

**ZHA04289**

## **An analysis of how and why teacher-training mode was changed: the implications**

**Suxian Zhan: Baoding Teachers College & University of Tasmania**

**Abstract:** Current nation-wide reform of Chinese compulsory education is challenging teachers' expertise and proficiency in English teaching in primary and secondary schools. An empirical research project, 'a survey study of practising English teachers in primary and secondary schools and empirical research into pre-service teacher-training mode', was conducted in over 500 primary and secondary schools in Baoding, Hebei Province, China. This project, in two major stages, aimed to get substantial data from practising teachers for the improvement of the present pre-service teacher-training mode. The first stage identified strengths and weakness of the teaching-training mode, through a survey study and interviews conducted with English teachers from different school contexts by geography and system. Class observations were made and the overall analysis formed the basis of the second stage, aimed at improving the outdated teacher-training mode. From this, a new teacher-training mode is envisaged.

In this paper, the consultative processes of stage one is discussed and English teachers' proficiencies in teaching are critically examined. On the basis of these data, a reflection on the strengths and weakness of present pre-service teacher training mode is made. Implications are proposed.

### **Introduction**

In China, giving priority to the development of education is the basis of improving the quality of people's lives and rejuvenating the nation. Three generations of national leaders have claimed that education is at the top of the political agenda and clearly stated: 'study hard and make daily progress' (Mao, 1951); 'Education should be geared to the needs of modernization, of the world and of the future' (Deng, 1983) and 'innovated education' (Jiang, 2002). Therefore, as China enters the knowledge and information age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education is expected to play a decisive role in its development. Chinese policy-makers and curriculum-planners sense that the fast changing world has been making a strong demand for the younger generations' creativity, innovation and social responsibility. They came to an agreement that education should become a basis for young people's intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. Thus, the National Curriculum Standard Team was formed by politicians, researchers, educationalists and teachers in 1999. They worked closely with project schools and were open to constructive suggestions from experts, educators, principals, teachers, parents and students. In 2001, the *Fundamentals of Curriculum Reform in Primary and Secondary Education* (FCRPSE) was promulgated by the Ministry of Education, P.R. China. This became a guideline for 18 curriculum syllabus standards for 17 subjects. With the adopted new curriculum, a nation-wide teaching reform in different disciplines is being carried out in primary and secondary education.

Within the framework of whole nation-wide teaching reform in primary and secondary education, English teaching reform has also been executed. In the field of

TESOL, the Chinese national government and many Chinese scholars of the English language have identified the ineffectiveness of English teaching in primary and secondary schools. It has now become a must for teachers and educators to improve English teaching. To achieve this goal the national government has carried out a far-reaching English teaching reform in primary and secondary schools since 2001. In 2003, under the guidance of FCRPSE, the new Chinese *National English Curriculum Syllabus Standard* (NECSS) was produced for primary and secondary schools.

NECSS is dramatically different from the former syllabus in the following ways.

- It changes from a focus on knowledge-retrieval to students' construction of new knowledge, from a stress on students' intellectual development to a great concern for student's cultural awareness and emotional wellbeing;
- In terms of teaching methods it changes from knowledge-transmitting through didactic instruction to combined discussion among teachers and students and exploration into the knowledge by students themselves through proposed tasked-based language teaching;
- In terms of teaching mode it shifts from teacher-centred classroom to learner-centred classroom;
- In terms of the role of the teacher it changes from the role of a knowledge transmitter to that of a facilitator and a guide;
- In terms of students' way of learning, it focuses on students' independent learning, self-directed learning and explorative learning;
- In terms of assessment system, it shifts from outcome-based to process-based.

For this new curriculum to be implemented effectively, teachers' classroom behaviours and their views on teaching and learning must change.

It is agreed that the effective TESOL and its progress, to a larger extent, depend on teachers (Dill, 1990; Els et al, 1984; Prabhu, 1990; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Freeman, 1991; Johnson, 1992). In other words, the key to the successful implementation of TESOL improvement and progress is English teachers' knowledge, their pedagogic skills, teaching methods and their changed classroom behaviours. Yet, whether they change their behaviours or not it is largely dependent on their reconceptualization of TESOL. It is of vital importance, therefore, to supply second language (L2) teacher education as an 'intervention' (Freeman, 2001) to provide well-trained pre-service English language teachers in pre-service English teacher training programs. According to Richard and Nunan (1990), the field of teacher education is a relatively underexplored one in both second and foreign language teaching. Similarly, Els, Theo van. et al (1984) stated that one of the reasons for a FLT 'pendulum' effect are due to the meagre teaching training programmes in many countries. Freeman (2001) also argues that L2 teacher education was in many senses an invisible undertaking, unframed by its own theory and undocumented by its own research.

Teacher educators must allocate priority to pre-service English training programs in Chinese TESOL. In the past the pre-service teacher training program has not been successful due to lack of qualified teacher trainers and financial support for these pre-service teaching training institutions (Shu and Zhuang, 1996). Also, the TESOL program varies widely between geographical regions with their dramatically different economic and cultural developments. Under the new reform FCRPSE makes a requirement that these pre-service teacher training institutions should uniformly

reform in order to meet the requirements of teaching reform in different disciplines in primary and secondary education (MoE, 2001).

