

**Teachers' understanding and implementation of a
whole language approach to literacy in Taiwan: A
study of early years' teachers' beliefs and
practices**

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Abstract

In recent years, state and national governments have introduced major programmes to reform literacy teaching, e.g. textbook programmes in the United States; the Literacy Block in Victoria, Australia (DEET, 1997, 1998); the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in England (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1998). These programmes are largely based on the growing body of evidence about what may constitute effective literacy teaching. Following the trend, Taiwan's government is also recognizing that in order to meet the challenges of globalization and the desire to improve students' PIRST in the literacy section year-on-year, Taiwanese should be well-equipped with new knowledge and literacy (Ministry of Education, Taiwan; 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005). One of the ways to make education and training more accessible is by providing better infrastructure, such as building new libraries and providing more books, as well as upgrading the teaching and learning practices through teacher training. There is also an urgent need to improve the declining standards in Chinese literacy (Ministry of Education, Taiwan; 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005). In 2000, the Taiwan Education Commission proposed a Reading Project in an attempt to deal with these challenges, which included the whole language approach (MOE, 2000). This approach was the key guideline for the implementation of the aims of early childhood education for the twenty-first millennium. Therefore, many nurseries and kindergartens claim that they have applied the whole language approach as part of their teaching policy, and have treated it as an important element of their curriculum design.

In order to explore the understanding of Taiwanese early year's teachers regarding whole language approach and its implementation, a total of 200 questionnaires were

delivered to teachers at nurseries and kindergartens. 169 were completed and analyzed. In addition, three Taiwanese nursery teachers participated in an in-depth qualitative study to investigate the implementation of the whole language approach and to explore their understanding of it. During the course of the investigation, their beliefs about literacy teaching and the extent to which those beliefs are reflected in their classroom practices were examined. Their framing of the whole language approach was tracked for more than four months by means of interviews and classroom observations. The wealth of data and information collected revealed that although the whole language approach may be positively mandated on a large scale, individual differences between teachers may make the implementation of any such approach or reform more variable in its impact than researchers and policy makers would expect.

The findings indicate that, while teachers sought to include the whole language approach into their literacy teaching, their thinking often shifted and their concept of the whole language approach and literacy learning and teaching fluctuated.

The findings also highlight the complexity of these views. The key influences on teachers' perceptions of literacy and literacy teaching form a continuum, ranging from a purely discrete skill-based curriculum, which reflects traditional Confucian beliefs, to social interaction, which supports the integration of the whole language approach. This range of beliefs is informed by a variety of different influences, including the experience of teachers; their personal background; their understanding of the needs of parents, as well as those of school requirements; government suggested guidelines, and, finally, cultural demands. Each of these influences represents a unique challenge to the beliefs of teachers. When drawn together, the combination of influences that emerge illustrates the complex ways in which teacher beliefs inform their pedagogical practice.

What the data reveals is that the pedagogical practices of teachers were pushed and pulled by these intervening forces, along a continuum between a whole language approach and a more traditional skill-based teaching. Therefore, it is not that they were slow to adopt the utopian whole language approach in practice, nor were they reluctant to change, but that their practice was in reality always constrained by these forces.

The findings also indicate that there are immense difficulties in understanding the concept of the whole language approach and a gap between the practitioners' espoused theories and practice. The study revealed the complex nature of learning and teaching and the core issue for implementing reform, namely, the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Based upon the findings of the study, implications for practice are also considered, namely, the need for government funding and subsidies to help nursery schools to mediate market forces; the restructuring of the bureaucratic and hierarchical management in nurseries; the empowerment of teachers through nurturing their pedagogical competence; support of professional career training; and the ongoing development and reformation of the philosophical underpinnings of teacher training.

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the thesis. As a nursery teacher in the past and a teacher educator, I am writing this thesis to participate in the current educational approach movement in my country - Taiwan. The decision on the topic and format as well as content is to respond to the expectations of many educators and researchers in my country. Furthermore, it is also to fulfill what has been a personal ambition for years. The chapter will start with the origins of my interest in undertaking the study described in this thesis. The intended research objectives for this study are then covered; this will be followed by the discussion of the rationale for choosing the focus of this study in Taiwan. Thirdly, the research questions of this study will be illustrated. Finally, an outline of the thesis will provide a structure of this study and the aims of each chapter. These sections will provide a brief understanding of the purpose of this study.

1.2 The origins of my interest

The personal issues leading up to the undertaking this study were closely tied to the path of my prior education and consequent professional development, first as a nursery school teacher, then as a research assistant and future early childhood teacher educator. I was considered an adequate student in my field in Taiwan. I followed the system and studied hard in order to receive good grades in most of the exams. I passed competitive entrance exams to enrol in high school and a teacher training college followed by the university. In a sense, I survived the Taiwanese educational system, but I did not enjoy my schooling journey very much. I consider on reflection that this is

because the learning was situated predominantly within a traditional objectivist approach with the teacher's delivery of knowledge based on a behaviourist transmission model. In this environment learning meant working hard to master the information passed on by the teacher and textbook in the class without involving too much fun. If any problem occurred during the learning process, this was often taken to be a student problem, implying that students did not work hard enough to learn. People seldom questioned whether the problem might originate from the system, teachers, curriculum or social and cultural backgrounds. As a consequence I increasingly lost interest in studying and learning. I was also disillusioned with the effectiveness of such an approach, particularly at college and university. My personal primary motivation to study hard was to enter college and university hoping to be free from those boring lectures and textbooks and to experience different ways of learning. Shortly after I passed the competitive entrance exam I began my new life. There, I found a little excitement but more disappointment. I was very disappointed because I realized that whatever stage I was in, all I was expected to do was to listen to teachers' lectures, follow the textbook, and master the skill and finish assignments after class. Moreover, I found that I did not have many choices about my courses. The courses for each year were pre-determined by the department. Basically it was a set of courses we had to finish each semester each year in sequence.

The start of a personal change process was my first research assistant role researching nursery teachers' professional development. My initial involvement was in the school and classroom as an assistant inspector and classroom observer. After that I participated in another research project about how nurseries integrate the whole language approach into the children's curriculum in Taiwan. An early exposure to nursery practice motivated me to pursue it as a researcher. Also through many years of

study into early childhood development and education training and teaching experiences, I began to appreciate the importance of my own learning and working experiences. I became more and more curious about many aspects of reading and writing that I believe were shaped during the educational and institutional experiences of children, especially in their early years.

Additionally, in recent years, state and national governments have introduced major programmes to reform literacy teaching, e.g. textbook programmes in the United States; the Literacy Block in Victoria, Australia (DEET, 1997, 1998); the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in England (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1998). These programmes around the world are largely based on the growing body of evidence about what may constitute effective literacy teaching. In this vein, in 2000, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education announced the first Reading Project, suggesting that nursery schools should not teach literacy in a traditional, formal, way that focuses on drills and direct instruction of reading and learning. Rather, they should shift to a holistic and dynamic whole language approach that is child-centred and meaning-focused (MOE, 2000; Tiu, 2004; Liu, 2006). Therefore, the whole language approach has in recent times been a very popular and important trend in Taiwan's early childhood education. Teacher trainers mentioned it in professional preparation classes. Practitioners discussed it at conferences. Moreover, many nurseries even put the whole language approach as one of the important elements in their curriculum design in order to attract more parents when they were looking for early childhood education programmes for their children (Chang, 2006; Liu, 2006; Lin, 2009).

1.3 Research objectives

The 2000 Reading Project document (MOE, 2000) spells out the vision of, and

directions for, the future development of early literacy education in the 21st century. It can be considered the ‘Official Expectations’. The performance indicators (for the nursery system) along with the booklets featuring the broadening views of literacy have made the responsibility for teaching literacy even more complex, nuanced and potentially more bold. ‘Reading and writing’ are no longer just about understanding the written Chinese character or Chinese phonetic-sounds system but also about negotiating a wide range of complex texts, and signs with which we interact in our daily lives (MOE, 2000). The principal aim of nursery literacy education should be “to help children cultivate a positive reading attitude towards learning and good reading habits in an inspiring and enjoyable reading environment” (MOE, 2000). The Reading Project directions put forth for nursery education indicate the official determination to push for quality service provisions that go beyond behaviouristic perceptions, against the launching of a subject-based curriculum, and lead away from the teacher-directed and traditional drill practice approach. The Reading Project initiatives propose a bond with social constructivism, cooperative learning, and child-centredness. In a sense, the government expects the curriculum to be ‘comprehensive and well-integrated’, catering to a child’s holistic cognitive, language, physical, affective, social and aesthetic development in the aspects (MOE, 2000). The government also expects the adoption of a ‘whole language approach’ which was first advocated in the 1999 Nine-Year Curriculum Guidelines (MOE, 1999). These formal expectations challenge teachers to teach in new ways in which they themselves were not taught or which they may not yet be well equipped to handle. As Hargreaves (2001:8) notes, ‘teaching is becoming more demonstrably complex than it has ever been’. This whole language approach, recognized as ‘an integrated approach’ in the 2000 Guidelines to the nursery curriculum (MOE, 2000), is considered to take “play, learning, interaction and care...as a whole...to contribute to the overall development of a new child” (MOE, 2000). A whole

language approach curriculum is planned, through various play activities, to provide broad, balanced and meaningful literacy learning experiences for children. The whole language is more flexible and coherent across levels to foster life-long literacy learning (MOE, 2000).

I was fortunate enough to participate in the development of some of these whole language programmes. This opportunity and interest was reinforced by the results of my earlier studies which had shown that adults' (parents and teachers) reading attitudes, habits and expectations could influence children (Huang, 2003). Also, in one of my unpublished research projects, I aimed to gain an understanding of Taiwan's nursery teachers' attitudes and understanding towards the reading project (Huang, 2004). The particular focus was to identify teachers' concerns and needs. The third, published, study was intended to gain an overview of present literacy education in nursery education in the centre of Taiwan (Huang, 2004). These three studies all used large-scale questionnaire surveys. However, the last two studies raised my awareness about the survey because of a few unfortunate occurrences. Despite in the last two surveys indicating that generally nursery teachers' positively espoused the whole language approach, when I was working as an assistant inspector during the random quality inspection from 2001 to 2004, I formed a very different picture in their classroom practice. It seemed that the learning and teaching practices that many nurseries employ remained a 'teacher-centred approach' in teaching and a 'drilling exercises in learning'. Although, at the same time, studies reported that the whole language approach had been successfully mandated in Taiwanese education, especially at the nursery level (Lin, 2011), they also indicated that the progressive stance adopted in the 2000 Reading Project document had been implemented in an 'uncertain situation'. Furthermore, a current nursery quality inspection report (Lin, 2011) has also indicated that nursery

schools and teachers had underestimated the difficulties in understanding the theories behind the whole language approach. The challenge was often too great for teachers to overcome, and Lin showed that many literacy classroom activities remained teacher-centred and didactic, even where the whole language approach was adopted.

Initially, I was convinced by my earlier quantitative studies that nursery teachers had no difficulties or different needs when the whole language was used as part of their pedagogical methods. However, I gradually moved towards a more questioning view of the practice of literacy education in the nursery stage during my PhD research. I realized that nursery teachers had different needs when the whole language approach was used as part of their pedagogical methods. Their time constraints, for example, may demand a different way of using the approach. Moreover, their teaching objectives are strongly connected with the values of the school where they teach. The discrepancy between current nursery literacy pedagogical practices on the one hand, the researcher's original views and official government expectations on the other, imply the difficulties in the implementation of the changes in nursery literacy learning and teaching. Further, few teachers seemed aware that a discrepancy existed between their stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Out of professional curiosity, and having in the past been an early childhood teacher and early childhood teacher educator, I felt a passionate desire to pursue a study with the primary research purpose of investigating the implementation of the changes to nursery literacy learning and teaching practices. What difficulties had they encountered in terms of integrating the whole language approach into their programmes? Where were the difficulties for teachers in making these changes to practice in nursery classrooms in Taiwan? If why and how do they emerge? These questions represent the key foci of the current study. How to approach these questions is central to the organization and scope of the research. While these key questions can be

approached from a number of perspectives with respect to the causes of the difficulties of practice, the present research chooses to address these by identifying the intimate link between the nursery teachers' pedagogical belief and the origin of the difficulties of changing teaching practice. These difficulties teachers had in implementing the changes may direct attention to the observable pedagogical behaviour of teachers in the classroom. Therefore, it is worth noting that classroom learning and teaching practice is largely determined by the pedagogical beliefs of teachers.

As such, in order to understand these difficulties, one needs not only to examine the literacy teaching practices of teachers, but also to seek a thorough understanding of how a teacher's beliefs are drawn on when they are planning literacy lessons and their actual teaching in the classroom. In addition, the pedagogical beliefs of teachers are also a function of their personal inclination and their teacher training. Furthermore, it should be noted that a teacher's beliefs do not evolve out of nowhere, but are nurtured through teacher training and daily teaching experience and past experience. Teachers are the key agents in delivering nursery education services (Malone&Denno, 2003). Their beliefs and values towards education (in particular, early years literacy learning and teaching), their background, their professional knowledge and teaching skills, as well as their perceptions of societal and parental aspirations in nursery education, and their sensitivity to the contextual constructs, are factors that scaffold both their personal and professional selves. These in turn influence their teaching practices (Cormack,1999; Helsing,2002; Paris and combs, 2000; Smith, 2001; Tutt and Carter,2000). Possessing these delicate qualities could certainly equip teachers with the necessary competence to cope with societal-parental expectations and the restrictive contexts of the schools (Brubaker and Simon, 1993; Calderhead, 1996). Otherwise, their pedagogical practice might simply be pushed and pulled by extrinsic societal demands and contextual constraints.

However, when discussing the origin of the implementation difficulties, much of the literature focuses on the faults of theorists, researchers, or policy makers, blaming them for concentrating on esoteric topics without being firmly rooted in practice in the real world. Because of the contextual insensitivity of these external parties, the contribution of their work to understanding and improving educational practice is unclear. But rather than accepting the blame, theorists, researchers, and policy-makers defend themselves by blaming teachers for being incapable of implementing the suggested innovations. Whatever the claims may be, if the difficulties in implementation are portrayed in this way, the understanding and opinions differ on where the problems in implementing changes are. Some have argued that the bottom up model (traditional skill-based) process of learning to read starts with separate skills and is acquired in a step-by step learning process in a linear fashion, while the top down model (whole language) suggests that reading is seen as being developed by experiences, within a social context. Reading will thus be developed in meaningful and interconnected ways.

1.4 The research questions are:

1. What are the beliefs of Taiwanese teachers about teaching literacy in the early years?
2. Are teachers' actual practices in the teaching of literacy consistent with their reported beliefs?
3. What factors influence teachers' beliefs about teaching literacy?
4. What are teachers' beliefs about the difficulties in teaching literacy and whole language in the nursery phase?
5. How do teachers' position of themselves in relation to the Reading Project and the whole language approach?

1.5 An outline of the thesis

This thesis contains eight chapters; excluding the present chapter, they are as follows:

1. Chapter two

Chapter two describes in general the research background, before outlining the general Taiwanese context. This is followed by an overview of the status and complexity of nursery education provision in the country. A detailed illustration of the nursery education curriculum will then be given. Finally, literacy teaching in the nursery curriculum as well as nursery literacy education initiatives in Taiwan (such as the national reading project) will be explained in this chapter.

2. Chapter three

Chapter three will present a review and synthesis of the literature on literacy learning and teaching practice, and identify the gaps that my research will attempt to address. The theoretical framework of the current research and the literature on the role of the first language teachers' goals will also be presented.

3. Chapter four

The methodology and research design of this study will be explained in this chapter. A critical consideration of ontology, and the epistemological implications and methodology will be discussed. This will be followed by the rationale for the methods I have adopted. The detailed illustration of the instruments of this study will also be explained. The procedure and methods of data analysis will also be presented in this chapter.

4. Chapters five and six

Chapters five and six will present data collected from questionnaires, interviews and

observation. Dominant conceptualizations and ideologies of early years teaching of literacy will be investigated. Analyzing the data, the researcher will also describe the teachers' beliefs about, and practice of, literacy teaching and the whole language approach within the reform movement. The detailed description also given means that chapter six is text heavy and something that my past position will affect. As Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCulloch and Sikes (2005:21), have claimed, "it is impossible to take the researcher out of any type of research or at any stage of the research processes". Therefore, my social constructivist stance and interpretive theoretical framework will be visible in the way the data is presented.

5. Chapter seven

In this chapter, the findings from Chapters five and six will be discussed in detail and possible interpretations explored. Indicative findings will be cross-examined with other evidence and relevant studies. This chapter aims to explain the phenomena and achieve a holistic view on literacy education in early year's classrooms.

6. Chapter eight

The strengths and weaknesses of this study will be discussed in this chapter. The implications of this study will also be discussed; this will be followed by my personal reflections on the research process itself.

1.6 Summary

There were many reasons why I choose this area as my focus of inquiry. With a background as an early childhood education teacher in Taiwan, it was a natural instinct for me to focus on education about literacy teaching issues in early year age. During the course of my study in UK I began to realise that a number of ideas that had previously informed my practice were being challenged by new ideas. Therefore, I decided to investigate this field hoping it would help me reflect on my past experiences. I also hope that through this inquiry I will be able to shed light on teacher beliefs about literacy education in early year classrooms in Taiwan and so contribute to early year education in the future. Furthermore, what has been described above all informed by my own personal background, motivations and theoretical understanding. The crux of the inquiry rests upon a thorough exploration of the complex difficulties that teachers face in responding to change as they negotiate the ongoing whole language reform, and whether there is a corresponding shift in their pedagogical beliefs at the same time. Such a research intention implies that the nature of the study is qualitative, requiring the use of classroom observations to explore practice and teacher interviews to explore beliefs. This qualitative study seeks to offer a platform for teachers, educators and researchers to go beyond the superficial realization of the difficulties of putting change into practice. It is informed by an assumption that studying teachers' pedagogical beliefs is not only an end in itself; it is also a way to scrutinize contextual, societal, personal, professional forces and institutional expectations in the interface between beliefs and practice. Moreover, the absence of government funding for nursery education in Taiwan provides a distinctive background for the present study. In a sense, the research data will further reveal more holistically the intricate and dynamic process of pedagogical beliefs and the reasoning of teachers.

Chapter two: Background Information

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides background and context of the research. The following sections describe, firstly, an introduction to the Taiwanese context, followed by an overview of the status and complexity of nursery education provision in the country. This will include a discussion of the nursery education system, nursery curriculum and the qualifications of nursery teachers and quality. Following this, the teacher's role and the reading project will be described. Finally, the Chinese language will be explained.

2.2 An introduction of Taiwan

Taiwan was formerly known as 'Formosa', from the Portuguese for 'Beautiful Island' (Ilha Formosa).



Figure 2.1: Taiwan's location.

(Resource from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1285915.stm)

Located to the south east of China, the island is about 394 kilometres long and 144 kilometres at its widest point. It covers an area of about 36 thousand square kilometres (Figure 2.1). The population is estimated at 23.2 million that consists of four main ethnic groups, Southern Fujianese, Hakka, more recent immigrants from the Chinese

Mainland and their descendents, following the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and a small Polynesian aboriginal minority. Taiwan has five special municipality districts (namely, Taipei, Kaohsiung, New Taipei, Taichung and Tainan) and as well as 3 further municipalities and 14 counties (Lin and Chu, 2010). For over a century, Taiwan experienced Dutch, Japanese and Chinese colonialism. However, in 1945, after the Japanese surrender at the end of the Second World War II, the Republic of China's government under Chiang Kai-Shek was able to seize control of Taiwan and Taiwan became part of China. Four years later in 1949 the Communist Party of China (which became the present Chinese government) defeated the Chiang Kai Shek's Republic of China in the Chinese civil war. The Chiang government then withdrew from mainland China and was forced to resettle its government in Taiwan. Since then, Taiwan and mainland China have been separate and adopted different political systems, effectively creating two different countries. Taiwan is officially known as the "Republic of China" (ROC), whereas the official name for mainland China is the People's Republic of China (PRC). After more than 50 years of separation, Taiwan and China have separate governments and laws within two different political and economic systems.

However, both governments used language as a tool to unify the population for political and cultural purposes, but they went in different ways. Mainland China keeps Mandarin as the official language but renamed it Putonghua. Moreover, the government also continued with the simplification of orthography and developed a new set of phonetic symbols to write Chinese based on the western Roman alphabet. This is known as Hanyu Pinyin and is widely used around the world to write transliterations of Chinese names and phrases. On the other hand, the Republic of China's Chiang Kai Shek government in Taiwan set about preserving the old culture and the national language to counter a radical communist movement in the country. Therefore, Taiwan

held onto the more complex orthography. Moreover, the most important development in Chinese writing that has had an enormous impact on literacy education was the introduction of Mandarin phonetic symbols that was called *zhu-yin-fu-hao* in the past. This form of the dialect is now the official Chinese language that is called Mandarin in Taiwan. It has 37 phonetic symbols representing the sounds of the original Mandarin. Thus the Mandarin language can be written and pronounced in at least two different ways. Nowadays, both complex and simplified characters are in wide circulation but any programme will use only one of the two sets of characters and pronunciation systems of Mandarin.

2.3 Nursery Education in Taiwan

Taiwan has experienced tremendous economic growth since 1950. This has influenced the economic structure of Taiwan and shifted it from a mainly agricultural based economy to an industrial based economy (Huang, 2004; Chuang, 2009). This has also affected dramatic societal transformation and the family structure has changed from reliance on the extended family to a greater focus on the nuclear family unit. In the past, children stayed at home before they entered primary school at the age of six. Extended family members, particularly grandparents, took care of young children if both parents went to work. As the economic situation improved rapidly with an increasing need for labour (Liu, 2006) more females sought employment and people started to move to big cities for better work opportunities. Hence, society was demanding nursery schools to fulfill the role of educating and caring for young children while their parents were at work. Therefore, the traditional mother's role of educating and caring for children has been undertaken by nursery teachers and caregivers (Lin, 2009). Also Taiwanese families are having fewer and fewer children compared with the past, with parents beginning to pay more attention to the quality of education and the care young children

receive in nursery schools. In this way, parents are increasingly willing and able to pay more for the quality of environment for their children's education.

In Taiwan, nursery education usually offers a three year curriculum for children between three and six years old. Enrolment at nursery level is not compulsory. Most of the nursery schools are private, profit-making businesses. The local governments in each town, county, or city, also offer several public nursery schools that charge less for tuition. Ko (2011) provides the following statistics to demonstrate the increase in nursery provision in Taiwan over the last fifty years (Table 2.1). As it appears from the table, there has been an almost 113-fold dramatic increase since 1950. As of 2009, there were 3,154 registered kindergarten schools, including both public and private in Taiwan (there are many more unregistered schools in Taiwan) with 182,049 children enrolled (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Table2.1: The number of Nurseries (MOE, 2009).

	Kindergarten	Preschool
1950	28	12
2009	3154	3780

2.4 The nursery education system

In Taiwan, the term of 'nursery' generally refers to kindergarten and preschool. They are regulated by different government departments. However, the Department of Elementary Education in the Ministry of Education at the central government level is responsible for matters related to kindergartens. At the local government level, kindergartens are the responsibility of the Education Bureau. The Children's Bureau Ministry of the Interior at the central governmental level is responsible for preschools, while the Social Affairs Bureau at the local government level is in charge of matters related to preschools. The compulsory school age for children in Taiwan is seven years,

therefore, neither kindergartens nor preschools are part of the government mandated twelve-year compulsory education, and these are available in both the private and public sector. These include a range of settings: religious-based, workplace, private by commercial organization, or government-subsidised but most of private (Lin, 2009). Kindergartens serve children from the age of four to the age of six years while preschool serves children from the age of one month to six years. However, many kindergartens also provide care with education. Therefore, they have also started to accept children under the age of four or even younger. As a result, the differences between these two programmes are becoming increasingly less apparent, at least in terms of the ages served and the goals and objectives for early childhood care and education. Likewise, preschool focuses not only on caring but also educating children. Both tend to be full day classes. However, the functions of these two types of nursery education systems are similar and the admission age of children overlaps. Regardless of all these similarities, kindergarten and preschool programmes are regulated by different government authorities and follow different standards (Ko, 2011; Wang and Change, 2003). Despite this all kindergarten and preschools have been involved in implementing the Reading Project and the whole language approach for literacy. It can be traced in different quantitative surveys (Lin, 2011). The current study sample was a sample of seventeen teachers picked randomly from two kindergartens and a preschool nursery, and who had offered to provide classroom observation opportunities as well as conducting in-depth interviews.

2.5 Nursery curriculum

The government has always tried, at least on paper, to suggest and improve early childhood education services, and literacy learning and teaching. Its attempts can be traced back through different policy documents. The Early Childhood Education Act in

1981 was concerned with the most important regulations for early childhood education in Taiwan. Since that time, early childhood education has had a legitimate place within the Taiwanese education system (MOE, 1981; Ko, 2010; Hung, 2006). According to this curriculum regulation for early childhood education in Taiwan, the five main aims are 1. “to help children to enhance physical and mental health development”, 2. “to acquire good living habits”, 3. “to enrich children’s life experience”, 4. “to improve ethical and moral concepts” and 5. “to develop gregarious, cooperative and cognitive habitual behaviours” (Ministry of Education, 1981). Health education, life education and moral education are the main areas of preschool education that all aim to help children to become healthy and well-developed people.

In 1987, the Ministry of Education (MOE) also articulated a curriculum standard for learning activities in nursery schools to address the following areas: ‘health, language, play, music, work ethics and common sense (i.e., nature, social studies and math concepts)’. Moreover, the MOE also regulates the Unit approach to an integrated curriculum in nursery education. The Unit curriculum approach is a teacher-directed programme that includes precise planning and is a fixed process of teaching. A Unit contains activities for cognitive and skill development. However, these curriculum, standards and goals only provide a framework or guidelines for nursery programmes (Chen, 2004).

Despite the fact that early childhood education is still not yet part of the compulsory system, in the past 30 years, the MOE has implemented nursery education policies, regulations and standards as broad principles that nursery schools are to follow. However, the MOE does not have a standard curriculum for the nursery level yet. Therefore, individual nursery schools have the power and freedom to design and

develop their own curricula and activities that they deem suitable for their students and classrooms, while also under implementing the MOE's policies, regulations and standards (Chang, 2006). Hence, the quality of the curricula used in early childhood classrooms in Taiwan varies greatly depending on the management of individual schools and the teachers' interpretations of the framework. Therefore, a variety of different programmes and approaches, such as the Montessori approach, Froebel approach, and also the currently fashionable Theme project and Reggio approaches, have spread widely throughout the early childhood education field and has the recommendation of many academic scholars in Taiwan. Due to the influence of the Theme-Project Approach, many academic authorities at present advocate thematic curricula for nursery teachers and nursery training students. The "Theme Project" curriculum is a useful method for integrating knowledge from different fields, such as daily life, society, maths, languages and science. It is also a very suitable for delivery by the whole-language approach (Lin, 2009; 2011).

2.6 Teacher's qualifications and quality

Kindergarten and preschools have different standards of training and different levels of qualifications. Kindergarten teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree from one of the designated university departments that teach content related to early childhood education in order to be allowed to teach in kindergarten. But teachers who are working in preschools have a range of qualifications, including qualifications from some designated senior high schools, colleges, or university departments in areas such as home economics, youth/children welfare and early childhood education/care and that teach content related to early childhood development education, but which focus more on children's development and children's welfare, so as to allow graduates to teach in preschool. Interestingly, staff members working in kindergartens are called 'teachers'

but staff members who work in preschools are called ‘caregivers’ (Huang, 2001).

The qualifications and turnover of teaching staff have a significant impact on the quality of nursery education in Taiwan (Hsieh, 2002). In private nurseries, Hsieh (2002) found that over half of the staff were unqualified and under a quarter held undergraduate degrees. Yang and his research team were surprised as the number of qualified teachers that education institutions have trained should have been enough to supply the needs of nursery school. They found that low salaries were one of the reasons for the high turnover of nursery teachers. Phillipsen, Burchinal, Howes, and Cryer (1997) also pointed out that salaries were strongly associated with high turnover. In fact, salaries have been found to be one of the strongest predictors of quality in nursery education, showing a stronger connection than teacher-child ratios, teacher education or working environment (Hsieh, 2002).

In the private nursery sector, teachers’ salaries are very low and this affects the turn-over, especially if they are qualified. Chien (2004) found that only 5 percent of private nurseries were offering the same level of salary as publically-employed nurseries. Additionally, a quarter of the private schools in the survey did not have a teacher retirement pension system. The average salary of a qualified teacher in a private nursery was just over NTD22, 500 (New Taiwan Dollars – about £375) per month compared to teachers working in publically-funded nursery, where the salary was just over NTD32, 500 (about £540). In addition, 6 percent of teachers in private schools earned salaries which were lower than the minimum pay conditions dictated by the Labour Standards Law. Combined with an expectation of long working hours, this means that many qualified teachers choose to leave their careers in nursery education to find other jobs (Lin, 2002).

High turnover rates influence the quality of nursery school (Chien, 2004; Lin, 2002;). Phillipson et al. (1997) suggested that schools should offer higher salaries in order to retain more qualified teachers. However, there is no legislative requirement for private preschool providers to offer reasonable salaries to teachers or caregivers. It depends on the providers' concept of a fair salary. Thus, there are different levels of salaries between different nurseries and this cause's staff instability (Chen, 2003). Although research has demonstrated a correlation between the salary of teachers and retention, which may in turn affect the quality of nursery education, increasing teaching pressures are still major concerns in Taiwanese nursery provision (Lin, 2002; Chien, 2004). This indicates the low status early years teachers have in Taiwan which may explain some of the difficulties hindering them from implementing the Reading Project and the whole language approach.

2.7 The Teacher's Role

From the view of traditional Chinese Confucian culture, a teacher is regarded a learned scholar who transmits knowledge and the skills essential for living, as well as a moral figure who sets an example for students to follow. As one of the Confucian masters, Han Yu, discussing teachers in his 'Shih Shuo' says that: "the responsibilities of teachers consist of three tasks: Being a teacher, one should propagate doctrines of the ancient sage [Confucius], transmit knowledge and remove doubts." One maxim puts it this way: "One should respect one's teacher as if he were one's father, even if the teacher-student relationship exists only for a single day" (Chong, 2007). This deep-rooted cultural belief has influenced the structure of the traditional, Confucian, society, which was composed of four estates of people: scholars, peasants, artisans and merchants (Rickett, 1998). Among these four estates, scholars were afforded the highest prestige. As another maxim says, "All other things are of lower class; only the scholar is

of the highest class” (Chen, 1983). Thus, teachers as learned scholars were afforded great respect both symbolically and socially in traditional Chinese culture. These traditional values concerning the high status of teachers are still alive in the minds of Taiwanese today (Fwu and Wang, 2002). Each year on Teachers’ Day, official ceremonies are performed in Temples dedicated to Confucius to commemorate ‘the Supreme Master Teacher.’ This is also an occasion for honouring today’s distinguished teachers who exemplify the ideal of a moral person of knowledge. In addition, it is a common practice for students to keep in contact with their former teachers by paying a visit or inviting them to join class reunion gatherings, as an occasion to show appreciation and respect for their guidance in their previous schooling years. Therefore, the relationship between teachers and student are a vertical division, rather than a horizontal line. Fwu and Wang (2002) argue that “Taiwanese teachers are in general regarded as role models and learned scholars”. Furthermore, people have respect for teachers and consider that teachers should lead what they regard to be a ‘respectable’ life with correct conduct at all times; in this sense, people also regard most teachers as well-rounded in subject knowledge and respected for their role in disseminating knowledge (Lin, 1992). Thus, a teacher seems to be regarded as a mature and respectable person or authority and professional by other adults. All these beliefs lead to a widely held “morally and intellectually superior” image of teachers in Taiwan (Fwu and Wang, 2002).

From this regard, young children in early childhood classrooms are required to obey and respect the wisdom and knowledge of adults. According to Lai (2000) and Ouyang (2009), Taiwanese early childhood teachers use a strong teacher-directed approach to control a curriculum within their classrooms. Most of the time, children are expected to follow the teacher’s lead rather than being allowed to make choices or engage in

spontaneous play. Although most of the classrooms have a number of different learning activities, children can only go to these content areas under adult supervision and with their permission. Even in modern Taiwanese schools, Confucius' main writings are still memorized by all teachers and children. The traditional way of teaching is that, while sitting quietly in their own seats, students are required to listen to teachers telling them what to learn. The same applies to teaching literacy.

2.8 The Reading Project

Due to the advance in information exchange across the world and rapid change in terms of the political, economic and social situation in Taiwan, early childhood programmes in the country have been significantly impacted by Western cultures (Wu and Chang, 2006). Taiwan's government recognized that in order to meet the challenges of globalization and the desire to improve students' PIRST in the literacy section year by year, Taiwanese children should be well-equipped with new knowledge and literacy (Ministry of Education, Taiwan; 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005). One of the ways by which they tried to make education and training more accessible was by providing better infrastructure, such as building new libraries and providing more books, as well as upgrading the teaching and learning practices through teacher training. There is an ongoing urgent need to improve the declining standards of Chinese literacy (Ministry of Education, Taiwan; 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005). In an attempt to deal with these challenges, a Reading Project that included whole language theory was proposed by the Taiwan Education Commission in 2000, with the intention of improving classroom interaction by including play activity and fostering high quality literacy learning and teaching interaction (MOE, 2000).

This whole language approach had its origins between 1992 and 1996. Looking for alternatives in language education for elementary school teachers to the In-Service

Education (IEST) and to develop a new language arts curriculum for elementary schools, a set of research-oriented curricula and learning materials in language arts were developed in 1992. This was intended to reflect whole language principles and was funded by the government. However, although here the term ‘whole language’ is frequently used (Watson, Burke and Harste, 1989; McConaghy, 1988; Gunderson and Shapiro, 1988; Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores, Weaver, 1988; Goodman, 1986), it does not mean that there is a universal agreement on what the term means. Indeed, the Taiwan Reading Project and kindergarten curriculum documents do not attempt to define clearly what this means. For the purposes of this thesis, I subscribe to the operational definition based on Froese (1991). Froese (1991:2) defines ‘whole language’ as a:

“child centered, literature-based approach to language teaching that immerses students in real communication situations whenever possible.”

Furthermore, Froese also gives a more specific definition of ‘literature based’. This refers to textual materials of all kinds, from fiction to informational materials that are used to promote language learning. Moreover, ‘real communication’ means that genuine audiences and interested listeners are involved whenever possible in the linguistic effort.

From this point, I also interpret Froese’s definition as follows: that language teaching and learning must be interesting and meaningful to the learner. Furthermore, language learning is considered to be a natural human developmental activity and used for social interaction and making sense of the world. Moreover, languages are learnt holistically in context rather than in isolation or as individual skills. Therefore, language teaching and learning is a way of making sense of real usage and involves immersion in environmental print. Language is also learnt through different social activities, for instance: play activity or role play.

Thus, the period from 1997 to present was important to elementary, secondary and nursery education in Taiwan. Major educational reforms, which were historically significant, all took place within this period of time. Administrators and educators searched for curricula that were more student-centered and relevant to students. Ideas such as an integrated curriculum, and connections between elementary and secondary curriculum were discussed and later became national policies. Some administrators and policymakers began to encourage teachers to construct their own curriculum. During this period of time, the whole language philosophy and instructional principles inspired educators who participated in the process of reform and influenced new curriculum development. For example, some members of the Development of the Nine-Year Curriculum Guidelines for Language Arts Committee who had participated in the IEST research team mentioned above were inspired by the whole language approach and brought its principles into the new curriculum. In early childhood education, new National Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines were also developed in 2000 to replace the old ones issued in 1976. The whole language principle was appointed by the government as the central principle that needed to be applied to the curriculum. Furthermore, to enable nursery teachers to abandon the traditional “spoon-feeding” teaching approach and drill practice, and to achieve the expected Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines (MOE, 2000), in the September of 2000 (MOE, 2000) carried on the Reading Project with direct and concise suggestions: “Immersion in language and print; many resources, materials, time, and space need to support the child as a learner and learning by doing, Meaningful communication, Meaningful reading and writing, Integrated learning rather than by subject”. Sensory and different play activities are proposed as the media of literacy learning. Observation, exploration, thinking and imagination are described to be the essence of the learning approach (MOE, 2000). These suggestions are in line with an argument made in the 2000 Guide to the nursery

curriculum (MOE, 2000):

Factual knowledge obtained through stereotype textbook teaching or rote-learning is only superficial. These teaching methods will only curb the creativity and cognitive thinking of children, and do not guarantee that children can remember and make use of the knowledge acquired (MOE, 2000).

Following the new curriculum policies, teacher training became part of the follow-up process. In some places, the whole language approach was taken into training programmes to help teachers think about teaching in different ways. It was expected that the whole language approach would expose these teachers to different views of learning, teaching, curriculum, and education.

2.9 The Chinese Language

As mentioned in the above section, Mandarin is the official language of instruction for children in schools in Taiwan. Therefore, for the purpose of the current research, it is important to provide a brief introduction on the Chinese language and to outline some important features of teaching and learning in the early school years. However, it should be noted first that I have not attempted to describe all aspects of the Chinese language systems, but only the aspects that are relevant for the research described later are discussed. This section also helps non-Chinese readers to understand the context showing how educators think, or how they teach and expect children learn to read Chinese.

The Chinese language system emerged in the second millennium BCE (Leong, 1986:84). The exact total number of characters is uncertain (Huang, 1993). In Chinese, a character can be classified as simple or complicated; the character is the basic independent unit. Each character represents a single syllable consisting of a single

morpheme (Chang, 1992:278). Unlike English, a word can be one single character, or a combination of two or more than two characters. According to a famous dictionary the Kang Hsi Tze Tien (a 42-volume dictionary compiled during the reign of emperor Kang Hsi, 1662-1722 AD, in the Ching Dynasty), there are more than 47,000 different characters (Hue, 1992:95). However, most literate Chinese know only a portion of these. It has been estimated that about 3000 different characters are actually of high frequency for most popular novels, newspapers, magazines, and textbooks (Chan, Juan and Foon, 2008; Taylor, 1987; Huang and Hanley 1995). According to another survey in Taiwan, there are about 4500 characters and about 40,000 words in daily use (Liu, Chuang and Wang, 1975).

The traditional way to write and read a sentence or paragraph is vertically, downwards, and from right to left. Nowadays, some books (e.g., science or mathematics) and newspapers are printed in horizontal format, and are read from left to right, as with Western languages.

