores in the exams, how to obtain a high score in a test becomes a critical challenge and primary motivation for students, parents, and teachers (Borg, 2011). However, students in the English program learned from communication and discussion without language knowledge, which made some students feel frustrated.

Secondly, this project has conflicting requirements for students to engage in the learning process. In a traditional Chinese class, students are required to be quiet, obey teachers’ direction, and obtain high test scores. However, this Western project expects students to be actively engaged in language learning, be more independent in their learning processes, and discover knowledge on their own. The CLT approach further requires cooperating ability and interpersonal skills, and students find it difficult to adapt to this style (Fang & Warschauer, 2004). Therefore, the experimental project became a significant challenge for the ‘good students’ according to the Confucian educational context, in that they seldom expressed their own ideas, and consequently wanted to drop out of it. This
example provides further evidence that the Western English teaching and learning style cannot directly be adapted to the Chinese context.

Conflict with parents relates to parents’ expectations of exam scores. One teacher mentioned that she had to comfort parents when their children did not receive high scores. She would say:

you don’t need to worry about your kids. Language is just a communication tool that kids can quickly acquire language when you send them abroad in an immersed language environment. Kids are still young and can quickly acquire a language that there is totally no need to worry about their English ability (Interview 1, lines 329-331).

The teacher was also proud that she had not pressured students with exam scores, as she believes they cannot represent everything, and she tries to make students feel positive. As obtaining a high score in the exam becomes the primary motivation for parents (Borg, 2011), this belief towards exam scores is a source of conflicts with parents, who value highly students’ exam performance. In addition, advising parents to send their children abroad for English language improvement is seen as inappropriate. Generally, the language and learning beliefs influenced by Western TESOL program leads to a dilemma for teachers, since their experience and knowledge is not readily accepted in the Chinese school context.

The conflict with Chinese education system derived from teachers’ reflections and concerns about it. There is a tension in teachers’ perception of their current teaching context. Teachers thought the Chinese ELT education system had some problems after studying in their Western TESOL program, from which they concluded that in China there is no language environment for students and no thinking process involved in language learning; some teaching practices still apply rote learning and repetition approaches; teachers focus too much on grammar and correction; there is not enough cultural supporting knowledge input, and English class seems too ‘boring’. In the suggestion section, teachers proposed that teachers should not pressure students by emphasizing exam scores and that they should try to make them feel positive and motivated about language learning.
Teachers are expected to design attractive teaching activities. For the teaching practice, teachers should pay more attention to improving students’ listening and speaking skills, and highlight the practical functions of language in contexts related to students’ future professional career. According to the analysis of Chinese contextual factors, teachers’ criticize Chinese ELT education system as not suitable. Firstly, from their reflection, it is inappropriate to present these as ‘problems’ as this reality is partially determined by Chinese contextual factors, such as English being a foreign language with limited language environments in China, Chinese Confucianism culture, exam-oriented education system, large class size school setting, and so on. The ‘problem’ conception reflects a bias towards Western TESOL approaches, which are not suitable in a Chinese local education context. Secondly, teachers’ suggestions show unrealistic and idealistic ideas in terms of English teaching and learning in the Chinese context, as teachers would not be able to actually achieve these goals. Lastly, according to teachers’ reflection and concerns, teachers held a negative attitude towards current Chinese ELT system after Western TESOL program learning. As they cannot change Chinese educational contextual reality, these negative conceptions lead to teachers’ confusion and frustration in terms of their teacher position and create dilemmas in their current teaching context.

In summary, based on both pre-application and post-application stages of Western TESOL knowledge and skills to the Chinese ELT context, the findings show that there is a contextual irrelevance between Western TESOL education and Chinese teachers’ local teaching practice. Key contextual factors such as teacher recruitment requirements, local school context, curriculum, large class size, students’ variation, exam-oriented educational system, and lack of language environment had been identified as negatively influencing the acceptance and application of Western TESOL knowledge and skills to the Chinese ELT context. After application, teachers also faced conflicts with their own beliefs, colleagues, students, parent and the Chinese ELT education system, which created confusion and dilemmas. Based on interviews, it could be concluded that Western TESOL programs are not contextually responsive to the Chinese context, which is a phenomenon that should be taken into consideration.
4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the data of semi-structured interviews held with three English language teachers working in a Chinese context. Several perspectives were used to analyse the impact of a Western TESOL program on teachers’ current teaching practice and to address the research question of how contextually responsive the knowledge gained by Chinese teachers of English during a Western TESOL program was. These perspectives included the acceptance and value of a Western TESOL qualification, the education-oriented and application-oriented focus of Western TESOL knowledge and skills, and the contextual factors influencing teachers’ application struggles and dilemmas.

Although teachers did benefit from a more comprehensive teacher knowledge construction, Western TESOL programs seem contextually rather irrelevant to Chinese ELT, with limited impact on teachers’ classroom practices. Due to the cultural and educational contextual differences between West and East, teachers face difficulties transferring learned knowledge to teaching situations, at both theoretical and practical levels. Several contextual factors associated with their confusion were identified, ranging from general social-cultural backgrounds, the Constructivist and Confucian educational philosophies and evaluation systems, to specific classrooms settings. There is no doubt that Western TESOL programs inevitably impact teachers’ teacher beliefs and some of their teaching practice to some degree, but whether or not this leads to a better teaching/learning outcome in Chinese ELT contexts remains questionable. All in all, the difficulties and struggles identified in the gap between Western knowledge and Eastern practice highlight the need for serious consideration by all stakeholders and further academic interest in this issue.
Chapter 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview of the study