Under the conditions of TESOL reform and the guidelines of FCRPSE and NECSS, an empirical national grant project: *A Survey Study of Practising English Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools and Empirical Research in Pre-service Teacher-training Mode*, was generated. This project is implemented in two stages, aiming to improve the pre-service English teacher-training program in the department of English, at the Teachers College of Hebei University so as to provide qualified teachers of English for the Baoding Area, Hebei Province.

This paper reports the process of the first stage of the national project — investigation into practising English language teachers through a pilot study, interviews and a large scale investigation among 490 primary and secondary English in-service teachers. It was set within primary and junior middle schools in the Baoding area, Hebei province. The objectives are to develop an instrument that allows for:

- Examining English teachers' classroom behaviours, their construct of knowledge, their views on TESOL and readiness for TESOL reform and educational theory and philosophy underpinning their teaching;
- Assessing the extent to which these teachers have come to terms with the new ideas and implementing these ideas into their actual classroom behaviours;
- Critically reflecting on current pre-service teaching mode and identifying its strengths and weaknesses;
- Providing implications for an improved pre-service English teacher training mode.

## **1. Pre-service English Teacher Education**

At present in world-wide TESOL program, with the study of second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994), individual learners become more and more the focus of researchers' attention in terms of studies of their individual differences and of their learning processes. (Gardener, 1985; Shu & Zhuang, 1996 ;) However, there were substantial studies on characteristics of good language teachers. (Shu & Zhuang, 1996; Freeman, 2001; Brown, 2001)

Likewise, L2 teacher education drew researchers' attention. Roberts (1998) elaborated on the developmental process of pre-service English teacher training in terms of parent theories, which underpinned teachers' respective perceptions of person, learning and teaching.

**Stage one:** The first influential parent theory, behaviourism, sees 'persons as input-output system' in which behaviour is primarily influenced by external conditions. In the pre-service teacher training program a model-based training mode came into being. Classical micro-teaching was employed to practise teaching strategies and competencies in a micro-setting; competency-based teacher education originated to 'provide clear expectations for student teachers, to link theoretical principles to practices and to allow a degree of individualisation' and the craft model - until World War II ( Grenfell, 1998) - provided student teachers with chances to observe a senior

teacher's teaching behaviour, follow his/her instructions and then do their own teaching.

**Stage two:** humanistic theory values each person as a unique individual, having his/her own potential. It argues that learning must be internally determined, rather than externally controlled (Roberts, 1998). Correspondingly, counselling models of supervision came into being.

**Stage three:** Piagetian constructivism argues that individual children's cognitive ability develops their interaction with reality through their own experiences. It is further contended by Vygotsky (Richardson, 1997) and other sociocultural constructivist (Richardson, 1997) that 'the contextualized individual' learning is facilitated by the learner's social interactions with others and 'what and how much students learn and remember is influenced by their beliefs, goals, expectations, affect and motivation' (Paris, 1994). Constructivist theory provides a richer implication for L2 teacher education in that student teachers bring their former conceptions of teaching and their own experience into pre-service teacher training - not to be transmitted as knowledge or skill but rather to construct new knowledge and teaching skills (Freeman, 2001). Constructivist teacher education has been discussed extensively. (Richardson, 1997)

**Stage four:** Schon's reflection-in-action and reflection- on-action provide a reflective practitioner model in the pre-service teacher training program (Grenfell, 1998; Roberts, 1998; Freeman, 2001) through response journals (Good, 2002) and via the genre of memoir writing in social studies and methods course (Braun Jr, 2004).

No matter what the pre-service teaching training mode is, the priority should be placed on how to supply a good quality language teacher. According to Brown (2001), a good language teacher is characterized by i) technical knowledge—understanding linguistics; grasping basic principles of language learning and teaching; language proficiencies in speaking, reading, writing and listening; knowledge about language learning process through one's own experience; understanding the relationship between culture and language and knowledge of latest development of language teaching and learning. ii) Pedagogical skills---well-informed language teaching approaches; teaching techniques; ability in lesson plan design and other classroom behaviour management skills. iii) Interpersonal skills. iv) Personal qualities. Shu & Zhuang (1996) presented a list of basic qualities of a Chinese teacher of English: i) English language knowledge and skills; ii) pedagogical knowledge or professional knowledge; iii) high morality and healthy personality; iv) Systematic language knowledge; v) knowledge of second language acquisition; vi) knowledge of English language teaching approaches.

Freeman (2001) made a review of second language education (including teacher training and teacher development) was conducted before the 1990s. According to him, until the latter half of the 1980s, the primary concern was L2 teacher education. It has tended to be an awkward integration of subject matter ('second language') and professional processes ('teacher education'). That is, in pre-service teacher training program much attention was focused on English as a subject matter with contributing disciplines such as linguistics and literature. However, student teachers as persons and also the process of their learning behaviours were neglected. By the 1990s,

researchers began to shift their focus to the relationship between subject matter and teacher education. Furthermore, Freeman raises four important issues— (i) the role of input: teacher education strategies’ ;( ii) ‘the role of prior knowledge: before formal education begins’; (iii) ‘the role of institutional context: teacher education in place’; (iv) ‘the role of time: teacher education over time’. With regard to his first raised issue, he argued that three types of input should be considered—what the input (content) is, how to affect the input (process) and what needs to be generated (outcomes). In terms of the second issue, it is vital for teacher educators to link student teachers’ former knowledge and experiences to new knowledge and skill. As for the third and fourth issue: teacher educators should fully take into account the context, i.e. where their students go through their teaching practices and for how long it is appropriate for them to have such practical experience.