Chinese written in characters look very different from an alphabet because the basic orthographic units of the two systems are very different. Written English, for example, has three principal structural levels (letter, word and sentence), whereas Chinese has five levels (stroke, stroke-pattern, character, word and sentence). A stroke is the smallest writing unit in Chinese. There are eight types of strokes commonly in use, such as dots, lines and hooks. The number of strokes in a character can vary from one to over 20. Moreover, Chinese is written in characters that each represent a syllable of the oral language. Each character also represents a morpheme. Characters can be divided into one or more components and these components are in turn made up of strokes. Each stroke in a character has a specific direction and form. Similar to alphabetic

writing, there is a sequence for putting the strokes together to form Chinese characters. But in Chinese, there is more emphasis on following the direction and order of strokes when writing the characters, because this helps to produce beautiful calligraphy which is highly valued, while the correct number of strokes are required in order to use a dictionary. Furthermore, Chinese is a tonal language in which each syllable must be pronounced with a specific inflection or tone. Mandarin has four main tones that differentiate phonemes. Therefore, the same syllable with tonal differences will represent very different meanings.

2.9.1 Chinese literacy teaching in the nursery school

Literacy educators in Taiwan are very concerned with the correct pronunciation of Mandarin in what is considered to be the ‘pure,’ and therefore ‘correct,’ Beijing pronunciation. Therefore, much literacy lesson time is spent on teaching and checking the correct accent of spoken Mandarin. However, before tone and word character teaching, teachers primarily need to teach phonetic symbols which were adopted by the Ministry of Education to be taught in primary schools to help children sound out characters. All children must learn the phonetic symbols before they can learn to read characters. The MOE has set a goal of 10 weeks of class as the appropriate amount of time to learn the symbols before starting to teach the of reading of characters with the help of the phonetic symbols at primary school. Therefore, Taiwanese Nursery authorities state that formal instruction in Chinese phonetic symbols, Chinese word characters and daily writing has been prohibited since 1987 (Hou, 2002). However, in reality, most nurseries provide formal literacy lessons built into their curriculum. This includes recognizing Chinese phonetic symbols and characters that require daily writing within a very small grid (Huang, 2003, Lin, 2011).

It is argued that this is because Confucianism remains the dominant education philosophy within the Taiwanese society, and early childhood practices are heavily influenced by its principles (Lin and Tsai, 1996; Chan, 1990). Confucianism emphasizes obedience to adults, teachers and parents, and influences the beliefs about a child's achievement, as well as an emphasizing academic excellence.

The same applies to teaching literacy. Teachers place a strong emphasis on teaching knowledge by the rote learning of phonetic symbols, correct pronunciation, and then memorizing the word characters rather than emphasizing reading comprehension. It is assumed that if the children learn in this traditional way, they will automatically understand the text. Therefore, children are taught as isolated skills phonetics, characters and sentence structures (Yang, Tsai and Yang; Liu, 2006; Lin, 2011). Wu (2005) argued that children achieve comprehension by accumulating and putting together these skills on their own.

The emphasis on the communicative and interactive functions of nursery education and literacy education is a written standard in the Taiwanese curriculum. However, in practice, it is not taught as it is understood in the West (Huang, 2001; Wu, 2005). Most Chinese teachers and professors still hold that there is one standard and correct interpretation for any word character and text which is delivered by the 'sage teachers'. Therefore, there is no need for discussions or activities and rather a lot of rote memorization, as well as drill practice and answering regular tests, as these are believed to be enough for learning. Teachers also pay attention to the correct way of writing but do not deal with the understanding of meaning. Teachers encourage children to improve their comprehension of the phonetic symbols, characters and text by reading aloud and better yet to memorize everything. It is accepted as common knowledge that memorization helps children read and write better after they move onto primary school.

Silent reading and independent reading are encouraged as well (Wu and Chang, 2006).

Another feature of Confucian thinking deeply rooted in the minds of Taiwanese teachers and parents is the notion that learning comes with hard effort (Liu, 2006). It is accepted that children's efforts and hard work are very important factors in determining their learning process. Taiwanese even believe that these efforts can supersede a child's biological development level. In this way, teachers and parents believe that in order to succeed in school, even at the nursery level, the amount of effort by children is what matters the most. Even though this is not consistent with much current educational theory, a child's failure to learn the elements of language is interpreted in terms of their failure to study or practice hard enough, rather than as a consequence of striving to achieve standards that are not suitable for a child's abilities, maturity, or psychological attributes. Moreover, because traditionally Confucianism places great value on academic excellence, in order to gain a higher social status, parents prefer formal academic oriented and a strict, teacher-directed, teaching pedagogy that requires children to listen attentively and do written work in nursery schools (Wu, 2005; Chen, 2006). Parents believe that children in direct instruction programmes attain higher achievement scores immediately following nursery school (Chen, 2003). To a certain extent, the similar aspirations are also present in Western contexts, with such notions as the 'self-made man' and the 'Protestant work ethic', which similarly maintains that effort is rewarded and failure is the consequence of not trying hard enough.

However, Taiwanese parents tend to be much more involved in children's education (Liu, 2006; Chen, 2006). Therefore, parents want their children to be well prepared with basic academic skills and become the best performers educationally at the primary stage. Based on this, Chen (2006) argues that learning to read and write is seen

as an important part of preparation and has been very popular with nursery education over the past few decades (Lin, 2011; Chien, 2004; Hou, 2002; Hsieh, 2002). In response to these parental needs, there has been an increase in nursery schools that teach reading and writing as well as Chinese phonetic symbols and characters through formal instruction. 97.4% of nurseries have introduced Chinese phonetic symbols and 88.5% the teaching of Chinese writing skills; 89% of parents now consider sending their children to such nurseries (Chen, 2006). Although doing so violates MOE regulations and those of the Children's Bureau Ministry of the Interior, some nursery school directors and teachers may modify their literacy lessons to fit the teacher-directed approaches while providing literacy lessons for the Chinese phonetic symbol recognition, Chinese characters and daily writing lessons to serve parents' expectations. Additionally, they may prefer this way of teaching because it is easy to prepare a curriculum or develop a child's effective learning (Chen, 2006; Chang, 2002). In this way, teachers struggle to balance the conflicting demands of MOE standards and parents' expectations. However, the roots of early academic pressure on children lay in Confucianism. Confucianism affects teachers' perspectives about their role in the classroom, the teacher-student, teacher-parent relationships, and the prevailing beliefs about how children learn best.

In addition, several nursery schools prefer pre-packaged teaching materials for literacy classes, despite the fact that studies have shown that these materials emphasize academic learning and are too difficult for young children (Liu, 2006). Yang (2002) and Liu (2006) found in their surveys that not only private, but also public, nursery teachers rely on teaching materials which are produced by commercial early childhood publishers. The packaged teaching materials include teachers' handbooks for the whole curriculum with activities, teaching aids and children's textbooks. In using such

packaged materials, teachers may save time in planning curricula or teaching activities and finding resources for their students; they can use these ready-made teaching materials to teach young children. Lin (2011) argues that these teaching materials are artificially divided into different subjects and focus more on cognitive teaching and learning rather than developing children's creative and social development. They are commercial handbooks and have fixed plans so teachers may find it difficult to cater for children's different needs during lessons. The materials do not provide children with opportunities to choose from a variety of topics that they would prefer to play with or learn from. Moreover, some nursery teachers claimed they used direct teaching approaches and packaged materials because the primary school tends to favour the teacher-directed approach, and that children who start with direct instruction at nursery school had slightly higher achievement scores immediately after finishing nursery (Chen, 2006, Liu, 2006). Also, teachers can easily evaluate children's learning level by using dictation formats. Research findings (Drake, 2001; Godwin and Perkins, 2002) suggest that nursery schools should offer a wide, balanced range of subject matter and needs to be carefully planned to match children's abilities and preferences. Therefore, the curriculum that most nurseries in Taiwan provide may not be appropriate for supporting children's learning and development.

However, teaching literacy through subjects is considered inappropriate in the whole language principle. As Nutbrown (2006) argues, if the nursery curriculum is artificially divided into subjects, teaching can be inappropriate and contrary to the way in which children think and learn. Taiwanese early childhood educators (Lin, 2002; 2009; 2011; Hsieh, 2002) worry that the formal pedagogy in Taiwanese nurseries usually focuses on learning outcomes and the learning process; the personal and emotional development and learning attitudes of children are ignored. Huang (2001)

raised her concerns about the nursery curriculum in Taiwan when she mentioned that contemporary education in Taiwan focuses on talent and academic subject learning and is only concerned about learning outcomes; such “instant education” approaches replace the regular curriculum. Many children are in educational traps: they seem to learn many skills and knowledge but these are superficial. As a result, children feel empty in their hearts and lose the special character of a whole person (Huang, 2001:40).

2.10 Summary

This introductory chapter lays down the basic background for the present qualitative study. The following chapter reviews the related literature and introduces the core research elements.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework and literature review

3.1 Introduction

There are three principal perspectives that underpin this research. The first is that of the socio-cultural theory put forward by Vygotsky (1978), which views learning to be not just an individual cognitive process of input and output, but the growth that occurs through interaction within a social context.

The second is that literacy is grounded in a social context, used by people in their daily and working lives; it is not merely an ‘autonomous’ subject for school study (Street, 1985, 1994). Moreover, literacy learning is a total process that involves the interaction of the teacher, the children, the school and wider society, rather than a simple set of skills to transfer from teacher to child.

A third perspective underpinning the research are that teachers’ understandings of literacy and of teaching are not static beliefs but rather that they are linked to a person’s identity and discourses, mediated by the society in which they live.

This framework draws from a socio-cultural view of literacy teaching. As many (Chapman 2002; Gee, 1999; Pendergast and McWilliam 1999; Davies 1996; Klein 1998) acknowledge, the beliefs and/or identity of a teacher are an important influence on their work. Therefore, taking beliefs/identity as a premise, socio-cultural theory provides a window through which discourses are seen as a tool to denote the construction of an identity, or as Gee, (2001:110), puts it: the “ways of being ‘certain kinds of people’ ”, or, more specifically, “certain kinds of teachers”.

Sections of this review which define socio-cultural theory, learning, literacy, beliefs, identity and discourse explore research in these areas. I argue that more research from

these perspectives is needed into how such a view can contribute to our knowledge of literacy teaching, in particular with respect to the introduction of new approaches.

3.2 Learning theories

Many theories have tried to interpret how learning occurs. These have influenced how learning is perceived, ranging from learning as a stimulus-response process to a perspective in which it is considered to be a result of social interaction. In this part of the current chapter I shall discuss what I consider to be the three main learning theories that relate to early childhood development and literacy learning. These theories are important in that they may not only continue to influence teachers but also policies makers.

3.2.1 Behaviourism

Behaviourist views were predominant for several decades from the beginning of last century until the early 1960s (Yager, 1995). Behaviourism states that knowing could be characterized only in terms of observational connections between stimuli and responses (S-R) (Skinner, 1953). Major behaviourist researchers, including J. B. Watson (1913), I. Pavlov (1927), E. L. Thorndike (1911), and B. F. Skinner (1950), conducted their studies on animals and believed that experiences on animals would produce similar results on human beings. When these experiences are applied to children's learning, the issue for a behaviourist is how new behaviour is acquired, rather than how new knowledge is acquired. Therefore, for them, learning means changes in the behaviour of an individual by reward or punishment. In this way, learning can be achieved by external motivation, which means children learn for high grades or extra credits. For this reason, behaviourists introduced the idea of positive and negative reinforcements to emphasize their view of rewards. While positive rewards aim to strengthen some good

responses, negative rewards aim to weaken others.

According to behaviourists, routine activities are effective for transmitting knowledge to the learner. Furthermore, they favour clear goals and reinforcement as teaching-learning strategies (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996). The behaviourist view emphasizes that knowledge can be transmitted from teachers to children's minds via language, and children simply absorb transmitted knowledge as a passive receptor of stimuli of outside forces (Hill, 1977; Hendry, 1996). Therefore, learning is viewed as knowledge transmission with the passive reception and storage of knowledge (Gallagher, 1993). The processes of learning were considered to be uniform across species. "It does not make much difference what species we study.... The laws of learning are much the same on rats, dogs, pigeons, monkeys, and humans" (Hill, 1977:9).

3.2.2 Constructivism

Piaget (1964) criticized the view of learning based on the stimulus-response schema. For Piaget, the stimulus is really a stimulus only when it is assimilated into a structure. Von Glasersfeld (1989) explained Piaget's view of learning by saying that cognitive change and learning take place when a schema, instead of producing the expected result, leads to perturbation and perturbation, in turn, leads to accommodation that establishes a new equilibrium. As a result, human kind is a complex network of schemata which are intricately connected to each other in patterns completely unique to the individual.

From a constructivist perspective, learning is viewed as a cognitive activity. Piaget's writings provide the theoretical foundation for a cognitive constructivist

perspective which emphasizes that children's knowledge is not necessarily transmitted from someone else to them. Rather, his theory is based on the idea that the child builds cognitive structures or schemas through which he or she experiences and understands his or her social environment (Scott, 1987). Identifying four age-related developmental stages, Piaget outlined principles of assimilation and accommodation as mechanisms that maintain an equilibrium from which more sophisticated cognitive structures develop (Piaget, 1964; Fischer, 1980; Gauvain and Cole, 1997). He argued that development occurred as children worked together to resolve cognitive conflicts by adjusting their views to accommodate the discrepancies between their own and others' perspectives (Light & Littleton, 1999). Resolving cognitive conflicts was said to overcome egocentricity and lead to development, but only at around seven years of age when the child was capable of engaging in reciprocal interactions.

Piaget's cognitive development placed a heavy emphasis on the role of self-directed activity, and he believed that children literally construct their knowledge of the world through the process of self-directed activity (Piaget, 1963). Moreover, Piaget claimed that children have an eager desire to know and they learn only when their curiosity is not fully satisfied. This curiosity is the main factor that drives their learning. Children build their understanding of their environment by the things they do (Piaget, 1963). This constructivist process of learning takes place as they continuously organize, reorganize, structure and restructure everyday experiences in relation to existing schemes or mental images, of thought, through a process of equilibration (Wolff, 1994; Morris, 2003).

According to Piaget, cognitive development takes place through a process known as the *adaptation* of mental constructs. Adaptation is composed of two interrelated processes of assimilation and accommodation functioning together. Assimilation is the process of taking in, making sense of, and the incorporation of, new information and sensory data

into one's existing knowledge. Accommodation is the process involved in changing old methods and adjusting to new situations (Morris, 2003; Singer & Revenson, 1996). Piagetian ideas provide a means by which to assess children's levels of intellectual functioning, intellectual readiness, and the appropriateness of classroom activities. He believed that children's learning is neither exclusively intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated, but learning based upon their interactions with their environment (Mooney, 2000).

Similar views to Piaget can also be traced back to Rousseau, Froebel and Montessori (Kwon, 2003). All of these emphasized the individuality of young children and advocated their learning autonomy. They also emphasized the importance of the child's own activity in the construction of both mind and knowledge. Moreover, it was the teacher's responsibility to increase each child's competence whenever possible (Mooney, 2000). Rousseau's interests in the nature of the child and the process of learning have had a powerful influence on early education. Froebel's use of play as an educational process is still valued by most early childhood educators. Emphasis on independent learning is found in Montessori. However, some of the ideas of Piaget, Rousseau, Froebel and Montessori's ideas have since been contested (Kwon, 2002). In particular, in recent years, Piaget's theory has been challenged and criticized in that it ignores the effect of social interaction on learning (Santrock, 2001). Social constructivist theorists now disagree with Piaget's stage theory, which implies that a child was unable to benefit from social interaction (Flavell, 1992; Matusov & Hayes, 2000). Another challenge facing Piagetian ideas was put forward by Bruner (1975), who claimed that his constructivism (though usually called a structuralist) included social values, while Piaget remains an individual. Bruner's (1975) major idea is that learning is an active social process in which children construct new ideas or concepts based on

current or past knowledge. The learner selects and transforms information, constructs and makes decisions, relying on a cognitive structure to do so. Cognitive structure provides meaning and organization to experiences and allows the individual to 'go beyond the information given'. The teacher and learner should engage in an active dialogue. Moreover, the curriculum should be organized in a spiral manner so that the children continually build upon what they have already learned.

Also, Piaget's emphasis on regular stages of maturity as a precondition for learning was opposed by Vygotsky (1978:89) who argued that the only "good learning is that which is in advance of development". Furthermore, Vygotsky argued that Piaget's theory did not consider the socio-cultural aspects of development, as children grow up in a particular social and cultural environment. Then these particular social and cultural influences are how they make sense of the world around them. That said, Piaget's view of the active child did provide influential ideas for socio-cultural theorists to consider.

3.2.3 Socio-cultural theory of learning

Socio-cultural theory is mainly based on the ideas of Lev Vygotsky (John-Steiner and Mahn, 1996; Lantolf and Beckett, 2009, Leont'ev, 1981; Werstch, 1991). Unlike behaviourist views that were based on simplified explanations of human behaviour or Piaget's views about the four stages of children's development, Vygotsky argued that higher mental functions cannot be viewed accurately in isolation but should be evaluated as a step in a gradual developmental process (Tappan, 1998). In this way, learning from a socio-cultural perspective focuses on moving "*through* understanding rather than *to* understanding" (Rogoff, 1998:690). Moreover, from an early stage, children learn through participation in social activities. Therefore, children's learning and development are inseparable from social the relations and cultural contexts

(Johansson, 2006). The idea is that to understand learning we need to look beyond the individual mind and explore the socio-cultural processes from which it derives (Wertsch and Tulviste, 1992). Vygotsky also claims that speech, language and other symbolic systems are the most important tools that mediate and shape cognitive functioning (Bredo, 1997; 2006). However, socio-cultural theory has recently evolved to provide a different outlook on understanding of learning (Steiner and Mahn, 1996). Below I will present some of the central features and concepts of the socio-cultural perspectives in relation to learning relevant to this present study. I will try to discuss them separately for clarification purposes since they are complex and interrelated. However, in some cases, this may not be possible.

3.2.3.1. The Social Nature of learning

Socio-cultural theory tends to emphasize the social contexts of learning and that learning is mutually constructed through interaction (Santrock & Arends, 2001). In this regard, a socio-cultural stance on learning recognizes that knowledge is socially, rather than individually, constructed. Learners within the socio-cultural tradition agree that learning involves negotiating understandings through dialogue or discourse shared by two or more people (Brophy, 2002). In this point of view, the focus is placed upon the social nature of knowing. Learning takes place at a more-or-less equal level through interaction with adults. They come to understand each other's thinking in a dialogue, language, speech or other symbol systems. They bring their background, experience and expertise to share the responsibility for learning, as well as collaborating in a dialogue and discourse to co-construct shared understandings (Burner, 1983). All parties to this shared activity have an expectation of learning because "the roles of learner and teacher are shared and the expertise and experiences of all participants are respected" (Askew & Lodge, 2001:13). Learning discourse thus expands from an adult-directed

communication to become a two-way conversation, or loops of a dialogue (Askew & Lodge, 2001). Jordan (2003:177) argues that co-construction requires a “wide area of shared meaning”.

3.2.3.2. A relationship between cognitive and social processes

Vygotsky suggests that cognitive development and learning are propelled forward in social settings not only under adult guidance but also through collaboration with others - first on the social level then on the individual level (Wersch, 1991). In this way, he does not dispute the idea that learning involves a cognitive process. The difference is that, within the social context, learning is perceived as the relationship between cognitive processes and social processes (Lier, 2001).

In *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky (1978:57) stated:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and, later on, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

In this way, learning occurs in social interaction in varying contexts. Learners are able to do with the help of others to construct meaning through problem solving situations, which they cannot do alone, and where they internalize the rules, conventions, more values and knowledge of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, learning is a social and cultural process that is contributed and constituted by social contextual activities in which people participate (Rogoff, 1998).

3.2.3.3. A social and collaborative endeavor

In contrast to the other learning theories presented in previous sections above, learning is perceived as a social construct and collaborative phenomena embedded in

social activities, in which people engage in various everyday situations and settings (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In this present study, these contexts refer to the nursery classroom, the wider context of school and contexts outside the learning institution that have important influences on the learners. In Vygotsky's terms, these settings are referred to as socio-cultural contexts, because in these contexts there exist particular and distinctive ways of doing things which may have historical grounding. Historical grounding refers to the fact that these contexts have undergone several transitions and changes over time. But more importantly, according to Vygotsky, these contexts are historical because they materialise through the activities between people and amongst people.

As social and collaborative phenomena, the development of individual learning emerges as different participants interact within a particular context. In most cases, these participants can be distinguished as "those in society who have mastered knowledge or capability and those who are discovering such knowledge or developing such capabilities" (Breen, 2001a). In the learning situation, the knowledgeable participant is the adult who is the expert teaching practitioner, and the ones discovering and developing knowledge are the learners who seek to become proficient literacy users. To illustrate the distinctive features of the social and collaborative learning activity, I have quoted Mercer (2000) on his description of adult-child interaction:

...adults do not only allow children to participate in activities, they also deliberately provide them with information and explanations and instruct them in ways to behave. But this need not be thought of as one-way transmission process. Children may take an active role in soliciting help or obtaining information and transforming what they are given into their own understanding. They can also contest what they are given, and gain understanding from engaging in argument (p. 134).

The part played by adults as in the above example is described as mediation. In mediation, adults help to enhance children's learning or understanding by selecting and

shaping the learning experiences presented to them (Williams and Burden, 1997). However, mediation is a central concept as it is seen as the instrument for cognitive change (Donato and McCormick, 1994). Furthermore, in the process of mediation, adults do not play an authoritarian role. Instead, children are allowed freedom to make sense of their own learning. This can occur almost immediately as the learning experience is encountered by children or later through the children attempting to make sense of the experience. Either it is in the interaction or during the sharing of knowledge that children come to an understanding and learning evolves. From this point of view, there does not seem to have a direct line between teaching and learning for the reason that learning is neither a matter of transmission nor an accumulation of information or skills. Rather, learning is more about solving problems and developing cognitive skills characterised by greater interaction between the teacher and the learners (Miller, 1999).

3.2.3.4. A tool for learning

Culturally appropriate mediational tools include such things as speech, language and other symbolic systems: the inventions of society that are used to represent and make sense of the world (Burner, 1973; Rogoff, 1995). Accordingly, learning allows for transmission of culturally appropriate solutions to problems as well as using culturally appropriate tools. Language has in fact been perceived as one of the symbolic tools in addition to physical tools, such as internet, which humans need in order to mediate their learning. Language, according to socio-cultural theory, is the major means by which we internalize thoughts (Bruner, 1983). Vygotsky placed special emphasis on language activities more than on any other mediational tools in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Berk, 1997).

He further theorized that children's speech takes on an intrapersonal function in

addition to an interpersonal one. That is, when children become aware of language, they can use it not only to communicate with others, but also to direct their speech inward to guide their thoughts and behaviour. As humans, we need language to mediate and manage our relationships with others. As children use language to talk about reading and writing in literature, mathematics, science, and other academic contexts, they begin to reflect on their thought processes. As they do so, they develop gradually the ability to mediate and manage the symbolic systems of their culture, and they shift to a higher level of cognitive activity (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, this means that language is not just for reading and writing, which among other things involves sharing the culture, but also we use it for thinking and in turn, understanding (Mercer, 2000; Williams and Burden, 1997).

3.2.3.5. The Zone of Proximal Development

From a socio-cultural point of view, making meaning of the world often includes the social interaction of a more experienced adult or peer (Rogoff, 1990; Bruner, 1990). In this regard, learning can be seen as a co-constructive process and one in which a child can greatly benefit through these interactions with these adults or more experienced peers. Within the socio-cultural perspective one of the primary concepts that informs adult (or peer)-child interactions, is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is described by Vygotsky (1978:87) as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”.

In this way, ZPD bridges the gap between what is known and what can be known (Wertsch, 1984). Vygotsky argues that learning occurs in this zone (Vygotsky, 1978).

This idea recognizes that children are able to learn through solving problems beyond their actual developmental level if they are given guidance from someone who is more knowledgeable. It is believed that within this ZPD effective learning takes place with the assistance or in collaboration with the others who act as mediators. The person could be another child, a sibling, a parent, or a teacher (Vygotsky, 1978; Wink & Putney, 2002). It also allows adults to know what a child is able to achieve on his or her own, and through the process of ZPD, the child can advance or reach a higher level of competence (Driscoll, 1994).

Within this zone, adults can also develop strategies for assisting learners. In the initial stages of ZPD learning, learners are to be supported more directly in their learning, for example, through explicit instruction. However, as learners show signs of being capable of dealing with the learning task on their own, the scaffolding must be gradually dismantled as not to breed dependency and helplessness (van Lier, 2001). From this perspective, the development of learners and learning seems to be shaped by their relationships with others. Based on this view, it is important to recognise that this “is only partly under their own control, and only partly under the control of their teachers” (Mercer, 2001:254). Therefore, learners are not solely responsible for themselves.

3.2.4 Summary

In the shifting perspective from behaviourism to social constructivism, I have sought to present the main concepts and features of some important learning theories that have influenced and contributed to the construction of the main underlying principles of Western early childhood education. This changing perspective emphasizes the importance of individual children’s needs and interests and respect for the

differences between individual children. Also, children are seen as intrinsically motivated to learn, and as curious, energetic and imaginative. Learning is assumed to take place through self-initiated play in an environment that exposes the child to a wide range of materials for exploration and investigation. Moreover, the way of learning in the early years is also conceptualised as holistic and integrated rather than as organised into subject compartments. These are the kind of views that influenced the promotion of a whole language approach to literacy learning. Although I have discussed theories of learning in relation to children, socio-cultural theories of development also apply to the development and learning of teachers. Their development and learning is an on-going, dynamic process within a socio-cultural context and through interaction with others. In the following section I will attempt to present a review of literature on learning in Taiwan's society.

3.2.5 Learning in Taiwanese Society

Each culture has its own perceptual framework of traditions and orientations that govern and guide the interpretations of interactions and the construction of meanings in the society (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Cortazzi, 1990). From a socio-cultural perspective, culture consists of learned systems of meaning through which people adapt to their environment and structure their interpersonal activities (D'Andrade, 1984). As Segall, Dasen, Berry and Poortinga (1990) argue, "We are what we are because of culturally based learning". In this regard, it is essential to review the Confucian tradition that heavily influences the Taiwanese cultural context before going into the further sections.

3.2.5.1. Confucian traditional cultural context

Confucius is one of the most influential thinkers in East Asian philosophy and East Asian culture. Although there are many different influences on Taiwanese education and learning traditions, the dominant one is clearly Confucian (Lee, 1983; Park & Cho, 199) and it is regarded as exerting a profound influence on the behaviour of Taiwanese people.

This ethical and moral system expounded by Confucius (551- 479 BCE) governs all relationships in the family, community, and Taiwan. These viewpoints regard the society as having a hierarchical composition based on a vertical structure of superiors and subordinates. Such system requires, for example, employees to obey and respect those of a higher status and employers. This also applies to the educational system. Teachers carry the highest authority and power which students should not challenge. Students, in turn, are expected to show obedience and respect for their teachers. The other principle includes the high value placed on education by society; beliefs that learning involves reflection and application; that hard work can compensate for lack of ability; that the teacher is a model both of knowledge and morality; and that learning is a moral duty and studying hard is a responsibility for the family (Watkins, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 2001).

3.2.5.2. Learning for self fulfilment and societal development

Confucianism suggests that everyone is educable; everyone can become a sage, and that everyone is perfectible forms the basic optimism and dynamism towards education in the Confucian tradition. This explains why education is viewed to be wholly significant in the Confucian tradition (Lee, 1996:28-30). In this regard, Confucianism emphasizes that education is perceived as important not only for personal improvement

but also for societal development. “The Great Learning” constitutes one of the Four Books, and the opening sentence of Confucius’s Analects refers to the significance and joy of learning: “Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?” (Analects, 1990: 1.1). Education is rather for personal development as dedicated by social requirements. “The officer, having discharged all his duties, should devote his leisure to learning. The student, having completed his learning, should apply himself to be an officer” (Analects, 1990:19.13). In this point, the fact that a person should seek perfection (pursue sagehood) and a government office has thereby become an ideal of the Confucian tradition, which is typified in the notion of a “sage within and king without” (Chang, 1976:293). As “The Great Learning” argues: “a Person should cultivate himself, then regulate the family, then govern the state, and finally lead the world into peace” (The Great Learning). This can be interpreted in two ways: if a person wants to govern the state, he should first cultivate himself. On the other hand, if there is a person who has cultivated himself sufficiently well, he should seek to influence the outside world. Hence for Confucius, a scholar should ultimately seek the opportunity to obtain a government office in order to extend his good influence. Paradoxically, the strong ambition for extrinsic rewards coexists with the ideal of external manifestation of a person’s internal establishment in the Confucian tradition (Lee, 1996:37-38).

3.2.5.3. Learning is effort

Confucius believed that effort is emphasized over ability in determining academic performance. He states that "I have no inborn knowledge. I love antiquity and I search for it [knowledge] assiduously" (Analects, 1990). In this way, learning is always associated with effort while self-determination, diligence, perseverance, will-power and discipline are the driving force of efforts (Rao, Moely and Sachs 2000). As the Book-Mean (20-21) says: “If another man succeeds by one effort, he will use a thousand

efforts. If another man succeeds by ten efforts, he will use a thousand. Let a man proceed in this way, although dull, he will surely become intelligent; although weak, he will surely become strong”. As Confucian master Han-Yu states: “Diligence is the path to the mountain of knowledge; hard work is the boat through the endless sea of learning.” A similar proverb echoes that “Effort can compensate for a lack of ability, diligence compensates for stupidity.” Therefore, it is clear that learning, rationality, effort, will-power and diligent, discussed in the Confucian tradition, are interrelated and inseparable. This Confucian tradition illuminates how learners view learning, and explains why effort is seen to be very important in the process of human perfectibility (Lee, 1996:32). Thus, effort is the most important attribute for learners to make their learning successful. In this way, learning is giving less emphasis to the role of individual differences in innate endowments in academic success (Cheng, 1996). Although these ideals have encouraged adults to pay close attention to their children's education and motivated children to learn, they have also resulted in excessive competition and pressure to pursue more examination-oriented learning (Ho, 1994).

3.2.5.4. The deep learning: promoting reflection and enquiry

As education in the Confucian tradition is considered important for its intrinsic value, it is by nature inclined towards the deep approach rather than the surface approach to learning. There is strong emphasis on the significance of reflective thinking in the process of learning in the Confucian tradition. Apart from suggesting that seeking knowledge (learning) and thinking are two sides of the same coin, the Confucian conception of learning is a process of “studying extensively, enquiring carefully, pondering thoroughly, sifting clearly, and practicing earnestly” (The Mean, 20.19). The emphasis on reflective thinking in learning requires a spirit of enquiry and open-mindedness.

Memorizing is considered as a surface learning characteristic in Western cultures (Watkins, 2000; Biggs, 1998). On the contrary, it is worth mentioning that memorization is seen as an essential and significant part of learning in the Confucian tradition, but should by no means be equated with rote learning. Memorization precedes understanding, and is for deeper understanding. It has never been regarded as an end in itself. In this way, deep learning is emphasized in which learners need to reflect, question, and be thoroughly familiar with the text in order for them to learn. This helps them internalize and personalize the information as if it comes from their own mouths (Maron & Saljo, 1984). As Confucian master Zhu Xi (1130-1200A.D.), emphasized:

“Generally speaking, in learning, we must first become intimately familiar with the text so that its words seem to come from our own mouths. We should then continue to reflect on it so that its ideas seem to come from our own minds. Only then can there be real understanding. Still, once our intimate readings of it and careful reflection on it have led to a clear understand of it, we must continue to question. Then there might be additional progress. If we cease questioning, in the end there will be no additional progress (Chu, 1990:135)”.

In this regard, Lee (1996) suggested that memorizing, understanding, reflecting and questioning are the basic components of learning and are interrelated, integrated and should be repeated for further and deeper learning. Memorizing was also considered as an important component in learning by Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529 AD), a leading Confucian educationist in the Ming Dynasty (1367-1644 AD). He considered the three significant aspects of learning to be “Memory, understanding and incorporating.”

3.2.5.5. Group learning is better than individual

Confucianism stresses integration and harmony. According to Confucianism, a well-balanced individual, well-ordered family, and well-governed country, happy and harmonious relations can be reached. The family is the prototype social organization,

and the principles of family living are applied to the larger society. In this way, Confucianism highlights group interests instead of individualism. "He also said, "Among three men who are walking together (myself being one of them), I am certain to find my teacher, a good one in order to emulate him, and a bad one in order [recognize in him what in myself I must] correct"(Analects, 1990.). An individual is viewed as part of a society or a group, like a child is part of a family, and a student is part of a class. His or her personal interests can be sacrificed in order to enable the harmony of the society. In this regard, a person would be educated to be considered as a member of the family, a member of a class, a member of a community and a member of society. Therefore, group learning is the most popular method from a Confucian point of view.

3.2.5.6. Summary

In this section, I have attempted to present the main concepts and features of some important learning theories that have influenced early education in the West and in Taiwan. The learning theory in Western society that influenced the development of beliefs in the whole language approach to literacy learning is regarded as essentially social, child-centred, play-oriented activities, in contrast to the traditional Chinese Confucian subject-centred, teacher-directed whole class lessons, which are memorization-oriented. However, as stated earlier in chapter two, early childhood education has undergone significant changes in Taiwan. The Western child-centred approach has influenced promoted learning theory into the Taiwanese early childhood education/care field (Lee and Lin, 2007). Other Western curriculum approaches, such as the Montessori approach, Froebel approach, the thematic-project approach and the Reggio approach have also spread widely throughout the early childhood education field and have the recommendation of many academic authorities in Taiwan (Lin, 2011).

The child-centred and integrated approach for curriculum planning is much more accepted and more widely implemented now than in the past. However, Chen (2006) shows that combinations of approaches simultaneously occur in some nursery school. She claimed that many teachers adopt the thematic-project approach but tend to implement the teacher-directed way of teaching, and so far many of them still adhere to this approach in their classroom in Taiwan. In the following section I will present a review of literature on literacy learning.

3.3 What is literacy?

In recent years there have been some significant changes in the understanding of what literacy means and how literacy learning takes place. Blackledge (2000) noted that a crucial debate among literacy researchers is whether literacy should be viewed as a set of individual skills or as social practice. It has been my experience in working with teachers that this debate also occurs among parents, teachers and school administrators. Blackledge stated that whether literacy is considered as a set of skill or as a cultural practice, it does not mean that these are to be seen as contradictory, but may instead be understood to be complimentary, as the development of literacy skills depends on the context in which they are being used and they are implicit within the social, political and intellectual forces that constitute society. If, as Blackledge implies, literacy develops differently depending on the social context of the learner, it follows that children from diverse families and cultures may have different concepts of literacy than those from dominant cultures. By looking at what is implied by an understanding of literacy, either as an acquired set of skills, or as a cultural practice, it is possible to explain these types of concepts people may hold about what literacy is and how literacy is learned.

3.3.1 Literacy as a set of individual skills

Hannon (2000) pointed out that literacy should be looked at as a set of skills. He stated that this approach to literacy is based on a concept of literacy that values the skills of reading and writing. This also leads to the implication that literacy is seen to be processes requiring decoding and encoding symbols in a pre-planned way. Street (1991, 1993) described an autonomous view of literacy as an independent skill that once acquired leads to a rise in cognitive levels by empowering people with critical, rational and reflective thoughts. Moreover, Lankshear and Knobel (2003) pointed out that within formal educational settings there has been a long established view of reading that was grounded in psychology and associated with time-honored methods of instruction such as how to decode and encode a text. Children have been exposed to literacy skills but when they do not achieve a preset level in these skills they are designated as ‘illiterate.’ This view of literacy as a set of skills still dominates some current approaches to the literacy curriculum (Porter, 2001; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Lin, 2004).

In such contexts, literacy is considered to be a static set of discrete cognitive skills, not open to questioning or revision, and understanding of the text is measured by how well it can be learned and recited. Children may be expected to learn these texts by rote in order to demonstrate comprehension rather than questioning the meaning of the text as a whole. For those teachers and parents who believe that the skills of reading and memorization lead to comprehension, they will stress practicing the text.

3.3.2 Literacy as a set of social practices

The point of view of literacy as a cultural practice emerged during the last century and has developed rapidly during the last few years. Postman (1970) refutes the idea of the neutrality of the reading process in schools. He stated that all educational systems

proceed from some model of what human beings ought to be like and that any teaching of reading takes a definite political position on how people should behave and what they ought to value.

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) suggest three reasons for why the focus changed from literacy as a set of skills to be taught to literacy as something to be acquired through social processes and the environment. The first is the upward movement to prominence of the work of Friere and Macedo (1987), who saw literacy as “reading the word and reading the world” and that it involved much more than merely decoding and encoding print. In this regard, learners used developing literacy skills in order to develop a better awareness of the world in which they lived and their place within it. Therefore, Friere claimed that literacy learning is an integral part of learning to understand how the world works and how societal change could be implemented.

The second factor is that the new post-industrial world of work has brought new problems to literacy, creating a need for more workers with new literacy skills (*ibid.*). In this regard, reading and writing have lost some of their power in the new economy setting. The third factor that has influenced the shift to the new literacy is the development of a socio-cultural perspective within the field. As Street (1991) argued, people become literate by being involved in social situations as they internalize ideas, theories and models about political processes, personhood and identity rather than first learn the basic skills of literacy in order to participate in the social use of literacy. In this regard, those learning literacy are continually in the process of building together. This is echoed by Barton and Hamilton (2000) who expanded Street’s (1994) concept of literacy as embedded in personhood when they argued that literacy can be seen as social practice. They made the case that literacy is best understood as a set of social practices

and that there are different 'literacies' associated with different aspects of life. They suggested that literacy practices are embedded in broader social roles and cultural experiences. In this point of view, literacy is seen as being historically situated and it is implied that learning practices change and new ones are acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. The authors, therefore, included a three-pronged aspect to the social theory of literacy learning. The first aspect is that "literacy practices were defined as the general, cultural ways of utilizing written language, which people draw upon in their daily lives" (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:8). These practices involve person's values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships within a particular culture and can both shape people and be shaped by people. Street (1993:12-13) described literacy practice as inclusive of literacy events such as "folk models of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them". However, literacy practice processes are not necessarily visible.