TESOL teacher education is a growing field, which has attracted academic and public interest in recent years. Its popularity is increasing worldwide, particularly in Anglophone countries (Liyanage et al., 2014). However, increasing attention is being paid to the capacity of programs to accommodate the needs of English teachers to work in a variety of socio-educational contexts (Liu, 1998; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). Contemporarily, English functions as an international language and plays a significant role in cross-national interactions, leading to increased demand for English language teacher education and training programs for teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds (Brady & Gulikers, 2004). With a growing number of non-native English speaking teachers travelling to Anglophone countries for pre-service education and in-service professional development, careful investigation is required to assess the appropriateness of teacher education programs for all participants. For English teachers who work outside Anglophone countries, the transferability of the knowledge and skills acquired during teacher education experiences abroad into their local teaching settings is a critical consideration. As this issue lacks research attention in existing literature, I addressed this gap by exploring the contextual responsiveness of Western TTEP for Chinese participants. The study was structured around the following three research questions:

Primary:

How contextually responsive is the knowledge gained by a group of Chinese teachers of English during a Western TESOL program?

Secondary:

1. How are the Chinese teachers with overseas TESOL qualifications accepted in local contexts?
2. To what extent do the knowledge and skills acquired during overseas education programs have a pragmatic function in the Chinese EFL teaching context?

These research questions were investigated using a phenomenographic approach to explore learning and teaching experiences. Three in-service EFL teachers employed in Chinese education institutions participated in the study. All participants were NNES from China who had travelled to Western countries as in-service teachers to undertake TESOL education programs, and then returned to teach English in China following graduation (for participants’ demographic information see section 3.5.1 – Participants, and Table 3.1).

The semi-structured interview was selected as the sole research instrument to collect data. One interview was conducted with each participant to explore their local teaching experience, and the extent to which they were able to apply the knowledge and skills gained during their Western TESOL programs in their local contexts. Open-ended questions were utilized to provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and understandings as freely as possible (see Appendix 4: Interview protocol). All interviews were conducted in Chinese and translated into English. For a detailed description of data collection and translation processes, see Chapter 3 (3.5.3 Data Collection).

The semi-structured interviews provided rich qualitative data concerning participants’ study experiences abroad and current teaching practices. Followed by phenomenography seven steps of data coding (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991), data were analysed and classified into several key themes according to related research questions. Subcategories were also generated to highlight the problems and difficulties faced by participants in negotiating the knowledge and dispositions acquired via their Western TESOL education programs and current practices in China. Data analysis processes were presented in Chapter 4 (4.3 Findings and Discussion).
5.2 Limitations

Three potential limitations were identified. The first is the small number of participants. However, this was unavoidable given the lack of teachers who have returned to teach English in the province where the data were collected. The second is the limited variety of school settings in which the participants worked. The three participants were from separate Chinese public education settings, which are primary school, university, and vocational college in urban areas. As the current Chinese education system includes both public and private schools from elementary to higher education, with a significant variation in the context between urban areas with country areas, the data from limited school settings can represent associated school contexts particularly. The last one is participants’ varying length of post-study employment; two of three teachers have 1.5 years post-study teaching experience, and the other has 7-8 years. Whilst these can be seen as potential limitations, the differences added to the richness of the data.

5.3 Synthesis of key findings and outcomes

5.3.1 Research question 1

How are the Chinese teachers with overseas TESOL qualifications accepted in local contexts?

The findings for the first question show that English teachers face the reality that their Western TESOL qualifications cannot be readily accepted when they return to their local Chinese context. This acceptance has been conceptualized at both pre-teaching and teaching stages: Western TESOL qualifications provided any significant advantages for candidates to find jobs as local schools do not highly value their overseas qualifications over local ones. Key contextual factors of national/local teacher recruitment requirements and process, rank and reputation of teachers’ host university, local school setting, colleagues and students, and English curriculum and general Chinese education system have been identified to influence the acceptance of teachers’ Western TESOL qualification. This phenomenon can also be understood by way of Chinese Confucian culture,
whereby society places more value on seniority and experience, which impacts the acceptance of knowledge and teachers with overseas study background in a negative way.

5.3.2 Research question 2

*To what extent do the knowledge and skills acquired during overseas education programs have a pragmatic function in the Chinese EFL teaching context?*

The findings for the second question include what teachers learnt from their Western TESOL program, and also, to what extent they apply the knowledge and skills to their current teaching context. From the education-oriented category, teachers mentioned they learnt teacher knowledge and teacher beliefs from Western TESOL program. The findings show that what teacher learnt most is content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and general pedagogical knowledge. Teachers had addressed fourteen conceptions; the conceptions of time and class design management and intercultural knowledge have been identified as the key ones, as all three teachers mentioned them. Teachers also learnt teacher beliefs towards language and learning, and teacher and student’s role in the learning process. The understandings of language as a communication tool and that language learning should be less focused on grammar correction are the key teacher beliefs. The findings show that a Western TESOL program has an effective impact on teachers’ understanding of Western English language teaching, and teacher beliefs are a significant measure of teachers’ professional growth in Western TESOL learning. For the application-oriented category, what teachers mostly applied is content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and support knowledge with seven conceptions being addressed. For the non-applicable teacher knowledge, grammar and pronunciation from content knowledge had been pointed out. From the perspective of teacher beliefs, teachers also show a strong tendency to apply Western language learning beliefs, such as language being a communication tool, learning being less focused on grammar correction, learning from practice and using language in context, to their current teaching practice. For the non-applicable conceptions, language acquisition in an immersed language environment was highlighted. As English is a foreign
language in China, students have limited language resources to access, especially off class. English classes in the traditional education system are the main English input that students have, which makes language acquisition near impossible. Teachers acknowledged this reality and felt pity that students in China lack an immersive English environment. Generally, for the participants, the knowledge and skills acquired during their teacher education programs had very limited pragmatic functions in the Chinese EFL teaching context.