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. A Survey Study**

In stage one of this project, a survey study was predominantly used to find out how in-service English teachers conduct their English teaching and to what extent their views on English teaching come to terms with updated ideas in NECSS.

#### **2.1.1. Setting of the study**

The survey study was conducted in Baoding, Hebei province, China in October, 2004.

It is argued that it allows for the creation of a pre-service teacher training plan so as to meet the requirements of TESOL reform in China. As stated before, NECSS requires that different geographic area should have respective reform plan of TESOL based on different social, economic and cultural settings so as to meet the needs of the children and the local economy.

It is plausible to work with this project to be conducted in Baoding area. Geographically, Baoding area, to the south of Beijing, is only 150 km away. The total population is over 10 million. It is made up of Baoding city and 23 counties with more than 500 primary and junior middle schools. It has a rich cultural and educational tradition. The economy here, on the whole, is developed, but varies in different physical settings. All these combined settings have a great impact on primary and secondary school cultures in different places. This mixture, therefore, seemed a representative environment for research into improved pre-service teacher training to facilitate English teaching reform in the whole of the Baoding area.

It will be fruitful that once an improved ITE is worked out to be taken into practice in Baoding area. More than that, it will give substantial implications for other areas in China. As mentioned before, these schools are located in varied physical settings, ranging from city schools, town schools to village schools. These schools are also dramatically different in school system and school culture due to their different physical settings and economic variables. Roughly 75% are governmental schools; 15% independent schools and 10% semi-governmental and semi-independent ones.



In-service English teachers are totalling 10,480 (5840 primary English teachers, 2850 junior middle school teachers and 1790 senior middle school teachers.)

### **2.1.2. Subjects**

In October 2004, 490 volunteer in-service English teachers from primary and secondary schools in Baoding, Hebei province participated in the survey. Among them, there were 94 males and 396 females. 18.6% teachers had less than 2 years' teaching experiences; 39.2% had 2 to 5 years teaching experiences; 20.2% had 5 to 10 years' experiences. 90.2% had gone through pre-service teacher training. 61.4% participants graduated from the researcher's university.

### **2.1.3. Apparatus**

The in-service English Teachers' Questionnaire (ETQ) was designed in English by the researcher in August, 2004. It was translated into Chinese by the author in August to do a pilot study among 124 teachers from three different primary and secondary schools in Baoding.. In September ETQ was revised on the basis of the pilot study. The ETQ is structured as follows: Part I concerns in-service English teachers' demographic information (that is, gender, age, educational background, speciality, school setting, level of schools, school system, class size, teaching years, employment level and experience in research). Part II concerns in-service English teachers' teaching behaviours and part III deals with teachers' views on English teaching and learning. In part II, there were five major items concerning in-service English teachers' teaching behaviours—their teaching objectives, their classroom teaching activities, their teaching strategies, the influential factors on their teaching behaviours and the application of knowledge and skills to their teaching. A five-point Likert scale was applied to measure the degree of their teaching behaviours from 'most frequently' to 'never'. In part III, there were five items concerning participants' views on: i) English teaching objectives; ii) English teaching strategies and methods; iii) students' learning; iv) challenges to their construct of knowledge and teaching skills; v) how to improve pre-service teacher-training mode. A five-point Likert scale was used in part III to measure the degrees of their views from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

### **2.1.4. Design and procedure**

Using the new Chinese version of questionnaires, a large scale investigation was conducted and data was collected. During the sampling three kinds of variables were considered—school level (primary, junior middle school and senior middle schools); geographical settings of the school (city, town and village) and school system (governmental, independent and semi-governmental). Thus, two blocks of samples were selected as follows:

*The first block:* 245 teachers from different school level (primary, junior and senior) were selected considering different local settings (countryside, town and city)

### Location of schools

Location Percentage	City (48%)	Town (34%)	Country (18%)
Primary schools (45%) Number =111	53	28	20
Junior middle schools (36%) Number =87	41	30	16
Senior middle schools (19%) Number =47	23	16	8

**The second block:** 245 teachers from different school levels (primary, junior and senior) were selected considering different school systems (governmental, independent and semi-governmental)

### School systems

School system Percentage	Governmental (80%)	Private (16%)	Semi-governmental (4%)
Primary schools (45%) Number =111	89	17	5
Junior middle schools (36%) Number=87	68	14	5
Senior middle schools (19%) Number=47	38	8	2

Sampling of the first block and the second block were completed in mid-October and late October respectively. The other four team members personally went down to the countryside and towns to distribute questionnaires. Some were collected instantly; some were collected in later days. Data from the completed questionnaires were analysed using SPSS and descriptive data statistics were completed

## **2.2. Interviews**

Interviews provided an in-depth study to understand in-service teachers' classroom behaviours and further explore their views on TESOL reform and the general challenges they are facing

### **2.2.1. Subjects**

10 volunteer in-service English teachers out of 490 from primary and secondary schools were invited to interviews. They varied in gender, age, teaching experience and role. They came from different geographical school settings, school systems and school levels. It is illustrated in the following table.