The second point was that literacy events serve as concrete evidence of literacy practice. Heath (1982:93) developed the notion of literacy events as a tool for examining the forms and functions of oral and written language. She describes a literacy event as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participant's interactions and their interpretive processes". Literacy events are the actions or activities in which literacy plays a role and they are shaped by literacy practice in a social context. These events are based on text, or talk about text, and these events and practices are dependent on the existence of text and an understanding of what is produced and used. Therefore, literacy events are the visible aspects of literacy practice. The last point was the texts used in these practices and events. The invisibility of literacy practices may lead to confusion and misunderstanding between teachers and children. For example, a teacher who is used to children learning text by rote may be

confused when being asked to encourage children to use text to question and predict outcomes and may not understand the literacy practices that support this way of using text. This confusion may lead to a lack of understanding about how children develop literacy skills in school.

3.3.3 Whole language approach

Arguments between what have been termed ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches (Smith, 1971; Goodman, 1986) have historically held a central position in the debate about the teaching of reading in the West. Stanovich (1999) has described these debates as the “reading wars”, and suggested that whole language versus phonics-emphasis controversy of the last decade has “generated acrimony, sapped the field’s energies and most important of all, confused and demoralized educators” (1999:12). Before starting the whole language approach (top-down model) it may be useful to introduce some of the central ideas of the ‘bottom-up model’. Briefly, the ‘bottom-up’ model assumes that the process of learning to read starts with the recognition of letters then clusters of letters, then words and so on progressively until finally a whole text can be processed. Taken at its most extreme, the assumption can be that the concepts and skills are acquired in a step-by-step process, requiring a careful and cumulative introduction to the elements of written language: first letters, then words, then phrase or sentences and then stories and books in a linear fashion (Gough, 1972). Smith (1971) and Goodman (1976) criticize the ‘bottom-up’ model believing to lead to an over-emphasis on decoding at the expense of other skills and concepts. Furthermore, a major problem with the extreme ‘bottom-up’ model (such as with traditional Chinese literacy teaching) lies with the model of knowledge and learning it appears to assume. It does not fit with the large and influential corpus of current thinking, which does not believe that knowledge can be described as a series of ‘chunks’ that are acquired one after

another (Bruner, 1957). In understanding literacy as a social practice, the focus has shifted from viewing language and literacy as a set of rules to using literacy in authentic events. Reading and writing are considered elements of larger practices that are socially patterned and cognition in literacy learning is seen as guided by social participation and relationships (Gee, 1996; Barton et al, 2000). To properly understand literacy processes one must locate them within interactions of social and cultural practices, that is, literacy learning occurs through social interactions and relationships with others (Street 1984). The child is not considered as an ‘empty vessel’ to be gradually filled by the teachers, but as partners in the social process of literacy learning (Berger 2005). Dyson (2001) argued that literacy learning should begin with children’s social worlds. Learning about print knowledge, or gaining knowledge about reading and writing, can occur in many different contexts. Concepts and skills will thus be developed in combined and interconnected ways – a view that underpins most current approaches to literacy, notably the model adopted by the Taiwanese Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and Reading Project in the 2000 (MOE, 2000).

The ‘whole language approach’ has traditionally emphasized what is often referred to as a ‘top-down’ model. The concept of whole language is strongly associated with the work of Goodman (1967, 1968, 1978, and 1986). Goodman’s conceptualization departs from an older perspective on reading acquisition in that it sees the process of learning to read as behavioural and maturing process. Goodman (1986) stated that reading and writing involve children learning in any social context that enables them to develop literacy before they start formal school instruction in reading and writing. As Goodman (1986) reports that when shown familiar environmental print, such as cereal boxes, familiar logos and signs, 60 percent of 3 year olds and 80 percent of 5 year olds could ‘read’. It is clear that before any concepts associated with the fine-grained decoding of text can hold any significance, children do need to have a more basic awareness of

print. Adams (1990:334) classifies these understandings into the following statements about children and print:

- Print is categorically different from other kinds of visual patterns in their Environment
- Print is print across any variety of physical media
- Print seems to be all over the place
- Different samples of print are used by adults in different ways
- There are different categories of printed material, each with their own characteristic appearances and uses
- Print symbolises language
- Print holds information
- Print can be produced by anyone (p.334)

Furthermore, Goodman suggested that literacy related behaviour occurring in the nursery period as legitimate and important aspects of the continuum of literacy (Goodman, 1986). Moreover, children learn language through ‘real use’ contexts, and not through reinforcing exercises (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). Hall (1987) also stressed the importance of creating contexts that facilitate enquiry and provide opportunities to the children to learn skills from those who model the practice in natural use. Thus, language becomes meaningful and relevant to learners. In the process of learning, children are encouraged to express themselves and interact with others (Lee and Lin, 2007). In addition, whole language proponents claimed that language should not be broken down into letters and combinations of letters and decoded. Instead, they believe that language is a complete system of making meaning, with words functioning in relation to each other in context (Moats, 2007). It also suggests that language is learned from whole to part. The philosophy of whole language approach is complex and

draws on fields such as education, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Li, 2011). As Adams (1991:41) claims, whole language movement:

... should be a core component of a long overdue and highly constructive revolution. It should be about restoring the confidence and authority of teachers. It should be an affirmation that education can only be as effective as it is sensitive to the strengths, interests and needs of its students. (P.41)

Stanovich and Stanovich (1999:29) echo this sentiment.

The way now seems clear for the whole language advocates to reconstitute their position in a scientifically respectable way. They could retain most of their broad socio-educational goal (teacher empowerment, equal opportunity for all learners, engaged learning etc) (P.29)

However, as a fully-fledged articulation of the development of literacy, the feasibility of implementation has been questioned. This approach is generally considered lacking in many respects. It is argued that that a whole language approach can be seen as responsible for a literacy crisis all over the United States (Stanovich, 1999). Furthermore, whole language has been said to have been abandoned by policymakers in Britain and United States (Donnelly, 2008; Hempenstall, 2002). The reasons as Krashen (1999; 2001) and Donnelly (2007) have claimed is that the whole language approach might work with children who are already good readers or who come from a privileged background, but it is allegedly negligent of the problems of the disadvantaged. Furthermore, Donnelly (2007, 2008) argued that the “whole language approach in fact was represented as guaranteeing reading failure.” In this way, the whole language approach has been portrayed as a legacy from the United States, the Western ‘mother-country’. In itself, this was enough to render it discreditable, especially in the eyes of neo-conservative commentators such as Donnelly and others (Donnelly, 2004d, 2008; McDonald, 2004). Most crucially the whole language is presented as a technique of neglect, since teachers and parents are encouraged not to correct every

mistake a child makes or in other word, to do nothing, relying instead on 'immersion' in language (Albrechtsen, 2004; Donnelly, 2008).

3.3.4 The process of Chinese Literacy Learning

In the 1970s, it was suggested that Chinese, which is logographic in nature, poses no difficulty in learning to read. Rozin, Poritsky & Soetky (1971) claimed that Chinese symbols are easier to differentiate than English words because of their configurationally distinctiveness. On the other hand, Chinese educators, in general, believe that children have difficulty in learning to read because Chinese words are numerous and complicated.

Many studies have demonstrated that visual skills are important in learning to read Chinese. Stevenson and Strigler (1992) conducted an extensive study comparing the reading abilities of children in the fifth grade with those in Japan and Taiwan. They found that the overall incidence of reading backwardness among children in Japan, in Chinese-speaking countries (in this case is Taiwan) and in the West (the United States) is very similar. There are children in all three countries who are reading at least two grade levels below their own grade. There is evidence of individual differences in learning to write, which implies that not all children progress at the same rate in literacy development. Visual skills have been found to relate to Chinese reading at first grade (Lee et al. 1986) as well as at third grade (Huang and Hanley 1995). Ho and Bryant (1997a) found that differences in visual-perceptual skills in preschool children significantly predict reading ability one year later. Huang et al. (1995) highlighted the importance for children to be able to distinguish thousands of different visual symbols in order to become proficient readers of Chinese. Given that Chinese characters are more visually distinct than words in an alphabetic script (Chen 1996), children are

likely to rely heavily on visual strategies to learn to read new characters. In an earlier study (Chan and Nunes 1998), they found that preschool children were able to recognize the positions of stroke-patterns, and were able to recognize graphically acceptable stroke-patterns at a character level.

In phonological processing, five-year-old preschool children can use one-to-one correspondence to match a syllable to a character when they read (Lee 1989; Chan, 1990). This finding is consistent with studies carried out with young children reading alphabetic script (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982), and confirms that even preschool children have little difficulty matching a syllable to a written word. Yang and Lee (2001) studied the written language ability of Chinese first-grade children in Taiwan. One hundred Chinese children were asked to write a spontaneous picture story and to copy ten words. The results indicated that there was a wide range of performance amongst the first-grade children in their productivity, use of syntax and vocabulary. For instance, in terms of quantity, four children were unable to write more than ten words whereas five children wrote more than 100 words. In analyzing the sentence patterns, the children used mainly simple sentences in describing the picture. About 15% of them wrote compound and complex sentences, but there were four children who could not make one complete sentence. Significant differences were also observed in the choice of word types and use of vocabulary. The high achieving children wrote more types of words and used more descriptive adjectives than the low achievers. The findings of this study are alarming because the study was conducted in the first semester of the first year; only a few months after the children have been formally introduced to reading and writing, and yet some children had already fallen behind in almost every aspect of their written language proficiency. Chan (1998; 2003) and Lee (1989) traced the active contribution of children to their own learning of reading and writing before formal schooling. They

both concluded that children at a very early age showed interest in the script in their environment.

Wu and Huang (1994) studied the so-called 'concepts and functions of literacy', and argued that the awareness of functional Chinese literacy by children emerged from age four and kept increasing until school age, but the degree of the awareness was not as strong as in English-speaking children. They indicated that preschoolers should be supplied with more opportunities to acknowledge and understand the function of Chinese characters, which is more important than just teaching them to read and write. Wu (1994) tested 360 Taiwanese children aged three to eight years with a pseudo-character, no character and true character. Wu further explored the development of print awareness, knowledge of Chinese characters, understanding of reading regulations, and the relationships between these three elements. She found that: (1) the children from age three to six did not have clear understanding of function of Chinese characters, (2) four-year-old children were familiar with the basic reading regulations but they could not tell the function of Chinese punctuation until aged six, (3) grapheme identification of Chinese characters emerged in four-year-old children, and there were positive associations among the three factors. Therefore, this appears that Chinese children have already learned some rudimentary knowledge of the written language system, before primary school, and they can apply this knowledge if they are given an opportunity to write.

Writing one's own name has always been regarded as an important landmark in a child's early literacy development (Welsch, Sullivan and Justice, 2003). Children can usually write their own names at a more advanced developmental level compared with writing other unfamiliar words (Tolchinsky, 2003). In order to examine whether Chinese

children can write their own names at preschool level, Chan and Louie (1992) invited 60 children, aged two–six years from Hong Kong to draw a picture of themselves and write their own name. It was found that 75% of the five-year-olds could write their names correctly, and more than 50% of the four-year-olds could use strokes and stroke-patterns to make appropriate writing. As for the three-year-olds, 75% of them could differentiate drawing from writing, but only 20% of them were able to produce appropriate writing. More studies are needed to trace this crucial developmental stage and examine how preschool literacy practice can support children to gradually develop their understanding of Chinese writing.

In Taiwan, over 98% of children from two to six years of age are sent to either nurseries or kindergartens (Huang, 2003). Literacy instruction begins at age three, when children are systematically introduced to learning to read and write Chinese. The literacy activities include character recognition, storybook reading and guided writing. Li (2005), Huang (2003), Chang (2003), Chen (2001) all have observed that insufficient attention has been given to reading activities in most early education system in Taiwan: reading sessions are short and infrequent, and there are insufficient books available in the classroom for children to read. Teachers spend a lot of time helping children to recognize individual characters. They introduce one to two new characters every day, pronounce them, and explain the graphic structure of the characters. A typical character recognition activity lasts 30–40 minutes, during which time children are required to sit together and pay attention to the teacher. The teacher introduces the pronunciation of the character and then shows the children how to write it, paying a lot of attention to the placement and order of strokes. Children are required to practice writing the newly taught character in the following group session, and the teacher walks round to check whether the character is correctly written in exercise books marked with big squares. If

the character is not correctly written, individual guidance is provided. In the more mature class (for children aged five) in some nurseries, kindergartens or preschools, guided writing is introduced, children are encouraged to make sentences with some of the taught vocabulary, and they are encouraged to write short sentences on their own.

However, as stated in Chapter two, the new national kindergarten curriculum reform in Taiwan has applied the whole language approach to the curriculum since 2000. According to Lee and Lin's (2007) systematic review of these reform efforts, that whole language approach reform gave teachers a different vision of language learning, teaching, curriculum and education. Furthermore, Lee and Lin (2007) claimed that whole language wave promoted three main ideas: (1) learner-centered teaching, (2) interactive learning with different activities (for example, play), and (3) integrated teaching and learning. The first, 'learner-centered' means respecting children's individual differences and developmental needs. Second, the 'interactive learning' which regard learn literacy as an interactive and constructive dialogue between children and teacher. Through the interaction with the teacher and surrounding environment, children actively construct their understanding and experience. Moreover, it focuses on helping children to "make meaning" of what they read and to express meaning in what they write. A teacher may create many opportunities for children to read, not independently, but with other children in small guided reading groups, and being read aloud to or in different types of play activity. Thus, literacy needs to be understood and learnt in its full range of context. Furthermore, teachers are expected to support and facilitate a child's exploration rather than direct their action. The whole language approach is based on a social constructivist approach to education, therefore, teachers emphasize that children create or construct knowledge from what they encounter. Teachers see literacy as something children did not construct inside their heads but

inside their daily life, society, historical and institutional as well (Au, 1998).

Another important aspect of the whole language philosophy includes an emphasis on ‘integrated based teaching and learning’. Thus listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated and taught together, instead of as isolated lessons. From this regard, literacy instruction cuts across subject areas. Moreover, teachers see children as engaged in social practices. Written language is used differently in different practices by different social groups and these practices are reflected in classroom activity. From this point of view, all these practices, written or reading language never sits by itself, cut off from oral language, speaking and action. Rather, within different practices, it is integrated with different ways of using spoken language; different ways of acting and interacting; different ways of knowing; and often different ways of using various sorts of tools. Therefore, teachers who use this approach exclusively do not place heavy emphasis in the early years on learning Chinese phonetic symbols and characters by rote and memorization, or drill practice writing; moreover, correcting errors places the focus on technical correctness, which is not where whole language teachers believe it should be. The effective whole language teacher “hears and sees through” the child’s errors, using the information gained for formative assessment, then creates experiences that help the child to acquire the correct structure and form (Goodman, 1986).

However, the whole language curriculum guidelines adopted from Western progressive ideology unavoidably has clashed with Chinese tradition and existing practices (Lin, 2011, 2010). For example, teacher-directed teaching was most commonly employed in nursery literacy lessons. However, these reform objectives require the nursery curriculum to shift from separate subjects to experience and activity (Lee and Lin, 2007). Teachers are also expected to change from formal instructors of knowledge

to facilitators of children literacy experiences and activities. They need to move away from the transmission of knowledge and skills according to a packaged teaching plan, materials and textbooks, towards an emergent curriculum and a whole language approach which is supposed to be more developmentally appropriate. Indeed under the reform, the formal teaching of Chinese reading and writing skills and testing are prohibited in nurseries (Chen, 2006).

3.3.5 Summary

Further evidence is needed about how and to what extent these whole language ideas have actually been implemented. Answers to this question are important in helping policy-makers and researchers clarify how the whole language pedagogy can be integrated into a Chinese cultural and social context and how this impacts on the teachers who are required to implement it.

3.4 Teachers' beliefs

The classroom decisions made by teachers are not random or accidental. These decisions are rooted in teachers' beliefs about how children learn, how they are effectively taught, the developmental nature of the children and the instructional circumstances. Therefore, to improve teacher preparation and teaching practice, educators should pay more attention to teacher beliefs because these beliefs profoundly influence decision-making processes and their teaching practices (Kagan, 1992; Nespore, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1994; Woods, 1996). On the basis of their beliefs about teaching, educational goals, and student learning, teachers choose specific strategies and materials from their repertoires to tackle particular situations. Their beliefs help them to determine what problems to focus on and how to solve these problems (Nespore, 1987). Although the study of teacher beliefs has great potential for

providing educational communities with unprecedented insights, it faces the difficulty of being short on clear and commonly accepted definitions and conceptualizations of beliefs and belief structures (Kane, Sandretto and Heath, 2002; Pajares, 1992). Scholars and researchers in the field use different terms to represent similar concepts (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1994; Gee, 2001), and the list of terms seems to grow continuously: attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, decision making, practical principles, perspectives, repertoires of understanding, identity and social strategy (Pajares, 1992 :309).

However, Nespor (1987) suggested that beliefs are distinguishable because the propositions or the concepts of belief systems do not require a consensus between the belief holder and the outsider and because beliefs are usually disputable. Furthermore, researchers can view belief systems as loosely bounded, as having no clear logical rules that connect these beliefs to events or situations in real life. Individuals can form the connections from personal, episodic, and emotional experiences. Belief systems are organized by individuals according to primary beliefs and to beliefs derived from other beliefs. A primary belief is too self-evident to explain, whereas a derivative belief is related to other beliefs, so it can be explained in reference to another belief that acts as evidence. In line with Rokeach's (1968) description, Green (1971) argued that some beliefs are more central to belief systems. Core beliefs are more resistant to change than are other beliefs because the former beliefs are held with "passionate conviction" (p. 53). However, Pajares (1992) stated that people have beliefs about everything and that to conceptualize a belief system is to recognize that the belief system contains various beliefs connecting to one another. In the same way, Richards and Rodgers (2001)

affirmed that teachers' process assumptions about language and language learning provide the basis for a particular approach to language instruction. Hence, it is argued that if theoretical orientation is a major determinant of how teachers' act during language instruction, then teacher educators can affect classroom practice by ensuring that teachers develop a theoretical orientation that is "reflective of current and pertinent research in the field" (Cummins, Cheek and Lindsey, 2004:183). Moreover, Pajares (1992) also claimed that teachers beliefs once held are highly resistant to change and questioned whether teacher education programmes have an effect on the acquisition of beliefs held by pre-service teachers. Therefore, they argue beliefs have a filtering effect on our thinking and information processing as well as playing a vital role in shaping both our perceptions and behaviours.

On the other hand, Richardson (1996) argues that teachers' beliefs are considered to have two functions in learning or expertise development. The first function is related to making sense of new information based on what we know and believe. Thus beliefs strongly influence what teachers learn and the way teachers' process information. The second function is related to changing beliefs. Richardson (1996) reported that the findings of belief change studies can be divided into two groups: a) teachers' beliefs about education are difficult if not impossible to change, and b) teachers' beliefs about education can change depending on the content and nature of influences that they undergo (i.e. a certain schooling activity or colleagues' ideas). However, teachers' beliefs are not consistent with beliefs implicit in an innovation. This point echoes Calderhead (1996), who noted that teachers could espouse particular knowledge and beliefs which conflicted with those implicit in their practices. On this point, the teacher may reconstruct the innovation and its associated beliefs and thus make the innovation more familiar or practical to them. On the other hand, if teachers' beliefs conflict with

those implicit in the innovation, personal knowledge structures may be reconstructed. Thus, teachers' beliefs, values and ideology cannot be reduced to subject or an individual's knowledge. Also, teachers' beliefs do not operate in isolation; instead, they are interrelated to all other beliefs (Doyle, 1997). However, with a growing discourse around teachers' pedagogical beliefs and teaching practice in recent years, a realization has emerged that their pedagogical beliefs and behaviours mean much more than their observable delivery actions, and are rather an extension of themselves (Hargreaves, 2003; Pittard, 2003). Hargreaves (2001) argues that in reality, when teachers practice teaching, they do not rely just on the skills they have learnt; the ways in which they teach are also deeply ingrained in their background, hidden beliefs and the personal meaning and understandings they bring to teaching. Upadhyay (2005: 881) states plainly that "a teacher's life experiences shape their beliefs about classroom instruction, curricular choices, and their purposes for teaching." Milner (2003) also raises a similar argument in his study:

I argue that the planning in which this teacher engaged depended significantly on her personal and professional experiences that is, her planning took into consideration a myriad of life occurrences relative to her race, her gender, and her culture, which influenced how she thought about her work, negotiated curriculum issue and enacted planned lessons. (Milner, 2003:176)

Therefore, the notion of 'teacher identity' emerges as a key factor in understanding teachers' beliefs and willingness to embrace change (Gee, 2001). The most recent concepts of teacher identity acknowledge its contested nature; the idea that there might be more than one, unfixed, and considered to be a reflexive process, and therefore unstable and fragile in nature (Giddens, 1991; Gee, 2001). These personal identity formulate their sense of self and shape their beliefs and values that are represented as a system of implicit theories of expectations that then form, and transform into, a

configuration framework that infuses meaning into what education means to them; what kinds of teachers they are; how they interpret basic teaching dispositions; how they articulate the practices inherited in a particular setting; how they judge the relevance of their pedagogical behaviours in classroom reality; and finally, how they subsequently behave (Chak,2006; Gee, 2001). A teacher's belief is unique. It provides structural insights into a teacher's sense of self, together with their identity, and moulds their subsequent vision of desirable pedagogical performance (Leary and Tangney, 2003). As a key ingredient in pedagogical behaviour, a teacher's professional beliefs and identity should be explored in their full complexity. However, in clarifying this distinction, I will draw upon the work on James Gee (1999) who offers a sound theoretical framework for looking at the way individuals use language "to enact activities, perspectives, and identities" (Gee, 1999:4-5).

For Gee, Discourses (with a capital 'D') are "socially accepted associations among ways of using language with non language stuff, such as different ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, believing, acting and interacting in the right places and at the right times with the right objects (associations that can be used to identify different identities and activities, give the material world different meanings, make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others)" (Gee, 1999: 13-17). Moreover, Gee (1992: 107) also described "Discourses" as linking "the workings of the mind/brain to social practices". Therefore, discourses (lowercase'd') refers to language in use and involves the production and reproduction of meaning, and social relations amongst people. In this regard, a discourse is, moreover, rooted in social spaces or communities. Indeed, a discourse is meaningless and empty without the individuals who enact it. Thus, a discourse is intertwined with notions of identity. From this way, discourses are ways of

establishing membership in a group (Gee, 1992). As pointed out, Gee distinguishes between ‘Discourses’ and ‘discourses.’ While Discourse refers to discourse as a set of related social practices, discourse is a part of Discourse and refers to meaningful social practices that involve language in the form of spoken or written texts (Gee, 1992). For example, conversations (discourse) about Teacher ‘how to’ achievement on a school standard (Discourse) are examples of discourses that might be found in classrooms. The Discourse of school standard carries with it assumptions and power relations that have been discussed by several authors, such as Murphy (2006), Reynolds (2000) and Taylor (1991).

3.4.1 Teachers D/d discourse

Gee (1992) in his discussion of discourse, further explains the notion that there are primary and secondary Discourses. Primary Discourses represent our first social identities, which are taken up during initial socialization into socio-cultural settings such as families (Gee, 1992). Secondary Discourses are part of our socialization into socio-cultural settings and institutions outside our families - “for example, churches, schools, offices” (p. 109). Secondary Discourses influence our beliefs and membership in these groups and these discourses are what determine our multiple social selves.

Primary Discourse affects our secondary Discourses and “constitutes our *personal persona* and is part of what gives a sense of unity to our multiple social selves (constituted by our many secondary Discourses)” (Gee, 1992:109). For example, my primary discourse is that of a Taiwanese, middle class family, which constructed my initial identity as female and as a daughter. This also influenced my subsequent identities as a Christian, student, friend, researcher and teacher. Discourses can often oppose each other, causing conflict and tension between an individual’s identities, and

can only be understood within a particular context (Davies, 1994). That is, our secondary discourses provide a context from which to look at our multiple social selves and see what positions are available to be taken up or resisted in those contexts. For example, my primary discourse as a middle class, Taiwanese female may conflict with my secondary Discourses around my job as a teacher in a community with a diverse population which includes both ethnic and class diversity. Therefore, to say the primary Discourses, which have shaped my identity are those associated with being middle class and being female Taiwanese. These Discourses present some conflicts between the assumptions, subject positions and power relations that characterize other Discourses that I draw on as a teacher. This concept clearly provides a new and important way of considering teacher beliefs that is relevant to my study.

However, a central aspect of Discourse as Gee argues is ‘recognition’. Gee argues that “making visible and recognizable who we are and what we are doing always involves a great deal more than just language” (Gee, 1999:17). From this regard, this “more than just language” is another way of looking at Discourse, whereas the ‘who’ projected through language and Discourse is a socially situated identity.

3.4.2 Teachers’ identities

Teacher identity is inextricably linked to professional practice and to continued professional learning and development (Wenger, 1998). Gee (2001), Mead (1934), Nias (1989) define professional identity as a unique blend of personal beliefs, dispositions, practical knowledge, and educational theories of teaching mediated by an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). What counts as ‘identity’ according to Richardson and Placier (2001), is connected to the ways in which teachers relate to other people such as students,

colleagues, and parents and the responsibilities, attitudes and behaviors they adopt as well as the knowledge they use (Beijaard et al., 2004). Based on this perspective, identity is socially constructed, complicated, fragmented, contradictory and fluid. In this regard, a teacher has a different identity in different settings, in school and in their personal lives. For example, Hargreaves (1994) argued that there is a very real sense in which teachers have different identities with different classes. Furthermore, Giddens (1991) views identity as a reflexive process and therefore unstable and fragile in nature. He equates identity with a kind of self-narrative: “the individual’s biography must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self” (p. 54). There are many tensions at play in this ongoing narrative, as the individual grapples with choices about who, and what, he or she wishes to be. In a similar way, Alsup (2006) argues that the teacher’s creation of a professional self is formed as a result of the integration of, and conflict between, various subject positions and ideologies. Emotions inevitably play a role in such a construction and are often foregrounded in discussions about teacher identity (Day & Leitch, 2001; Van, Veen and Sleeper, 2005).

However, teacher identity viewpoints reject simplistic views of teacher knowledge and decision-making but instead acknowledge the contextual forces that shape who teachers are and the instructional decisions they make. In this sense, identity is co-constructed out of complex and meaningful interactions with others and is often shaped by tensions between personal and professional knowledge (Rex & Nelson, 2004). For instance, Hou (2002) study described the tension of one primary school teacher experienced when she attempted to introduce multi-cultural literature and constructivist approaches into her literacy classes. Because of the pressures to help her students pass the regular test and attain the best grades, she gradually gave up many of her goals in

exchange for a test preparation curriculum. A conflict grew between her imagined professional identity as a teacher who believed in using multi-cultural literature to help students understand and appreciate the lives of others, and the externally constructed professional identity she perceived due to the pressures of the test-focused context of her school. Hou (2004) research also supports what Shotter and Gergen (1989) has suggested, that professional identity is constructed among shifting social contexts that make demands on an individual's agency, social responsibility and ethical positioning. The work of Wenger (1998) is significant in this context. He acknowledges the impact of internalized processes, but also draws attention to the context in which identity is shaped. Identity is thus construed as a series of negotiations in which the individual attempts to reconcile perceptions of self with those of others, including the broader social and cultural communities in which he/she practices (Wenger, 1998). From this perspective, the formation of identity implies that socio-cultural theories conform to an argument due to Gee (2001), that notions of 'identity' have become more fluid and multidimensional over time, in response to the increasing complexity of society and the roles within it. According to Gee this cannot be ignored. 'Identity' is used to mean the "ways of being 'certain kinds of people' " (Gee, 2001, p. 110), or, more specifically, 'certain kinds of teachers', that emerge from how they are talked about and the recognition of particular traits by others. Gee also claimed that identity develops along various dimensions and have been described as having four overlapping perspectives (Gee, 2001).

Rex and Nelson's (2004) study highlights how two experienced teachers, also facing extreme testing pressures, sustained their ethical commitment to student learning. Both teachers resisted integrating test-based instruction into their literacy classes and instead remained committed to their personal views of what and how their students

should learn. According to Rex and Nelson, (2004: 1320), both teachers acted according to a personal sense of ethics, “based upon what they were able to discern as honourable and necessary amidst conflict and ambiguity.” Coldron and Smith (1999) similarly discovered that there are many competing influences on teachers’ professional identities manifested in school settings and classroom practices. These influences can impact both new and experienced teachers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1999), experienced teachers may experience conflict and shift their professional identities in response to educational change or change in immediate working environments. They suggest that teachers’ interpretation of what matters in their institutional contexts shape stories about themselves and how others view them. In fact, teachers’ past experiences, roles and responsibilities, and the relationships with parents, students and fellow teachers all play a key part in shaping teachers’ professional identities.

Using identity to look at belief change can be seen in terms of changing and developing identities. Thus, fundamental changes in teachers' beliefs necessitates fundamental changes to teachers' identities involving far more than "fixing" or "topping up" teachers' "inadequate" knowledge. Furthermore, the identity used in this research acknowledges that the discourses teachers use in describing their way of literacy teaching, teaching role and process of adopting whole language approach are influenced by their understanding of institutional expectations, as well as the ways in which they identify with others. Though teachers have their own ideas of what defines their agency, it is likely that these views will be influenced by the roles imposed on them by various institutions, as well as those roles affirmed by other teachers whom they share similar beliefs and practices. Therefore, teachers’ identities will be influenced by the standpoint of all those who author their position, including the ways in which teachers view themselves. As I have already discussed in the previous section, there are difficulties in

balancing some of these and developing their identities as whole language literacy teachers, whilst at the same time maintaining their identities as nursery teachers.

3.4.3 Subjectivity

Inextricably linked to notions of identity is subjectivity. Because identity is no longer seen as fixed but as transient, this poses some interesting questions about how we categorize and group ourselves. Nowadays people often identify with each other through common reactions and experiences that feature in their lives (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999) for example as teachers we can identify with others in the teaching profession because we share professional experiences. Within the teaching category we might sub-classify ourselves as say literacy teachers, and then again as nursery, primary or secondary teachers. In addition, many of us would have experienced difficult classes in which we struggled or successful ones in which we thrived. However, our cognitive and emotional responses to those classes may have differed considerably - some may feel victimized by a bad experience, others may feel empowered by it, seeing it as a profound learning experience, and so on. Thus we may share experiences in our varied response to them. All lives pass through particular dynamics but the emotional experiences of those actions are variable; these are subjectivity.

Subjectivity, like identity, is not fixed but is relational. Davies (1992:75) argues that subjectivity emerges through the notion of difference, where 'I' is distinct to some 'other'. According to Ellis and Flaherty (1992:1), subjectivity is the "human lived experience and the physical, political, and historical context of that experience" and includes cognitive and somatic experiences as well as emotional processes. Since our thoughts, feelings, opinions and reactions are subjective, subjectivity can be regarded as the ways in which we perceive, feel and express ourselves. Subjectivity, then, who we

are, and the ways in which we perceive ‘who we are’ is how we identify and categorize ourselves. Davies (1992:75) contends: “Who we are, our subjectivity, is spoken into existence in every utterance not just in the sense that others speak us into existence and impose unwanted structures on us, as much feminist writing presumed, but, in each moment of speaking and being, we each reinvent ourselves inside the male/female dualism, socially, psychically, and physically.”

Richardson (2000:929) points out that our experiences, and our memories of them, are susceptible to conflicting interpretations dominated by “social interests and prevailing social discourses”. Thus, we become exposed to diverse, shifting and conflicting subjectivity. In addition, because we are faced with challenging and composite discourses from a variety of sources, in which we are positioned as both ‘sites’ and ‘subjects’, there is a continual struggle for identity between conflicting discourses (Richardson, 2000). For instance, a teacher who struggles to make a difference to her students’ reading and writing lessons, to make their literacy world different than before can often be caught up within her other positional identities, such as those of wife, mother, and government/school employee, senior teacher. I argue that we need to consider how we can move through and balance competing and shifting positions, or indeed, hold them simultaneously. It is my contention that by gaining an understanding of the multiple and shifting nature of subjectivity and the ways in which we process experience, we can grasp a greater awareness of classroom practices and this in turn can influence future research and policy making.

3.4.4 Teacher change and classroom practice

Research has explored the complex relationship between change in classroom practice and change in teachers’ beliefs. Studies have shown that a change in practice

might be followed by a change in teacher beliefs. As Argyris and Schön (1974) show how in understanding professional practice it is essential to distinguish the espoused theory, which a teacher may say s/he believes in, from the 'theory-in-use' which actually, regardless of what is said, influences a teacher's practice. Beijaard and De Vries (1997) focused their study on the development and change of teacher beliefs. After interviewing eight experienced secondary school teachers, they found that teachers' personal experiences in the classroom appear to be the most important source for changing their beliefs about learning. Changes took place after an incident made them realize that they had to teach differently. This study also developed four patterns of development or change of teachers' beliefs about student learning: internally-driven versus externally-stimulated, radical change, versus gradual changes, individual versus collaborative, and content of teachers' beliefs.

Other studies have focused on the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices. According to Johnson (1994), teacher beliefs affect perception and judgment that may affect their classroom practices. This relationship is echoed by Turnbull's (1999) study that found that four ninth-grade French teachers modified their methods to render them compatible with their own beliefs. Often, teachers compromise their beliefs in order to respond to their classrooms practices. Yoo (1997) found that due to the poor student performance and lack of motivation, teachers' practices varied noticeably from their beliefs about appropriate reading instruction. Other studies suggest change occurs as a result of professional development. Findings indicate that entering a master's degree, a teaching programme or a certification programme may result in a change in instructional practice and beliefs. Cryns and Johnston (1993) conducted a five-year case study of an elementary classroom teacher studying the changes she experienced as she entered a master's program and how these changes

influenced her classroom practices. Moreover, Cryns and Johnston found that the teacher's reflective thoughts evolved as a result of the scholarly encounter provided by the master's program which fostered critical self-reflection. At the end of the programme, the participant became more eloquent and refined when discussing her teaching practices, and had "expanded her understanding of her classroom practice and its connectedness to the larger social and political world" (Cryns & Johnston, 1993, p. 157).

Similarly, Freeman (1993), through a longitudinal study of change in teacher practice, examined how four foreign language teachers integrated new ideas from a masters' program into their practice. Freeman introduced four concepts that emerged as findings: conception of practice that "guided them in the face of new problematic situations on their classrooms"; tensions understood as "simply competing demands within their teaching"; articulation, "the process through which the teachers gain access to their thinking about their classroom practice"; and local language which "voices the teachers' explanations of teaching prior to entering the in-service program" and professional language "a discourse, built upon a set of socially constructed facts." According to this study, participants "reconstructed their classroom practice, using professional discourse to rename their experience and thus to assign new or different meaning to their actions" (p. 485). Brownlee and Boulton-Lewis (2001) suggested that changes might occur as a result of the implementation of a teaching programme with a group of 29 pre-service graduate teacher students in Australia. Employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, researchers used a research group and a comparison group, and surveyed participants at the beginning and at the end of the study. They found that the research group students demonstrated an increased sophistication of their epistemological beliefs, suggesting that the programme helped them to develop

such beliefs. Hart (2004) examined 14 pre-service elementary teachers participating in an alternative certification program in an urban setting. This study employed a beliefs survey and weekly logs as data sources. The survey was applied before and after the programme. Hart found that the programme was successful in changing pre-service teacher beliefs. For example, at the beginning of the programme, teachers believed that succeeding in maths depended more on the memorization of formulas; however, at the end, most of them disagreed with those statements, revealing a change in their beliefs in a direction consistent with the National Council on Teaching Mathematics Standards. Data from the weekly logs supported the responses on the survey and the philosophy of the programme.

In their study Levin and Wadmany (2006) examined the evolution of teacher beliefs on learning, teaching, and technology. Conducted in Israel, this study examined the integration of technology-based information-rich tasks in six fourth to sixth grade classrooms using questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations as data sources. They found that all six teachers changed their beliefs and educational practices. They found that the participants changed their behaviourist and transmission views to more varied views and discarded direct instruction, adopting practices focused on more collaborative learning. They also found that it is easier to change classroom practices than educational beliefs. This study did not present any evidence indicating that changes in teacher beliefs were followed by a change in teacher practices or vice versa.

Howard, McGee, Schwartz and Purcell (2000) trained 41 experienced teachers in constructivist teaching practices in an attempt to promote epistemological change. The study employed an epistemology questionnaire before and after the four-week training. Howard *et al.* found that this training resulted in significant changes in teacher beliefs

“from objectivist orientation to more constructivist ones” (p. 459). Additional research studies have identified other factors that affect teacher change over time, and the regularity with which these changes occur. Schiro (1992) studied 76 educators’ perceptions about the changes as regards curriculum belief systems during their careers. Data were collected from written curriculum life histories, inventories, curriculum vitae, conversations and interviews. Schiro found that educators make changes to their beliefs about the curriculum approximately once every four years; the first main change occurs about three years after entering the work force; changes are associated with changing of schools, the grades they teach, or movement from teaching to administrative positions. Schiro also found that the major stimuli for change in their curriculum and instructional beliefs system are their everyday educational practices.

Fisher (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of two teachers who were involved in a large-scale programme to change the way literacy was taught in England. The study involved interviews and observations over three years. Fisher found that teachers made considerable changes to the organization, and management of their teaching as well as to planning and contents. However, their pedagogical approach did not change. In other words, this study revealed the unchanging nature of the teacher approach. Evidence regarding participants’ change of beliefs was not provided. Finally, it is necessary to point out that many of the studies on change, classroom practice and teacher beliefs presented in this review were conducted in educational contexts different from that of language learning and teaching. Taking into account that minimal research has centered on the use of whole language approach reform movement at nursery level in Taiwan, conducting this research on whole language will help fill this gap. It will also contribute to a better understanding of its implementation and the impact it may have on the learning and teaching of Chinese languages and literacy.

3.4.5 Teacher beliefs and practice in literacy

It has been argued that recently there has been a significant emphasis on the social nature of literacy (Lwewi and Moje, 2007). Furthermore, it has been argued that literacy is considered as a cultural process where group members of a community draw on their own values, practices and beliefs (Ivanic, 1998). Therefore, nursery instructors who view literacy as social and cultural practice structure their classroom so that skills are not taught in isolation, but during literacy events that are dramatized through play, as in the whole language approach. This is contradictory with another view of literacy that looks at individual, performance-based activities consisting of a set of pre-decided skills that can be subjected to technical assessments and objectively standardized tests. Teachers who subscribe to these points of view tend to encourage the drill and rote learning of basic literacy skills, such as the phonetic system and word character identification (Lin, 2010). However, it can be argued that culture in the classrooms merely evolves through a process of co-construction that involves both the teacher and the student (Irvine and Larson, 2001; Steet, 1995). Each of these individuals is bringing his or her values, beliefs and expectations into the classroom community to co-construct new sets of these norms.