5.3.3 Research question 3

*How contextually responsive is the knowledge gained by a group of Chinese teachers of English during a Western TESOL program?*

The findings for the third question are based on the previous two questions to analyse the contextual responsiveness of Western TESOL program for Chinese teachers of English. Although the three teachers all acknowledged that the Western TESOL program improved their professional ability, promoted their personal growth, and that they would recommend these courses to other language teachers, there are still some application issues that cannot be ignored. As influenced by contextual factors of general language environment, government policy, Chinese Confucianism culture, education system, local school/class context, and student variation, teachers at primary school level, university level, and vocational college level all faced challenges and struggled to apply Western TESOL knowledge and skills into their current teaching context. After application, teachers also faced conflicts with their own beliefs, colleagues, students, parents and the Chinese ELT education system, which creates confusion and dilemmas. Based on the interviews, it could be concluded that the Western TESOL program is not contextually responsive to the Chinese context, a phenomenon that should be taken into consideration.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of this study deepen the understanding of the pragmatic function of the knowledge and skills acquired during Western TESOL programs in the
working experiences of graduates after returning home. This phenomenon is a key problem for both Western teacher education providers and English language teachers/Chinese local schools alike.

Firstly, as TESOL qualifications may not be fully recognized by stakeholders abroad, education providers may face difficulties in proving the value of programs to potential students, putting at risk the viability of education exports in the international education market. Likewise, teachers may not reach their expected outcomes post-graduation and, despite investing significant time and money in completing programs, may experience dissatisfaction and frustration. From the perspective of education receivers, such as Chinese teachers and Chinese local schools, not making the most of the value of Western TESOL education after a significant direct/indirect investment is a waste for both stakeholders. As English language teacher education remains a critical issue in non-Anglophone contexts, there is a necessity for both Western English teacher education providers and educational stakeholders abroad to come to some agreement regarding recognition and validation of qualifications in order to minimize teachers’ difficulties when returning to their home countries to work, and create a welcome environment to support teachers’ practice in local school contexts.

Secondly, the findings extend understandings of English language teachers’ practice-based decision-making processes in China, suggesting that most of the knowledge and skills acquired during participants’ Western TESOL programs are not as useful as expected. It is therefore crucial for education providers in the West to design teacher education program curricula with greater care and consideration for teachers’ working contexts. As contextual factors are key for determining teaching practice, accommodation of the demands inherent to teachers’ local teaching contexts should be taken into account (Carrier, 2003; Eun, 2001; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2008). Another suggestion from the findings is to emphasize the role of practical knowledge in TESOL programs. On the one hand, theoretical knowledge is important and can enhance language teachers’ understanding about language and language learning/teaching. One the other hand, theoretical knowledge by itself is not enough. Rather, teachers also need
practical knowledge and reflecting teaching skills to help them transfer knowledge and skills into their teaching practice. The findings suggest that in the Western TESOL curriculum more attention should be paid to teachers’ practical ability by providing teaching placement opportunities to enhance the learning outcomes of in-service professional development. Finally, for Chinese local schools, there is a necessity to develop more suitable in-service professional development to increase teachers’ intercultural awareness, to better understand contextual differences and adapt to them in the current teaching setting.

Generally, the findings have highlighted the need to further investigate the appropriateness of Western teacher education programs for pre- and in-service teachers working in various socio-educational contexts around the world. Further research in this area would advance the interests of education providers, international students and stakeholders in source countries to ultimately better support English language teachers working in a global context.

Several recommendations for future research are also presented here to expand upon the findings of this study. Firstly, future research recruiting a greater number of participants may serve to broaden the understandings of learning and teaching experiences post-participation in Western TTEP. Teachers from other socio-educational backgrounds could provide rich data to contribute to this discussion and the ways in which issues of transferability are negotiated in different contexts. Similarly, recruiting more experienced teachers may provide insight into how teacher knowledge is negotiated and transferred by teachers at different stages of their careers. In the interest of exploring effectiveness and efficiency of Western TTEP, both pre-service English teachers and in-service English teachers could also be included in participant samples to assess potential impacts on these different groups.

Secondly, future research could also take a greater number of English teacher education contexts and teachers’ local school contexts into consideration. In this study, only Australian and Irish teacher education programs were investigated. However, such programs are widely available across Britain, Australasia and North America. Future studies comparing TESOL teacher education across
Western contexts to gain a comprehensive, cross-sectional view of contextual responsiveness and transferability would be a valuable addition to this area of research.

5.5 Conclusion

The contextual responsiveness of Western TTEP is of great significance to the international education at national, institutional and personal levels. Subsequently, it has received increasing academic attention in recent years. My findings showed that although teachers benefited generally from their overseas experience, the TESOL programs they undertook were contextually non-responsive to the Chinese context in that they had limited impact on teachers’ actual classroom practices. The findings have serious implications for TESOL teacher education providers and employers of TESOL practitioners. For Australian educational institutions, the findings provide insights for furthering opportunities for students to be employed in global contexts. For Chinese schools, it is a strong reminder of the need to develop more suitable in-service professional development programs for English teachers with overseas qualifications.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain language statement

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: January 2016

Full Project Title: Western Teacher-Education Programs & Contextually Responsive English Language Teaching in China

Principal Researcher: Associate Professor Indika Liyanage

Student Researcher: Lanxi Huang

Associate Researchers: Dr Josephine Lang

You are invited to take part in this research project. Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. Deciding not to participate will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with any other organizations. Once you have read this form and agree to participate, please sign the attached consent form. You may keep this copy of the Plain Language Statement.