### **2.2.2. Apparatus**

The interviewer (one of the heads of team members) personally conducted an open interview in an informal way. The topics centred on practising English teachers' teaching behaviours, the challenges they are facing and their view of the pre-service teacher training program.

### **2.2.3. Design and procedure**

Four open ended questions were presented to the participants. The questions are:

- In what way do you conduct your present English teaching?
- What are the challenges you are facing?
- What are the characteristics of a good English teacher in primary and secondary schools?
- What is your view on the pre-service teacher training mode?

Since September 2004, the interviewer went to different schools to conduct interviews in Chinese. Some data were collected in individual interviews and some in a group interview. The interviewer took notes of the interviewees' responses to the questions.

All collected data were emailed to the researcher in word form. They were translated by the researcher from Chinese into English in a structured and orderly way. Then the researcher did an analysis of the transcripts of the interview and interpreted them under the headings of *four themes*.

## **3. Class Observations**

Class observations function as 'a feedback tool in teacher training' (Allwright, 1988). Before the study, the data collected showed that there was a mismatch between what the student teachers learned and their actual teaching behaviours. The data were collected through follow-up classroom behaviour of student teachers and in-service English teachers and students' journaling (Zhan, 2001). Through a continuous four years' study of these student-teachers' classroom teaching behaviour, the researcher



found that most of these students actually did not apply what they had learned from teacher training but rather that they were strongly influenced by their conception of TESOL from the experience they were taught English by **their** teachers. Their teaching journal confirmed this point.

### **3. The Results**

#### **3.1. The results of the survey study**

##### **3.1.1. In-service English teachers' teaching behaviours**

- ***Focused Objectives of English teaching program***

The results showed that English teaching program in primary and secondary education is ranked to focus on improving students' abilities in listening, speaking, reading and learning autonomy. Through English teaching teachers aim to nurture students' welfare as human beings, such as to have concern for their emotional wellbeing and cultivate students' self-confidence and their ability to cooperate with their peers.

In the English language teaching program the shaping of students' cultural awareness, enhancing students' abilities to translate and write seemed of lesser importance. Still, 55.5% of respondents most focus their teaching objectives on improving students' abilities in coping with examinations.

- ***Classroom teaching activities***

The results indicate that teachers frequently ask students to read textbooks. More than half of the respondents frequently organize meaningful communicative activities, writing and translating activities. In English classes, activities centred on listening, retelling stories and memorizing grammar are not so frequently used teaching strategies

- ***English teaching strategies***

The results indicate that English language teaching is largely dependent on teachers transmitting knowledge to students. However, teachers also often create a lively atmosphere and organize some interesting learning activities, which are linked to students' life experiences and engage students' interests. Computer-assisted instruction is not frequently used.

- ***Influential factors on teaching behaviours***

The results report that English teachers' behaviours are most frequently influenced by the environment—with ranking orders of non-intellectual factors (such as their motivation and interests in English learning, their personality, their feelings, their cooperation), students' preferred ways of learning and students' feedback. Items like school and national examination and school facilities and curriculum reform also influence teachers' behaviours comparatively frequently. Other factors such as school leadership, colleagues' attitude, parents' feedback and their payment are the least frequent influential factors.

In terms of competencies, teachers' personal practical knowledge is ranked most highly among the influencing factors. Subject matter knowledge and related knowledge to English is regarded as nearly equal in percentage terms in influencing teachers' teaching behaviours. The knowledge they learnt in pre-service teacher training program is seen as the least influential factor on their behaviours.

In terms of teachers' beliefs, their personal values are not often projected to their teaching.

- ***Application of knowledge and skills to Classroom teaching***

Results indicate the ranking of frequencies of applied knowledge and skills to English teaching are as follows: firstly, the teachers' personal qualities—their own teaching experiences, reflection on their own teaching through journaling and portfolio. secondly, their pedagogical skills—different approaches to English teaching and how to manage and monitor English classes, thirdly, related knowledge to English teaching such as general pedagogical theories, psychology of students' learning; fourthly, subject matter knowledge—theories and ideas in applied linguistics, curriculum and teaching materials related to literature and understanding of intercultural communication. Relevant sociology theory is least frequently applied to their English teaching.

### **3.1.2. In-service English teachers' views on TESOL**

The data analysis identifies the following focus themes.