According to McMahan, Richmond & Reeves-Kazelskis (1998), teachers generally believe that literacy is important for young children. Specifically, skills including knowledge of the letters of the alphabet, recognition of site words and the ability to identify elements of a story are essential to a child's literacy development. McMahan, et. al. (1998) also noted that a wide variation exists between what teachers believe is important and what teachers claimed that they should specifically target in their preschool classroom. This notion is supported by Ure and Raban (2001). They found that while the teachers in their study felt that preschool environments should be rich in

print in order to develop their students' oral and written language skills, some teachers focused on teaching writing for a purpose (e.g., writing the child's name) while other teachers believed the significance of writing as a social practice (2001). Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek and Rescorla (1990) conducted a study to identify the relationships between teacher beliefs and the decisions they made regarding curriculum and preschool programmes. The study did not focus specifically on the classroom environment; however, it did focus on teachers' attitudes regarding early childhood education. Of the 58 participants, ten were chosen for in-depth study. Results indicated that there was a robust correlation between teachers' self reported beliefs about appropriate preschool instruction and their observed practices in the classroom (Hyson et al, 1990). Dickinson's and Smith (1994) research focused on how preschool teachers' classroom practices linked with their beliefs about literacy. Fifty-six preschool instructors were interviewed and were also required to complete the ECERS (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) in each of their classrooms. The findings determined that teachers' classroom practices generally reflected their beliefs regarding literacy (Dickinson's and Smith, 1994). That is, teachers who believed literacy were engaged in activities such as story reading, question and answer and conversations that challenged their students mentally.

On the other hand, instructors who were proponents of the importance of social context and interaction tended to spend considerable time with pretend play and pretend talk. McGill-Franzen, Lanford and Adams, in their 2002 study, also tried to determine the links between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. Their study indicated that teacher education level determined teachers' beliefs, which in turn, influenced their classroom practices. They found that teacher education levels were higher in programmes that serviced students from higher income levels. Conversely, preschool

programs servicing students from lower-income families tended to hire instructors with lower education levels. For instance, teachers from publically funded programmes such as Head Start, Pre-K and child development day care each had 2 years or less of post-secondary education while teachers from university day care programmes, or religious-affiliated nursery school (Montessoori programs), employed teachers with two-four year college degrees (p. 445). Additionally, McGill-Franzen, Lanford, and Adams (2002:460) found that “besides having access to fewer books and spending less time engaged in literacy activities, children in publicly funded preschool were offered a less challenging and culturally relevant pedagogy,” while children in the other programmes studied and experienced literacy as both a culturally cohesive and moral force that conveyed belonging and purpose to the preschool students. Furthermore, McGill-Franzen, Lanford, and Adams (2002:460) found that teachers from publically funded programmes generally believed the curriculum was solely for the purpose for developing social behaviour as well as social communication. As such, these programmes often focused on unguided pretend play where no literacy materials were included as well as story times which did not include opportunities for discussions about the materials. However, teachers from the university day care programmes and religious-affiliated nursery schools believed that the curriculum was intended to “challenge and stimulate children intellectually and socially” (p. 450). As a result, their programs focused on “cognitively challenging” activities (p. 449). These studies take a large number of respondents and analyze their responses to fixed questions. As indicated above, teacher beliefs and classroom practices are more complex and liable to shift than such studies can show. More research that considers how nursery teachers adopt new ideas about literacy into their classrooms is needed, to give a fuller and more teacher-driven view.

One of few studies to specifically examine nurseries teachers' literacy in the southern county in Taiwan was conducted by Pan and Liu (2008). They found little progress had been made in teacher children interactions and the organization of literacy activities to meet the whole language movement objectives except, for example, arranging literacy activities, scheduling and paying attention to individual needs. Similarly Lin (2011) in a cross-county in Taiwan comparison of teachers self-reported beliefs about whole language practice, indicated that there was big gap between Taiwan's teachers' self-reported beliefs about whole language practice and self-reported practice. The article indicates that Taiwanese teachers' practices are still quite far from the whole language approach advocated by Goodman in 1986. However, this study used a large scale survey and did not include observation of classrooms or give space to teachers to talk freely about their views and work. A fuller picture is needed. However, many researches above have identified the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs about whole language and practice. Therefore, identifying the reason beyond the discrepancy is the focus of the present study.

3.5 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I have shown how learning theories and views about literacy have provided an impetus to curriculum change in literacy teaching in Taiwan. For those understanding literacy as a social practice, the focus of research has shifted from viewing language and literacy as a set of skills to using literacy in authentic events. On this view, literacy learning is seen as occurring through social interactions and relationships with others (Gee, 1996; Barton et al. 2001; Berger, 2005).

I have also considered how views about the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice have shifted according to the same socio-cultural theories. Recent

understandings of the relationship between how teachers think about their teaching and what they do in practice draws more on theories of identity and subjectivity than the earlier more fixed view of individual beliefs. Nursery teachers influence how children learn about literacy from the classroom and school culture that is created for students. They are also considered as partners in literacy learning as a social process (Berger, 2005). However, Tsai (2011) stated the following conditions are keys to this effort: (1) enough resources and support, (2) high teacher–children ratio, and (3) sufficient professional training for teachers. They argued that these conditions are often not provided in most nursery schools in Taiwan. Furthermore, Lin (2011) states that the policy-makers and advocates have focused more on changing teachers’ beliefs while leaving the question of how to implement imported curriculum models and the whole language approach to the teachers to explore on their own (Lin, 2011). In addition to the lack of resources and adequate support, the real challenge is that Taiwan’s teachers do not have firsthand experience of teaching with a Western whole language approach. Therefore, they have to rely on their experiences and understanding to translate and explore the new ideas into teaching practice. This results in a gap between teachers self-reported beliefs and actual practice (Lin, 2011; Tsai, 2011).

This belief-practice gap is worsened by the top-down nature of curriculum and the whole language reform in Taiwan (Lin, 2011). Not only do practitioners lack the motivation to make these changes due to the fact that they have been consulted little in the formation of the reform agenda, but they are also short on confidence in their ability to implement the reform in their classrooms, as they are forced to abandon their own familiar ideas and skills (Lin, 2011). As a result, many teachers have not yet changed their initial beliefs and practices and are more inclined to use the traditional pedagogy of literacy teaching that is more suitable at primary school level (Yang, Tsai and Yang,

2002; Lin, 2011).

The pressure of primary school on the nursery curriculum has existed for a long time and has become a critical problem to be solved. Moreover, the common early childhood curriculum in some parts of Taiwan is still teacher-directed and traditional subject teaching (Lin, 2011). The dissonance between Taiwan's teachers' allegedly progressive whole language approach and their use of traditional practices (Huang, 2003; Liu, 2006; Lin, 2011) has motivated researchers to reflect on this whole language movement, which has aimed to adopt Western curricula approach (Lin, 2011). Cultural conflicts have been found between Western and Chinese Confucian pedagogies in several important respects, including teaching philosophy, teacher–student relationships, teaching and learning strategies, student characteristics encouraged, and “good” literacy lessons (Liu, 2006; Tsai, 2011). Therefore, the present study sets out to draw on firsthand evidence of actual practice in Taiwanese nurseries to explore the implementation of the whole language approach and explore the teachers' understandings regarding the whole language approach on early childhood classrooms. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs concerning literacy teaching and the extent to which those beliefs are reflected in their classroom practices were examined. In light of the peculiarities of the Taiwanese nursery services briefly reviewed in Chapter 2, how would the distinctive contexts (School, Government, Society, Parents, Cultural, Teachers personal background and experience) influence teachers' pedagogical beliefs and shape their subsequent curricular practice at the nursery level? These questions form the key research focus of the present study. They also guide the processes of this research in answering further questions in the methodology chapter, such as what kind of research approach should be adopted? What kinds of teachers and how many should be invited to participate in the research? How should their classroom be visited and

observed? And how should they be interviewed to enrich the field data? Details of the methodologies employed in the present research are provided in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 What I Believe

It is crucial for the reader to understand my epistemological and theoretical position in order to understand my research journey and aims. As a researcher, my position becomes a lens through which I view the world and explore and construct my concept of reality. Another useful metaphor could be that my outlook is a filter in front of what I see, and as such it takes on a certain tint, a color and a shade. These metaphors are apt and nicely illustrate my personal epistemological and theoretical perspective over the research journey.

Like others I have followed my own formal and informal curriculum in my personal and educational life. This also included my MSc and PhD courses in the UK, that is to say, studying and socializing in a foreign country. During these journeys in my life, I have been challenged by the notion of epistemology, theoretical perspective and the fact that people have different understandings of where knowledge comes from and how it is constructed. My education and an appreciation of multiple realities really happened. Where previously I had been convinced of an absolute right and wrong, I now became aware of differences and multiple interpretations of historical and contemporary events.

Now I have come to believe that there is no absolute truth in the worldly sense and there is no over-riding truth governing human social interaction. My personal truths may differ from the truths that are scientifically accepted truths in different cultural and social contexts. In this regard, as Merriam (1988:17) stated that the world "is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interactions and perceptions.

It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring." From this point, I now realized that the truth of education is not simply a matter of right or wrong or a matter of good and bad it is not an ultimate truth. Truth is a matter of life, not about according to a standard.

4.2 My Epistemological Position

My epistemological position is that of Social Constructivism which underpins my theoretical perspective, my interpretive approach to this study, and the resulting methodology in using a case study and qualitative methods. Social Constructivist epistemology can also be simply referred to as constructivism (Kanuka and Anderson, 1999). This highlights the influence of cultural and social contexts (Vygotsky, 1962). Social Constructivists argue that knowledge is not systematic or fixed, but that it is constructed socially and mediated through language (Vygotsky, 1962) and that everyone has different social experiences resulting from these multiple realities (Jonassen, 1992). My basic understanding of social constructivism is that knowledge is not fixed or given, but is a historically and actively constructed meaning, one that is socially mediated through language, so that what is 'true' for one group cannot be said to be universally true. In this regard, I can say I have more than one sources of 'true' knowledge, which is knowledge gained from my work and social practices and knowledge produced by research. Working as a teacher has allowed me to gain knowledge of literacy learning, teaching and beliefs and an identity from practice and from sharing knowledge and expertise with colleagues in the education and the surrounding teaching and learning environment. Teaching provides many ways of accessing knowledge from different sources. Further, I have also integrated my personal beliefs as a researcher and as a teacher to serve the same objective, which is to seek knowledge from the available resources.

From this regard, I hold that people's perceptions and interpretations of the nature of reality are based on their belief system, previous knowledge, learning experiences and cultural legacy that we inherited from the past generations (Spiro and Jehng, 1990; Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson and Coulson, 1991; Kanuka and Anderson, 1999; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, as a social constructivist researcher, in response to the question, 'what is there that can be known?' I would assert that in our daily lives there are multiple social realities that we construct to make sense of the world we live in. Every one of us tries to contemplate and to question so as to find answers to real life questions. How does this world work? We need to understand fully other people's views and interpretations of the world around them in order to make sense of the world we live in.

Differences between individuals, societies and cultures do not mean that either one is wrong or right but that rather they perceive the world differently. They use their common sense that is underpinned by their social context and their belief system, and they act accordingly. However, while social constructivism places our sense of what is true and good in shared relationships, this is not the end. What is obviously true and good does not exist, so in this sense social constructivism "invites a continuous posture of reflective thinking, even regarding researchers themselves" (Crotty, 2003). Reflective thinking is a source of knowledge because it allows one to search, improve, and reflect on prior knowledge in order to better assimilate knowledge. We as human beings necessarily have limited knowledge and personal knowledge is always limited. The knowledge I have gained through teaching, through study and as a researcher is incomplete and bounded by language, tradition, culture and context, and this is also true of my participants.

As a researcher, I am trying to produce new knowledge by collecting data from informants that I then reflect upon, analyze and formalize as knowledge. This research would not only deepen and build my objective knowledge but also would make me better understand processes of teaching and specifically, my own teaching. I can share this practical knowledge with students, teachers and colleagues, who will in turn interpret this in terms of their known social reality. I am therefore on a journey of exploration, interpreting and constructing practical and theoretical knowledge, drawing on my personal experience as a teacher, the literature and the data at hand. In accepting all these limitations, I can claim that my task as a researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge of my participants.

The chosen research methods were questionnaire, interviews, observations, audio recordings and document analysis which are discussed in more detail below. This combined approach allowed me to acquire multiple perspectives. The participants in this study were viewed as helping to co-construct or jointly construct multiple realities with me (Robson, 2002).

Social constructivism does not seek to be a final word but a form of discourse that will help us to build a world in which there is no end to dialogue (Gergen, 1999: 228). For this thesis, the aim is not to prove a theory but to gain insights and ideas and perceptions of efficacy in early year teaching practice in Taiwan and other Asian language teaching contexts. I am involved in exploring a social phenomenon: the teaching of literacy in Taiwan by early year's education teachers. The knowledge that this study is striving for can only be partially jointly constructed or co-constructed.

4.3 My Philosophical Perspective

I have taken an interpretive perspective for this study. Philosophically, this stance can also be described as my world view or paradigm which guides my methodological approach. Different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the phenomenon. I shall now discuss interpretivism and why I am adopting it over positivism.

Initially my own thinking was clearly grounded in the scientific method and positivism, namely something that is posited or given in direct experience (Crotty, 2003). This appealed to me, especially the reductionist way in which a complex world could be reduced to a set of seemingly simple equations (Crotty, 2003; 1998; Blaikie, 2007). I was less comfortable with statistical probabilities. Nonetheless, I ended up with sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to become a researcher and a teacher in early year's education. However, having worked in education for few years, I find that for many questions or problems, the positivist paradigms are overly simplistic and reductionist in their ability to help me answer questions that contain complexities. From my experience with people educationally, it is clear to me that there are multiple realities for each and every situation. I feel that quantifying human experience cannot always express or manifest the truth I am looking for. Further, I have the desire to search the meaning behind all the numbers. I have come to understand that human interactions in an educational context are multi-faceted, infinitely variable and highly complex.

The positivist paradigm is a stream from the scientific paradigm which springs from the objectivist epistemological position. This paradigm is frequently used in research in social sciences, including education. Usually the main purpose of research in

this paradigm is to come up with universal laws or regularities of similar events. In this sense, the positivist paradigm argues that there is only one reality. Positivism is based on the ‘verification principle’ and thus relies mainly on quantitative approaches with a combination of method, experiment, comparison and replication and controlled activities as the dominant methods (Hitchcock and Huges, 1989; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In the context of my own study this would assume the measurability and comparability of teachers’ beliefs. Despite its clear process and testable outcomes, positivism has been subject to certain criticisms, particularly in researching education, as linked with personal, cultural and social factors, and therefore, humanistic aspects; attitude, beliefs and feelings should not be neglected (Maiklad, 2001). Therefore, I argue that it is not suitable for my study especially when dealing with the complexities of my study context.

Also, I focused my study on understanding the meanings of human beings as constructed in particular contexts (Merriam, 1998). In this regard, I claim a naturalistic, interpretive approach can make sense of how teachers’ identity, beliefs, and practices in early literacy instruction and are therefore more appropriate for this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Schwandt (1994: 118) “the interpretivist believes that to understand the world of meaning one must interpret it”. The Interpretivist looks for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 2003: 67) and stands in opposition to positivism.

The interpretative paradigm is an alternative for humanistic researchers. This paradigm aims to understand the occurrence of human actions and behaviours’ in social contexts. Interpretative investigations take into account personal experience, beliefs and identities. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), interpretative researchers deal

with participants' perceptions with an attentive, empathetic and unprejudiced mind. This means that interpretative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This approach allowed me to develop a critical understanding of the phenomenon under study (Glesne, 2006). The paradigm employs qualitative means of data collection including comprehensive interviews and observations of real-life events.

The reason for adopting the interpretative paradigm was to explore the perceptions, beliefs and personal meanings of the teachers in my study. Moreover, I can by way of the interpretative paradigm and qualitative methods empower my participants with a voice, enabling them to make explicit ideas and perceptions that may otherwise be implicit. As Cowie (2004: 41) notes: "For me it means that as a researcher I am an instrument of research and that in interaction (talk) with participants I come to a jointly constructed meaning making view of reality."

4.4 Qualitative methods approach

This set of aims calls for a qualitative method rather than a quantitative one. The phenomenon that I have investigated, the beliefs of early years teachers, is one which is characterized by a number of personal backgrounds, experience of work, cultural, institutional and pedagogical complexities. The tensions and complexities in the field are therefore best understood through the experiences of participants – in this case, teachers. Qualitative methods enable this kind of in-depth, complexity and human interactions investigation. As Kervin, Herrington and Okely (2005:37) argued research can be seen as:

“an approach to making sense of social phenomena as they occur in their natural settings ... the qualitative researcher is not interested in objective measures, preferring

to explore the subjective experiences, ideas and feelings of participants”.

While I brought perceptions that I wished to explore, I did not bring a strongly held belief to this study, and neither did I determine the outcome of the study. My intuition, based on my own earlier observations and on anecdotal experience in the field of early years teaching in Taiwan, was that teachers might have differences between what they say they believe and their practice. I did not assume that this was the case, however. Therefore, I have attempted to follow through my exploration of the natural scheme of things through documenting and analyzing the findings. This enabled me to co-construct the literacy practices of early childhood in Taiwan and the relationship between beliefs and personal identity of teachers behind everyday routine practices.

It was necessary to use qualitative approach in this study because it recognizes that teaching is an on-going continuous process that takes place against a background of personal backgrounds, experiences regarding work and literacy teaching, cultural and socially mediated contexts (Tillema and Westhuizen, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Purcell-Gates, 2000; Fisher, 2002; Labone, 2004; Fisher, 2006).

As Mirriam (1988:3) states, "research focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education". Qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretive approach to viewing complex constructs such as, in the current research, beliefs and identities, in an effort to make sense of these complexities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this way, qualitative methods allow me to develop a critical understanding of the phenomenon under study (Glesne, 2006). The qualitative methods I have utilized have enabled me to illuminate the different styles of early years teaching and to articulate some of the dilemmas that

are intrinsic to literacy teaching in Chinese language and the Confucian context in particular, in the early years setting in Taiwan. In this case, the study is about making sense of different styles and approaches to early years teaching in classrooms. Qualitative methods rely on fieldwork by the researcher and produces “detailed, thick description; inquiry in depth; direct quotations capturing people’s personal perspectives and experiences” (Johnson and Christensen, 2000:313). In qualitative inquiry, “*the researcher is the instrument*” (Patton, 2002: 14). As the *research instrument*, I have drawn upon the traditions, skills and disciplines of qualitative methods as well as my own experience, ideas and knowledge about teaching literacy in Taiwan. While the sample of teachers involved is not large, the strength of this study lies in the inclusion of the perspectives of teachers from different institutions through questionnaire, interviews, observational, collected documents and self-reflective data.

4.5 Exploring Teachers’ Beliefs

Although it is commonplace to talk about teachers’ beliefs as an issue and define them in different terms, my understanding of teachers’ beliefs is that they do not have an independent existence outside social practices and discourses. In this regard, teachers’ beliefs are a social construction and hence contingent (Osisoma & Moscovici, 2008). It is a complex and dynamic equilibrium where teachers themselves are burdened with a variety of roles they feel that they have to play (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, although this research is concerned with teachers’ beliefs and identity, it is important to note that I see no absolute distinction between these two constructs. For example, Richerson (2003) argues teachers’ beliefs are not easily captured. All propositional statements - beliefs, identity, self concepts, self-esteem, personal knowledge, practical knowledge motivation and attitude - all have the same status of being constructed through discourse. Where you draw the line between any of them and fact cannot be determined by the statement

itself, but only through the social definition (Fisher, 2001; 2006).

The complexity in the perception of beliefs and identity has led to another complexity in researching this field. Studies that dealt with Teachers' beliefs in Taiwan mainly employ a positivist or quantitative approach quantitative approach (Tzeng, 1999; Kao, 1996; Liu, 1999; Tan, 2002; Huang, 2003; Wu, 2004; Chen, 2004; Chang, 2005; Lai, 2008). Most of these studies involved large-scale Most of these studies involved large-scale samples, and searched for correlations using surveys (multiple-choice tests) as the main instrument. These surveys can cover a large number of people as well as those who are from diverse areas, and will produce a lot of data at once. In terms of analysis, the data are already in categories, and therefore it is time-saving to quantify. However, current thinking in exploring teachers' beliefs is that surveys are too constrained. Surveys of beliefs are derived from the scholarly literature and are predetermined by the researcher. The theories on which these surveys are based may not match up teachers' beliefs. Thus, the predetermined beliefs that are included in multiple-choice measures may not actually reflect teachers' beliefs but represent the researchers' theoretical assumptions. In this regard, survey techniques have limitations. The limitation of positivist inquiries has led to a shift in the methods used to explore the beliefs of teachers.

In the West, more recent studies on teacher beliefs reflect a shift toward a wide range of qualitative approaches and the attempts to understand how teachers make sense of the classroom. Interview and observation are the two most widely employed data-collection methods in this field (Richardson, 1996; Haney, lumpe, Czerniak and Egan, 2002). Although Thompson (1992) advocates the determination of beliefs through observation alone, most researchers use interviews in combination with observation. In

addition, narrative writing (Kagan, 1991; Johnson and Golombek, 2002), concept maps (Van Driel, Beijaard and Verloop, 2001; Zanting, Verloop and Vermunt, 2003) and self-report methods (Woolley and Benjamin, 2004) have also been used in measuring teachers' beliefs. Some researchers may employ multi-qualitative techniques, or both qualitative and quantitative methods to increase the trustworthiness of data, and therefore this is also what I will focus on in this study.

This study is concerned with exploring teachers' beliefs. At the heart lies a fundamental problem which is the complexity of teachers' beliefs and the difficulty of capturing these. A teacher's practice is likely to be informed by beliefs about themselves, about pedagogy, about children, about the social and cultural context and about the value and purpose of education. Hence, the outcome is unlikely to be fixed and static but one that is continually negotiated, constructed and reconstructed. Therefore, any research enquiry is only ever snapshot of this process.

The paradigm debate is revealed in how beliefs are framed and explored within two different traditions. For positivists, methodological approaches have included scientific quantitative methods and reductionist approaches in which a seemingly complex world is reduced to a set of seemingly simple equations (Crotty, 2003; Blaikie, 2007). This approach makes certain assumptions about the nature of beliefs in which they are fixed, and can be measured and compared. In contrast, interpretivists have included qualitative means of data collection and aim to understand the occurrence of human actions and behaviours in social contexts. Interpretivists assume that teachers beliefs are fluid movements, on-going continuous processes, taking place in the context of personal backgrounds and experiences regarding practice, and culturally and socially mediated contexts (Tillema and Westhuizen, 2003; Golombek, 1998; Purcell-Gates,

2000; Fisher, 2002; Fisher, 2006).

My own approach will draw on the interpretative paradigm. The qualitative methods takes into account the literacy practices of early childhood in Taiwan, and the relationship between beliefs and the personal identity of the teachers behind everyday routines practices.

Taking into consideration the previous discussion of the literature, Confucianism remains the essential educational philosophy in Taiwan and early childhood practices are heavily influenced by its principles (Barclay, 1989; Lin and Tsai, 1996; Greer and Lim, 1998; Mo and Shen, 1999; Cheaves, 2002; Kim and Park, 2003; Hahm). In this regard, there is a need to help reveal the unique underlying Confucian-influenced experiences in the classroom. This is crucial to creating an opportunity to understand how and what happens there. This adds another dimension to the complexity of researching teachers' beliefs in a context that can be considered different from the Western viewpoint.

4.6 Aim of the research

The research reported in this thesis was designed around the following aims:

- To examine the conceptions of literacy held by Taiwanese early years teachers.
- To examine their beliefs on how to promote literacy in the classroom.
- To investigate how their beliefs may influence their actual practice.
- To explore whether their practices are consistent with the requirements of the Reading Project and whole language approach

4.7 Research Design

4.7.1 Adopting a case study approach

After considering different types of qualitative research, this research will follow a case study approach to explore literacy teaching in the early years context of Taiwan. My objective in exploring how teachers teach literacy in Taiwan as a ‘case’ is to throw light on the broader issue of how literacy can be taught in early years education institutions in Taiwan. In conducting case study research, Stake (1995:1) stated that “we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus”. Moreover, we expect to “catch the complexity of a single case” (p.6) and aim to “thoroughly understand the case” (p.9). A case study design is chosen purposefully because “researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 1998, p. 28-29). Case studies have the advantage of being able to incorporate a range of methods or approaches. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003:134), “Case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry... we could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods”.

The case-study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth and within a limited time-scale. Following Stake (1995, 2000, 2006), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998) the research design is conceived as a qualitative multiple-case study. A multiple case study increases the scope of the study and uncovers nuances of multiple realities that are both particular and unique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The ‘case’ here is the teaching of literacy in early year’s institutions in

Taiwan. Participants of the case study are drawn from multiple sites which together provide data illuminating literacy teaching in Taiwan as a 'case' This study can also be seen as a 'multi-case project', as described by Stake (2006:6):

“as ... a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts, or members. We study those parts, perhaps its students, its committees, its projects, or manifestations in diverse settings ... One small collection of people, activities, policies, strengths, problems, or relationships is studied in detail ... The cases have their stories to tell, and some of them are included in the multi-case report, but the official interest is in the collection of these cases or in the phenomenon exhibited in those cases. We seek how to understand better how this whole ... operates in different situations”.

As stated earlier, I am the prime instrument for analyzing and interpreting the data. According to the social constructivist epistemology that underpins my methodology, my own role in constructing knowledge produced must be acknowledged Belenky, Goldberger and Tarule (1986); Stanley and Wise (1983); Crotty (2003); Denzin and Lincoln (2003). The social constructivist epistemology, which was discussed briefly in a previous section above, can be summed up as, “all knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known” (Belenky et al., 1986:137). It is inevitable that my own ideas and biases will have colored the findings, especially as I am both a researcher and early year's teacher. My own history and practice are therefore offered as a subject to enlighten the research and to be considered as part of the methodology as well as the outcome.

Moreover, the five main methods of data collection (questionnaire, teacher interviews, classroom observations, collected documents and self-reflection) have served to provide a degree of triangulation of the findings and a multi-faceted picture of the current situation.

4.7.2 Multi-Method designs of Data Collection

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explain that compassing directions from more than two distant points in navigation is referred to as triangulation. It may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of human behaviour which is often employed in research. The most common involves checking two or more sources of information or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data (Cresswell, 2003). In this way, Cresswell (2003:217) states that the triangulation method is best used when a researcher “uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross validate or corroborate findings within a single study”.

In this study, the methods employed were both quantitative and qualitative, namely: questionnaire survey, interviews, observation and document review were used to gather multiple data sets with the aim of developing a broad understanding of the context of the teacher. However different data sets can be described to reveal different kinds of questions with the same focus. For example, my questionnaires reveal the de-contextualized beliefs of teachers; my interviews reveal the interface between beliefs and practice within a greater context; while my observations reveal what teachers in fact do. The reason for choosing a multi-method approach in this study is that it would enable me to better understand and unpick more fully the richness and complexity my participants in the field. In this regard, I argue that multiple methods can be used to clarify the findings of a complex phenomenon.

As Greene and Caracelli (1997) state, the underlying premise of a multi-method inquiry is that each methodological approach offers a meaningful and legitimate means of knowing and understanding. Moreover, the underlying rationale for a multi-method inquiry is to generate deeper and broader insights, to develop important knowledge

claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives (ibid.). A combination of methods and a triangulation of data sources addresses the fact that inherent in any single method has limitations and biases (Creswell, 2003). In this regard, as Walker (1985:8) rationalizes, “what might at first sight appear not to be very rigorous methods such as the open interview and unstructured observation, become much more powerful when used in conjunction with each other.” The multiple methods that I have used therefore combine a quantitative questionnaire survey with several sources of qualitative data, namely interviews, observation and documents. I have added a fourth method that reflects my journey in order to add a further dimension to the analysis. My interpretations of these data are based on “the belief that our worlds are independent, messy, unique and therefore the qualitative researcher aims to uncover this complexity rather than to uncover a ‘knowable truth’” (Kervin et al., 2005:3). The procedure of information collection and the methods for data collection will be described in the following section.

4.7.3 Information Collection

➤ **I gathered the empirical data as follows:**

1. I distributed 200 questionnaires.
2. I conducted pre-interviews with three teachers from three different early year’s institutions (drawn from the original sample of 200).
3. I conducted three different classroom observations with the three teachers.
4. A follow-up recall interview was carried out with the three teachers after each classroom observation.
5. I conducted post-interviews.
6. I kept detailed notes of my research over a period of sixteen week.

For the three phases of this study, firstly, I administered 200 questionnaire surveys. All of the questionnaires were anonymous except for seventeen questionnaires from the teachers who gave their names as those who were willing to take part in the interview and classroom observations. I used purposive-sampling to select three different schools and teachers for the location comparable from these seventeen volunteers. These three teachers' questionnaires were returned to subsequently for post-interview use. Nevertheless, all the participants in this research were guaranteed that their information and identities were to be known only by me. Furthermore, the confidentiality and anonymity were also addressed by using codes instead of these three participants' real names; therefore the participants – and their nurseries – are given aliases.

I made numerous visits to the three different early years institutions before the pre-interview started, and had informal meetings with the principals or head teachers and the volunteers just getting to know them and to discuss my proposed research. I also presented an outline to them of the interview and observation, explaining the purpose of the study and the confidentiality protocols. These meetings were productive and positive, in terms of research design, and good levels of trust and rapport were established.

In the first interview before the classroom visits, I adopted a semi-structured interview approach. I decided the sequence and questions for the pre-interview protocol (See Appendix Three, Page 323). These were used to gather more in-depth information regarding the early year's teachers' beliefs and background about the role of literacy in the classroom. Having this information prepared me for the forthcoming observation as well.

Following these first interviews a programme of visits was arranged. The classroom observations were completed over a 16-week period at the selected institutions. Each classroom was visited a minimum of three or four times, for one to one-and-a-half hours minimum each visit. I sat at the back of the classroom and attempted to be unobtrusive so as not to affect any routines or behaviour in the classroom. For classroom observations, I chose to use a loose observation schedule. However, I also imposed a degree of structure through the use of my own observation checklist (See Appendix Six, Page333) and alongside my own handwritten field notes (For a sample of field notes see Appendix Five, Page 329).

The classroom observations helped raise my awareness of the issues I needed to explore and follow. In particular, it helped me to shift the focus away from a general idea of literacy teaching and learning to focus more on the issues in relation to literacy teaching practice and performance in the classroom. Furthermore, the observation allowed me to gain information that would otherwise not be available. Moreover, the checklist and field notes enabled me to get an overall idea of whether the teachers' practice and interaction in the classroom reflected the whole language working definitions of the terms in page 35 as exemplified in classroom practice. For instance, does teacher provided many opportunities to show how reading and writing are used before they are instructed in Chinese phonetic symbol (sounds) and Chinese character (word) identification? Are basic skills developed when they are meaningful to children? Are an abundance of these types of activities is provided to develop language and literacy through meaningful experience: listening to and reading stories and poems; seeing a lots of environment print in the classroom; participating in dramatic play and other experiences requiring communication; taking and sharing informally with other children and teachers; and experimenting with writing by drawing, copying and inventing their own spelling.

In my field notes I noted as much as I could on, for example, the behaviour of both teachers and students and their interaction in the classroom environment; contextual information; and critical moments. The notes helped me to record all the time I spent in the classroom. This helped inform my understanding of the participants and processes involved. It required me to describe the action without evaluating. Additionally, I was able to record my personal notes on the research process. These included my feelings, self-reflection, memories, and impressions. Therefore, I was able to see my own possible influence on the participants and the effects of personal events on the data collection and analysis. I believe that personal notes help reveal my inner dialogue, self-doubts and questions, and especially any problems encountered.

Furthermore, following each of the classroom observations, I had an informal discussion (follow-up recall interviews) immediately with the teacher on the same day. In these interviews, I adopted an unstructured and informal interview, maintaining a high level of flexibility to sustain the natural flow of dialogue with the teacher. This was aimed to clarify the question of missing information or some of the points that rose during the observation. There is no pre-planned interview schedule was used for these interviews as questions arose from the observation and related to teachers' use (or not) of whole language. However, I noted the questions in my field notes for the visit (see Appendix Five, Page331). One of my intentions was also to jointly construct the teachers' pedagogy and the practice I had observed.

At the end of data collection phase, there were semi-structured post-interviews with each teacher. I had an additional set of general yet important questions which had emerged from the data: their questionnaire they filled in the first phase, their pre-interview and the follow-up interview after the classroom observation's. Three different

semi-structured interview schedules were prepared based on the previous data for each teacher (see appendix Four, page 325). The post-interview helped me to see connections among the three phases. Furthermore, this helped to make clear and explain the complex way in which teacher beliefs inform their pedagogical practice. Moreover, they were helpful in allowing the teacher to revisit and reflect on the answers they gave in the questionnaire, and their actions and what they had said in their classroom. The question and answer exchange in the interview could also further explore the daily influences on their pedagogy. During the post-interviews, I also tried to encourage the teacher to articulate how they interpreted their responses in the questionnaire, what they said during the pre-interview and follow up recall interview, and what had happened in their classrooms. In this way, I tried to stimulate their recall and co-construct of how they perceived the range of intervening forces or difficulties of contextual, social, personal and professional influences that transformed their conceptual knowledge into practical classroom pedagogical action.

Table 4.1: The three phases of study.

Phase	Method	Purpose
Phase 1 Stated Beliefs	Questionnaire	To establish the range of views from a larger sample.
	Pre- interviews	To establish more focused views from a smaller sample.
Phase 2 Beliefs in Practice	Observations	To establish how beliefs are reflected in Practice.
	Follow up discussion	To explore teachers pedagogical decision Making.
Phase 3 Reflections on beliefs and practice	Post -interviews	To allow teachers to explore the relationship between beliefs and practice.

4.7.4 Questionnaires survey

First I submitted surveys with questions using a four-point Likert Scale to each participant. This was in order to gather an overall sense of the views of teachers

regarding teacher beliefs and classroom practice toward literacy instruction in this study. Surveys are useful in gaining some initial data. In this regard, (Mertens, 2009; 1998; Fowler, 2008) stated survey methods emphasize an individual's self-reporting of their knowledge, attitude, or behaviour. Moreover, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) state that surveys can be used to describe people's background information, to deal with relationships between study variables, and to explain provided information. Due to the fact that the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' beliefs, classroom practices, and relationships between beliefs and classroom practices, questionnaire surveys were used to serve this purpose.

Furthermore, there are a number of practical reasons why I chose to employ a questionnaire in this study. Firstly, questionnaires can be sent to respondents from the researcher at a distance, which was beneficial to my present situation. Secondly, questionnaires enable the collection of the opinions, ideas and experiences from a wide number of potential participants (Mertens, 2009; 1998). Using a questionnaire also allows such data to be collected in different time slots at the convenience of the respondents (Fowler, 2008). Furthermore, questionnaires can elicit many different opinions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Cohen and Manion, 1994). Finally, many teachers in Taiwan are familiar with the format of questionnaires as these are commonly used to collect data in educational research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Cohen and Manion, 1994).

4.7.4.1 Teacher Beliefs about the Literacy Questionnaire

Study participants completed a questionnaire referred to as the Teachers' Beliefs about the Literacy Questionnaire. This questionnaire was the primary instrument used in the survey portion of this study. The inventory was mainly based on existing survey

instruments in Western studies used to obtain data concerning teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction developed by Westwood, Knight, and Redden (1997). However, it was adapted to suit the literacy instruction in the old and new Taiwanese nursery literacy curricula, the Reading Project and the whole language approach. While the old curriculum follows a 'skill-based orientation' and represents the traditional view of Taiwan's literacy instruction, the new curriculum and Reading Project follows a 'whole process-based' that involves the interaction of teacher, the children, the school and the whole society, rather than a simple set of skills to transfer from teacher to child. Taking this into consideration, the adapted version of the TBALQ was designed to cover both streams of the literacy curriculum. It consists of 24 items related to teachers' views on teaching and learning. The items followed a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, 'Strongly Disagree', to 4, 'strongly agree'. For each question teachers were asked to consider the importance of either reading as a set of skills or a whole process-based directed beliefs statement.

Appendix (Page 295) I contains a complete list of the 24 descriptors found in Part Three of the TBALQ and each is identified as either a top-down or bottom-up model of practice. These descriptors identify concepts and practices that potentially influence early childhood teachers' day-to-day instructional activities. Specifically, top-down descriptors are mostly associated with whole language, child-centered activities. For example, with item 9 (Direct teaching of phonics is unnecessary), a top-down practitioner would avoid direct teaching of word decoding skills and related activities to break down the sound meanings of letters. They would emphasize immersion in the knowledge of language, including the meaningful aspects of language (Goodman, 1986). Conversely, bottom-up descriptors identify practices most associated with teacher-controlled and direct instruction along each step. For example, with item 7, (Beginning

readers should be taught phonics skills), bottom-up practitioners would teach the connections between letter patterns and the sounds these represent. Phonics instruction requires the teacher to provide students with a core body of information about phonics rules or patterns and engage learners in repetitive practice. Furthermore, part of the TBALQ also consists of two quantitative-qualitative items, based on a 7-point continuum rating scale. This assesses the teacher's position regarding their perception of how the nursery stages of reading and writing should be structured for beginning readers.

The second item is to know if there are constraints, by policy or expectation, in using a particular model of literacy instruction in their teaching contexts. These two items also included open comment text boxes to obtain related qualitative comments and remarks.

Besides the TBALQ items in part three, I generated another 17 items in part two of the questionnaire to assess whether Taiwan's early years teachers' reading instruction in their daily teaching was consistent with either the skills-based or whole process-based approach. Items in this section indicated the frequency teachers used the instructional technique described in each item on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, 'never', to 4, 'frequently'.

Moreover, every participant in this scale survey was asked to fill out their personal background information within the Teacher Belief Scale. The items included their general education level; major; training and number of years in the field of early childhood education; number of classes at preschool; grade levels mainly taught; number of students in the class; personal reading habits; literacy environment or

condition in the classroom. This part aimed to investigate any possible effects of this background information on the beliefs of the individual participant. The English version of the TBALQ instrument and the translated Chinese version used in this study are given in the Appendix (Page 295 and Page 309).