Study aim

The aim of this research project is to analyse the English teaching experience of Chinese teachers and how their practical knowledge accommodated to local school settings. The project expects to deepen the understanding of the pragmatic
function of the Western EFL/ESL teacher-training program from a contextual responsive perspective. The project also aims to provide guidelines for further English language curricular internationalization in Western educational institutions to cater for the needs of non-native English-speaking background international students working in a global context.

**Procedure**

Your participation in this project will involve responding to an interview of approximately 45-60min. The interview will be conducted in Chinese. The interview will be audio recorded. If you do not wish this to occur, hand-written notes will be taken during the interview. You will be given the transcribed interview to check its accuracy. All data will be stored for up to 5 years after the examination of the thesis is completed. For an indicative interview question, please see the attached semi-structured interview question. You may withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain or provide a justification.

**Location**

All semi-structured interviews will be conducted online through Skype or WeChat.

**Participants**

We are seeking participants who are Chinese English teachers with TESOL teacher education qualifications (postgraduate) from Australia. The participants need to have 3-5 years teaching experience in China prior to undertaking their studies in Australia. Upon returning to China on completion of their overseas teacher education program, they need to have 1-3 years of teaching experience in public schools.

**Benefits and risks**

We do not believe that there are any risks to participation in this study, and you are free to decline to participate. Your decision to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with any organizations or any of the researchers involved. We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this project. However, there are a number of potential benefits to the wider community, specifically relating to the Western TESOL program in the higher education sector and Eastern Asian international students, and how to internationalize curricular to cater for the needs of international students in a global context. Once the study has been completed, on request, you will be able to obtain a copy of the results.
Privacy

Your data will be non-identified and presented as anonymous data in any peer reviewed publications or thesis in order to protect your privacy.

Reimbursement

You will not be paid for your involvement in this project.

Funding

There is no funding, or funding sources for this research. There are no conflicting interests by any of the researchers, sponsors or institutions.

Contact

If you would like to get in touch with any of the researchers regarding participation, please do not hesitate to contact Lanxi Huang on +61 452600379 or hlanx@deakin.edu.au.

Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety

Deakin University

221 Burwood Highway

Burwood Victoria 3125

Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Please quote project number: HAE-16-005
Appendix 2: Consent forms

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consent Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Date: January 2016

Full Project Title: Western Teacher-Education Programs & Contextually Responsive English Language Teaching in China

Reference Number: HAE-16-005

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

I understand the interview will be audio recorded using Skype or WeChat. The researchers have agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed) ………………………………………………………

Signature ………………………………… Date ………………………………

Please mail this form to:

Lanxi Huang

School of Education, Deakin University 221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood, 3125

Or please email this form to: Lanxi Huang, hlanx@deakin.edu.au
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Participants

Withdrawal of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date: January 2016

Full Project Title: Western Teacher-Education Programs & Contextually Responsive English Language Teaching in China

Reference Number: HAE-16-005

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardize my relationship with Deakin University and with members of the research team involved in this project.

Participant’s Name (printed) ……………………………………………………………

Signature ………………………………… Date …………………………………

Please mail this form to:

Lanxi Huang

School of Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood, 3125

Or please email this form to: Lanxi Huang, hlanx@deakin.edu.au
Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview questions

**English version:**

1. What is your name (Anonymous)?

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Others
   - Prefer not to respond

3. What is your age?
   - 18-29 years old
   - 30-49 years old
   - 50-60 years old and over
   - Sub-Q: How many years of teaching experience do you have?

4. What is your native language(s)? Are there any other languages you can use, at what level?

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? What major you studied?

6. When you started teaching English before the overseas study experience? What kind of school (urban/suburban/rural; primary school/secondary school/higher education institution)? How long? When and where you went abroad and when
you got overseas ESL/EFL qualifications? Did you get teaching experience during your overseas study time? When and where you started your teaching work again? What kind of school (urban/suburban/rural; primary school/secondary school/higher education institution)? How long?

7. How do you think people value your overseas certificate compared with domestic certificates in your working context, in relation to teaching practice? Why do you think so?

8. What you learnt from overseas English teacher education program (teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge)?

9. Do you think overseas English teacher education experience influences your current teaching practice? Please provide reasons and examples.

10. How is your current teaching practice? Can you give some successful examples and the underlying reasons?

11. How you reflect your overseas English teacher education program and your study experience? What influenced you most? When you were doing this program, did you think these skills would be useful? Would you recommend this program to others? Why (not)?
Chinese version:

1. 您的姓名是（化名或代号）？

2. 您的性别是？
   - 男
   - 女
   - 其他
   - 选择不回答

3. 您的年龄是？
   - 18-29 岁
   - 30-49 岁
   - 50-60 岁及以上
   - 附加问题：您有多少年的教学经验？

4. 您的母语是？您还会其他语言吗？是什么水平？

5. 您获得的最高学历是？其专业是？

6. 在出国留学前，您哪年开始教英文，在什么地方（城市 / 郊区 / 农村）什么学校（小学 / 中学 / 大学）？教了多长时间？您哪年出国留学，去什么国家学习什么课程，什么时候拿到国外的英语教学学历？您在国外留学过程中有相关的教学工作经验吗？您什么时候回国重新开始英语教学工作？在哪儿工作，这是您现在的工作吗？在什么地方（城市 / 郊区 / 农村）什么学校（小学 / 中学 / 大学）教了多长时间？