- ***Aims of TESOL in Primary and Secondary Education***

The results reveal that over 70% of the respondents agree that the aims of TESOL in primary and secondary education are inferred as follows:

- To improve students' abilities and skills as *English learners*  
Firstly, the aim of TESOL in primary and secondary education is to enable students to master English language in a systematic way;  
Secondly, its aim is to enhance their abilities in English language use;  
Thirdly, its aim is to improve students' abilities in communicating with others and thinking in English;  
Fourthly, its aim is to shape students' cultural awareness of English speaking countries;  
Fifthly, its aim is to help students' be able to read critically different genres of reading materials;
- To improve students' abilities in learning autonomy as *students*  
75.7% of respondents agree that the aim of TESOL in primary and secondary education is to improve their strategies in self-directed learning and independent learning;
- To nurture students' wellbeing as *human beings*  
79% of respondents agree that the aim of TESOL in primary and secondary education is to increase their self-confidence, develop their human potentials, enrich their insight and improve their humanistic qualities

- ***Subject Matter Teaching Strategies***

In terms of what is important in order to enhance students' proficiency, the results indicate teachers' views on English class practice. It is inferred that there is a stronger

tendency towards focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing than on demonstrating a knowledge of grammar and translating sentences. 59% of teachers agreed that shaping students' awareness of speaking countries' cultures was important in enhancing their language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In terms of how to help enhance students' proficiency, 69.4% respondents agreed that to organize various kinds of class activities for students would be helpful. By contrast, 62% teachers didn't agree that students' language proficiency could be enhanced either through teachers' indoctrinating knowledge or students' doing a great of homework.

- *Students' Ways of Learning English*

This item centred on how teachers believe students to learn English well. 73.9% of practising teachers supported good use of modern teaching resources. In other words, teachers should help provide rich learning *environment*, such as making it possible for the student to gain knowledge through e-learning or provide students with periodical and electronic reading materials. 73.5% of respondents agreed that students learn English by linking new knowledge with their personal, real life experiences.

What is the role of a teacher in students' learning English? Over 60% of teachers believe that students' English learning is also largely dependent on teachers' transmitting knowledge, giving instruction and then the student doing practice. However, a similar percentage deemed that students learn English well by way of their own exploration and decision-making. It seems to be recognised that there are more ways than one to learn the language.

- *Challenges Faced*

This item is designed to investigate what challenges are facing practising teachers while the present English teaching reform is in progress. Over 64.5% of the respondents responded to each item that they are faced with various challenges in present TESOL reform. The results showed that the challenges facing these respondents are as follows:

- Firstly, they need pedagogical content knowledge—upgraded modern English teaching ideas, enhanced English teaching abilities and improved English teaching methods.
- Secondly, they need subject matter knowledge—enriched English language, improved proficiencies in listening, speaking, reading and writing and better understanding of speaking countries cultures.
- Thirdly, they need guidance to improve their professional development. They want strategies and ways to achieve goals.
- Fourthly, they need to study recent theories concerning students as individual learners with different learning styles, learning modes and different methods and strategies in English-learning.
- Lastly, 64.5% of respondents agree that they are in lack of rich English teaching resources.

- *Pre-service English Teacher-Training Program*

This item was aimed to examine in-service teachers' perception of how important subject matter knowledge, knowledge related to TESOL, pedagogical content

knowledge and practical teaching practice are in the holistic pre-service English teacher training program. According to their views, it is important to provide knowledge and skills as follows:

- In terms of *pedagogical content knowledge*, it is equally important to update modern national and international ideas of English teaching and provide English teaching methodology.
- In terms of *related knowledge*, teachers think that theories of English learning and child development are important. In other terms, it is important for these student-teachers to be informed with the latest studies of child development and individual learners' style, mode and strategies in learning English.
- In terms of *subject matter knowledge*, they think it important to provide an understanding of applied linguistics.
- In terms of *practical teaching practice*, it is important to provide a structured and well-supervised school practicum.
- Among *related knowledge*, in the pre-service teacher training program teachers considered it important to provide fundamental educational theories on teachers and students, the psychology of students' learning and knowledge of classroom management.
- In terms of *subject matter knowledge* and related knowledge, 75.1% respondents thought it important to provide selected readings concerning literature and culture and research methodology
- In terms of *related knowledge*, interdisciplinary knowledge and knowledge of action research account for the same percentage.
- In terms of *practical teaching practice*, to provide student learners chances of micro-teaching is considered important.

### **3.2. Results of interviews**

The analysis of data from the interviews yielded the following four focus themes.

- English classroom teaching behaviour
- The challenges faced by practising English teachers
- The characteristics of good English teacher
- Pre-service English teacher training mode

Each of these themes is explained below and illustrated with examples from transcripts of interviews. Names of individual in-service English teachers have been omitted to protect their anonymity. The used examples were translated by the author from Chinese into English,

#### **Theme 1: *English classroom teaching behaviour***

One head teacher (*over 15 years experience*) presented an overview of what was happening in primary and secondary school in Baoding area.