4.7.4.2 Instruments Translations

The Chinese translations of the Teachers Beliefs Scale and the interview questions were by three native Chinese speakers from Taiwan, me, and another two professional teachers. One of them had graduated from a TESOL department; the other was at a translation department at a UK university. Each translation was completed individually and the drafts were compared and discussed until a consensus was reached.

Table4.2: The information of the questionnaire participants.

	Information	N	%
Gender	Male	5	3%
	Female	164	97%
Age	19-23	12	7.1%
	24-28	53	31.4%
	29-33	66	39.1%
	34-	38	22.5%
Degree	High School	17	10.1%
	College	42	24.9%
	University	110	65.1%
	Post grad	0	0 %
Background	Education	136	80.5%
	Other fields	33	19.5%
Year of teaching	less than 2Y	22	13%
	2-5Y	53	31.4%
	6-9Y	46	27.2%
	More than 10Y	48	28.4%
Name of Title	Teacher	154	91.1%
	Head teacher	12	7.1%
	Dean	3	1.8%

Class of teaching	Toddler 1-3 Y	36	21.3%
	Middle 3-4Y	45	26.6%
	Mature 5-6Y	61	36.1%
	Mix age	27	16%
Population of school	Less than 2 Classes	1	0.6%
	3-5 Class	51	30.2%
	More than 6	117	69.2%
Number of Pupils	Less than 10 Pupil	11	6.5%
	11-15 Pupil	53	31.4%
	More than 16C	105	62.1%

➤ Procedure

For the survey data collection in the summer of 2008, initial versions of questionnaire were first piloted and reviewed by four experienced early years' teachers in Taiwan. Refinements were made based on their feedback. Then copies of the revised version, together with questions concerning teacher background information. Also a cover letter was attached with the questionnaires to explain the purposes of this study and to solicit the help of teachers in filling out questionnaires for each school. In addition, due to the usual low return rates of such questionnaires and in order to make sure there were sufficient numbers of participants, I personally contacted administrators in Taiwan and urged them to participate in this survey before mailing out the questionnaires to them in advance. The participants included teachers, administrators and caregivers who work with children aged 3 to 6 years. Teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires on a voluntary basis and to return them to the researcher within 4 months, using an enclosed addressed envelope. A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were sent out in this study and 169 (84%) copies were returned.

4.7.5 Recruitment of Teachers for Interviews and Observations

I interviewed and observed the teachers at three different early years' institutions that took part in the study. Three were located in or near the Taichung City. The three schools are about 40 to 50 minute drive away from each other.

Fontana & Frey (1994) highlight the need to gain trust and establish rapport with the interviewees, once access to the institution has been obtained. I had made numerous visits to the institutions before the interview started, and had informal meetings with the principals or deans or head teachers and the volunteers just getting to know them and to discuss my proposed research. The nomination of teachers for both classroom observations and interviews was based on the fact that I could observe teachers from different institutions and with different personal backgrounds. This would add a variety of expertise and a variety of different educational, literacy and cultural backgrounds. Each teacher was informed about my first visit to her classroom a few days in advance. I also presented a letter to the participant that I was going to observe, explaining the purpose of the study and the confidentiality protocols. These meetings had been productive and positive, in terms of research design, and good levels of trust and rapport were established. The three teachers' participation in the interviews and observations were strictly voluntary. The information of the three teachers who participated in qualitative data collection process is provided in below.

Table 4.3: Background Information of the Three Teachers.

	Teacher1	Teacher2	Teacher3
Age	35	34	28
Type of School	Private	Private	Owned by Church
Highest Degree	Private University	Private University	Public University
Major	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Education
Total Years Teaching	15	15	4.3

Case study 1: Miss Wang.

Miss Wang, 35 years old, reported that she has been teaching nursery level at “Kangaroo school” (the name has been changed for this research) for a total of fifteen years. As it related to early childhood education, she stated that she had a degree in early childhood education from a college.

Kangaroo nursery is a large private nursery school. It is located in an old area with a rich history on the outskirts of the Taichung city. It enrolls a diverse body of approximately 230 pupils. The school is old and well known for its traditional approach and academic success in the primary school. Pupils at the Kangaroo nursery predominantly come from diverse, lower-middle-class backgrounds.

The first visit to Kangaroo nursery was on a rainy morning in the beginning of September 2008. Thinking I was at the main entrance, I tried to talk through the intercom to gain entry from a big iron door. Fortunately, a teacher inside the office directed me through the intercom to another door. I thanked her and rushed into the school as heavy rain poured outside. As I entered the building one of Miss Wang’s colleagues greeted me in a very friendly manner and offered to take me to the head teachers’ office.

Kangaroo nursery school projected a warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils outside the main office were waving their hands and greeted me with “lao3shi1hao3老師好” (hello, teacher). The head teacher was willing to help and guide me around the school and the school principal also greeted me cordially. The warm environment and the community feel in this school made me feel at home.

Case Study 2: Miss Lyn.

Lyn is 34 years old and stated that she has been an instructor for fifteen years. She spent the first twelve and a half years in Montessori school and the last two and a half years as a head teacher at the Tulip nursery school. She has taught at nursery level for her entire teaching career. She received her bachelor's degree in early childhood education from a private university.

Tulip nursery school was in a mixed commercial and industrial area. Unlike many other schools in Taiwan, which are located in noisy urban areas, it occupies a quieter area, far away from any major businesses, factories and residential buildings. The school enrolls approximately 350 students of mixed socio-economic background. The school had an exceptionally large campus with a playground in three different sections. Lilly nursery was very well equipped. It had more than fifteen classrooms, numerous special rooms, an auditorium, a library, and several indoor play rooms. In brief, the school provided abundant resources to support teachers.

The day of the first visit with Tulip nursery was cold and windy. In fact, I had a hard time walking due to the intensity of the winds. The strong winds almost caused the loss of the protocol document I had with me. After a brief battle with the winds I managed to put away all my papers and gained entry through the intercom system. I headed to the school building. On my way, I saw a massive playground area and grass. Also I saw a large notice honoring the nursery environment evaluation report as "Excellent."

As I entered I greeted a group of pupils who were standing by the main hallway waiting to be picked up for clinic visit. They seemed to be very excited about their early

leave. There was no need to ask where the reception office was since it was in front of me. As I entered the reception office, a very jovial woman greeted me with a big smile, saying, “Hi, you might be the person who is going to work with Miss Lyn.” I assumed that she had been told about my visit. I just politely nodded yes. Immediately, she announced my visit through the speaker. And said, “the school principal and Miss Lyn will come and get you.” After a while, the school principal and Miss Lyn showed up. The school principal was so happy to see me he also introduces me to Miss Lyn at the same time. I thanked both of them for giving me the opportunity to observe the classes. Anyhow, the first visit was conducted in a cordial and friendly atmosphere as well.

Case study 3: Miss Liu.

Miss Liu, 28 years old, has been an instructor for just over four years. She completed her bachelor’s degree, a four-year course, at a prestigious public Education University in Taichung, where she majored in early childhood education.

The Lion nursery school is a large, wealthy, private nursery school, owned and operated by one of the Christian organizations. The school ambience was dominated by religious influence. At the top of the main entrance, a message from the Gospel reads: *“Teach me, Lord, your way that I may walk in your truth”* This religious sentiment reflected the strong faith of this community and the Lion nursery. In addition, most of the staff were Christian. It was near a business and residential mixed area in the city centre. It enrolls approximately 400 pupils who predominantly come from an upper-middle-class background.

I visited Miss Liu’s school for the first time on a bright sunny morning. When I entered the main entrance the secretary approached me, and I introduced myself and explained to him that I would visit the head teacher and Miss Liu as part of a research study. No questions were asked and I was told to fill out a form. Then, I was given a

visitor tag that I put on the upper left side of my shirt. Although the secretary was taking care of many things, he realized that I did not know where Miss Liu and head teachers' room was and requested a student escort me to the office. After that, I met the head teacher in her office. I thanked her for the opportunity to interview the teacher and observe the classes.

4.7.6 Interviews with Teachers

The second form of data collection was pre-observation interviews, following the questionnaire and before the observation. Followed-up recall interviews were also conducted immediately after an observation. At the end of the data collection, there were post-interviews. These three different types of interview served different purposes to obtain teachers' beliefs regarding literacy teaching and learning.

Maiklad (2001:96) states that interviewing is the most frequently used method in qualitative research. It generally appears in teachers' beliefs investigations as a dominant or follow-up method. My purpose of using the pre-interview in the very beginning phase is that it can produce a deeper level of information about personal backgrounds and past events. Some participants may also reveal cultural, historical and other hidden issues. Furthermore, through interviews, a participant can express or imply feelings, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. Moreover, the follow-up recall interviews were conducted immediately after an observation to follow-up interesting points for the further development of ideas or details on the data. In the follow-up interviews and post-interviews, I encouraged the teacher to articulate how they interpreted what had happened in their classrooms. In this way, I tried to stimulate their recall and co-construction of how they perceived the range of intervening forces or difficulties of contextual, social, personal and professional influences transformed their conceptual

knowledge into practical classroom pedagogical action. The followed-up and post interviews actively allows the teacher to revisit and reflect on what they had been doing and saying in their classroom. The question and answer exchange in the interview could disclose how the divergent and tacit interfering forces intervened in their daily transformation and application of their daily teaching pedagogy.

Also, the arrangement of interview time and place is negotiable and adjustable. The atmosphere can be informal and cheerful to minimize the interviewee's tension. Therefore, the purpose of the interviews was to get a deeper understanding of each teacher beliefs related to literacy. The outcome from these interviews could then be contrasted with those generated by the questionnaire and also used to explore how views expressed in a context that is de-contextualised from the classroom are played out in the classroom context. The strength of the design was viewed to be in the way the different data sets informed each other.

➤ **Procedure**

Interviews may vary in their degree of structure and formality (King, 2004). The interview formats in this study were of two kinds. In the pre-interview, I adopted a semi-structured interview approach (Include a sample schedule in an appendix page323). The semi-structured interviews pertained to retrieving specific planning considerations the teacher had incorporated into their literacy lessons. Knowing these planning considerations prepared me for the forthcoming observation as well. Moreover, in the followed-up recall interview I adopted an unstructured and informal interview, maintaining a high level of flexibility to sustain the natural flow of dialogue with the teacher. The followed-up recall interview was designed to ask the teacher to “recall, to any extent possible, their thoughts and emotions during the instructional sequence”

(Stough and Palmer, 2003:3). It was in fact a reflective step. In the post-interview, I adopted a semi-structured interview approach (Include post interview schedule in an appendix four, page325). I asked an additional set of general yet important questions which from the questionnaire they filled in, their pre-interview and their follow-up recall interview data, to help make the teacher aware of their tacit considerations when making literacy pedagogical decisions throughout their practice of classroom learning and teaching.

The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that an interviewer has predetermined questions and that the order of those questions can be modified. I decided the sequence and working of questions during the interview. Based upon my perception of what seemed most appropriate, the question wording was changed and explanations given; particular questions which seemed inappropriate with a particular interviewee were omitted or additional ones included (Robson, 2002). Patton (2002) argued that that the semi-structured is a guided interview approach. The characteristics of this approach are that the topics and issues covered were specified in advance in outline. This outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somehow systematic for each respondent. Moreover, the interview-style with a planned focus in advance allowed me to efficiently use my time as an interviewer. Since the undertaking of a doctoral thesis is also my personal journey of a co-constructed world, a statement by Fontana and Frey (1994: 373-4) about interviewing has a greater resonance:

... in learning about the other, we learn about the self. That is, as we treat the other as a human being, we can no longer remain objective, faceless interviewers, but become human beings and must disclose ourselves, learning about ourselves as we try to learn about the other.

However, before conducting the interviews, I gave each person a detailed description of my study, and all those approached signed the ethics consent form (Include a sample in an appendix page 339). Three female teachers from three different early years' schools fully cooperated and showed interest in contributing to my study. Each signed a consent form and each was informed that she could withdraw at any point during the data collection phase. I also explained to the teachers that participation was optional and that they could withdraw before the interview took place. It is worth mentioning that I needed to interview different teachers from different schools in order to get a broader spread of viewpoints and a sense of the field as a whole. As a researcher, it was a good opportunity to meet and interview a number of teachers from different institutions in order to interrelate and compare data.

These interviews were all conducted separately using Mandarin. The pre-interviews and post interviews lasted approximately for about 60-90 minutes each and took place at the teachers' place of work, either before the school day began or at the end of the school day, according to the teachers' preferences. Questions in the pre-interview protocol were used to gather more in-depth information regarding the early year's teachers' beliefs about the role of literacy in the classroom.

The follow-up recall interviews lasted 10 to 15 minutes each, following each of the three classroom observations for each participant. These interviews included additional questions to follow-up if clarification was needed for the classroom observation. Thus, both the pre-interviews and the follow-up recall interview, in association with the post-interview, were most helpful in stimulating respectively teacher recollection of the conscious reflexive literacy pedagogical beliefs that they had made in the pre-active planning phase, as well as their unconscious reflexive pedagogical beliefs in the

interactive phase during their interaction with the young children. In short, interviewing the teacher allowed me to gather descriptive data in their own words (Freeboby, 2003), and thus to investigate teachers' literacy pedagogical beliefs.

The interviews were MP3 digitally recorded. They were transcribed using the 'clean transcript' approach described by Elliot (2005) where unnecessary words or sounds are not included. Finally, the transcripts were returned to the interviewees in order for them to check the meaning. This process is for '*member checking*' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After all these processes, they were translated from Mandarin to English.

4.7.7 Carrying Out the Observations

The third phase of data collection was classroom observations. In this I was guided largely by Sapsford and Jupp (1996:58), who state that observation, may be employed in the preliminary stages of a research project to explore an area which can then be studied by more fully utilizing other methods. In my case, the observations were carried out at roughly the same time as the interviews. As I went along, the observations helped to raise my awareness of the issues I needed to explore further, and in particular, helped to shift the focus away from a narrow focus on a general idea of literacy teaching and learning (with which I had begun) to a broader focus on other issues in relation to literacy teaching practice and performance in the classrooms, such the relationship between beliefs and practice in terms of teaching reading in more detail. Furthermore, the observations enabled me to understand the process of education as it unfolded in the classroom. Through the process of the classroom observation, I was able to better understand the teachers in this research (Anderson and Burns, 1989: 140). Also, the observations, serving as an important counterbalance, allowed me to explore the teachers' perception and conceptions in the context of their actions. Moreover, through

the observation I gained access to experiences and actions that the teachers of the research may be unwilling to talk about during an interview. Thus, through directly observing actual events I was able to gain information that would otherwise not be available (Patton, 2002).

As stated by LeCompte and Preissle (1993: 166), interviewees may deliberately or unconsciously supply false or misleading data; therefore, “other forms of data collection, including observations” can be used to interpret information obtained through interviews. In this regard, Marshall and Rossman (1999) support the view that observation plays a fundamental role as the researcher can note the participant’s body language which accompanies the words. Likewise, Gonzales and Carter (1996) indicate that there are no substitutes to observation in understanding classroom events. Therefore, classroom observation is considered as an essential method for understanding teachers’ beliefs, intentions and practices (Smith and Hatton, 1993).

Gall, Gall and Borg (1993) explain the difference between more structured observation and less-structured or unstructured observation. These two approaches originate from different academic traditions, and have different aims, purposes and procedures. For classroom observations, I chose to use a less-structured observation. Gall, Gall and Borg (1993) maintain that less-structured observation aims to explore the social meanings that underpin behaviour in natural social settings. The data was usually combined with information from conversations, interviews and, where appropriate, documentary sources, to produce an in-depth and rounded picture of the culture of the group being studied. In my case, however, I imposed a degree of structure through my use of an observation checklist alongside my own hand-written field notes. Nevertheless, my analysis of the observation data was combined with the questionnaires and interview data.

➤ Procedure

The Classroom observations were completed over a sixteen-week period in three different early years' institutions. Each classroom was visited a minimum of three-to-four times, for one to one-and-a-half hours each visit. It was a good experience to observe different teachers and pupils at different learning institutions. Each one of the teachers presented a different activity or lesson from the school syllabi. Each class I attended was different from all the others. I sat at the back of the classroom and attempted to be unobtrusive so as not to affect any routines or behaviour in the classroom.

I designed my own checklist, based partly on the research questions, partly on my understanding of the key elements of literacy, by drawing on my experience as on researcher and teacher. I also drew on material from a checklist developed by the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), a research-based tool used to identify classroom practices and classroom environmental supports that promote early language and literacy development. The item of ELLCO provides a comprehensive set of observation tools for describing the extent to which classrooms provide children optimal support for their language and literacy development. Three separate tools are provided: (a) Literacy Environment Checklist, (b) Classroom Observation, and (c) Literacy Activities Rating Scale. I used the observation checklist as a way of tick in summary form the gaps and strengths of each style of teaching and referred back to it as I was writing up. Include in an appendix (Page 333)

In addition I had field notes Include in an appendix (Page 328) that I kept whilst in the classroom to enable me to get an overall picture of the teacher's behaviour and interaction in the classroom. I noted how the students and the teachers responded to

each other in the classroom environment, contextual information and critical moments, so that all of my time spent at the classroom helped form my understanding of the participants and processes involved. This required me to describe the action without evaluating. Additionally, I was able to record my personal notes on the research process. These include my feelings, self-reflection, memories, and impressions. Therefore, I was able to see my own possible influence on the participants and the effects of personal events on the data collections and analysis. I believe that personal notes help reveal inner dialogue, self-doubts and questions, and especially any problems encountered (Chang, 2005).

Following each of the observations I had an informal discussion (follow up recall interview) with the teacher and I have included some of their comments alongside the observations. The purpose of this follow-up recall interview was to clarify the question of missing information or some of the points that rose during the observation. Also, one of my intentions was to jointly construct the pedagogic thinking informing the practice I had observed.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are highly emphasized in interpretative research. In this regard, Cohen et al (2000: 66) indicate that "methodological and ethical issues are inextricably interwoven in much of the research we have designated as qualitative or interpretive". According to Daniel (2005), ethics has three aspects which are worth mentioning in the context of educational research. The first aspect is that the research should be without harm. The second aspect is that responses must be kept confidential. The third ethical concern about educational research is that the participants take the time of respondents on behalf of the research, and this contribution of time should be respected and not be

wasted (Daniel , 2005) .

There were a number of ethical considerations that challenged me to think through the overall ethical conduct of the research and to safeguard the interests of the participants. Firstly, before any data was collected, the proposed research was approved by the University of Exeter in 2007. As such I detailed my research proposal and received a *Certificate of ethical research approval* from the ethics committee of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning. Include in an appendix (Page339).

The most highly emphasized ethical consideration for me was informed consent. My research data resources was mainly through interaction with human beings, who possess thoughts, beliefs, emotions and feelings; I did not see my participants as samples or numbers (Yang, 2003). In this regard, participants have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of the research in which they are involved, and informed consent gives the participants a clear picture of the research (Ruane, 2005). Therefore, I gained informed consent from the teachers participating in this research and a copy of the consent form.

The concept of informed consent gives the participants the right to freedom and self-determination (Crotty, 2003; Cohen *et al*, 2007; Ruane, 2005). There are four main areas that informed consent must be take into account: competence (responsibility and maturity of individuals to give relevant data), voluntarism (individuals are free to decide whether to participate in the research), full information (participants should be well-informed of the research), Comprehension or full comprehension (participants should have a clear idea about the research) (Ruane, 2005; Maiklad, 2001).

In this research I had gained the consent of the teachers involved in this research. However, as I was committed to listening to the voices of the early years teachers, I

needed to give them detailed information about the research so that they could make their own informed decision. I met with each teacher before I began the pre-interview. I was then able to talk through with them the purpose of the research, as well as the implications of consenting to my interviewing and observing them. The teachers could have withdrawn from the research at any time. In the other words, decision as to which data will be collected or used are not my opinions alone, but also made by the participants. Furthermore, the issue of confidentiality and anonymity were addressed. In this research, I retained anonymity by using codes instead of the participants' real name and referring to each school by this type. Others names existing in the participants' accounts also become aliases. Moreover, all the participants in this research were guaranteed that their information and identities were to be known only by researcher.

After all of these ethical deliberations, anxieties worry and concerns, I found comfort in Punch (1994: 94-95) when he states:

Each individual will have to trace his or her own path. This is because there is no consensus or unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm and what the benefits of knowledge are. ... In essence ... simply go out and do it ... [but] before you go, you should stop and reflect on the political and ethical dimensions of what you are about to experience. Just do it by all means, but think a bit first.

I have certainly thought about the ethical considerations, and indeed I believe more than “a bit”! I have acted as ethically as I possibly could.

4.9 Quality control: issue of trustworthiness and generalization

As with any other research, I encountered all the standard problems confronting qualitative researchers; namely, the trustworthiness of the data, the problems of generalizing from the findings, and the subjectivity and bias of the researcher. The following explains how I minimized these problems.

4.9.1 Trustworthiness of Data

Research paradigms reflect our worldviews, our values, beliefs and assumptions (Lather, 1986a). The criteria traditionally used to evaluate research in the human sciences are embedded in the positivist framework. Within this framework, reality is objective and can be discovered, quantified, measured and categorized (Peile, 1994). It assumes that there is one absolute truth (Peile, 1994). Thus, if the researcher uses the right methods he or she will obtain true facts and true results. From this positivist perspective it is also assumed that the way to do research in the natural sciences is applicable to social sciences (Lather, 1986a). Hence, the conventional standards of rigour within this paradigm are validity, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). According to Leedy & Ormond (2001), validity refers to “the accuracy, meaningfulness, and credibility of the research project as a whole” (p. 103). Furthermore, validity also points to how a study’s design and the data gathered allow us to draw accurate conclusions. Moreover, validity refers to the extent to which the conclusions of a study can be generalized to other contexts. Reliability rests in the capacity of an account to be replicated by another researcher (Schwandt, 2001). Objectivity refers to how the study is supported with evidence or data, presuming a distance or separation between the known and the knower (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

The problem with these traditional criteria resides precisely in its questionable assumptions. Post-positivism has challenged the positivist notions, giving way to other views for inquiry based on the idea that knowledge is socially shaped, historically contextualized and value-based (Lather, 1986b). From this paradigm, it is presumed that there is not one absolute truth and that incorporating the correct methods does not assure true results (Lather, 1986a). It is presumed also that the complexity of reality and of the human being does not necessarily allow for generalizations or replications or for

claims free of bias or values. It points out that the researcher is not neutral. Within these post-positivist premises Lincoln and Guba (in Schwandt, 2001) in the 1980s substituted validity and reliability as terms to establish rigour with a parallel concept of 'trustworthiness'. They argue that establishing the trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as reliability and validity. Moreover, they define trustworthiness as a set of criteria that we can use to evaluate the quality of research in the human sciences. In an effort to deal with the trustworthiness issues in this study I approached multiple alternatives. These included credibility (understood as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and crystallization) (Lincoln, 1995). As part of my prolonged engagement, as I have spent five years on this study, I have become wholly immersed in its issues. I have built enough trust with the teachers involved that I believe they would not try to mislead me or provide me with false data; in fact, some information was volunteered. For example, a teacher actually said that she told me things that she would not have told her colleagues or head teacher at the school, precisely because she trusted me. Furthermore, I went to the teacher's classroom every week, until I reached data saturation. These experiences in the classroom offered me the opportunity for observation, to interview with an audio recorder and to write field notes, as well as to listen to the teachers. Moreover, I asked two experts to revise my data and analysis and to share with me their opinions, insights, suggestions and recommendations.

For crystallization, I incorporated multiple methods such as questionnaire, interviews, and observation. The basic principle of triangulation is straightforward in that, if a variety of different methods or sources of data point to the same conclusion, then this lends credibility to that conclusion. However, Guba & Lincoln (1989) do not support this concept of triangulation because it implies that it is possible (or desirable) to find consistency across sources, which contradicts the notion of "multiple realities"

found in the interpretive paradigm. They say that triangulation can still be used to check on “factual data”, but recommend the use of member checks for other types of data. Stake (1995) points out that the stronger one’s belief is in a constructed reality, the more difficult it is to believe that any complex observation or interpretation can be triangulated. He suggests (1995:115) that for many qualitative researchers: “the protocols of triangulation have come to be the search for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning”. Consequently, triangulation is widely accepted in the research community as one way of adding rigour to a research design. In particular, the process of triangulation where the researcher uses multiple sources of evidence carries an important advantage. For example, in one of the interviews, Miss Lyn claimed that her way of teaching was very close to the whole language approach. This was checked against the questionnaire data she filled in earlier. Moreover, Miss Lyn’s class was also observed, as another means of triangulation. This information gave me hints and helped me to clarify the difficult situation in the hard work teachers have in implementing the whole language approach. However, triangulation in this research is a development of convergent lines of inquiry, where any finding or conclusion is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several sources of information.

This study also integrated the teachers in the revision of the interview transcriptions and in the analysis and interpretation of the data as part of the member checking processes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that the process of member checking gives participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what are perceived as wrong interpretations and also provide an opportunity for them to volunteer additional information which may be stimulated by the review process. However, member checking relies on the assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality

that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent. From an interpretive perspective, understanding is co-created and there is no objective truth or reality to which the results of a study can be compared (Sandelowski, 1993). Although this process is contestable, in this research all interviews were recorded electronically and all the interviews were directly transcribed into Mandarin. The transcripts were shown to the interviewee: the accuracy of my transcription could then be checked, meaning drawn from it, as well as giving participants the opportunity to provide additional information. For Lincoln & Guba (1985: 314) “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” is through the process of “member checks”.

‘...whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 314).

By using this technique, the researcher attempts to verify with the respondent teachers the constructions that were developing as a result of data collected and analyzed. In a case study, Stake (1995: 116) states that “all my reports have been improved by member checking”. Member checks can be formal and informal. In my research, the formal interviews were informally member checked by paraphrasing. Additionally, once transcribed, these were sent to the participants and discussed and amended at a follow up meeting. However, whilst member checking is useful for increasing or broadening analysis, essentially it does not ensure the trustworthiness of the conclusions. What it may provide is an opportunity for the participants to contribute in the construction of descriptions of themselves, to give them access to data so they have an opportunity to reflect on their stories, and thus fundamentally allowing the participants power in the research process.

Furthermore, Guba & Lincoln (1989: 233) also developed criteria for “authenticity,” which were “embedded in the basic belief system of constructivism itself.” These are unique to the constructivist assumptions and can be used to evaluate the quality of the research beyond methodological dimensions. Their view of authenticity, I suggest, was appropriate in this case study. As Guba & Lincoln (1989: 248) state, this is literally the “improvement in the individual’s (or group’s) conscious experiencing of the world” and when individual stakeholders can attest to the fact that they now comprehend a broader range of issues, or that they “can appreciate (understand, comprehend) issues that they previously failed to understand” then there is evidence of ontological authenticity. The structure of my research and the access I had to the participants means that this change in understanding is uncertain for all the participants. The process of interviewing the teachers and the interview after the classroom observations allowed for their development of understanding about their practice. This happened through the questioning and reflection processes that took place.

4.9.2 Generalization

This deals with the problem of knowing whether a study’s findings may be generalized beyond the immediate case study and is “one of the most problematic issues faced by the case study approach” (Gray, 2009: 261). MacDonald and Walker (1977) define a case study as the examination of an instance in action. They claimed that the:

Case study is the way of the artist, who achieves greatness when, through the portrayal of a single instance locked in time and circumstance, he communicates enduring truths about the human condition. (p. 181-182)

The stance of Cohen and Manion (1989) is that:

...the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the

life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs. (p. 124-5)

Critics of the case study classically state that single cases offer a poor basis from which to generalize. Such critics are implicitly contrasting the situation to quantitative research, in which a random sample readily generalizes to a larger population. This is because quantitative research relies on statistical generalization, whereas single case studies rely on what Yin (1994) calls analytical generalization. He pointed out that the single case study does not represent a sample and the purpose is to generalize to theoretical propositions; a generalization to theory, in other words, and not to populations or universes, as with statistical generalization.

A generalization is based on repeated observations, and a single case study provides an observation that can be generalized to a general theory, particularly when considered in concert with the results from other studies (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Yin (1994) also argues that such a generalization is not automatic. A theory must be tested through the replication of findings in a second or even third case where the theory has specified that the same results should occur. Once such replication has been made, the results might be accepted for a much larger number of similar cases, even though further replications have not been performed. This replication logic is the same that underlies the use of experiments. However, the replication process is based on a multiple case study. This would require extensive resources. In this research, I tried to preserve the multiple realities by presenting the different and even contradictory views of what was happening, and as far as possible, present the teachers own words, but I regret along with Stake that:

Case study methodology has suffered somewhat because it has been presented by people who have a lesser regard for study of the particular. (Stake, 1994: p.238)

Therefore, generalization was considered an inappropriate approach for this thesis.

4.9.3 Researcher Positionality

I have stated my positionality early in this thesis (please see the section above and Chapter One). This may be more simply understood as the interests and values of the researcher and is usually “the most significant factor that influences choice and use of methodology and procedures” (Sikes, 2004:18). Wellington, Bathmaker, Hunt, McCulloch and Sikes (2005:21) argue that positionality requires consideration since “it is impossible to take the researcher out of any type of research or at any stage of the research process”. Exactly “where the researcher is coming from” is considered in terms of their philosophical position and their fundamental ontological assumptions (social reality); epistemological assumptions (the nature of knowledge); and their assumptions about human nature and agency (Sikes, 2004). Therefore it has been necessary to make known to the reader my own prejudices and assumptions, and this has been discussed above in the introduction and in an earlier section in this chapter.

4.9.4 Accounting for subjectivity and bias

The nature of my study required rigorous interpretation and decision making based on subjective judgments at every stage of data collection. Due to the intense interaction with people in the field during the fieldwork, it was not easy to remain neutral and impartial all of the time. However, I consciously made an effort in data collection and interpretation to try and avoid subjectivity and bias by taking my own positionality into account. I consider myself to be a critically reflective educator, as discussed above and in Chapter One. I did not consider myself to be a representative from the associated educational community, the local authority. As such I was aware of my perspective and potential for prejudice, and as a result thought carefully about the issues I was exploring and how I framed my questions. However, subjectivity is not a failing that needs to be eliminated but is something of which the researcher should be

conscious (Stake, 1995). There was one area where I was acutely aware of my own experience. As I mentioned in Chapter One, I grew up in the era of traditional learning and teaching education. However, by the time I qualified as a teacher, I believed the western style of teaching was a better than the style in which I had been taught, so a) I prefer the whole language approach b) I had the skills and resources to support children's learning needs through the whole language approach. I am aware of my deep and strong prejudice for the whole language approach. I was aware that I needed to be more open-minded, kindly and non-judgmental towards the teachers who were slower in adopting the whole language approach. It was crucial for me to develop a relationship with teacher and staff alike, and as such it became imperative for me to approach this as an impartial researcher. I believe that since I was able to develop relationships over an extended period of time, I was able to do this and that I was able to collect and interpret data and avoid bias in this respect. My responsibility was to do the research and as such I had no responsibility for the teachers' daily teaching actions and preferences. I believe that I was able to achieve this mindset.

I believe that my informed critical manner has helped account for issues of bias. I also suggest that the levels of self-awareness and reflection in action that I experienced throughout this thesis reduced the effects of my positionality and the potential for prejudice, subjectivity and bias as much as possible to. Furthermore, I also tried to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations by being rigorous in data triangulation; by paraphrasing to the informants what I had understood and asking for confirmation; and by interviewing different people involved with the same incidents to get different viewpoints. I also recognize that multiple realities exist, as pointed out by Creswell (1994):

On the ontological issue of what is real, the qualitative researcher differs from the quantitative researcher. The only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation. Thus multiple realities exist in any given situation. (p.4)

I recognize that there are multiple realities represented by the teacher's interpretation, the researcher's interpretation and the reader's interpretation. What I did was to faithfully report what the perceptions of teachers were, tried the best I could to ensure that the interpretations described were well-triangulated, and to report them in as much detail as necessary for readers to arrive at their own judgment.

4.10 Analysis and Interpretation

4.10.1 Questionnaire Data

Out of the 200 distributed questionnaires, 169 were returned and will be analyzed. The responses of the participants to each questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program for Windows. Descriptive statistics were applied to the analysis of the data. This will include calculating the Frequencies, Percentages, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and ANOVAs. The data they will be presented in table form grouping common elements and themes together.

4.10.2 Interview and Observation Data

This part of data set that I assembled consisted of:

- Fifteen transcribed teacher interviews (three pre-interviews, nine follow-up interviews and three post-interviews).
- Nine observation sheets together with my own handwritten notes for the classroom observations.
- My own self-reflections.

Analyzing qualitative data is not always smooth sailing and can bring some frustration and difficulties. Patton (2002) states that "Analysis brings moments of terror that there's nothing there and times of exhilaration from the clarity of discovering ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight-

lifting volumes of material.” (2002: 371). Although an attempt will be made in this chapter to be succinct, it nevertheless will invite the reader to share in some of the deep thinking as the “volumes of material” are sifted, sorted and constantly compared in order to extract patterns and construct frameworks.

As Miles and Huberman (1984:16) point out: “We have few agreed-on canons for qualitative data analysis, in the sense of shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying their sturdiness.” Patton (2002.) reinforces this point and concludes that there are no rules for analyzing qualitative data as each study is unique and demands its own approach. “Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights and capabilities of the researcher, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analysts. The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis” (2002: 372). To bring myself into the analytical process and the main focus of the study interviews, I clarified my observations and notes. To do this, I used direct interpretation and sought the guidance of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998a, 2001) but I allowed my best instincts and knowledge to take over when theoretical guidance ran out of steam with respect to this study.

Grounded theory involves reading data and noting and coding the prevalent categories and themes that emerge from the study. I found that the coding did not spring naturally from static descriptions or categorizations extracted from the data as they did not display the essential dynamic attributes of a process. Therefore, I began by personally transcribing the data from the interviews and observation notes. I repeatedly listened to, viewed and personally transcribed the interviews and classroom observation notes in order to extract meaningful data. This was a time consuming but a worthwhile

process as I was able to immerse myself in the what was said by the teachers about their own beliefs and practices from a socio-cultural perspective (Moje & Lewis, 2007). This helped me to understand how the relations between the teachers' schools and parents on the one hand, and the government on the other, shaped these teachers' beliefs and their professional identities. I looked at all the data and coded specific actions that illustrated the various roles that the teachers enacted in the classroom.

I highlighted anything carrying the clue qualities of direction and noted any movement that was contingent upon something else being in place. This was done on the computer screen and a highlighter pen was used to draw attention to the coded material for later scrutiny.

At the same time, I wrote notes concerning the interrelationship of the data and the coded categories. This process of note-taking allowed me to capture immediate thoughts as the data came to light. I also noted any relationship, or resonance with data in interviews and observations and insights (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998a, 2001). Each coded data set was given a unique alphanumeric identifier so that the data could always be re-contextualized. Being steeped in the data in this way was both enlightening and exhausting.

Lastly, I again looked for and developed themes within cases and across cases. This multi-layered analysis allowed me to generate assertions about the nature of teachers' beliefs, identities and actions or practices that were based on the strength of the evidence for each category and consistency between surveys, interviews, observations, and written reflection data sets (that is to say, a multi-method approach).

4.11 Summary

In this study, three teachers, with various years of experience, and I met weekly or at the school site over three months to discuss their literacy beliefs and observe their literacy practices in the classroom.

The school literacy arts lesson supports the use of teaching guidelines and textbooks within a thematic curriculum. I was considered to be working independently as a non-participant in the classroom to co-construct meaning on their reported views on literacy and the practices we discussed, as well as observe their actual practice.

Chapter Five: Questionnaire Findings

5.1 Introduction

One of the major thrusts of this research was to examine the implementation of the whole language teaching approach, to find out whether or not it has brought about changes in terms of interaction and practice in the classroom since its implementation in Taiwan's nursery schools from 2000 until now. A questionnaire was used to gain an overall picture of many teachers' perceptions of teaching literacy and children's literacy learning from a large sample. This would act as a springboard for more qualitative methods such as interview and observation to provide a greater in-depth picture of the phenomenon (see section four).

I distributed a total of 200 questionnaires to nursery, preschool and kindergarten between September 2008 and January 2009 in Taichung County, Taiwan. A total of 173 were returned but 4 had to be rejected due to incomplete information. Therefore, 169 questionnaires (84%) were completed and analyzed. The questionnaire was divided into three sections as discussed in Chapter 4. The first included introductory questions to find out if the sample represented a normal range of early year's practitioners; the second section consisted of 17 items to assess Taiwan's early-years teachers' literacy instruction in their daily teaching classroom. The last section consisted of 24 items to explore teachers' beliefs about literacy. This chapter focuses mainly on presenting the findings based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire, to explore and investigate two sub-research questions:

- What are Taiwanese teachers' reported beliefs concerning literacy instruction?

- What are teachers' reported practices approaches to teaching and the factors affecting their practice and choice of approaches?

Taking the aims and the above mentioned questions into account, the questionnaire results will be analyzed under the following headings:

- **Reactions towards the whole language in the literacy classroom**
 - **How do teachers assess their own approach to teaching literacy?**
 - **Decision-making in the literacy classroom**
 - **Perceptions of literacy**
 - **Availability of resources in the school**
 - **Perceptions of teachers' reported practices in the literacy classroom**

- **Analysis of the literacy "Beliefs Profile"**
 - **The relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices**

- **Background profiles of the respondents**
 - **Analysis of the Beliefs Profile in the light of the background of teachers**
 - **Overall scores on the Beliefs Profile with teachers' background variables**

5.2 Teacher reactions towards the whole language in the literacy classroom

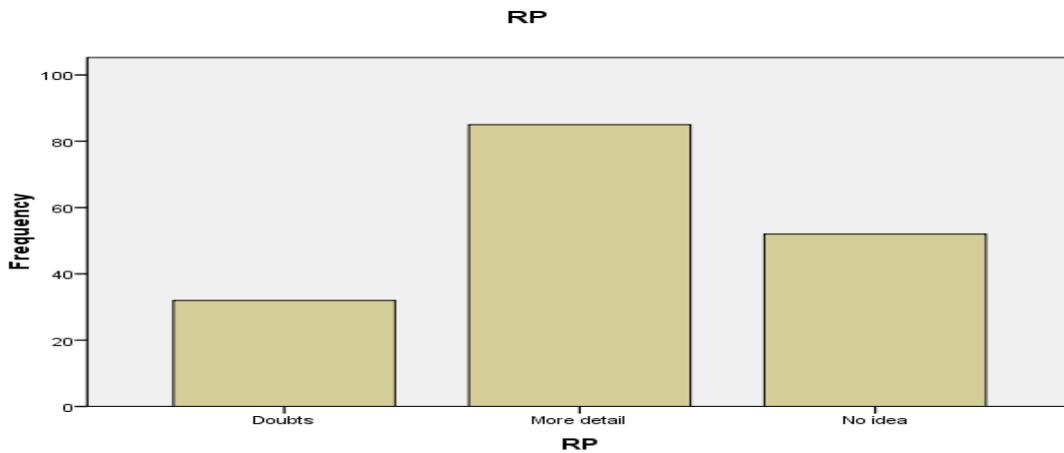


Figure 5.1: Conception of whole language approach.