7. 您认为在您的工作单位，其他人相比于国内的学历，是否更看重您的国外学历文凭呢？在实际的教学中呢？为什么您这样认为？

8. 您在国外英语教师教育项目中学到了什么呢（教师理念和教师知识）？

9. 您觉得您的国外英语教师教育经历是否影响您现在的教学呢？请说明原因和例子。

10. 您现在的实际教学情况如何？在您的教学实践中，能举出一些成功的例子吗？您觉得为什么会成功呢？

11. 您如何反思您的国外英语教师教育项目和学习经历的呢？您认为什么对您影响最大？
    当您在学习此项目时，您是否想过所学内容是否有用呢？您是否会向其他人推荐您的英语教师教育项目呢？为什么？
## Appendix 4: Transcription/Translation Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1/P2/P3</td>
<td>Participant 1/ Participant 2/ Participant 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Transcription</td>
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<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Additional description, not transcription of speech, for example: (Interview 3, lines 13-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Explanation added by researcher to clarify what an interviewee means, for example: The value of qualification from other university [with normal ranking] is about the same [compared to Chinese domestic qualifications].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Untimed pause in tenths of seconds or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Sample of interview transcription

P1: 嗯… 其实可能对找工作还是有一定的帮助，但是，就教学来说，我现在，嗯，教小学的那种教学来说，其实我觉得帮助不是特别的明显。对，找工作有一定的帮助，因为他会看…你找工作的时候，他会看重你的学历，还有你的，嗯，你的，那个专业方面，可能出国还是有帮助。但是真正对教学来说，可能还是不太明显。

T: 可能对找工作有一定的帮助，但是对小学教学来说，我觉得帮助不是特别的明显。在找工作时，因为会看重其学历和专业，所以出国经历可能还是有帮助。但是对于教学，可能帮助不太明显。

P2: 哦，其实坦白说啊，就是我觉得就学历这块儿而言，其实含金量是差不多的，就说，除非你在国外那种高等的学府，特别有名的，他们不是很看重每一年的排名吗？除非你在那一种，起码是 TOP50，五十以内的顶级学校，比如说，我举个例啊，比如说在剑桥，在… 因为那是学语言类的嘛，在一些剑桥，在一些那种，爱丁堡大学之类的，那种文学… 文学和语言方面超强的大学之类的。其他的，就像一般点的大学，在他们看来，可能学位的含金量是差不多的。

T: 坦白说，对学历而言，含金量是差不多的。除非在国外特别有名的高等学府，Top50 以内的学校，像是剑桥大学，爱丁堡大学，文学和语言超强的大学。其他一般的大学，和国内的相比，学位的含金量是差不多的。

P3: 我觉得这个是要分，分，呃分是工作单位，因为中国的这个背景，就相当于是，它不仅仅说是很单纯的学术背景或是怎样。它有的工作单位的话，会很认，认可你的海外学历，但是有的工作单位的话，它就觉得你海外学历也。。。又能怎样，然后我们这儿，你是研究生，我们这儿还不是研究生很多，就这个样子，对，还是要看工作单位。

T: 我觉得这个是要分工作单位。中国的工作背景并不是很单纯的学术背景。有的工作单位很认可你的海外学历，但是有的则不然。你是研究生，我们这里研究生还不是很多。就这个样子。
Frankly speaking, in terms of education qualification, the value of overseas education [and Chinese domestic education] are about the same. Except if it is exceptionally famous institutions, or universities ranked within top 50 [in the world], like Cambridge University and University of Edinburgh, which are strong in their literature and language departments. The value of qualification from other university [with normal ranking] is about the same [compared to Chinese domestic qualifications]. (Interview 2, lines 13-14)

Work background is not simply academic background. Some workplace value your overseas education qualifications while others do not. You have a Masters degree, and we do not have many teachers with master degrees here [in local school], then... that is it. I have a full-time [teaching] job and a part-time one right now. The employer of my part-time job recognizes my overseas study experience and TESOL qualification to some extent, but the full-time role values more your seniority, teaching experience, teaching outcome and recognition from the students. (Interview 3, lines 13-16)

Certainly our major is relevant to English Language. If you have studied, had internship or have training experience in a country that uses English as her first language, people believe it is significantly helpful for self-improvement. (Interview 2, lines 15-16)
这个班考的怎么样，他的三个班怎么样，他的一个平均成绩，然后会有一些绩效考核的不一样，跟你的工资挂钩的。但是上面，校长或主任，他认为你的课怎么样，更多的是一些修课。你拿出来上的一些公开课的得奖情况，还有你自己的考试成绩的情况。其实更多的是公开课的得奖情况。所以我们说模课呢，其实就是拿出去上课。就是这面。他对你的评价，我们这个授课怎么样，更多的是他公开课表现的情况。

For example, if the school principal wants to know about a teacher’s teaching performance, in other words, how are his classes doing in test performance, final exam performances, how are his three classes doing, what is the average grade of the classes, then it will affect the annual review evaluation and his salary… … however, for your superiors, the school principle or the guidance director, how they think of your teaching performance depends on the ‘public class’, the accolades you receive for the public classes. So when we say ‘public class’, is in fact teaching demonstration outside of your school. That is the aspect. How he reviews you, how he thinks of your teaching performance, it depends more on the ‘public class’ performance. (Interview 1, lines 312-319)

所以一个年级会有两个老师，然后这两个老师平时上什么课可以有一些交流和提醒。

比如说我们现在教师的话，更多的是带新，两个老师教一个年级，这两个师有配套，更多的是一个有经验的老师，一个是稍微年轻的老师，然后会有一些带领和教。

因为我还算是新老师，所以我会有一个比较有教学经验的老师平时来提醒我，教导我。

Our School arranges two English teachers to teach one grade as a team, and then the two teachers can communicate and remind each other in regards to teaching materials. For example in our case, it is more often the experienced teacher supervising the new teacher. The experienced teacher will guide and teach the novice one. Because I am still considered as a novice teacher, the experienced teacher will normally remind and guide me, then we will discuss how to run the class. (Interview 1, lines 283-286)