- Monotonous teaching mode  
*In Baoding in quite a few primary and secondary schools their teaching mode is monotonous or they just copy the foreign teaching methods.*
- An imbalance between interest and knowledge retrieval  
*Yes, interest is the best teacher. However if you only focus on students' interest without triggering their thinking and making them do something, interest loses its meaning. You must arouse students' interest in learning knowledge. They learn English with their interests.*

Theme 2: ***The challenges faced by practising English teachers***

- Pedagogical skill  
*To teach primary students, my English knowledge is satisfactory. However, how to transmit knowledge to students is very very important. How to convert knowledge into teaching activities is a key to successful English teaching. (13 years teaching experience)*
- Research ability  
*Our school requires from us strongly to do research into our teaching practice and to publish academic papers. It is very necessary, however, it's challenging to us. ( 2 teachers from secondary school with over 15 years experience)*
- teaching materials  
*It's not enough for you to depend on textbooks. You must search for many teaching materials from different resources—use tapes, CDs, projectors and multi-media. (less than 2 years experience)*
- Students  
*At present, students are hard to deal with. If you don't want to be driven out of the classroom, you must improve your teaching mode to meet students' needs and interests (less than 2 years experience)*

Theme 3: ***The characteristics of a good English teacher***

10 interviewee's views of a good teacher are characterized as follows:

- A good command of the English language  
*The English teacher must understand the linguistic systems of English phonology, grammar and discourse. Only when he has a full understanding of this, can he be highly competitive. (a teacher with over 25 years of English teaching experience)*
- A wider use of English language teaching abilities and strategies  
*Student-teachers with high academic achievement may not turn out to be good language teachers. It depends if he or she has a high ability in English teaching. ( a principal with over 25 years English teaching experience)*  
*Your (English teachers) abilities in teaching English are...er...extremely important. You must act as an actress to be able to sing and dance; and also you must act as a director to direct a drama. ( less than 2 years primary teaching experience)*
- Keeping up with new ideas and research in the field of TESOL in primary and secondary education  
*Student teachers must understand what's happening in TESOL in primary and secondary schools. They must keep up with new ideas. ( a teacher with over 25 years English teaching experience)*
- Individualized English teaching

*A good teacher is also one who projects his personality to his or her teaching. ..His teaching should have his own originality. (a teacher with over 25 years English teaching experience)*

- A strong sense of awareness of and assimilation with different cultures  
*A teacher should be open to western cultures to learn, assimilate and harmonize Chinese culture with different cultures. (over 25 years experience)*

#### Theme 4: ***Pre-service English teacher training mode***

- It is important to find a better way to train student teachers.

*Few people were born to be good teachers; most of people need a training course to become teachers. Therefore, it is important to train these student teachers. (over 25 years experience)*

- It is necessary to improve the former teacher-training mode.  
*Graduates from the university need a further teacher training before they go into the classroom. It shows that there is a great gap between what we learned from the teacher-training program in the university and practical English teaching in primary and secondary schools. In professional training, we learn modern ideas of English teaching; we learn how to play games and sing English songs as well (over 25 years experience)*

*The theories we learned in the teacher-training program are out of step with teaching practice (less than 2 years experience)*

- It is important to provide the following knowledge and skills.  
Psychology of students' learning  
*We should learn psychology of students' learning. We should learn how to stimulate their interest in learning English so that each student can be expected to be involved in learning activities in a class with over 50 students. (over 25 years experience)*

#### *Study of Chinese New English Syllabus Standard*

##### *Interdisciplinary knowledge*

*It's an orientation to run bilingual primary and secondary schools. Students are immersed in an intense English learning environment and it's easy for them to be proficient in English. (less than 2 years experience)*

##### *New English teaching method*

*I teach English in secondary school. The knowledge of my English is enough. However, the approaches to English teaching must be improved. My abilities in teaching English must be enhanced. (over 15 years as a senior middle school teacher)*

##### *Proficiency in speaking*

*In English teaching, the teacher should have very good spoken English to communicate with students in English. That's the essence of English teaching. (a head teacher over 15 years experience)*