The result in figure 5.1 shows that over half of teachers 50.3% approved of and agreed with the idea of the whole language approach. Moreover, 30.8% of the teachers said that they were not sure what the whole language approach is, how it could work or how it could be successfully implemented, so they reported that they had some reservations and were doubtful at the same time. On the other hand, only 18.9% of the respondents expressed any explicit doubts and reservations towards the new approach. However, this result also showed some of the extra comments made by the teachers while answering the questionnaire about literacy teaching and the whole language approach. These comments was given by those who chose “others” in this section, then giving the reason that teachers are confident in coping with literacy lessons and in handling the process of changing. However, these teachers suggest the notion or inspiration should be promoted in more detail and be more practical as they desire more detailed information.

When asked about teachers' decision making in the literacy lesson regarding lesson content and material choice, the results show that 55% of the respondents said that they were following the school's own principles and the teacher's manual. Another 43.2% of teachers said that they depended on the children's interest and supported what children the liked and needed. A small number of the teachers (1.8%) claimed that they followed the government's curriculum standards.

5.2.3 Perceptions of literacy

Table 5.3 :Teachers perceptions of literacy.

The reasons why literacy is good for you (n= 169)	Count	%
To receive knowledge to become knowledgeable.	134	79%
To cope with textbooks and exams.	89	53%
To find out truth with effort and pleasure.	141	83%
To help in work.	145	86%
To demonstrate positive attitudes to others.	118	70%

The respondents were presented with five items and chose as many as they liked to indicate the reason(s) why literacy teaching was good thing. For example, indicating whether literacy means receiving knowledge, or remembering knowledge, or constructing meaning through experience and interaction. Altogether, five statements were given and the respondents were offered multiple choices, as they were asked to choose as many as they believed could best represent the importance of 'literacy' to them. An overwhelming consensus was found in the belief that literacy is good for pupils: "To help with work" (86%), "To find out truth with effort and pleasure" (83%), and "To receive knowledge to become knowledgeable" (79%). At the same time, a large number of the respondents (118, over 70%) selected "to demonstrate positive attitudes to others" and "to cope with textbooks and exams" (53%), reflecting the traditional

Confucian conception of literacy learning, which is to become a knowledgeable role model.

5.2.4 Availability of the resources in the school

The results show that 90.6 % of teachers are of the opinion that their schools in general have sufficient resources of books in the school main libraries rather than individual classroom literacy corners. Based on the result of a more specific question about the individual classrooms, 65.2% of teachers mention that they do not have enough books and reading materials in their classroom literacy corners; only 34.8% of the teachers claimed they had enough literacy resources. These figures indicate that many, if not most, of Taiwanese early year classroom literacy corners still lack sufficient books and materials.

5.2.5 Perceptions of teachers' reported practices in the literacy classroom

Based on the responses to the second section of the questionnaire it appears that what the respondents reported and believed was reflected in their responses to the statements on classroom practices. There were altogether 17 statements and the respondents were asked to rank them on a 4 point Liker-scale in order of importance, from the most important to the least important, or from very often to not often, as appropriate.

The seventeen statements covered a wide range of teaching behaviour in the classroom. Some were associated more with whole language and a child centered approach; others with a skills-based, teacher-directed approach. With a 4-point Likert scale, a mean above 3 would indicate a generally positive answer to the statement while a mean below 2 would mean a negative answer. In order to get a clearer picture of the

views expressed by these teachers, the results are presented in two separate tables (Table 5.4 and Table 5.5) to show the results in descending order based on mean averages. Furthermore, the four answers (very often, often, not quite often or not often) are also grouped into two, general tendency, groups. The reason for re-grouping the responses in this way is that, firstly, a 4-point Likert scale has no midpoint to follow or for comparison. Secondly, the Chinese Confucian culture tends to avoid extremes and contradictions (Nisbett, 2003). People often express moderate opinions, unless they believe that something is logically false. Therefore, 'very often' will very likely end up with 'often' while 'not quite often' is sometimes more acceptable than a straightforward 'not often'.

Table 5.4 Descriptive Statistics for whole language approach activities.

Item No.	Item description (n= 169)	Mean	SD	Agree %	MODE
14	I often ask pupil to join the reading or library area	3.54	.732	91.7%	4
1	Pay special attention to children's interests in literacy	3.53	.557	97%	4
11	I often read story to my pupil and also create opportunities for them to share and express.	3.46	.598	95.8%	4
4	Using children's book	3.44	.606	95.3%	4
13	I create opportunities and encourage children to express and share their own ideas, feeling or opinions	3.23	.645	90.5%	3
7	Using a mix of materials	3.18	.792	83.4%	3
12	I often introduce new vocabulary based on a familiar story book.	3.03	.812	81.7%	3
8	Using Children's newspaper or magazine	2.30	1.004	46.7%	3
9	Using audio book or e-resources	2.18	1.062	45.6%	2
Overall average of mean 3.10					

Table 5.4 shows the mean, SD, percentage of agreement and mode scores of the cluster of 9 items for the whole language approach and child-centered practice. The overall scores averaged 3.10 on the 4-point scale, which is moderately toward the high agreement side of the scale. In fact, seven of the nine items show agreement within the range of 81.7% to 97%. The strongest rating was for Item 1, for which 97% of teachers agreed with the statement about paying great attention to children's interests in literacy. Also, the majority of teachers positively agreed with items 14, 11 12, which were

statements regarding the use of stories and library materials to encourage pupils to express themselves and engage with the vocabulary learning. At the same time, a large majority of respondents claimed that they create opportunities for interaction in the classroom (Item 13; 90.5% of teachers' agreed).

On the other hand, teachers tended to disagree with items 8 and 9, statements about the use of children's newspapers, magazines or audio books and any e-resources. All the above statements of teaching behaviour were closely associated with the whole language and children-centred approaches, except those presented in Table 5.5 below. Here, it seems that teachers were asking children to do a lot of repetition and imitating, often considered to be part of the traditional approach, which was also frequently observed in literacy lessons.

Table 5.5 Descriptive Statistics for skills based activities.

Item No.	Item description (n= 169)	Mean	SD	Agree %	MODE
3	Stress on good rules and try to keep good order during class time	3.52	.557	98.20%	4
5	I often using textbook	3.43	.843	89.90%	4
2	Pay entire attention to skill based practice	3.30	.543	95.9%	3
6	I often use flash cards	3.28	.866	85.80%	4
15	I often keen in give lesson and explain vocabulary, phonics most of the time then pupils do some focused practice.	3.12	.999	84%	3
10	I often use a skills practice book and work book	2.88	1.051	71.60%	3
16	I often ask my pupils to recite. Coping and practicing words helps memorization.	2.79	1.023	73.40%	3
17	In class, most of the time pupil do a lot of repetition and drilling after my talk to practice new words and dialogues	2.36	1.136	54.40%	2
Overall average of mean					
3.9					

Table 5.5 above demonstrates that the majority see value in skills-based activities for classroom practice. The data show that in seven of the eight items, teachers agreed with the statements. The skills-based activities most likely to be carried out are those identified in items 3, 5, 2, 6, 15, 10 and 16. However, teacher responses to item 17 were relatively divided (54.40%). Specifically, this statement was about practices discussed

in the research literature as predominantly supported by skills-based advocates. But according to the data, this statement reflected a separate view in practice, relating to asking children to frequently repeat and imitate.

The overall data in tables 5.4 and 5.5 show that teachers' classroom practice of literacy teaching was mostly an interactive approach, indicating that most teachers prefer neither the whole language approach nor a skills-based approach. They report that they teach with a blend of methods and techniques drawn from both approaches.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that teachers tended to respond inconsistently to this section, showing perhaps that they tended to tick statements relating to the whole language approach and a traditional skills-based approach. The reason could be that their beliefs in and the application of the skills-based and teacher-centred view of literacy teaching and learning may not be firmly established. This also necessitates a deeper look into the reasons why teachers tended to be inconsistent in their responses, something which the interviews with teachers might help to explain. Moreover, it may be because the Chinese Confucian culture tends to avoid extremes and contradictions (Nisbett, 2003), as indicated previously. Teachers want to express moderate opinions: neither a whole language approach nor a skills-based approach, but somewhere between the two.

5.3 Analysis of the literacy beliefs profile

The results show that Taiwanese teachers tend not to position themselves in different professional camps. Rather they tend to agree with the majority of the questionnaire items that represent statements of beliefs about either the whole language or the traditional, skills-based approaches. In this regard, section three of the

questionnaire included a total of 24 statements found in the TBALQ (*Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy Acquisition Questionnaire*) and each is identified as either a top-down or bottom-up model of practice. These statements tackle the beliefs and practices of respondents that potentially influence early childhood teachers' day-to-day instructional activities. Specifically, they cover areas of how literacy should be taught - whether it should be required to learn it more mechanically as a separate knowledge system, or whether it should be taught experientially, through children's active participation in the learning process. The former view is known to underlie the skills-based, teacher-centred approach, while the latter underlies the whole language and children-centred approach. Responses to questionnaire items 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 13, 19, and 22 defined instructional practice reflecting a whole language approach. Specifically, items 2, 9 and 13 were practices discussed in the research literature as predominantly supported by whole language advocates. On the other hand, it must be noted that a number of items (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23 and 24) defined practices identified with a skills-based approach. Specifically, questionnaire items 4, 7, 17 and 24 represented traditional, direct, skills-based instruction. Each statement was measured on a 4 point Likert scale, from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA) and scored from 1 to 4. A mean above 3.0 would indicate a generally positive view to the statement. In order to get a clearer picture of the views expressed by these teachers, the results are presented in two separate tables (Table 5.6 and Table 5.7), showing the results for "agree" and "disagree", in descending order, based on the mean. The reason for re-grouping the responses in this way is the same as for the previous section: the lack on the Likert scale of a midpoint and the Chinese Confucian influence.

Table 5.6 below shows the mean, SD, agree percentage and modal scores of the cluster of 8 items for the whole language, child-centered model. The scores of the six

respondents averaged 2.78 on the 4-point scale, which is moderately toward the low agreement side of the scale. Respondents were moderately towards agreement with practices relating to the top- down (whole language) model. In fact, five of the eight values fell across the low agreement midpoint. Moreover, Item 13 (*learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral skill*), Item 2 (*learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral skill*) and Item 19 (*Spelling is best learned incidentally*) of the survey enjoyed overwhelming agreement, showing between 78.1% and 92.3% either positive or nearly very positive views from the respondents (Table 5.6). The strongest rating was for Item 13 (*learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral skill*), which received 92.3% agreement and a mode of 3. This expressed considerable agreement with the idea that spelling should not be taught directly. Most of the teachers agreed with item 19, which was that the best way to learn spelling is incidentally through regular reading and writing activities. Also, the majority of teachers positively agreed with item 2, statements expressing the view that children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire other language skills.

On the other hand, teacher responses to Items 3 (*Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable*), 9 (*Direct teaching of phonics to young children is unnecessary*) and 1 (*There is very little difference in the skills needed by beginning and proficient readers*) were relatively evenly divided between the categories of Disagree and Agree. Specifically, these three statements were practices discussed in the research literature as predominantly supported by whole language advocates. But there were notable differences in the data towards beliefs relating to the whole language and skills-based pedagogies. However, the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement from item 22, that learning spelling depends on vision rather than attending to the sounds within words. Concurrently, teachers disagreed with item 11, expressing the

view that proficient readers do not pay too much attention to the details of print. These two statements reflected a tendency towards the whole language pedagogy. Disagreeing with these practices meant that teachers were more likely to endorse a skills-based approach. Learning to spell and read naturally is a top-down construct which also showed modest agreement. Overall, the data indicated that teachers' beliefs are a mix of teacher-centred and child-centred approaches.

Table 5.6: Descriptive Statistics for whole language approach, child-centered items.

Item No.	Item description (n=169)	Mean	SD	Agree %	Mode
13	Children learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral language skills.	3.27	0.65	92.30%	3
2	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	3.21	0.84	78.1%	4
19	Spelling is best learnt incidentally through regular reading and writing activities.	3.13	0.70	85.8%	3
3	Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualizes a component skill of language.	2.90	0.84	63.9%	3
9	Direct teaching of phonics is unnecessary as children learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	2.83	0.87	66.3%	3
1	There is very little difference between the skills needed by the beginning readers and those used by proficient readers.	2.66	0.85	56.8%	3
22.	Learning to spell depends almost entirely upon vision rather than attending to the sounds within words.	2.37	0.79	42%	2
11.	Proficient readers pay very little attention to the details of print when reading.	2.17	0.79	30.2%	2
Overall average of mean					
2.78					

Regarding the cluster of items associated with the bottom-up model (skills based model), Table 5.7 below presents the percentages showing agreement, the mean, SD and modal scores for the related 16 items for the TBALQ section. The mean score for these 16 items was 2.82, which placed it between the high and moderate agreement range. 14 of the 16 items had values less than 3.0, all of which also placed on the agreement end. In line with the formal literacy approach, teachers favoured the utilization of phonic skills to new readers (item 7, where 78.1% of teachers agree). Also, Table 5.7 shows item 10, where 78.7% of the teachers indicated that sight vocabulary learned in isolation is transferred to text reading. Item 4 (*Teachers should select books for children to read*

based on the difficulty level of the text) is the exception in the table with a mode value of 4. Furthermore, with a mode value of 3 for item 17 (*Invented spelling creates bad habits*), both these two questions are “reverse polarity” items, which indicated agreement that this practice creates bad habits and that teachers should select difficulty level of book for children to read. These values indicated a very high level of agreement that teachers are well supported.

The majority (88.2%) of teachers believe that spelling involves careful listening to sounds within words. Another strong rating was for item 6, which received 73.9% agreement and a mode value of 3. There was considerable agreement with the idea that flashcard drills should be used to build up children’s sight vocabularies. Over 72.2% of teachers replied in the agreement range for item 5 (*Attending closely to the print on the page*). Teachers agree that when learning to read should, pupils should pay great attention to the print on the page, which is a practice related to learning to read. Experiences with print have been shown to play an integral part in learning to read and an understanding of conventions, purpose, and the function of print. Knowledge about the conventions of print enables children to understand the physical structure of written language and the conceptual knowledge that printed words convey a message or contains meaning (Gunn, 1992).

Each of these items above again reflects a mainstay of direct instruction of literacy teaching with a skills-based approach. However, just over half of teachers (55.5%: item 8) do not favour using graded reading schemes containing controlled vocabulary. Teachers also indicated an average level of agreement with the need to regularly test spelling (Item15; 56.2% of teachers disagreeing). Moreover, the majority of teachers agreed (78.7%: Item 17) with the statement that children’s use of invented spelling

reinforces bad habits. Teachers believe that pupils should not be encouraged to use invented spelling and guess unknown words they encounter during their reading ventures.

Six items addressing spelling practices (items 14, 16, 18, 23 and 24) were placed onto the two categories of Disagreement and Agreement. These items addressed directly spelling instruction, such as “*spelling lists and teachers should choose the words for instruction*),” where there was a moderate agreement that this is a good practice. According to the data, these five items reflected noted differences in beliefs relating to whole language and skills-based pedagogies. Similarly, teachers appear to be divided regarding their beliefs as to whether phonemic awareness skills are essential in predicting learning how to spell (Item 21, *Phonemic skills predict spelling*: 59.1% of teachers agreed). Concurrently, item 12 just about 55% of teachers indicated that specific time within the literacy programme should be allocated each week for the effective learning of separate skills.

Overall, the results for teacher beliefs about the two models of early literacy instruction favored a bottom-up (skills-based) approach, with the mode at or near the moderate or interactive level. This suggests that the majority of respondents are most likely to practice an interactive mode with regard to related principles, but with important emphasis being given to the use of phonetics and direct instruction practices. Interestingly, notwithstanding the tendency towards the bottom-up model, the great majority of teachers expressed low agreement for directly teaching phonetics or writing for young children. Teaching phonics is one of the mainstays of the bottom-up model (skills-based model).

Table5.7: Descriptive Statistics for traditional approach.

Item No.	Item description (n=169)	Mean	SD	Agree %	Mode
4	Teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text.	3.38	0.79	89.4%	4
20	Spelling involves careful listening to sounds within words	3.17	0.67	88.2%	3
10	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	2.96	0.75	78.7%	3
7	Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills	2.91	0.68	78.1%	3
6	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	2.89	0.72	73.9%	3
5	Learning to read should involve attending closely to the print on the page	2.86	0.85	72.2%	3
24	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years	2.70	0.77	59.8%	3
18	Words learned in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing	2.68	0.79	57.4%	3
23.	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of spelling	2.67	0.81	65.6%	3
21	Young children's phonemic awareness skills predict their ability to learn to spell in the early years.	2.66	0.74	59.1%	3
14	Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell.	2.64	0.88	60.4%	3
16	The use of spelling lists is essential for learning how to spell.	2.62	0.73	59.8%	3
12	For effective learning, literacy programs should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	2.58	0.84	55%	3
8	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	2.47	0.83	45.5%	2
15	Teachers should regularly test spelling	2.33	0.86	43.8%	2
17	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	2.91	0.67	78.7%	3
Overall average of mean 2.82					

5.3.1 The relation between teachers' beliefs and their practices

Table (5.8-5.9) : relation between beliefs and practices.

		Practice	Beliefs
Practice-Skills Based	Pearson Correlation	1	.336**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	169	169
Beliefs- Skills Based	Pearson Correlation	.336**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	169	169

Table (5.8-5.9) : relation between beliefs and practices.

		Practice	Beliefs
Practice-Whole language	Pearson Correlation	1	.210**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	169	169
Beliefs- Whole language	Pearson Correlation	.210**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	169	169

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 shows the relationship between the beliefs of early childhood teachers and their implementation in the classroom. For interval variables in this investigation, the Pearson Correlation test was applied. The direction of correlation in this investigation was not expected, so the test was 2-tailed. For the result shown in Tables 5.8 and 5.9, the Pearson correlation coefficients were (.336**; .210**). These results indicated that there was a strong correlation between what teachers believed and what they say they do regarding teaching practice when teaching children to read and write.

Overall, the findings from Tables 5.4 and 5.5 regarding what teachers reported they did were found, in general, to be consistent with what they believed, shown in Tables 5.6 and 5.7. For example, corresponding to the TBALQ beliefs section 3, item 2, children learnt to read in the same natural way that they acquire speaking and listening language skills (mean = 3.21; 78.10% agreed). I found a similar percentage of the teachers who also reported that they often read stories to pupils and create opportunities for them to share and express themselves (mean = 3.46; 95.8% agree). However, a few exceptions were found that showed certain degrees of discrepancies between what the teachers believed in and what they reported they did.

The first of the inconsistencies was that 63.9% of the teachers believed that devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable (item3), but 73.4% of teachers reported that they had done so in the classroom. Secondly, 85.8% of the participants believed that spelling is best learnt incidentally through regular reading and writing activities, while 54.4% of the participants reported that they had organized the time for pupils to do a lot of repetition and drilling after the teachers' input, to practice new words and dialogues. Similarly, an overwhelming majority (92.3%) agree with the

idea that children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire speaking and listening language skills. In contrast, an overwhelming majority (92.4%) agree that teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text. In this regard, teachers' beliefs in, and the application of, the whole language approach of literacy teaching and learning may not be firmly established. On the other hand, a skills-based and teacher-directed view of literacy teaching and learning may also not be firmly convinced and rooted. This may be because some teachers believe that a skills-based and teacher-directed teaching is still important in current classroom practice. Instead of giving up the traditional way of teaching and traditional roles in face of the new ideas of the whole language approach, they may adopt these new ideas and roles over time.

In some cases it may mean that they will practice a skills-based, teacher-centered approach, and yet in others they may use a whole language, or child-centered, approach. Overall, the survey data showed that they slightly favored more skills-based practices in their day-to-day approach to teaching children. The one exception to this trend was the 78.70% of the teachers who agreed with item 17 (*Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits*), rather than disagreed as may have been expected, in line with traditional views. This result could be because the statement itself is not a good fit to personal belief constructs, either positive or negative. Some teachers believe that the statement is not fully true but also believe that in addition the children should be encouraged to invent some (but not all) of their spelling words. For this reason the teachers, may have been uncertain or unsure how to respond to this item.

5.4 Background profiles of the respondents

In order to develop deeper insights into the variation in teachers' scores on the beliefs profile, a detailed analysis of responses in the light of the teachers' background variables is addressed in the next section. In this regard, factual profiles of teachers will be presented first.

Table 5.10 shows the profiles of the early year teaching responses in the current research. The results in the table represent the responses of 164 (97%) female and 5 (3%) male teachers, with the majority of teachers ranging between 20 and 33 years old in age. In general, this reflects a tendency in the Taiwanese teaching profession, which is characterized by relatively young female teachers (Wu, 2005), who have always dominated nursery and primary teaching. Moreover, in recent years, this imbalance has grown with very few nursery teachers being men. As the questionnaire sample was random, a variety of teachers' qualifications, teaching experiences, and population of schools are represented. As shown in Table 5.10, it is clear that only 17 teachers (10.1% of the sample) held lower qualifications, while over half of the respondents (65%) held degrees above the level of a college certificate. However, among those who were 'on-paper', qualified for teaching in an early-years school, only 127 of teachers (75.1%) have specialist degrees in early-years education, while about 42 teachers (24.9%) were non-specialists, holding degrees in subjects other than in early-years education. In this way, around one quarter of the 169 early-years teachers have had no formal training in the subject matter. It also needs to be pointed out that many of those who are new to the profession, with or without an early-years degree, are unlikely to have been trained to teach children in early-years education; they are recent graduates from any college or university. This is not an unexpected, given that untrained teachers are employed annually in Taiwan.

In terms of teaching experience, respondents were divided into three: newly qualified (1-5years), semi-experienced (6-10) and well experienced (11 and more). Grouping teachers in this way might reveal changes in beliefs due to teaching experience amongst teachers. From Table 5.10 below, it appears that 75 teachers are newly qualified, 46 are semi-experienced teachers and 48 are highly experienced teachers. This means that newly qualified teachers represent a majority of the sample.

Table 5.10: The information of the questionnaire participants.

	Information	N	%
Gender	Male	5	3%
	Female	164	97%
Age	20-33	131	77.5%
	34-	38	22.5%
Degree	High School	17	10.1%
	College	42	24.9%
	University	110	65%
Specialist	Education	127	75.1%
	Other fields	42	24.9%
Teaching Experience	1-5Y	75	44.4%
	6-10Y	46	27.2%
	11Y	48	28.4%
Post Held	Teacher	154	91.1%
	Head teacher	12	7.1%
	Dean	3	1.8%
Level of Class	Toddler 1-3 Y	36	21.3%
	Middle 3-4Y	45	26.6%
	Mature 5-6Y	61	36.1%
	Mix age	27	16%
Population of school	1-5 Class	52	30.8%
	More than 6	117	69.2%
Number of Pupils	Less than 10 Pupil	11	6.5%
	11-15 Pupil	53	31.4%
	More than 16 Pupil	105	62.1%

5.4.1 Analysis of the Beliefs profile in the light of teachers' background

The independent T-test for equal variances was employed, because this test is used to look for a difference between two unrelated groups of parametric data. The scores of the TBALQ section in this investigation are parametric data, because they are of interval level status, and they are normally distributed in the population. The independent T-test analysis indicated no statistically significant differences amongst respondents due to gender; position; class level or population of school.

5.4.2 Teachers' beliefs and teachers age range

Table5.11: Teachers’ beliefs and age range.

Item No.	Item description	Age		2-tailed Sig (*P< .05)
		Average Mean Ranks		
		22-33	Over 34	
2.	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire speaking and listening language skills.	3.31	2.84	0.010*
9.	Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	2.93	2.47	0.004*

The independent T-test for equal variances was used and a significance level of 0.05 was applied when analyzing the data in table 5.11. This indicated that teachers between 20 and 33 years old, in general, tended to favour a whole language approach and child-centred practices more than their over-34 counterparts, in relation to the “use of the natural way to learn read” and “view of direct teaching of phonics”.

Since younger teachers ranked higher in items 2 and 9 than older teachers, it can be argued that the first group of teachers tended to agree with the idea that ‘*children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills*’ more

than older teachers. Regarding the average mean and the observed two-tailed significance with respect to the direct teaching of phonics, it can be concluded that younger teachers tended to agree with the view that “*Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others*” more than older teachers did. These results suggest that younger teachers hold beliefs consistent with the whole language approach and children-centered practice more than older teachers.

5.4.3 Teachers' beliefs and Education

Table 5.12: Teachers' beliefs and Education.

Item No.	Item description	Education		2-tailed Sig (*P< .05)
		Average Mean Ranks		
		Vocational high school	University	
6.	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	2.21	1.82	0.030*
12.	For effective learning, literacy programmes should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	2.52	2.06	0.016*
23.	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of spelling.	2.43	1.94	0.004*

As the T-test results in table 5.12 indicate, there was a significant difference between the teachers' beliefs and their degree background. Teachers with a high-school vocational childcare background in general tended to follow skills-based and teacher-directed practices more than teachers with university degrees, as evidenced by their responses to “use of flashcard” and “separate skills” for effective literacy learning, and their devotion to the explicit teaching of spelling. In this regard, it can be argued that non-degree teachers were more likely to use flashcards to build up children's sight vocabularies; explicit directed teaching and use of separate skills, such as

comprehension, word recognition and phonics, for the effective teaching literacy. This can be clearly seen in the average mean of the 2-tailed score significance obtained. Differences can be clearly noticed between both kinds of teachers in those three items. These findings do suggest that it is the non-degree teachers who are least likely to hold to adopt the whole language approach and children centered ideas or hold related beliefs.

5.4.4 Teachers' beliefs and specialization

Table 5.13: Teachers' beliefs and specialization.

Item No.	Item description	Specialization		2-tailed Sig (*P< .05)
		Average Mean Ranks		
		Spec	Non-	
17.	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	2.64	2.97	0.021*
24.	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years.	1.07	2.38	0.006*

As far as the relationship between the beliefs of teachers and their degree preparation programmes is concerned, a significant difference has been found, as is shown in table 5.13, between teachers who did not have a degree or certificate in the field of early childhood education and teachers who specialized in the field. Non-specialist teachers tended to favour skills-based, teacher-directed practices, more than specialist teachers, to judge from their responses to the statements regarding the “use of direct instruction in spelling” and “view of invented spelling reinforces bad habits”.

Since non-specialist teachers ranked higher than specialist teachers in using direct instruction in spelling, it can be argued that specialist teachers tended to favour avoiding using direct instruction in spelling in the early age classroom more than non-specialist teachers.

Looking at the average mean and the observed two-tailed significance for teachers responding to the statement “invented spelling reinforces bad habits”, it can be concluded that specialist teachers tended to view invented spelling as natural in the learning process rather than as evidence of reinforcing bad habits, more than non-specialist teachers. These results suggest that on the whole specialist teachers hold beliefs consistent with the whole language approach and to a greater extent than the non-specialists.

5.4.5 Teachers' beliefs and teaching experience

Table 5.14: Teachers' beliefs and teaching experience.

Item No.	Item description	Teaching Experience					
		Average Mean Ranks					
		Newly & Experienced			Semi-experienced & Newly		
		Exp	Newly	2 tailed sig	Semi-Exp	Newly	2 tailed sig
6.	Flashcard drills should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	2.21	1.90	0.019 *	2.15	2.21	0.634
10.	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	2.15	1.81	0.007 *	2.09	2.15	0.689
17.	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	2.77	2.92	0.252	3.11	2.77	0.006 *
24.	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years.	2.21	2.23	0.909	2.50	2.21	0.048 *

The beliefs profile highlighted that there was a significant difference (< 0.05) based on differing levels of teacher experience, particularly between experienced teachers and their newly qualified counterparts, as well as semi-experienced and the newly qualified. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between semi-experienced teachers and experienced teachers. However, when compared with experienced teachers, the majority of the newly qualified teachers disagree with the statements concerning the necessity of using a skills-based approach in literacy teaching. Since these items are quite opposite to the traditional skills-based approaches, it may be

that recent training promotes newer ideas and practices and so this group may feel more confident with these whole language approaches. This can be clearly noticed through the average mean ranks of both cohorts and the 2-tailed significance obtained. Differences can be clearly noticed between both kinds of teachers in the vast majority of the items, which show that newly experienced teachers hold favourable views in the use of flashcards and isolated skill practices than newly qualified teachers do. Comparing semi-experienced with newly qualified teachers indicated that semi-experienced teachers agree with using direct skills-based instruction and learner error more than newly qualified teachers.

These findings suggest that it is the experienced and semi-experienced teachers who are least likely to hold beliefs or to adopt the whole language approach. On the one hand, this may be because their training was less recent and rooted in a different pedagogical framework. Thus they were educated and trained within a traditional literacy structure where the teaching method is a skills-based approach. Moreover, the more experienced teachers might be more firmly convinced by the traditional skills-based methodologies through experience, and be less willing to change.

5.4.6 Teachers' beliefs and school size

Table 5.15: Teachers' beliefs and nursery school size.

Item No.	Item description	Size of School		2-tailed Sig (* < .05)
		Average Mean Ranks		
		Less than 5	More than 6	
6.	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	2.21	1.88	0.008*

As far as the influence of school size is concerned, the results indicated significant differences between working in bigger schools and working in smaller ones. As the results in table 5.15 below show, the average mean rank of teachers in larger schools' teachers (1.88) is lower than that for the teachers for smaller schools (2.21). The 2-tailed significance level was (.008). This indicates that teachers who work in small schools were significantly more likely to make use of flashcard drills as a resource to help build children's sight vocabularies than those who work in a bigger school.

5.4.7 Overall scores of the Beliefs profile with teachers' background variables

Table 5.16 Independent Samples Test of TBALQ by degree; specialist; number of pupils.

	F	Sig	t-test for Equality of Means	
			Sig (2-tailed)	Mean
Degree	.794	.374	.021*	56.4848
			.045	59.4779
Specialist	.713	.400	.037*	57.3095
			.034	59.8091
Number of pupils in the classroom	.517	.475	.010*	62.3636
			.008	56.3774

The independent T-test for equal variances was used and a significance level of .05 was applied when analyzing the data in table 5.16. The result indicated that the total scores in the second section of the teachers' beliefs profile of the TBALQ compared with teachers degree, teachers specialist background and number of pupils in teachers' classroom of the TBALQ background section, were significantly higher than that of the teachers' background. According to summary findings in Table 5.16, teachers who got educational specialist background degrees ($p = .021$) ($* < .05$; two-tailed test) from university ($p = .037$) ($* < .05$) and teach in a less pupils classroom ($p = .010$) ($* < .05$) significantly favoured to adopt a whole language approach and children centred idea to teach literacy than other teachers in the early year school.

5.5 Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis of the Teacher Questionnaire. The findings give a snapshot of the main tendencies informing teachers' beliefs about literacy teaching and learning clustered primarily in the interactive approach, which indicated that most teachers prefer neither the traditional skills-based approach/teacher-directed view of literacy teaching, nor the social interaction/whole language view of literacy teaching and learning. They used a blend of methods and techniques, drawing from both the whole language approach and the skills-based approach. The survey also indicated the difficulties that teachers face in their daily teaching life. The questionnaire acted as a way of understanding teachers' lives, especially, as I mentioned when discussing the methodology, that the research context in Taiwan is scientific and uses questionnaires. So, it was quite beneficial to start from the familiar and move towards the unfamiliar, the use of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

Chapter six will present the other aspect based on the qualitative approach of the study. The focus in the follow will be on the teachers' beliefs about literacy teaching, learning and their roles in the literacy classroom.

Chapter Six: Presentation of the interview and observation findings

6.1 Introduction

Following the presentation of the quantitative data obtained from the survey in the previous chapter, this chapter presents data gathered from the three initial semi-structured interviews; nine classroom follow-up interviews and three post semi-structured interviews, as well as the findings from nine observations literacy lessons delivered by three of the participants who participated in the qualitative study. To preserve their anonymity, they have are referred to as Miss Wang, Miss Lyn, and Miss Liu. Before presenting the interview and observation findings I outline how I analyzed the interview data, classroom observations and field notes. It is also worth mentioning that while the majority of the field notes were taken while I was in the field; some other notes were added in due course as reflections to photos taken in the field.

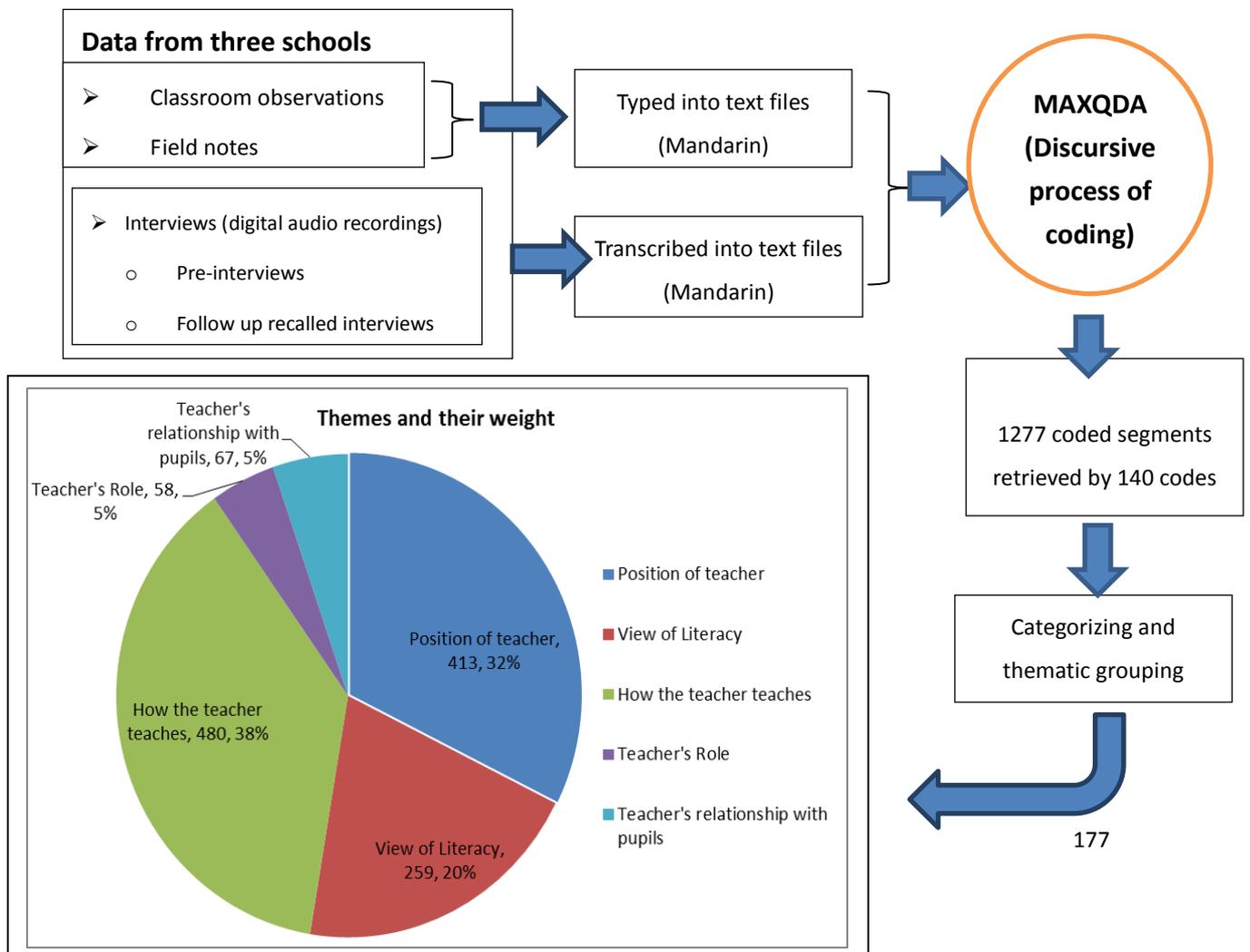


Figure 6.1 Detailed procedures of the data analysis process.

As it is presented in Figure 6.1 above there were a number of steps to be taken before generating some presentable findings. I began by personally transcribing the interviews recordings that were stored in a digital format. I repeatedly listened to these recordings using a computer and an audio player while trying not to lose any meaning from the recorded discourse. To do this, I transcribed the recordings in the original language in which the interviews were conducted, Mandarin, the mother tongue of the participants. The transcripts were stored as text files using separate documents for each interview. I put the participants' basic information such as name, contact telephone number and school name into a password protected Word database shown in Figure 6.2 below.

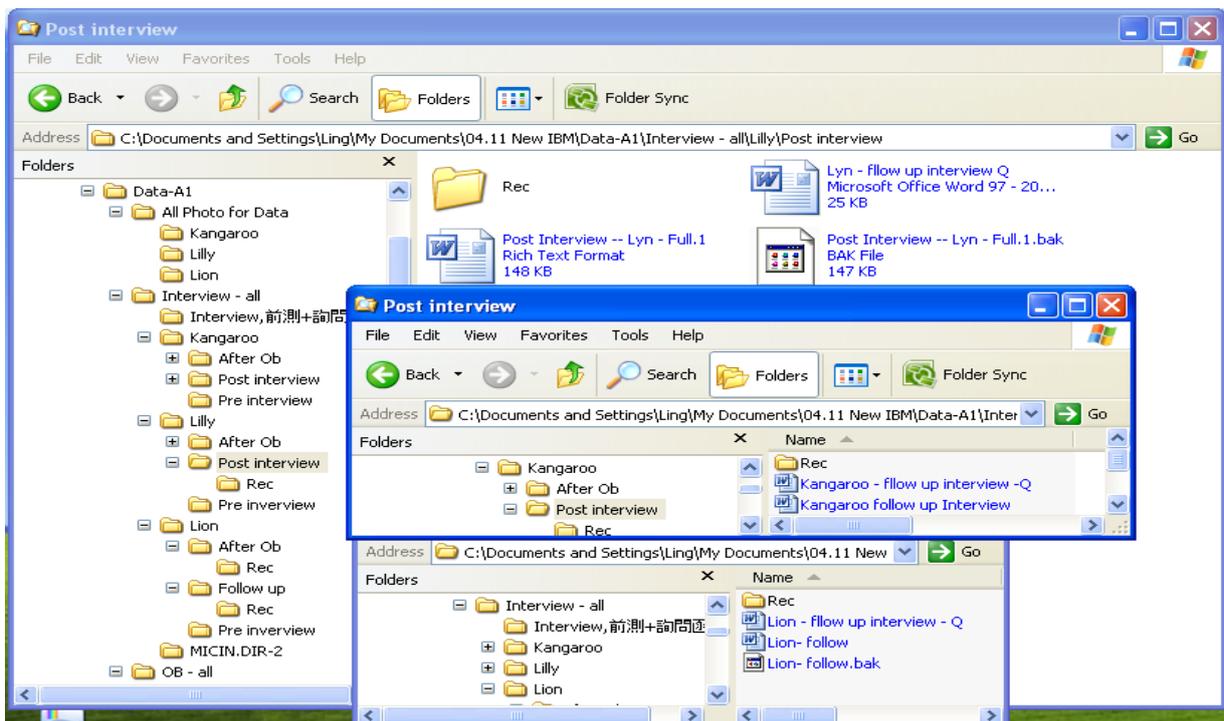


Figure 6.2: A sample of files managements.