它结合的是第二语言… 因为我们的母语是中文，第二语言是英语。[爱尔兰] 这边

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3 Public class, 公开课, is a formal public activity of teaching demonstration with clear organization, planning, and targeting a specific group of people. Each class has clear themes and teaching task. Not only students will participate in the class, but also school leaders and other teachers will attend the class. It is a beneficial research activity for teachers to demonstrate teaching practice and share teaching experience.
[assessment and evaluation] 主要结合的是 second language acquisition, 第二语言的认知, 和语言的 input 和 output, 输入和输出这一些理论。主要是涉及到理论方面的学习。还有对于语言认知面的理论进行学习和引导。

It integrates with the second language… As our native language is Chinese, and English is our second language. [In Ireland, assessment and evaluation] mainly incorporates second language acquisition, cognition of second language, and theories regarding language input and output. It mainly relates to learning theories in these aspects. Also, I learned and was guided by theories in regards to language cognition. (Interview 2, lines 230-232)

我想一想, 我记得我们当时有做 mini lesson, 就是模拟课堂, 每个人讲 15 分钟, 然后是空讲的那种, 然后其他的学生可以根据你的讲课来评课, 给你提一些要求和建议, [这个活动] 其实更多的就是模拟 [真实] 课堂可能会发生到的状况, 会提到不同的来考一考你, 或是一起讨论该怎么解决。像这种课也只能说是模仿课堂, 更多的可能会有一些可以于真实课堂的可以用的东西。

Let me think, I remember we practiced in conducting mini lessons, which was like mock class. Each student was given 15 minutes to just talk. Other students would evaluate your lesson based on the presentation, and also make recommendations and suggestions. [This activity] mainly tried to imitate all the possible situations that could happen in a [real] classroom, and it questions different aspects to test you or discuss how to handle problems together. This kind of lesson could only be called a mock class, with some teaching skills that can be applied to a real class. (Interview 1, lines 260-263)

如说亚历克斯的课, social linguistic, 更多的是讲 global linguistic, 不同国家的语言和 culture 面, 其实有一些东西要内化, 但是内化了以后, 拿出来用时, 不是教你的, 是 己内化了之后把它拿出来。不是 个教学, 很难说教你必须要这样做, 那样做, 我觉得没有那么死板。知识就是需要内化, 内化完了之后成为你的, 然后再去按你的式教学, 所以我很困难说它这个教了我, 那个没有教我。

For example, a unit taught by Alex [alias] called social linguistics mainly covers global linguistics, languages and cultures from different countries. Actually, the learnt knowledge should be digested and internalized, and after that, what you apply is not what you learnt, but from your internalization. It is not teaching, and it is hard to teach you should do this or that; I don’t think it’s so rigid. Knowledge should be internalized and it
will only be yours after this process, and then, you teach in your own way. So it is hard to say what [the TESOL program] teaches me or not. (Interview 1, lines 263-267)

When studying abroad, possibly how culture and background affect you are up to your own perception, in fact everyone experiences culture shock differently when going abroad. You could feel it is very different [from what it is like in China]. So, I think the bigger difference is not how the teacher teaches and what teacher teaches in class, but how you feel and perceive [in class]. Or it is dependent on your daily living experience, or the interaction with your classmates, local or international friends, it comes from your interaction with them and life abroad, it is from your own observation and feelings. So it is really hard to say you learnt the culture in class. (Interview 1, lines 189-192)

有一门课程是 class culture。关于跨文化研究的课程，我觉得影响还是比较多的。…… 就比如说一个关于颜色的翻译，由于不同国家的语言不同，文化背景不同，所以即使是一个简单的蓝色，给出的翻译也会有非常多的不同。在不同翻译的背景下，可以反映出不同国家的文化。

There is a unit called class culture, which relates to cross-cultural research, which I think influenced me a lot. … For example, a translation for colour, as different countries have different languages and different cultural backgrounds, the translation for a simple colour, blue, can produce many different versions. The different backgrounds of translation can reflect the culture of different countries. (Interview 3, lines 94-97)

我觉得是尊重学生作为个体的想法。有些生活的小细节可能你也没有注意到。如说中国爱说的是 shall we, 但是在西方人中较习惯说的是 may I。个主义和集体主义之间的 [差别]。首先，我会把学的个体充分的尊重，我觉得每个人都是有自己想法的。然后我希望他[学生]做的就是鼓励他出声。把他 己的东西表达出来。
I think it’s to respect students’ individual opinions. You can easily ignore some tiny
details in life. For example, Chinese people tend to say ‘shall we’, while Western people
are more used to say ‘may I’. It is [the difference] between collectivism and
individualism. Firstly, I will fully respect my students as individuals, as I believe
everyone has his own opinions. And then I want to encourage him [the student] to speak
up and express himself. (Interview 2, lines 259-262)

爱尔兰这边主要结合的是 second language acquisition。第二语言的认知，
和语言的 input 和 output，输入和输出这一面的一些理论。主要是涉及到理论这一面
的学习。还有对于语言这一面的理论进行学习和引导。它有如何规划你的课程设计
的一面。它有提及，是结合理论这一面的介绍。会把很多的理论结合在一
门课程当中，然后在 assessment 和 evaluation 的时候，告诉你如何的评估学生
的表现。评估中，学生的表现和反应对于设计课程起到什么样的作用和影响，这样的
feedback 来不断的促使你改变你的教学设计。

It integrates second language acquisition here [in Ireland], which mainly studies related
theories, such as second language cognition, language input and output. It’s
predominantly learning about theories. Also, it guides you in terms of learning theories of
language cognition. It has [learning content] about how to plan your curriculum design,
which was mentioned when introducing the theories. It integrates many theories in one
unit, then during assessment and evaluation, it tells you how to evaluate students’
performance. What kind of function and impact the students’ performance and reaction
would have on curriculum design could be reflected during evaluation, so this kind of
feedbacks would constantly impel you to change your teaching design. (Interview 2, lines
230-238)