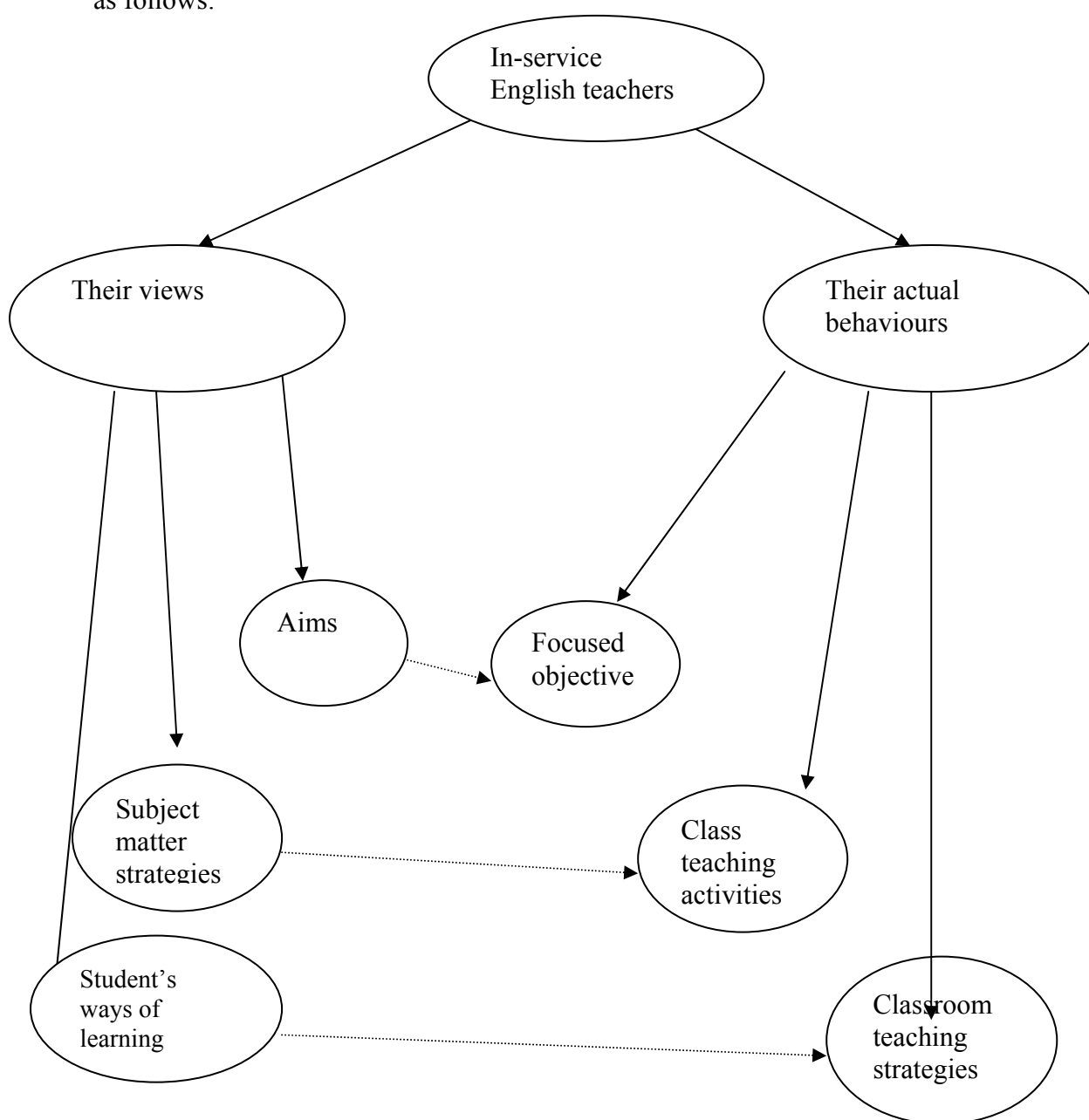


## 4. The Discussions

The purpose of stage one in this national project was to investigate in-service English teachers' teaching behaviour and English teaching ideas underpinning their behaviour, and then to identify the strengths and weaknesses of present teacher-training mode and to suggest improved methods.

### 4.1. Mismatches between teachers' views and their teaching behaviours

The combined results of the survey study, interviews and pre-project class observation have shown that there are *mismatches* between how teachers view TESOL and what they actually put into practice. This is illustrated in graphic form and in verbal terms as follows:



***Mismatch between ‘aims’ → ‘focused objectives’***

A high percentage of in-service teachers’ and the interviewees agreed that the aims of English language teaching program in primary and secondary schools is to enhance students’ language proficiency and language use, shape their cultural awareness so as to improve their communicative ability in English, cultivate their abilities in learning autonomy and nurture their wellbeing as individual persons. In real teaching practice they focus their attention on improving students’ language proficiencies in listening, speaking and reading. However, a mismatch became evident between what they saw as a teaching aim in English teaching and what they focused in on real teaching practices.

In terms of ***learning autonomy*** (69.8% to 62.4%), 7.4% of teaching practice wasn’t focused on students’ as individual learners with individual motivation, style and learning pace.

- In terms of shaping students’ ***cultural awareness*** (average 73.8%: 78.8%, 71.4% and 71.2% to 42.7%), 31.1% of real teaching practice wasn’t focused on shaping students’ cultural awareness of differences so as to communicate effectively.
- In terms of nurturing ***students’ welfare as human beings*** (79% to 61.4%), 7.6% teachers didn’t implement tools in their teaching so as to increase students’ self-confidence and learning how to cooperate well with each other.

***Mismatch between ‘subject matter strategies’ → ‘classroom teaching activities’***

A high percentage of in-service teachers agreed that subject matter strategies should be focused on speaking (81.8%), listening (81.2%), reading (75.5%), writing (72.%) and organizing different meaningful class teaching activities (69.4%). However, their frequent practical teaching activities were centred on asking students to read textbooks (70%). Only 39.5% respondents answered that they frequently asked students to listen to various English programs; only 45.3% frequently asked students to retell a text; 59.6% teachers organized meaningful communicative activities. The result of the survey study through the questionnaire was in agreement to the class observation done before the project. Teachers’ actual teaching practice in class is:

Step 1: ask students to read textbooks

Step 2: demonstrate language points in the texts

Step 3: ask students to translate some difficult sentences in the textbooks

Step 4: organize such learning activities as retelling the story, practising reading texts in pairs and writing down a similar story. (Zhan, 2002)

***Mismatch between ‘student’s ways of learning’ → ‘class teaching strategies’***

In terms of student’s ways of learning results showed a slight tendency in the teachers’ view from focus on knowledge -transmission teaching model to rich provision learning resources for students. The role of the teacher in the students’ learning environment are seen as that of a facilitator to link new knowledge to students’ life experience and an instructor to give them models which they can imitate. The role of students may explore the solution to questions. The teachers’ views indicate that the juxtaposition of the two contrasting behaviourism and constructivism learning theories have a parallel impact on their teaching behaviours.