Similarly, during my school visits to conduct the classroom observations and the interviews with the three teachers I accumulated some field notes which were hand written in my research diary for each of the teachers I observed and the classroom I

observed her in. I made notes of what was taught, how it was taught, how often, in what context and for what purposes they used literacy during the lessons. Also, I took notes of how they conveyed the Chinese phonetics symbol system, Chinese characters and meanings. In addition I made notes about classroom interaction and the participation of students.

At the same time, during these school visits and classroom observations, I used an observation checklist which I designed and adapted some part from a checklist developed by Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO, 2003) and I also added my own list based partly on the research questions and partly on my understanding of the key elements of the literacy pedagogy. The checklist was used to note the pedagogic and classroom practices as well as classroom supporting resources that promote early language and literacy development and how they differed from one another. The check list covered five main aspects of the classroom. These were: classroom environment; classroom management; teachers' roles; classroom practice activities; literacy environment (see table 6.1 below). For each of these five aspects I was looking at a number of elements giving each a tick within a four point scale. A sample of the checklists is attached in the Appendix six (page, 334).

Table 6.1: Checklist of classroom observation.

Classroom environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organization of the Classroom ● Contents of the Classroom ● Accessibility of materials ● Condition of materials , display of child work
Classroom Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● T/S ratio ● Teachers interaction ● Different area ● Signs, posters, photographs, pictures
Teachers' roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunities for Child Choice and Initiative ● Daily Schedule ● Engaging children in conversation ● Children's participation

Classroom practice activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated approach • Children’s contributions to learning • Controlled practice • Guided practice
Literacy Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of Book Area • Characteristics of Books • Books for Learning • Approaches to book reading • Environment Print • Early Writing Environment

Furthermore, I took some photos to record classroom and school settings. During the first stage of data analysis, I typed all my field notes and stored them in text files ready for analysis. As I was sorting and viewing the images, I wrote reflection comments beside the field notes.

6.2 Data sorting and initial data analysis

After the documentation phase, I separated my interview data manually. I regrouped the 15 interview data sets under the interview protocol headings as illustrated in Figure 6.3 below. This helped me gain an initial sense of the data.

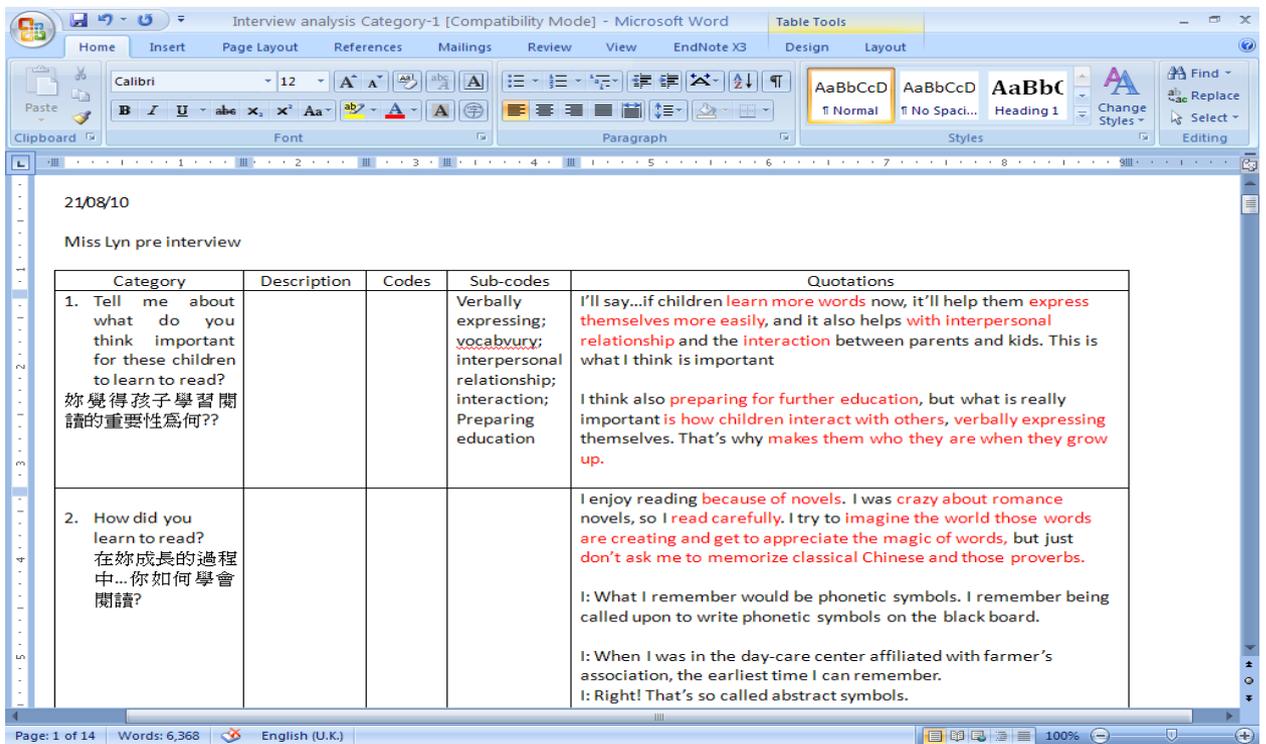


Figure 6.3: A sample of manual sorting (Miss Lyn pre interview).

Simultaneously, I attempted to use QSR Nvivo 8, a qualitative data analysis computer software package, to code and analyze the interview and observation transcripts. Therefore, after importing my text documents into the program, I started coding the data and exploring the different capabilities of the program. After spending about four weeks trying the software, I found that the results generated by QSR Nvivo 8 made good sense. Nevertheless, what I did discover was that, though it has strengths in storing and retrieving a massive amount of data, it also had some weaknesses. One of these weaknesses is that the program kept crashing and I kept losing saved files as the sample message reveals in Figure 6.4 below. This problem and others with the software package hampered the analytical process and the flow of thinking.



Figure 6.4: A example of crash file.

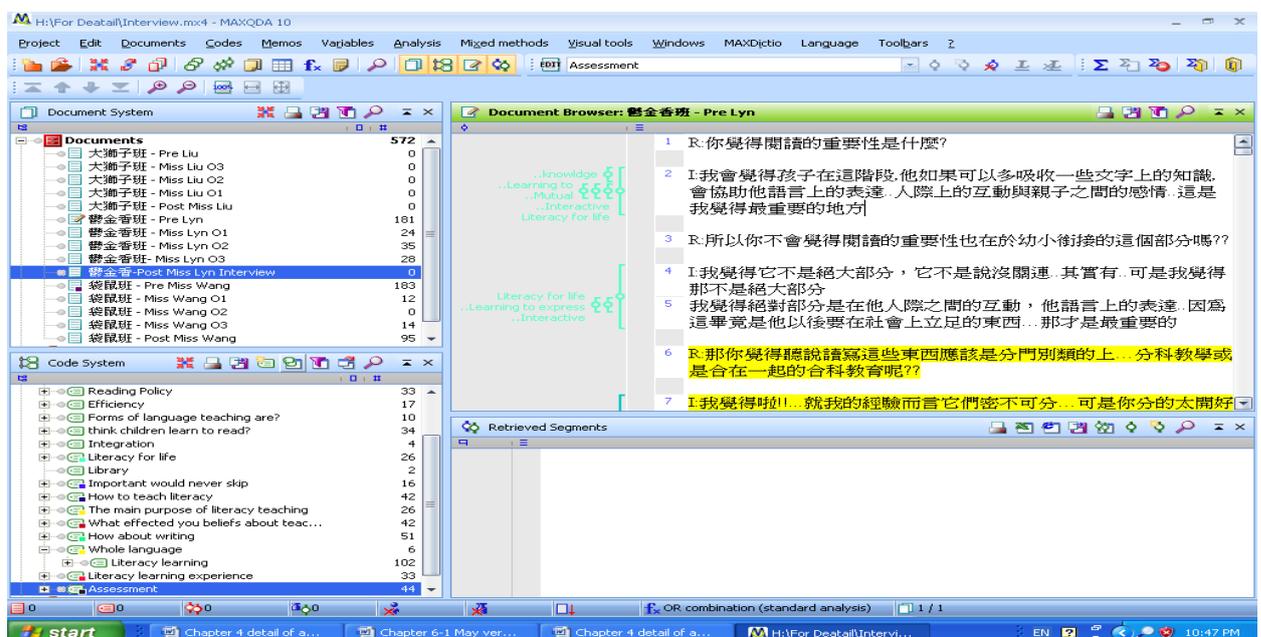


Figure 6.5: A sample of using Max sorting.

Thus it was decided to stop using QSR Nvivo 8 and restart coding manually while trying to familiarize myself with another qualitative data analysis computer software package, Maxqda as a tool for highlighting and grouping meaningful words, phrases and utterances. After feeding my data into the program, I worked first on the data sets that I have coded manually. Based on the interview protocol, I keyed in each of the codes in the code system (Figure 6.5). MAXqda software also allowed me to create a colour code system for identification. I highlighted in green sentences, comments, expressions and words related to teacher change; I highlighted everything related to teacher beliefs in blue; and I highlighted in red everything related to classroom practices. This helped the interpretation of the data.

6.3 Data coding

After those preparations, I started the first stage of data analysis which began with reading the data fed into the program, thoroughly highlighting the passages where literacy teaching, beliefs, and practice, the relationship between participants' beliefs and practice were discussed. At the same time, I was writing comments and memos. Then, the transcripts were re-read very carefully for a second time, to generate open codes under each interview protocol. Using individual sentences as my basic unit of analysis, I sometimes assigned a paragraph to a code or multiple codes. Most of the time, I assigned a code to a single sentence. However, if no codes were available for the sentence, a simple descriptive phrase or a smaller sentence was used as an open code. As the coding went on, each sentence was compared with the previous sentences and open codes for differences and similarities. If they were the same or very similar, then they were coded identically. If they were very different, the new sentence would use another distinct label. Besides the name and type of the codes, the initials of the informants were attached to each open code for future analysis, tracing, and retrieving

of the data. This process generated a total number of more than 140 codes that retrieved 1277 coded segments when run by the program. Having done this with all fifteen transcripts (five from each teacher), I began with the second stage of analysis where I further analyzed the data and began comparing the codes based on the level of their denoting data for differences and similarities, which resulted in the creation of a smaller group of codes.

6.3.1 Rereading the coding, noting and coding prevalent categories

After I finished with open-coding each interview transcript, I read reread the open codes, writing more comments and notes to make the analysis more rigorous. After several times re-reading the interview transcripts and comparing the transcripts and new codes, I identified the recurring and prevalent categories. The remaining open codes were compared with each other and with the existing prevalent categories. This helped me to create a new category, modify the existing codes, or combine these existing open codes to a new category, as illustrated in Figure 6.6 below.

This rigorous and systematic coding procedure of interpretive analysis process continued until more than 140 codes were reduced to about 50 codes. At this stage, I attempted to establish the relationship between the core categories and the codes.

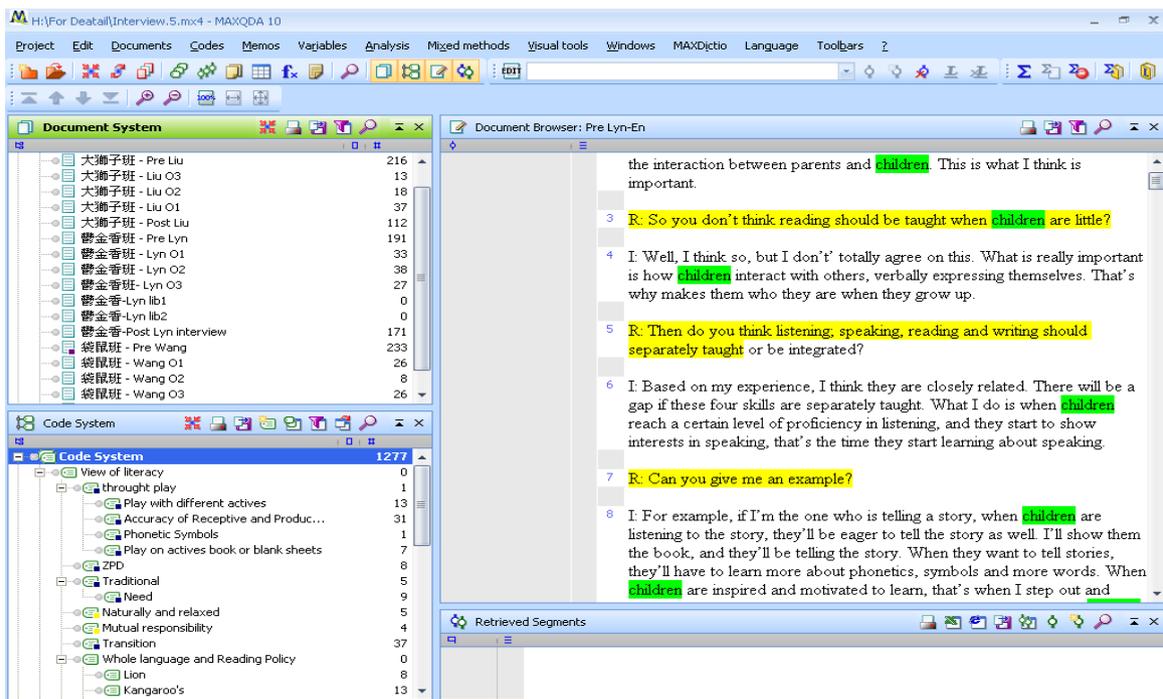


Figure 6.6: A sample of rereading the coding, noting and coding prevalent categories.

I used a similar process to catalogue the categories and codes. After going through the same process of analysis, there were 12 categories in the final coding catalogue. These final categories along with their corresponding codes were exported to a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel, as illustrated in Figure 6.7 below. After that, I added a definition for each code and category.

	Category	Code	Definitions
1	<u>Role of teachers</u> (This refers to comments of teachers about the role of themselves)	Morally and intellectually superior	This relate to teachers think of being a teacher in terms of the respect that the role of the teacher affords; " this is viewed hierarchally"
2		Supporters and Facilitator	This pertains to comments of teacher's roles in the classroom as supporters and facilitators rather than directors and Questioners
3	<u>Personal experience</u> (This refers to opinions of teachers' own experience of reading)	not engage in reading	This refers to comments of teachers' on how they are not engage in reading
4		Functional engage reading	This refers to comments of teachers' on how they engage or not engage in reading
5		Love reading	This refers to comments of teachers' on how they engage in reading
6	<u>Perspective about teaching literacy</u> (This refers to opinions of teachers' view about		This refer to teachers' opinions that teaching of reading and writing needs to be

Figure 6.7: Final coding catalogues.

6.3.2 Theme Emergence

Following the second round of data reading and code modifications, the resulting 50 codes and the 12 main categories had to be examined further. This final stage of coding aimed to integrate the emerging themes. The process began during the reading and re-reading at the coding stage by writing memos on each category and the relationship among these larger codes. Through this process, the data were reduced to five central themes. 413 (32%) of the 1277 quotes came under the teacher theme. 259 (20%) of the quotes were categorized as a view of literacy, while 480 quotes (38%) fell under the way teachers taught literacy. 58 (5%) of the extracts related to the role of teacher and 67 (5%) of the quotes were classified as a teacher's relationship with pupils. However, in my case, the themes were the most difficult and confusing stage of the analysis stage because it required me to integrate and produce the themes that can ultimately fit the data and explain the phenomena. Therefore, I discussed and revised

these five themes and categorization with two professional researchers, referred to as researcher (A) and researcher (B) who helped me to revise and clarify the themes and categorization. Both gave feedback on the categories and themes which were somewhat different from mine and sometimes they suggested the merging of categories or themes. Through three separate discussions we came to an agreement on the themes that emerged from our interpretations of the data. For example, the first suggested was provided by researcher (A) was renaming the theme of ‘position of teacher’ to ‘the teacher in context’. Another suggested by researchers A and B was to merge the theme ‘teacher’s role’ and ‘teacher’s relationship with pupils’ into the theme of ‘how teachers teach literacy’. Indeed, I ended up with three main themes: ‘the teacher in context’ under which 413 (32%) of the 1277 extracts fell. ‘View of literacy’ further categorized 259 (20%) of the quotes; and lastly, ‘how the teachers taught literacy’ accounted for 605 (48%) of the quotes.

6.3.2.1 The teacher in context

I categorized a total of 413 of the 1,277 quotes as 2 categories within the theme of the teacher in context. Table 6.2 summarizes the categories within the theme.

Table.6.2: The categories within the theme of teacher in context.

Category	References from
Teachers’ personal background and teaching experience	Interview Data
Teachers’ own literacy learning experience	Interview Data

This theme included data in which the participants provided information about the way they view themselves as an individual and how they relate themselves to other people. As Table 6.2 above shows, two main categories were identified within the theme of the teacher in context. The quote below is an example of the quotes that are

categorized under the theme of the teacher in context. It is taken from background information within which the teachers perceived they operated.

'Life is a journey or race of knowledge achievement. In this regard, teachers are represented as 'superior knowledge transmitters' (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

We basically take transition of primary school to be getting students ready to do use these skills, which is what I really feel strongly Nursery school should be. (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

6.3.2.2 View of literacy

Views of literacy quotes are those that represent the conceptualization of different possibilities of literacy lessons and views by participants. I categorized 259, or 33 % of the 1277 quotes within 5 categories as table 6.3 below shows.

Table.6.3: The categories within the view of literacy.

Category	References from
The general views of literacy	Interview Data
View about the goals of literacy education	Interview Data
View of language skills and literacy	Interview Data
Perception of literacy learning in the classroom	Interview Data
View of whole language and Reading Project	Interview Data

This theme comprises statements by teachers about their general view of literacy, view about the goals of literacy education, view of language skills and literacy, perception of literacy learning in the classroom and view of the whole language approach and the reading project. Teachers often justified how they view literacy, why they did what they did in the classroom or why pupils liked their way of literacy teaching. For example,

Literacy is the skill to prepare pupils for study and work in the future. (Wang, 3rd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

Literacy is verbally expressing and interaction with others. It is tool to help with interpersonal relationships (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

These statements provided evidence of whether participants believed that their choices were limited or whether they had deliberated on their school tasks or learners' needs.

6.3.2.3 How teachers teach literacy

I identified four categories in the theme 'how teachers teach literacy', as summarized in the table 6.4 below. This theme incorporated the largest number of quotes (605 or 48%). This might be because of the inclusion of more than one source of data. While the previous themes included mainly what the teachers themselves reported, as private beliefs are not publically observable, this theme incorporated observation and field note data. It also included quotes on how the participants act in a literacy lesson and how they deal with their curriculum tasks.

Table.6.4: The categories within the theme of how teachers teach literacy.

Category	References from
Classroom environment and curriculum management	Interview And Observation Data
Teaching content	
Teachers' role	
Teachers' relationship with pupils	
Structuring literacy instruction	

The two quotes below act as an example, for what is categorized under this theme.

... it's easier to talk about literacy and vocabulary when there's a story. Pass through all these interactive discourse, students will find it necessary to learn the relevant literacy information and vocabulary (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

I don't quite enjoy teaching pupils in the traditional Confucian way, so I love to allow my pupils to learn something through the actives we play. My teaching strategy are 'playing' and 'having fun' (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

I'm a facilitator. So, I'm here if they need me. They come to me if they need help and I help them with anything they ask me (Lyn, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

6.3.3 Summary

To conclude, the data analysis procedure took a number of steps, starting with accumulating of the data and documenting, before moving onto a trial run of the manual coding and unsuccessful experience with NVivo. Following this, I began with the main coding, using Maxqda for for qualitative and interpretative data analysis. . I moved onto more rigorous and systematic examination and classification of the codes and categories, which resulted in three emerging themes. These are the teacher in context, view of literacy, and how teachers taught. Within each theme there were between two and five categories, a total of 12 categories covering the three themes. The following section will present a detailed account of the resulting data from these analytic procedures.

6.4 Interview and observation findings

The data presented in this chapter will examine the early year literacy teaching beliefs and practice of the three individual teachers, and will explore the relationship between the teachers' classroom behaviour and their pedagogical beliefs. This section will show the complexity of teaching literacy in which the context and the teacher's views –three of the themes identified above - impact on what they do, taking into consideration some of the existing tensions. This in return reveals the complexity of teachers' beliefs that vary in different ways and appear to fall along a continuum of perspectives.

As has been discussed in Chapter Three, teaching literacy in Taiwan follows two main streams: whole language and traditional discrete skills. The whole language view is promoted in the new curriculum which looks at literacy learning as social in nature and being integrated with life and learning (Goodman, 1986). From this perspective, teachers are viewed as active participants in the lesson rather than passive observers of

maturational processes (Froese, 1991). On the other hand, the traditional view suggests that success in early literacy is built on well-established pre-reading behaviour. This view provokes formal instruction in reading and discrete cognitive skills taught in nursery or kindergarten, such as word recognition. Within these programmes, reading and writing are considered to be isolated skills to be taught and the programmes are highly structured and sequential, favouring a ‘drills, rote and skills approach to learning’ (Donnelly, 2007).

However, the results of the current study indicates that individual beliefs about literacy teaching do not appear to favour one over the other, but rather overlap, with “midway thinking” appearing to exist. In this regard, individual teachers’ perspectives are spread along a continuum. This is visualized in Figure 6.1, which shows a continuum with traditional skills literacy teaching at one end and the whole language approach at the other. This representation reflects the existing conflict and tension the individual teachers experience in how they operated/enacted their literacy teaching along the continuum.

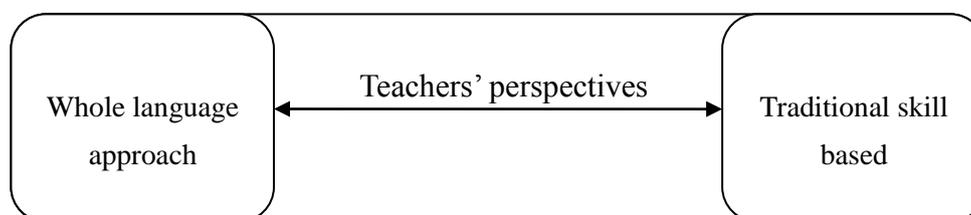


Figure 6.8: View of literacy.

Indeed, in this respect, while the teacher may favour a whole language or skills-based approach, the data shows that teachers tend not to strictly follow the requirements of each of these approaches. As a result, their responses appear to reflect flexibility ranging from the main concept of the whole language approach to traditional skills-based instruction. This variety in the perceptions of literacy and literacy teaching could fit along a continuum that ranges from a purely discrete skills-based curriculum that

reflects traditional Confucian beliefs, to one of more social interaction that supports skill integration. Similarly, the perception of literacy learning ranged from the reception of information to acquiring it through exposure. Regarding the structure of literacy instruction, it is located between controlled practice and co-operative guided practice. In this regard, it is found that while Miss Liu's perspectives tended to reflect a whole language approach in general and Miss Wang appears to be closer to a traditional skills-based approach, Miss Lyn seems to take more than one position along a continuum between the two extremes.

However, I am not going to argue that teachers who stand far to one end of the continuum are good or bad and to replace either of these teaching approaches or to pitch traditional skills-based arguments against whole language arguments. Rather, I shall recognize that teachers literacy teaching might sit anywhere along the continuum and will understand them in this way. In the first section, I begin by presenting the teacher in her wider context. The next section will provide their view of literacy, while the third section will be devoted to showing how the teachers taught.

6.4.1 The teacher in context

This section of the chapter summarizes the teachers' educational history, work experiences and literacy learning experience from the interview findings. These were regarded as a cumulative collection of evidence related to teaching and classroom events and provide the wider context.

6.4.1.1 Teachers' personal background and teaching experience

Miss Wang and Miss Lyn were experienced, professionally trained, nursery teachers each with over 15 years of teaching experience. Both received their initial teacher training from the different vocational schools in Early Childhood Education.

After completing their training, they taught in different nursery schools while receiving in-service teacher training at a college of Children education at the same time. After few years of teaching experience they decided to improve their teaching abilities and enrolled themselves on an in-service teacher training programme that lasted for three years and earned them a bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate. In contrast with their rich teaching experience, Miss Liu was in her fourth year of teaching when the study began. She received her bachelor's degree at a prestigious Education University in Taichung, majoring in Early Childhood.

A common experience of educational learning amongst these three teachers is they all had desired to become a teacher from very young and they reported that teaching was the “most suitable” and “respectable” job for girls in those days (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008). Moreover, they also developed a love of passion for nursery education partly because the influence of other teachers and educationists. As Miss Lyn explained that because she took courses related to Montessori's ideas during her college and university programmes. Because of this influence:

'I fell in love with Montessori. I spent almost my entire teaching career to learn all her teaching aids; I have tried really hard to pass the certificate in Montessori Educational organization following her ideas of teaching' (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008)'

6.4.1.2 Literacy learning experience

A common experience of literacy learning amongst these teachers is that they did not find learning literacy to be an easy task. They started learning literacy in class from nursery level at about age five. Miss Wang and Miss Lyn recalled that the early days of their literacy learning experience were not very pleasant as they were weak in reading and writing and so were often punished by their teachers for doing badly in class.

'I learned literacy the traditional way, only memorized words, pronunciation of the words and

practice drills on what the teacher had instructed. I can still remember after practice for few days more we had dictation... This was how I learn (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008)'.

In contrast with the other two teachers, Miss Liu had relatively little to say about her literacy or language learning experience. She said that she had a vague memory of how she learned literacy during the first few years at nursery and primary school, which led her to the conclusion that overall, her literacy learning experience in her school life was *'not too bad'*. Probably because her memory was not clear, she mentioned *'talking'* having a relatively deep impression on her. In Liu's opinion,

'When I was little, most of the time my surrounding people spoke to me a lot. So I had to listen and reply...I think my literacy learning was forced by the context to do so' (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

Moreover, when I asked how Miss Liu came to master literacy, she attributed her success to a habit of extensive reading and listening as she explained that:

'I like reading books, magazines, and journals....all types of resources...When I have time, I always read. This habit gave me a great sense of self-satisfaction' (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

The similarities evident from Miss Lyn was that though she did not enjoy the *'boring way of literacy learning'* very much initially, but because of reading novels was such a good experience she did turn around her literacy experience from being negative and not really enjoyable experience to becoming one of pleasant moments for her. As she recalled:

I was crazy about romance novels, so I read carefully. I tried to imagine the world those words are creating and get to appreciate the magic of words, but just don't ask me to contact with the schoolwork or coursework. I hate the boring ways of the literacy lesson. Such as, memorize and practice classical Chinese and those proverbs (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

However, Miss Wang stands out because she said that she strove to drill and practice hard her literacy skills, especially, to master skills correctly in reading and writing.

Just as our great ancestor Confucius said, diligent in drill and practice can overcome everything. This experience had great impact on me. I believe students should memorize and practice' (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

The literacy learning experience above helped Miss Wang lay a solid foundation in literacy learning and develop a sense of thorough practice, and developing precise academic skills, in contrast to Miss Liu and Miss Lyn. Miss Liu claimed that speaking freely, listening carefully, and reading widely were three of the most important factors that contributed to making her proficient in literacy. As will be explained in the section below, I shall see how these perceptions influence their teaching practices directly.

6.4.2 Views of Literacy

This section presents the findings obtained from the three participants regarding their views on literacy. It includes five sub-sections identified from the interviews and observation with teachers about their general views of literacy. These are: their views about the goals of literacy education in the three participating schools, views on language skills and literacy; perception of literacy learning in the classroom; and views on the Reading Project and the whole language approach.

6.4.2.1 The general view of literacy

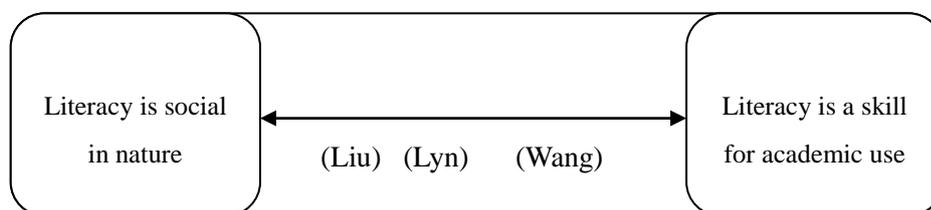


Figure 6.9: General view of literacy.

The three participants expressed different but sometimes overlapping views about general literacy that can fit a along continuum between two extremes, at one end

viewing literacy as social in nature and at the other viewing literacy as a skill for academic use. As it is represented in Figure 6.9 above, Miss Liu is mainly in favour of literacy being social in nature but Miss Wang stands at the other end. Miss Lyn stands between the two, but closer to favouring the view of literacy as being social in nature. When interviewed, Miss Liu and Miss Lyn viewed literacy as ‘an important component of exploration and social interaction tool’. Based on this view, they claimed that literacy, which was intricately intertwined with other language skills, is a “*vehicle and means to help pupils to convey meaning to the world (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008)*”. The interview data also reveals that this process of creating meaning might take place through social interaction. Both said that “*Literacy is verbal expressions while interacting with others. It is a tool to help with interpersonal relationships*” (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008). In this regard, literacy-use was situated in a context where social interaction takes place. This means that, in Miss Lyn’s and Miss Liu’s opinions, literacy was essentially social in nature and that it emerged out of interaction.

However, interestingly, Miss Wang talks of “*the model answer of literacy*” where she places literacy “*as a type of tool*” that enables students to communicate with others. The interesting point is that Miss Wang appears to have assumed she should reply and answer the interview question perfectly correctly. Therefore, she prefaced the answer with “*the model answer*”, implying that she was actually giving a reply which she thought was expected to be official. However, after few follow up interviews, once when her consciousness was not focused on the literacy topic, she disclosed that in her perspective she considered literacy to be “*a skill for academic use only*”. Although Miss Wang reported that the provision of traditional formal instruction might not be an current in child development and educational trends lately, Miss Wang said it was necessary to teach literacy for academic use because literacy was a major component in

their schemes of work. In this way, Miss Wang found herself having to go through the literacy sections in her prescribed teaching materials series textbook.

6.4.2.2 Views about the goals of literacy education

Regarding the goal of literacy teaching, the three teachers argued that instruction should be *'the students way and at the appropriate level'* (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008) but this takes on different meanings for these three teachers. Based on the two general views of literacy, literacy education is reported to serve three main purposes. The first one is to help pupils to transit smoothly to primary school and the second purpose is to provide pupils with literacy in order to communicate with others. A third purpose plays a crucial role in directing the school and teacher actions as well as their perceptions of literacy and literacy teaching. This purpose is represented in the parents' requirements and catering for them.

1) Preparing students for primary school

Firstly, in the three nursery schools, considerations about the transition to primary education are powerful determinants of classroom practice. Miss Wang claimed that in Kangaroo nursery has a long history of preparing pupils well for transition. In the interview she describes the literacy goal in Kangaroo nursery as having *'a priority on education'*, and the students as *'prepared for primary school'* and *'ready to learn'*. Therefore, Miss Wang reported that her duty is to prepare her students well for the transition to primary school which they would move onto one year later. Thus, she taught the students how they should perform in primary school situations, and she also emphasized accuracy in reading and writing skills in order to cover all the practices in the textbook. But there is a deeper, more important sense in which Miss Wang viewed

literacy as an academic skill for transition into the primary school purpose. She continually mentioned that the foundation of literacy, such as the Chinese phonetic symbols system and the Chinese characters, were to be established mainly in the nursery. She explained how the students would need to use these literacy skills in the primary school. Therefore, she felt she had a duty to prepare them well for the transition to primary school by teaching Chinese phonetic symbols system and the Chinese characters, as well as teaching reading and writing thoroughly in class. She explains:

You know after student transition into primary school, the first thing they need to do is to understand the textbook and examination paper. These are introduced mainly through reading and writing. ... For my students at this stage, the first things they need are writing and reading, followed by listening and speaking (Wang, 2nd follow up interview, Sep 2008).

In the same way, Miss Lyn reported that at Lilly nursery they also ‘have a priority of preparing student for primary school’ and making students ‘ready to learn’. But when Miss Lyn claimed that her real view beyond the responsibilities of the goal of literacy from school context, she reported that she preferred to focus always on kids. She explained that “*it's not about school goals, staff, or parents; it's about what can we do for kids, how can we best serve the students literacy experience*” (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008) On the other hand, a different meaning of preparing students for primary school by the teachers at Lion school is given in that their students arrive with ‘*varying degrees of exposure to print character and oral language*’ (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008). As Miss Liu claimed, the influence of the transition to primary education was less of a pressure. Therefore, she reported that she looked at her students who had just started their journey of learning. They will not be preparing for any major transition of primary education at their nursery stage.

2) Preparing students to communicate with others

The second purpose for literacy education as reported by Miss Lyn and Miss Liu in their interviews is to equip students with the tools to communicate with other people. Furthermore, consistent with this perspective, Miss Lyn also gave an account of literacy as pertaining to parental–child relationships or as a bridge: *“I think literacy is a tool; it’s really a matter of an interactive bridge between parents and children”* (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008). The three teachers also raised the point that literacy education works as a foundation tool, and serves as a building block function. As Miss Liu put it: *“they need the tool. Literacy is the framework of language. With this framework, it’s easy for them to add things up”* (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008). Furthermore, Miss Wang and Miss Lyn reported that *“it’s also a foundation and a basic. When students have this foundation, they can build everything on it.”* From this quotation, it is obvious that the three teachers saw literacy as laying the foundation for the development of language proficiency.

3) Catering for the needs of parents

The high expectations of parents are a third factor that can influence decision making about literacy education. According to these three teachers, one of the familiar expressions from these parents is *‘well, what have you done for MY child’*. Families or parents want the school to support their children's literacy development through the combined efforts of teachers and resources from schools; the great majority of children at school are all expected to become successful readers. Miss Wang also mentioned that *“catering for needs”* had a role in shaping Miss Wang’s belief, as the parents expected her to teach everything that the students had to learn:

Parents expect me to teach their children everything. They would think: “If you don’t teach reading and writing to my children, how are they supposed to do the thematic textbook exercise? How are they supposed to transition to primary school?” (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Similarly, Miss Lyn and Miss Liu also mentioned that ‘*catering for parent’s needs*’ requires her to teach everything that the students had to learn. However, Miss Lyn and Miss Liu both explained that their beliefs and ways of teaching have not necessarily been influenced or shaped by the parents of students:

What I will do is, using careful discretion, listen to what parents have to say and tell them I’ll do my best, but I won’t necessarily do it since I think what parents want their children to do is unreasonable. I won’t do it because I think parents are being unreasonable for expecting their children to do so (Lyn, post interview, Dec 2008).

However, Miss Wang and Miss Lyn noticed that this issue is causing a ‘lack of time, lack of voice in the school and lack of home support’ in their literacy lesson.

6.4.2.3 View of language skills and literacy

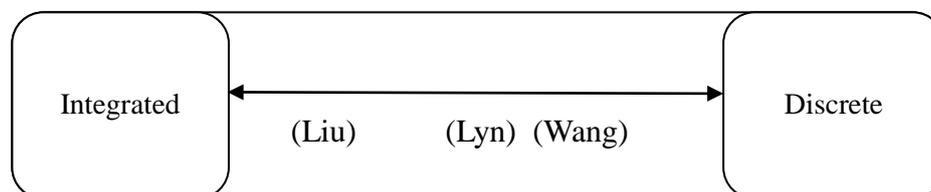


Figure 6.10: View of language skills and literacy.

As far as language skills and their relationships with literacy are concerned, participants had two main conceptions. Firstly, literacy was viewed as a set of separate skills, while the second emphasizes skill integration. However, the data shows that the three participants expressed different but sometimes overlapping views on language skills and literacy learning that fit within a continuum between the two extremes of teaching integrated skills and separate, discrete skills. As it is represented in Figure 6.10 above, Miss Liu is mainly in favour of an integrated approach, whilst Miss Wang stands at the other end, with Miss Lyn in between, but closer to favouring discrete skills.

Miss Wang and Miss Lyn suggested that literacy consisted of separate components such as writing, reading, listening, speaking and vocabulary. Thus, they often referred to these components as discrete entities, each of which could be taught as a separate skill to students. Of all the components of language, for Miss Wang writing was the most important:

“writing is the most important skill because when students join the primary school, they need it immediately.” (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Miss Lyn also reported it relatively easy to prioritize individual skills in terms of their importance to students as she said that communication hinged crucially on them. However, she claimed that listening was the most important skill because everyone needed to be able to use this skill. She argues:

That’s what I’ve just said: Have they received my message? Have they received what I said? Have they received it correctly? I need to make sure that they have received the message correctly (Lyn, 2nd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

In contrast, reading and writing were less important because they were not absolutely essential for survival.

The second conception is that literacy is viewed as an integrated set of skills rather than “separate and discrete”. This belief was held by Miss Liu, who suggested an especially close relationship between speaking, listening and reading. She also claimed that the latter emerged from the former. Therefore, in her opinion,

if you can speak and listen, then you are able to read. If you can read, you know how to write it down. ... But if you are able to write, it doesn’t mean that you will be able to speak, listen and read (Liu, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

She viewed the four skills as being integrated rather than being discrete, as evident in the following remark:

I think ... the literacy lesson is an integrated lesson where students need to listen, speak, read and write at the same time. And what they speak, listen to, read and write about is all inter-related (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

6.4.2.4 Perception of literacy learning in the classroom

From the data it appears that three literacy learning perceptions were held by the three teachers. These perceptions are not exclusive, but more than one perception can be held by the same teacher, as the following discussion demonstrates.