我觉得这些课程只能够间接性的指导我的教学。因为我不可能把 Discourse
analysis 这门课程上所学到的知识教授给学生。只能够只片面的告诉他们应该怎么
做。比如说让他写一个 400 字的章，然后很多学生就不知所措应该怎么做。然
后我就告诉他第一段可以写什么，第二段可以写什么，第三段可以写什么。或者
是说第一，二，三部分可以写什么，让学生根据他所写的内容去分段。这不
仅仅是写文章，他们在进行语言表达的时候，例如在雅思具体问题当中，他可以回答
我对这个问题基本的了解和看法是什么。这样逻辑性会更强一些。然后我在批阅[作业]的时候，我会告诉他这一段文字和上一段文字[的关系]，或者与题目要求是否脱题。如果已经脱题了，我可以告诉他这一段话可以不要。还有就是句与句子之间的逻辑关系，上一句话一定要是下一句话的开头。下一句话一定是紧接着上一句话的。否则句与句子之间缺乏逻辑关系。我基本上就会简单的告诉他们这些[知识]。

I think these units could only help guide my teaching practice in an indirect way, as I cannot teach all the knowledge I learned from the unit of ‘Discourse Analysis’ to my students. I can only teach them what to do in a word or two. For example, asking students to write a 400-word paper, many students have no idea how to write it and feel overwhelmed. Then, I will tell them what to write in first, second, and third paragraphs. Or let them know what can be put into the first, second and third paragraphs, and they can organize the contents by themselves. This is not just about writing papers, when they are engaging in expressing language, for example answering an specific IELTS question, they can respond to the question with their understanding and opinion of the question. So that it may strengthen their logical thinking. Then when I mark assignment and give feedback to students’ writing, I will tell them [the relationship] between this section of texts and previous section of texts, or whether it is irrelevant to the topic required. If it is not relevant, I will tell them to delete it. Also, the logical relationship between sentences, which the previous sentence must relate to the next sentence and the next sentence must be closely linked to the previous sentence. If not, there will be a lack of logical relationship between sentences. I basically would tell them these [knowledge] simply. (Interview 3, lines 28-40)


[For listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation,] if students can generally [grasp] the most keywords and sentences in class, teachers will not deliberately pursue [the correct grammar]. But for translation homework, in a writing perspective I will correct [the grammar] more meticulously. (Interview 2, lines 183-185)

就是国外的授课模式。我将国外的授课模式引用到国内，给学生一种很轻松，愉悦，乐知的感觉。……就是上课的时候学生都很散漫，想发言就发言。老师问题在引导
整个课堂，不是说只是在讲授。 [学生]就会更自由嘛。我现在甚至要求学生可以在我的课堂上吃东西，吃早饭，喝水，随便的走动，在讨论的时候还可以放音乐。

It is the overseas teaching model. I apply the overseas teaching model into my [Chinese domestic] class; to make students feel relaxed, enjoyable and happy to learn. … It is that during class students are carefree, they can speak whenever they want to. Teachers direct the class through questions, instead of lecturing. [Students have] more freedom. Currently, I even allowed students to eat, eat breakfast, drink water, walk freely in my class, and put on music during discussion. (Interview 3, lines 181-186)

我觉得做 presentation，尤其是小组的 presentation 是一个现在经常用的方法。我们 [一个班] 有四五 人，不可能做 personal presentation，我们只能做小组的讨论。只要组员确实交流了，把自己的观点表现出来了，然后在 exchange，share 他们的 idea 了，最后形成一个他们自己的小组观点，不是一说 服另 一方，

是把所有的观点柔和在一起，这样他们还是能够学到一些东西的。

I feel doing presentation, especially group presentation is a method always being used these days. We [one class] have 40 to 50 students, it is impossible to do personal presentation, we can only do group discussions. As long as team members did discuss, interact, express their opinions, and then exchange, share their ideas, and eventually develop a group idea among themselves, which is not to convince one another but to incorporate all their points together, they can still learn something in this way. (Interview 2, lines 252-255)

就是说以前更注重语法的训练，是国内 [中国] 典型的教学方式。但是现在我是轻语法，重情景教学，注重语言的实践性。 [学生] 一定要多说，哪怕错了都没有关系。即使语法错了，只要不影响理解，我觉得就可以了，这个错误是可以容忍的，不是必须要纠正的。

It is that it values more on training in grammar, which was a typical domestic teaching method [In China]. But now, I pay less attention on grammar, emphasize on teaching the context, and focus on practicality of language. [Students] must speak more, it is okay even if they make mistakes. Even if the grammar is wrong, as long as it does not affect it
being understood, I think it is fine. This grammar mistake can be tolerated and not necessarily have to be corrected. (Interview 3, lines 43-46)

But I find in actual teaching [the pronunciation] method is not effective. Reason being that students have been affected by their native language considerably. For example, the area where I am is Sichuan, where students have been strongly influenced by their dialect. When correcting students' mouth shapes, I am not only correcting their English pronunciation, if they cannot speak their mandarin well, which makes it more difficult for them to pronounce English. (Interview 3, lines 22-26)

For example what teaching materials were chosen this term, how do students find it, if it is good, it will be continued next term. If not, then we won’t use it. There are other societal interpersonal factors. For example this publisher offers more commissions than others, the school will choose this material. There is a possible that textbooks could change every year. (Interview 3, lines 111-113)