A mismatch also appears between the teachers' view of students' ways of learning and class teaching activities used:

- As regards theories of behaviourism learning and teaching, 64.1 of the respondents agreed that students are dependent on teachers' transmitting knowledge. In real teaching practice, 64.2% teachers frequently demonstrate knowledge to students.
- As for the theories of constructivist learning and teaching, 61.2% teachers link English learning activities to students' life experiences as compared to 73.5% who expressed positive views on constructivist learning theory. 58.2% of teachers organized learning activities (such as games and competition) and simulation (role play) but 66.5% had supported the view that students explore the solution and construct new knowledge through doing and playing.
- In terms of a modern learning environment, there appears to be a contradiction between teachers' views (73.9% the highest rank) of the importance of providing rich learning environment and only 38.4% (the lowest rank) of them using multi-media in their teaching.

## **4.2. Implications**

The survey study, interviews and class observations confirmed the ineffectiveness of previous pre-service teacher training. Only 35.1% teachers responded that their teaching behaviours were influenced by what they were taught in the pre-service teaching training program. Through SPSS case summary (2 variables: educational background and the influence of the knowledge gained in teacher training) 77 teachers responded that their teaching behaviours were sometimes, rarely or never influenced by what they were taught in pre-service teacher training. Teachers from teachers college accounted for 66.7% (total percentage 61.4%). A fairly high percentage of teachers (64.5%) responded to each item concerning the challenges they are facing. Likewise, a high percentage of teachers (over 73.3%) consider the supposed knowledge and skill necessary to provide to student teachers. All these provide substantial implications for an improved pre-service teacher training program

### ***What are the weaknesses of the former teacher training mode?***

The former pre-service English teacher training program, conducted by the department of English is described by Shu & Zhuang (1996) as unsatisfactory due to a lack of teachers and monetary funds. Especially in recent years with an increasing student intake, the ratio between teacher and student has risen to 1/30. Money to support the program is scarce. Since the establishment of the department of English in 1984, course design for student teachers hasn't been substantially changed. In terms of 'the role of input: teacher education strategies', knowledge about subject matter is considered much more important than pedagogical knowledge or professional knowledge and tacit knowledge (Grenfell, 1998). This knowledge and these skills are transmitted mainly by lecturers by means of different disciplines contributing to English as a subject matter. Student teachers are assessed through feedback received by the school where they carry out their practicum. How to construct their new knowledge with their former knowledge and experience was, until now, seldom considered and discussed in workshops or seminars. The schools where these student teachers gain their practical experiences and the university where they learn the theory seldom get together to discuss how to cooperate to mentor students' teaching and how to achieve the common goal to make them become qualified teachers. The

period of time spent by students' at school (usually 1 month) is decided by a uniform time schedule made by the university administration, neglecting the different characteristics of subjects.

Through critical reflection based on the data analysis the weaknesses lie in:

- A strong focus on students as English majors  
In the curriculum setting, more subject matter knowledge is provided to students—contributing courses such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating, linguistics and literature
- Neglecting students as student teachers  
Students with English as subject are different from other English majors. They are student teachers. Therefore, in the pre-service teacher training program the focus should be on courses contributing to knowledge and skills as a teacher  
Neglecting students as individual learners  
Student teachers are individual learners with their different learning style, learning motivation and learning mode. They have their own personal experiences and former knowledge.
- Lack of practical experiences in time
- Ineffectiveness of lecturing mode  
Knowledge is constructed through linking with learners' experiences and former knowledge rather than transmitted by teachers.

#### ***What is the nature of the pre- service English teacher training program?***

The L2 pre-service teacher training program should concentrate more on transferring individual learners into language teachers. The pre-service English teacher training program is different from the general teacher training program. The difference lies in the fact that the former xxaims to train teachers with English as their subject and enhances their abilities in conducting English teaching as opposed to the latter which does what???

#### ***What kind of knowledge needs to be taught?***

Firstly, pedagogical content knowledge is important. Such contributing courses as English teaching methodology, English teaching strategies and recent studies on English teaching should be provided.

Secondly, related knowledge such as studies of child development and learners' motivation, style and mode in learning English should be provided.

Thirdly, subject matter knowledge such as selected readings concerning speaking countries cultures should be provided.

Fourthly, recent studies of general education should be introduced, such as action research and educational research methodology.

#### ***In what way is this knowledge to be taught?***

Student teachers are individual learners with their personal experiences and knowledge. To teach them how to teach doesn't mean that they learn how to teach in the schools. Instead, they teach based on their own experiences. Therefore, in pre-service language teaching teacher educators should facilitate their teaching, linking new knowledge with their personal experiences and former knowledge. It is assumed that only when they are immersed in a constructivist learning environment they can benefit and project their learning experiences to their students in a constructivist teaching way.

### ***In what way and how long does student teacher's practice happen?***

Practical teaching experiences are fairly important for student teachers. Only one month is not enough for them. Simulated micro-teaching has proved to be ineffective. Therefore, it is high time for teacher educators to consider the length and placement criteria of practical teaching. It is also high time for schools and the university to cooperate so as to train effective English language teachers.

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