和在墨尔本所学的有所区别。对于同样的教学活动，例如 discussion。由于我们当时是大学生，所以有语言基础，所以我们的讨论有思维的碰撞，不是答案只有一个。但是现在小学教育，更多重视的是知识层面的，会说还是不会说，没有更多思考的内容，就是 Yes 或 No 的回答。虽然是‘讨论’，却更加局限，没有发散，是得到一个结论。例如在老师问问题之后，只有几个学生举手想要回答问题，大部分学生不知道答案，因为问题是有标准答案的，在这种情况下进行讨论，讨论的含义变为了好一点的学生去教差一点的学生，来获得这个答案，不是真正有思考在其中。所以同样是一种教学方法 discussion，但是 [中西方的内涵不同]。我越来越觉得国内更加形式化。
It’s different from what we learnt in Melbourne. For the same teaching activity, like discussion, as we were undergraduate students and had basic language skills, our discussion involved collisions of thinking and there was more than one answer. However, for primary school education nowadays, it focuses more on the level of knowledge that whether students can speak or not, there is no much thinking involved but just answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Though it is so-called ‘discussion’, it’s much more limited and no divergent thinking process involved, just reaching a conclusion. For example, after the teacher asks a question, only a few students raise hands and want to answer, while the majority of the class has no idea of the right answer. It is because the question has a standard answer, in this situation, the meaning of discussion becomes of teaching the ‘not good’ students for the sake of ‘good’ students to get answers, instead of involving any thinking in it. Therefore, for the same teaching activity - discussion, but having [the nature being different between Western and Chinese], I increasingly find the Chinese method becoming more of a formality. (Interview 1, lines 33-39)

因为故事性教学有 line，固定的对话，学生主要是读出来，很多都读不出来，加上表情。这就是国内的 Role play。可能与传统的意义上的 role play，编对话，是有区别的。我们偶尔会有，但是极少。（你说的传统意义上，就是指在国外学习到的 role play 吗？）嗯，对的。

P1: Because story-telling teaching involves lines with fixed dialogues, students are mainly required to read them out. Lots of students cannot read out loud with facial expressions. This is the role-play activity in China. It is possibly different from the traditional role-play that requires creating dialogues.

I: When you say ‘the traditional role play’, are you referring to the role-play learnt in your overseas education?

P1: Yes, that’s right. (Interview 1, lines 50-52)

我在国外学习的一些教学方法和理念，部分理念，但特别是法，把语当作是一种交流工具来习得，对我现在教学很困难。因为现在小学没有这个[语言]环境，不可能习得语言。例如其每周课程安排和输英语的强度还达不到习得的强度。所以主要是学习，不是习得。我觉得是两套体系[西方英语教学和中国英语教学]，所以很难应用。
Some teaching methods and ideas I learnt in my overseas education, certain ideas, but especially methods, which allow acquiring language as a communicative tool, they are hard to apply for my current teaching practice. As the primary schools these days do not have environment for this [language], there is no way to acquire the language. For example, the weekly class content and the strength of English input is not enough for acquisition. Therefore, it is mainly learning instead of acquisition. I find these are two systems [Western ELT and Chinese ELT], and therefore it is hard for application in reality. (Interview 1, lines 18-21)

我是一个教授，是很传统意义上的知识的传播者。所谓引导，因为是有标准答案的，更多的老师引导出学生说出正确答案，思维上的层面我觉得太少了。所以语言更多的是学习。仅代表个人观点。…… 这个要根据具体的情景。就是一个问题我抛出去之后，如果他答的太偏了的话，我很少对学 说错，you are wrong，更多的就会说 you can think about it 再想想，或者是我请其他学生再说，说出那个正确答案，我会 加励让他知道可能那个 [答案] 更正确 点。就是这种情况。更多是像这样。…… 我已经提到过了，我们现在知识的情况，不是很发散的，问题抛出去可以有很多不同的回答，更多的是像1+1=2的情况。……但是更多的是一个事实的东西，很少会需要我过多的去解释 [问题的原因]。（能不能够这样来理解，其实有点死记硬背的趋向，因为是这样的答案，也就不需要背后的联系）对。P1: I teach, in a traditional sense I am the disseminator of knowledge. The so-called guide [is not common], because there are fixed answers, teachers [in China] just direct students to reach the correct answers, there is too little [critical] thinking process involved. Hence, there is more learning for the language. It is solely personal opinion. (Interview 1, lines 89-91)

P1: …It depends on particular situations. After I raise a question, if the student gives a deviant answer, I rarely say ‘you is wrong’, more often I’d say ‘you can think about it’. Or I will invite other students to answer it until the correct answer is given. I will give more encouragement, and let him know that particular answer is much more correct. This is the case. It is often like this. (Interview 1, lines 95-97) … As I have mentioned before, the situation of our current knowledge, it is not very disseminative, a question could get different answers, it is more like the example of 1+1=2. (Interview 1, lines 101-102)
P1: …But it is more of a factual thing, it rarely needs me to give much explanation for [the underlying reasons for the question],

I: Can I take it as, it in fact has a tendency of rote learning, because it is this kind of answer, it doesn’t require any underlying correction.

P1: That’s right. (Interview 1, lines 103-105)

[Particularly, for second language], if students don’t have input and there must not be output. So, if students don’t understand ‘input’, then there won’t be any output. Especially for a second language, the time of coming into contact with English is very limited in a week for them, then it’s very easy to forget, and they do not review back at home. It’s very hard for students themselves to have output and being able to speak at primary school level. (Interview 1, lines 79-81)

… Currently it is that, for communication, it is necessary to have input for communication, which is non-existing right now. Student only has his/her first language, and how can you make him/her communicate [in English]. When communicating, he/she will use his/her mother tongue. Because student has very limited input [stored], so it is very difficult to let student communicate by himself/herself. Therefore, they are doing more learning and I am teaching a process [of how]. (Interview 1, lines 114-117)