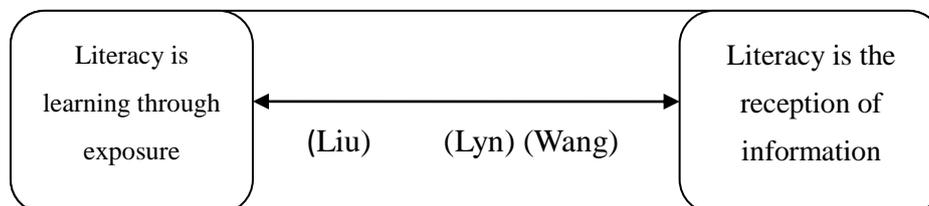


Figure 6.11: Perception of literacy learning in the classroom.

The three participants expressed different but sometimes overlapping views in their perception of classroom literacy learning. These can be placed on a continuum between two extremes of literacy learning, with the reception of information at one end and learning through exposure at the other. As shown in Figure 6.11 above, Miss Liu is mainly favours learning through natural exposure whilst Miss Wang stands at the other end. Miss Lyn stands in somewhere between. Miss Wang and Miss Lyn argued that literacy learning depended crucially on whether students could receive knowledge and information transmitted from the teacher to the students. Miss Wang said that literacy is a large amount of knowledge that has to be learned, mastered and demonstrated through productive skills in textbook and classroom assessment. Therefore, she reported that students learn literacy as they receive “an input, then they can produce” (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008). Furthermore, she argued that literacy was related to accurate skills. She claimed that if students got the literacy skills right, they could read and write at the primary education stage successfully:

I think the practice we do every day is to help them reading and writing skill in the right trajectory, also help them to get these skills just as fast as I can (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

Miss Lyn claimed that literacy learning is a communication process in which the teacher sends an oral message containing information to students, who were expected to receive it. In the same vein, Miss Lyn explained and emphasized that it was very important for all students to ‘receive information’ that the teacher was passing on:

Have they received my message? Have they received what I said? Have they received it correctly? I need to make sure that they have received the message correctly (Lyn, 2nd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

It is apparent from these quotations that in the view of Miss Wang and Miss Lyn, there was a direct relationship between attentive memorizing, listening and literacy learning gains. This belief is not difficult to understand as they saw listening as a means that enabled students to receive information or knowledge. This is evident from the field notes for Miss Wang’s classroom:

During literacy lesson, Miss Wang was revising the names of fruit with pupils. The teacher showed pupils some word cards and read out the first one with the class. Then she (pointed to the next word card): ‘Can you tell the class what’s next?’

Children: ‘葡萄’ [Grapes].

Miss Wang: ‘Right, you are all clever children. Do you all remember what we learnt the day before?’

Miss Wang (jumped to the next word card): ‘What’s this?’

Children: ‘橘子’ [Oranges].

Miss Wang: ‘Smart.’

(Field notes, Oct 2008).

The other teacher, Miss Liu, made almost no mention of this learning perception.

The second view of literacy learning is learning by doing, a view held by Miss Liu and to a certain degree, Miss Lyn. Miss Liu reported that she felt as a deeply held a principle that literacy learning is best learned by using it actively for the classroom and social interactional contexts: ‘*Language is for daily life. You have to use it in order to learn it*’ (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008). Through using language in this way, Miss Liu reasoned: “*students’ literacy proficiency will naturally improve.*” Thus, she reported that

she regularly asked her students to share stories and their experiences. Miss Liu claimed that her students were fully capable of reading short paragraphs on their own and discussing it (*Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008*).

This was reflected in the classes that I observed. For example, while doing the day's reading, Miss Liu and her students actually read the book together. Miss Liu provided many extended learning and sharing opportunities for the students to involve their own experience and interest during the book reading. After the book reading, she also offered many opportunities for brief open questions about the story (Field notes, Oct 2008).

In a similar way, Miss Lyn also claimed that she asked the students to talk and share their experience with each other in a lesson before introducing the lesson details to them. However, there was little evidence of this in the classes that I observed. Furthermore, although the book reading section time was provided in the timetable, book reading-related activities were not incorporated within curricular tasks. The entitlement of book reading time or free play and free choice time mostly depended on the children's efficiency and behaviour themed lesson. If they behaved well during the themed lesson, then book reading would take place following their afternoon on Monday afternoon (it being common in Taiwan for a short nap to be taken by students at their desks in school in the afternoon). In other words, it is used as a reward for good behaviour. During the book-reading time, there were also very limited opportunities for interaction, sharing and discussing the story. The following examples illustrate the situation:

Miss Lyn [leading a 'story telling' in a 20-minute book reading section]: 'Let's cook the special soup.'

Miss Lyn: 'Can you tell me how many ingredients he put into the soup?' Children paused and could not answer.

Teacher: 'Do you notice the different type of ingredients I write down on the board? [Leading

counting from the board], so the word “ingredients” tells you how many you can add into the soup. So, we have eleven ingredients for the soup.’ (Field notes, Nov 2008).

Miss Lyn provided hints and clues in order to achieve the expected outcomes during the discussion time. Underlying these examples, the evidence shows that Miss Lyn took a slightly different classroom practice compared to Miss Liu.

The third idea of literacy learning is learning through exposure. Miss Liu argued strongly that if natural exposure to literacy could take place, students would not need to learn literacy explicitly at all. She also claimed that she insisted on creating the necessary exposure literacy throughout all her lessons in the classroom. Furthermore, she suggested that giving plenty of wide exposure to language in the lesson is the best way of literacy learning. She said this exposure creates an “*immersion effect*” and gives students the opportunity to pick up the language. After that, facing more complex situations, students can produce language “*naturally and play with it*”, without having to think about what words or structures they should use. As she explained below,

‘Through telling stories, daily sharing, reading aloud...etc, just giving them plenty of oral practice in activities. After that students can gradually pick up expressions or ways to express idea. Anyway, for me, exposure promotes an unconscious learning opportunity (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

In the same vein, Miss Liu said that if students worked in a rich environment with rich exposure, they could benefit from the exposure and environment available. However, she generally tended to view exposure as a necessary precondition on which language development depended. Without it, she said, students would find it very hard to master the language. Moreover, Miss Liu also pointed out that the learning environment and exposure should be created in a natural context, free from inhibitions and anxiety, by engaging more literacy learning opportunities and enhancing students’

self-confidence. Thus, she claimed that when she asked students to read aloud, she would read along with them together “*so that weaker students can gain some confidence too*”. She also reported that she preferred getting students to read aloud in pairs or groups because she claimed:

“Students will have more confidence and have a lower chance of making mistakes” (Liu, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

Additionally, she was also conscious that when students were not ready to learn certain skills, for example, writing, they might make the same mistakes, even after repeated practice:

I find out that when they try to write it down that they still make some mistakes. It is not that they don't understand what it means. In fact, they know in which situations they should use the phonetic symbol, But they may not link the two things together [i.e. using phonetic symbol accurately in reading and writing]. ... Especially for the not so commonly-used symbols (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

The classes I observed reflected this perception. For example, Miss Liu's classroom had a specific literacy focus and display which follows a theme-based lesson. Moreover, surrounding the classroom area were many print resources, posters and students' work. Also different types of books could be found around the classroom and these were displayed attractively and invitingly. They were frequently relocated and the books changed, the variety maintaining the interest of students (Field notes, Nov 2008).

In contrast, the other two teachers attached some degree of importance to exposure. The observation data reveals that Miss Wang did not regard showing as a condition that would allow students to learn literacy naturally. For example, in Miss Wang's classroom, there was very limited evidence of a print environment and books. She argues that she prefers to start her literacy lesson with teacher-directed approach; formal instruction rather than any other indirect activity (Field notes, Sep2008).

6.4.2.5 Views on the Whole language approach and the Reading Project

The three participants claimed that they knew the Reading Project and the main idea behind the whole language approach from 2001. They all reported positively about the whole language approach, *'It would be good if sometimes I can involve the whole language approach to teach skills'* (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008). However, Miss Wang mentioned in her interview that she never implemented it in her literacy lessons, claiming that her students had no time for the whole language approach. Moreover, Miss Lyn claimed that the reading project and the whole language were not suitable for her students and the whole nursery environment and circumstances. In fact, she reported a rather skeptical view about its usefulness. :

I think the whole language approach is very good, but the goal cannot be successfully and thoroughly achieved in reality. As for me, I'll see what will be best for my students and that'll be what is used in my class (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

She claimed that while the dominant government Reading Project trend had changed over this period, this had not helped students to improve their mastery of the language. As she indicates:

Talking about the whole language approach, which is nowadays greatly encouraged, I think it is a good method, but I can only apply it to a certain extent.... I should say some parents don't think it's important, but in terms of education, after so many years, I think it's rather an ideal, a dream, a goal. When it clashes with reality, you have to give up your dream (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

She continued her argument about the Reading Project and whole language approach in the next extract:

Just like a slogan we've heard all the time, "The government promotes reading", but you only heard of it and no actual actions are taken to carry out this slogan. There are but you are just unaware of it. There is still a lot that needs to be done. We still have a lot to do (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

However, Miss Liu is the only teacher among the three participants who has implemented whole language in her lessons and class most of the time as she reported in the interview data:

Whole language...It tickled me since I was doing my PFCE. I've got it highlighted. Because, we can't separate literacy from our life...meaning in ordinary life, giving meaning to the ordinary life that makes up our days that all my pupils feel (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

This shows that Miss Liu subscribed to the whole language approach. Although she was in favour of the Reading Project and promotion of the whole language approach, she reported that they were not well organized enough to be able to follow or change:

I don't really know much about the reading project but I know reading is important and the importance should not be emphasized only when the government says so. I think it's a bit late. I like to read. I like the way the whole language approach benefits students. With or without this project, for me, for the way I teach, it doesn't really change anything. I'm still doing what I believe is best for students (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

Also, the three teachers claimed that they did not feel that the nursery was following the project guidelines or the whole language approach strictly. Moreover, they did not receive any formal teacher training oriented towards the new Reading Project; they got to know the new project mainly through the news and attending mandatory teachers' seminars and workshops, organized by the non-governmental institutions and agencies.

Honestly, I haven't figured out the content of the policy but I know there are books being given away, from the news and other colleagues. This is the only information I had from the reading project (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008; Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008; Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

6.4.3 How the Teacher teaches

At the start of theme time, Miss Liu shown her class a story book called ‘太空漫步 [Spacewalk]’, and asks, how can we start?’ The children are very excited. Instantly, they suggest starting from Mars. Some children even act out the action of a spacewalk...some children suggest starting by testing a new spacecraft first... some children suggest, how about our astronaut clothes and equipment...? Some children suggest starting with a space station... Miss Liu suggests that the children start with what they had just said in different groups around the classroom. Then Miss Liu leaves the story book in front of the whiteboard and invites the children to use it. Also, she tells children that they will have story telling after group time... Miss Liu walks round the different groups and discusses with them the group’s progress... A child sought to speak to her about his space station as he needed some advice from her... another group of children used paper to cut out many different ball shapes to represent planets, the solar system (Miss Liu-O field notes).

Table 6.5: Liu’s lesson photo.



Miss Liu’s lesson time

Miss Lyn started the class by listening to a themes package CD for 5-10mins. After that, she gathered the children into a semi-circle at the centre of the classroom. She then provided a real experience for the children by bringing out a bag of real fleece for the class and also some different type of wool products: a scarf, clothes, etc. She was eager to involve the children by asking them if they had ever seen sheep before and engaging them in the introduction of social knowledge; for example, she put different things in front of them to show, touch and feel. After that, Miss Lyn used 10-15 mins to introduce the writing of the Chinese characters ‘羊’; ‘羊毛’ and the Chinese phonetic system ‘一’; ‘尢’; ‘丿’. The worksheets and homework were designed by the commercial theme package. It is very different from the beginning introduction of the concept of animal theme which started with ‘sheep’, and the teaching and learning of this 10-15mins was very formal. Miss Lyn seemed also to notice that the children were not interested in this part of lesson, so she skimmed through the teaching. After that Miss Lyn started to ask children to think when they can use this word in the daily talking. Every child in the class was all expected to give an example for Miss Lyn write on the whiteboard. The children returned to their own seats and copied the writing from the whiteboard to their worksheets. They had to finish this assigned activities by the end of lesson. They could move to the corners in the classroom to have free play only after they finished their writing activities. (Miss Lyn-O filed notes)

Table 6.6: Miss Lyn’s lesson photo.



Miss Lyn’s lesson time

Miss Wang started with revising the names of fruit and some parts of the human body with pupils. She showed pupil flash cards with a word and picture and read out the first one with the class. Then Miss Wang (pointing to the next card) asked: “can you tell the class what’s next?”. Repeated this activity around 5-10 mins. She started pointing to individual pupils to come to up to the front and matching the Chinese phonetic system and Characters according to her order. The children clapped their hands for correct answers from classmates. This continued until all pupils had finished. Then... “now open your book and turn to page17. Take a pencil and an eraser. I will count to 10 and all of you should be starting on your Chinese worksheets...” Miss Wang walks around the classroom, supervising the children working at the table. All the children are writing in their worksheets. Miss Wang noticed that a boy had not put down answers on his worksheet. He was drawing something on it. She asked that boy to sit with her and Miss Wang erased the drawing and the wrong words that the child had written. She insisted that the boy rewrite them in front of her - Miss Wang rubbed off the wrong words many times. In the end, she held the boy’s hands to assist them to write according to the rules for writing Chinese characters. At the same time, Miss Wang asked the children who had finished to hand in their sheets for her to correct. (Miss Wang-O filed notes).

Table 6.7: Wang’s lesson photo.



Miss Wang’s lesson time

These are three samples of the many learning and teaching notes of the observation visits. Not only do they capture the teaching practice of the teacher, but they also record the learning experience of the children. Explicit in these vignettes as well are the distinct pedagogical features such as the roles the teacher played and the diverse kinds of teacher-child interaction and relation exhibited. During a half-day observation, it is easier to understand the teacher's practice and what it is like to be in the class. This portrayal is crucial to answering the research question, because the learning and teaching practices thus encapsulated facilitates analysis of pedagogical practice with reference to the expectations of government and scholars, as outlined in Chapter Two.

This section is composed of five principal parts. The first part presents an overview of the nursery and kindergarten classroom environment and curriculum management, upon which the pedagogical practice of the teacher was based. The second part illustrates the teaching content of the teachers' literacy instruction. Observational vignettes will be employed to picture the flow of the lesson in the classroom of each teacher. The third and fourth parts are devoted to presenting an account of the opinions obtained from the three teachers on the role of teachers and their relationship with pupils. The last part illustrates the teaching structure of literacy instruction.

6.4.3.1 Classroom Environment and Curriculum Management

The first important aspect to nursery teaching is related to the physical learning environment. The learning environment denotes the space, classroom size, and the basic facilities installed where learning and teaching take place. The classroom setting refers to the placement of activity centres and their layout in terms of the storage of the learning materials where learning activities are conducted.

As it appears from the field notes, observation check list and the classroom activity

photo (below) Miss Wang's classroom was very roomy but inadequate in terms of decorations, furniture, learning area and materials. The majority of what were meant to be learning area (activity centres) were in fact just pieces of cardboard hung on the wall at the children's eye level with inadequate materials. Miss Lyn's classroom was medium-sized and separated into several learning areas, but these areas were not clearly identified as to purpose. However, most of the decorations were cut outs of various Mandarin phonetic characters; some letters of the Latin alphabet and Arabic numbers. Moreover, the walls were also covered in posters from the teacher supply guide with strategies for solving numeracy problems, telling the time and thematic unit posters. The Classroom seating was arranged in a U-shape with some available spaces left towards the front of the classroom just in front of the white board. Miss Lyn sometimes took advantage of this space and spread the students out for different activities.

Miss Liu's classroom, the furniture was arranged in such a way that students were easily able to move from one activity to another. Also it was clear that the physical environment was arranged to encourage collaborative learning. In comparison with other two classrooms, Miss Liu's classroom was the only one that was equipped with activity centres surrounded by storage shelves and learning tables to emphasize their unique identity. Furthermore, Miss Liu's classroom was decorated mainly with children's artwork and other creative products and the classroom poster and decoration displays were also changed to relate to the monthly theme and subtheme. However, the decoration of the other classes was predominantly commercial products, such as giant colourful cartoon cut-outs stuck to the window, the walls and the doors. Table (6.8) summarizes the findings of the observation data for the three teachers' classroom environment, management and basic information.

Table 6.8: Summary of classroom observation Data (Classroom Management).

Category	Miss Wang	Miss Lyn	Miss Liu
Class Level	Mature class, age between 4-6 years old		
T/S ratio	1:19	1:15 (2special needs)	2:18
Learning area	None	Yes	Yes
Display work	None	Yes	Yes
Signs and poster	None	Yes	Yes



Miss Wang's classroom



Miss Lyn's classroom



Miss Liu's classroom

Table 6.9: Summary of classroom observation Data (Literacy Environment).

Category	Miss Wang	Miss Lyn	Miss Liu
Book area	None	Yes	Yes
Environment Print	None	Yes	Yes
Books for learning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Type of Books	2	2	more than 10
Approaches to book reading	Yes, 1time	Yes, 1time	Yes, everyday

Table 6.9 above gives summarizes the observations check of the literacy environment in the classroom. From the table, it appears that not all practitioners offered the students a print environment. In Miss Wang's class, there was poor evidence of a print environment. However, Miss Lyn and Miss Liu's class had print environments. The predominant kinds of environmental print in these two early years' class were displayed differently, however. Miss Lyn highlighted key words in order to help children understand and remember. However, Miss Liu had a specific reading focus which followed their theme and subtheme programme and display. Moreover, surrounding Miss Liu's classroom area there were many of the students' works such as paintings on the walls from their daily thematic program.

All the three classes had notice boards, but only Miss Lyn's and Miss Liu's were used as a demonstration to children of the purposes of print and also to serve as a reminder of upcoming important events, including extracurricular activities. In addition, Miss Lyn's and Miss Liu's classrooms have easy access to books, plus a book area was offered to the children. Especially in Miss Liu's classroom, books were to be found all over the class and displayed attractively and invitingly with frequent changes to maintain interest. Moreover, in the three class settings, Miss Liu's class was the only one that tried to offer as many different types of books as possible to the student.

Furthermore, in these three classrooms, when the students were given free class time in class, they were presented with a selection of materials, which in most cases were related to the main literacy or numeracy activity of the day.

6.4.3.2 Teaching content

Before moving onto the teaching content, it is worth giving an overview of the curriculum first. Curriculum organization means putting learning and teaching together in a particular, chosen manner. The use of themes to link various parts of the curriculum is a very popular approach in nursery and kindergarten curricula in Taiwan. It was also an approach adopted by all three participating school to anchor discrete curriculum elements within a coherent entity. Themes were very clearly written on the lesson plans drafted by teachers. What followed closely after the topic of the theme was the subtheme topic; this was to help to make the overall plan of the lesson more cohesive. A theme usually served as a weekly, bi-weekly or by monthly focus, with the subtheme as a daily focus. Miss Liu was the only teacher who employed the theme as a monthly focus, the subtheme as a bi-weekly focus, and then introduced a daily focus to organize the learning of children each day. (See Table 6.10 and Table 6.11)

Table (6.10-6.11): Themes in the curriculum of the three participating schools the observation period of current research.

School/Teacher	Themes (weekly/bi-weekly focus)	Sub-themes (Daily focus)
Kangaroo nursery (Miss Wang)	Sense of magic	My Body To Smell To touch and feel
Lilly nursery (Miss Lyn)	Animals	Four-legged animals Sheep A Shepherd

Table (6.10-6.11): Themes in the curriculum of the three participating schools the observation period of current research.

School/Teacher	Themes (Monthly focus)	Sub-themes (Daily focus)
Lion nursery (Miss Liu)	Outer space	Astronaut Astronaut's clothes and equipment Spacecraft Space station Planets

The three teachers all follow a theme-subtheme arrangement, but differ in the design and production of the contents. Kangaroo and Lilly schools both implemented commercial textbook packages for each theme and subtheme, as prescribed by a committee chaired by the head teacher. However, Lion school implemented guidelines for each subject prescribed by a committee that involved both the church and head teacher. Further, the choice of subtheme for Lion school was made by the teacher and students. The above table (6.10-6.11) includes the prescribed thematic lesson contents during the class and teacher observation period of the current research (Field notes, Nov 2008). The thematic curriculum was the principal element of the curriculum organization that could be identified in the lesson plans of all the three teachers.

a) Timetabling and observation schedule

All three nursery schools offered an eight to nine hour school day. For the purposes of the current research, four whole mornings teaching session were observed for Miss Wang's classroom as it is represented in Table 6.12 below.

Table 6.12: Observation period of current research in the kangaroo nursery.

	Mon	Wed	Thu	Fri
900-930	Snack time			
930-1000		Literacy lesson		
1000-1030	Literacy lesson	Phonetic lesson	Literacy lesson	Literacy lesson
1030-1100	Maths lesson	Maths lesson	Phonetic lesson	Writing lesson
1100-1130	Theme-based lesson	Assessment	Writing lesson	Maths lesson

These observations covered 13 whole lessons with a literacy focus. They also covered four lessons of literacy, three of mathematics, two of teaching writing, two of phonetic lessons as well as one theme-based lesson and one assessment lesson. The literacy instruction included a brief introduction (5 minutes); the phonetic symbols and word character recognition (15 minutes); writing practice and one to one or group accuracy checking (20 minutes). Moreover, the lesson on writing involved introduction on word character formation, spelling, punctuation and practice (40 minutes). Classroom observation showed that of the 390 minutes observed, Miss Wang would use all the classroom time to go through all these literacy routine practice. Also, she would arrange for a number of literacy lessons to be conducted on consecutive days in order that students could be given a concentrated dose of literacy knowledge. However, when I asked Miss Wang to comment on my follow up observation notes she recalled and claimed that this consecutive arrangement would facilitate the literacy.

The interview and observation data show that Miss Wang based her decisions about what literacy content to teach on the Kangaroo's prescribed commercial thematic textbooks. She reported that she enjoyed a very little degree of autonomy in the use of the kangaroo nursery materials prescribed by the administrators. Within the very little flexibility afforded to her, Miss Wang chose to follow the textbooks closely. For example, when I asked Miss Wang after the observation session why she spent one whole literacy art lessons on phonetics symbols and word character recognition and practice, she replied that she just followed the commercial thematic textbook, which has a chapter to follow. Furthermore, when she elaborated on the reasons for following the textbooks so closely, she referred to *ease of preparation* and having '*no other choice*' but to use the textbooks:

You can say the textbook series covers everything; I fill in the blanks and turn them in. I just do the input. I have been following the textbook series for 15 years (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008)

In talking about the need to cover the literacy items contained in the textbooks, Miss Wang stressed the importance of practical literacy skill:

... But for practical literacy skill items, I feel I must teach them all. Otherwise when students are promoted to primary school, they won't know all of the phonetic symbols and enough word characters, which wouldn't be good for their primary stage (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

She also reported that while it was possible to skip the sharing time and pair or group work because of a lack of time, all phonetic symbols and word character items in the textbooks had to be taught. This shows that to Miss Wang, literacy is essential for the ability to write to recognize and to memorize in Mandarin. The comments also further substantiate her belief about the centrality of literacy, that is, mastering skill in literacy is crucial.

Apart from her phonetic symbols or word character recognition literacy lessons, Miss Wang would also deal with writing practice in her literacy lessons. She claimed that after students had learned basic phonetics symbol, word character and sentence structures, they would be able to write better and more accurate Mandarin in their textbook. In terms of the observation schedule in the Lilly School, I observed Miss Lyn's classroom over three whole mornings and one afternoon teaching, as presented in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13: Observation period of current research in the Lilly nursery.

	Mon	Tue	Fri
830-900	Greeting and outdoor		
900-920	Snack time		
920-950	Theme-based lesson	Theme-based lesson	Literacy lesson
955-1025	Literacy lesson Science lesson		Theme-based lesson
1030-1100	Orff music		Phonics practice
1105-1135	Idiom lesson	Maths lesson	
1410-1440	Book corner and books sharing		
1445-1515	Phonics practice		

These observations covered ten whole lessons with a literacy focus. Among them were six literacy lessons, two theme based lessons, one idiom lesson and one occasion of book corner and book sharing lessons. Of the 435 minutes of literacy time observed, children were involved in different literacy activities. This included a brief introduction, group formal instruction, and a match playing activity with 2-3 minutes discussion.

The “curricula and syllabus” were decided by Miss Lyn and her colleagues, who browsed through the Lilly nursery school’s themes covered in the prescribed guidelines and commercial textbook series. In each section of this guideline and textbook series, there were activities, aids, a CD and a poster to train students’ use of the language skills.

I decided what students needed to learn in the literacy art lessons. Then I chose the appropriate activities. Because of the thematic textbook series, we have to follow the chapter. So even if a chapter is very boring, I still need to teach but I will choose some funny activities to help them (Lyn, 2nd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

But Miss Lyn claimed that she paid more attention to the literacy art sections than other colleagues. In fact, Miss Lyn used the thematic CD and textbook content to be covered in the literacy lesson to determine what theme and subtheme she was going to teach. However, Miss Lyn reported that she enjoyed a fair amount of flexibility in how she adapted the materials for her students:

We have textbook series dealing with different topics, idiom books, and activities books and work books...etc. we just talked about. But I don’t follow them all (Lyn, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

Moreover, in each “literacy lesson”, Miss Lyn wanted to focus on one literacy item only. She assumed that if more than one literacy idea was involved, students would become “*confused and perplexed*”,

... Step by step is better....I don’t want my students to get confused... I’ll observe the class and make sure that they understand from each lesson before I move on to the next one (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Additionally, she claimed that she actually arranged her lessons as she did not want to tag literacy on to the teaching of other skills:

We do have literacy art lessons whose main focus is on reading mostly, so I don't usually teach Chinese phonetics symbols or writing Chinese words character deliberately (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

In this regard, Miss Lyn's preference is that students have to understand one literacy item first before they move on to the next one.

Miss Liu was observed over 3 whole morning teaching sessions with a specific focus on literacy sections (see Table 6. 14).

Table 6.14: Observation period of current research in the Lion nursery.

	Tue (2xTimes)	Fri
750-820	Greeting and outdoor	
820-900	Wisdom and prayer time	Wisdom and prayer time
900-930	Literacy lesson	Sharing and discovering lesson
930-1000	Snack Time	
1000-1100	Theme-based lesson	Literacy lesson
1100-1150		Theme-based lesson

These included three lessons of wisdom and prayer time as a whole class activity, three theme based lessons, three literacy lessons with group activity and one whole class sharing time. A close analysis of the observation field notes and the lesson transcripts shows that Miss Liu is engaged in literacy work most frequently among the three teachers of this study. For example, in each of the lessons I observed, Miss Liu was engaged in literacy work at the start of early morning as part of regular praying or singing a hymn. During the book sharing lesson, she also interacted with the children on aspects of literacy, such as word recognition, comprehension and oral expression. It should be recognized that Miss Liu never failed to spend some time teaching or

involving literacy points that the students needed. This classroom practice from the observation data is consistent with her comments below:

I really don't have a lesson especially for literacy. Every lesson is a literacy lesson and every lesson is not a literacy lesson. In the Maths lesson, they need literacy; IT lesson, they need literacy as well ... I don't think I'll have a lesson specifically devoted for literacy, now or in the future (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

Furthermore, Miss Liu's observation data show that after each major learning activity involving integrated language skills, Miss Liu would typically draw her students' attention to the literacy points needed for the production of a coherent text. For example, in helping the students to complete a short outer space section in one of the theme based lessons, Miss Liu first focused on content and got the students to understand the gist of the text. She then drew their attention to literacy points which would help them understand the details better. In summary, Miss Liu dealt with literacy so frequently that she included different activities and formal instruction in each and every lesson..... (Field notes, Dec 2008).

When Miss Liu started her literacy lessons by focusing on storytelling, the literacy features which she chose to focus on typically arose out of the communicative and interactive activities with which students had been involved and shared. For example, after Miss Liu had finished storytelling in a literacy lesson, she directed their attention to some new and difficult language points which she supposed they might have used in their reading and writing. She commented that:

I think this involves many aspects, I don't think I can prepare the students for so many things before they write. ... I wanted them to have the context first. They first learn about the context and the order of the events. Then when there are things that they have not noticed, I remind them (Liu, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

The teaching guideline and textbook provided a stock of literacy information to cover in Miss Liu's class. However, in Miss Liu's opinion an effective teacher should not be teaching guidelines and be textbook bound. As she pointed out,

'Although we have guidelines and one textbook, we won't just follow it' (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

Miss Liu preferred to add other relevant language points which students themselves decide based on their interest or she may change the order of the exercises. With regard to teaching activities, Miss Liu claimed variety would help to avoid both the teacher and students from feeling bored. To use her own words,

Students can learn something they really like and also can learn other things at the same time. It was not just for practicing skills only (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

A second strategy which Miss Liu used to take notes of the errors that students commonly made and who made them. These formed the basis for remedial literacy teaching:

I usually have a rough sheet for jotting down common mistakes and who made the mistake. That is my regular practice. And before I move on to the next, I will talk about these common mistakes with them again tell them what they have forgotten from the content side and what kinds of accuracy mistakes they have made (Liu, 3rd follow up interview, Nov 2008).

6.4.3.3 Teachers' role

The teachers' role is meant to refer to comments gained from teachers about how they make sense of themselves as a teacher in class. The data findings reveal that there are two main perceptions of the teacher's role in the literacy classroom.

a) Morally and intellectually superior

In Miss Wang's opinion, the teacher is assumed to be morally and intellectually superior rather than a facilitator. As she reported, she always demands respect in terms

of authority before giving any lesson in the classroom. Several illustrations are provided in the following extracts:

It is important for them to learn to respect teacher. I have to demand respect in terms of keeping the part of our ancestral culture and rule. Also I believe this demand is good for them (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

This role played by Miss Wang was reflected in the classes that I observed. Miss Wang had to act as the “lead and guide” in the literacy lesson. For example, she chose teacher-fronted or teacher-led instruction and also she did all the talking in the lesson. Moreover, if a student did not recognize the meaning of a word during the lesson, Miss Wang would answer the question directly (Field notes, Sep 2008).

When the researcher asked Miss Wang for clarification at the end of the observation, she confirmed that her way of literacy instruction in the classroom interaction is “teacher-centred only”, though this is a type of teaching instruction that many teachers have been advised to avoid nowadays. However, Miss Wang argued that *it would be the best way if I guided student and they followed (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).*

In a similar vein, Miss Wang also views herself as a “transmitter”. She gives a description of “transmitter” as providing detailed explanations about literacy which the students could understand and match with textbook and flashcard (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008). Another role for the teacher Miss Wang reported was to *monitor* students’ work in class. Through monitoring, the teacher can check whether students are paying attention and whether learning is taking place.

I’ll walk around in class and monitor the students. I’ll jot down the names of those who have not done their work and I’ll ask them to show me their work next time. After following this procedure for a while, they know that they must do their work. I must do that (Wang, 3rd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

In the same way, she also said that it was the teacher's role to correct mistakes as students make them: ... *I think it's my responsibility to correct them when they make mistakes (Wang, 3rd follow up interview, Oct 2008).*

This role is reflected in Miss Wang's behaviour in the classroom. In one instance after a detailed section, she had to give students exercises to drill practice. She also gave students a quiz following the lesson and practice exercises, as well as asking them to do homework every day (Field notes, Sep 2008).

When I confirmed what I observed with her at the end of the observation, Miss Wang reported the lesson in the nursery as a race arguing that *childhood is not a journey, it is a race*. In this way, students were expected to “*receive and pack*” the knowledge as much as they can in the school. Therefore, she argued that what she usually asks is that students do the drill practice exercises or quiz and homework that deliver knowledge efficiently and quickly. She explains this further in the following:

Just do it again and again, as you know, it's the old idiom from our Confucius, 'practice makes things perfect' (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

Here, Miss Wang expressed a belief that is very common among Chinese teachers. The idea is that it is very important to let students know what is correct and what is not. As a result, Miss Wang tends to be stricter and harsher with the students.

b) Supporters and facilitators

On the other hand, both Miss Lyn and Miss Liu reported that the first role of a teacher was to help students to grow, mentally and morally. Both of them used the same Chinese expression 傳道, 授業, 解惑 *chuan2 dao4 shou4 ye4 jie3 huo4* (“pass on the doctrines of ancient sagas and explain difficult points”), and they emphasized the

teacher's role to develop students' thinking:

....傳道, 授業, 解惑 *chuan2 dao4 shou4 ye4 jie3 huo4*, normally meant, we teacher tell students things and also we answer their questions. Sometimes, we need to teach them how to think. Such stuff is kind of guiding them (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Moreover, Miss Lyn and Miss Liu claimed that teachers should stimulate and motivate a long-lasting interest in the literacy subject matter in students. The following from the interview data clearly illustrates the ideas suggested above.

My main role is to stimulate and motivate my students' interest in the world of books. I am just a tool or mediator in the class (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

Furthermore, Miss Lyn reported that she had to act as a “*guide and a supporter*” in the classroom. She claimed that if a teacher took mainly the guide's role, the classroom interaction would become “*teacher-centred*”, and this is the scenario that she has been trying to avoid.

I don't quite enjoy teaching children in formal conventional ways, like teacher centred instruction. So I love my children to learn something through the actives we conduct (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

It is noteworthy that Miss Liu also strongly argued that her role in teaching language did not rely on teacher-centred teaching. She reported that use of teacher-directed learning and explanations would “overburden” students. As Miss Liu's own words state:

It's up to my students; they have to decide what they want to learn (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

The interview data show that Miss Lyn and Miss Liu also considered that their role as a teacher is to support and facilitate students to construct their own literacy meaning within an activity.

I'm a facilitator. So, I'm here if they need me. They come to me if they need help and I help them with anything they ask me (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

The next role of the teacher was as a provider of comprehensible activity. Both of them claimed that if students were to learn literacy easily, they needed to understand the language which was directed to them. They also claimed that children have to be taught to read and write through play activities.

I think students will learn through play and having fun in a relaxed setting. I don't quite enjoy teaching students in formal conventional ways, so I love my students to learn something through the activities we play (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

To this end, Miss Lyn and Miss Liu all reported that they provided playful activities. However, playful activities meant different things for each of the two teachers. In this way, Miss Lyn described that providing playful activities is providing detailed explanations and guided purposeful playful activities. This role was reflected in the class that I observed with Miss Lyn. For instance, after Miss Lyn explained the 'sheep' section, there was very minimum opportunity for further discussion or interaction with the topic. After that, Miss Lyn decided to spend 20 to 30 minutes playing an activity called 'Whack-A-Mole'. She explained the rules and put all the flash cards and picture cards she prepares in advance on the floor. Then when she read out a phonetic symbol 羊一尤 (yang2; sheep), students had to locate the card she wanted them to find in the classroom area (Field notes, Oct 2008).

When I asked Miss Lyn for clarification about the 'play activity' at the end of the observation section, she responded:

'yes, this is what I mean by play. Students through the play will always remember the words I want them to find. This is my idea of play and fun activity' (Lyn, post interview, Dec 2008).

Another example is the day's reading activity in which Miss Liu and students actually read the book together to the rest of the class. Miss Liu provided many extended learning and sharing opportunities for the students to discuss their own

experience, in order to keep the attention of students and their interest during the book reading. Also, Miss Liu offered many opportunities for brief questions and interaction for students via the thematic content of lesson. Then she helped students to work in pairs or small groups. She offered suitable guidance and assistance rather than obstacles and intervention.

Miss Liu took a slightly different approach to play compared to Miss Lyn. In the classes that I observed, Miss Liu did not follow everything in the curriculum guidelines. Rather, she helped students to self-discover and use their background knowledge and experiences to find new learning situations. For example, during a reading exercise, a student did not recognize the spelling and meaning of the word ‘高 gao1’ (high or tall). Instead of answering the question directly, Miss Liu asked the student to review a vocabulary list and phonetic sound system. After the student reviewed it, Miss Liu also asked student to review one of his/her classmate’s surnames which is also ‘高 gao1’. Then the students were able to remember the pronunciation, spelling and meaning of the word (Field notes, Nov 2008).

When I asked Miss Liu for clarification at the end of the observation, she responded that “who doesn’t necessarily give the answer but leads them to the answer.” (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008). Moreover, Miss Liu indicated in the interview that teaching is a journey for both the teacher and the students. In this metaphorical journey, learning is a journey from one point/state to another in which the teacher acts as companion with the learner. She states that “*Teaching is guiding students to see how far they can walk*” (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008). This journey would take the students from not knowing the subject matter to knowing it (Liu, 1st interview, Oct 2008).

The last teacher's role relates to the need to revise previous learning with students regularly. As with Miss Wang, Miss Lyn and Liu reported that after students had learned something, in general they soon forgot it and would not be able to use it freely and on their own. However, if the teacher reminded them of what they had covered, they would remember the language skills or language items and then be able to use them in activities or daily life. For this reason, doing reviews with students became an important job for teachers:

Students will forget things most easily during the first few days after they have learned something. If I revise the topic with them a few days later after I have taught it, they will say, "Ah, I can remember now." Their impression will be a bit deeper. That is to say ... after I have taught something, if I put it aside for a while, then revise it with students, then put it aside again, and then revise it again with students, they will remember much better (Lyn, post interview, Dec 2008).

6.4.3.4 Teachers' relationship with pupils

This section outlines how the three teachers see their role as teacher and how they interact with their pupils in the class.

a) Confucian hierarchical relationship (Top-down relationship)

The three teachers differed in this perception, with only one teacher reporting this perception. Miss Wang stands out because she reported that she expected her students to sit still and pay attention when she taught. She reasoned that if they did not follow and pay attention to her attentively, they would miss some of the important information that she was trying to give to them. Thus, students in her class were expected to conform to conventional behaviour, such as to obey and repeat what she said to demonstrate that they had been paying attention and listening to her. She claimed that students learned more if she demands conventional behaviour and if she was strict and serious. Otherwise, students may not develop a good attitude towards learning and therefore fail

to get anything out of lessons:

I feel that teachers are the ultimate authority in the classroom and we have to respect authority. I developed that perspective, really, from how I would have liked to have been taught when I myself was growing up. I had to listen and follow what teacher said. Just follow the teacher (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

What is interesting about Miss Wang's point of view is her idea that “*to demand respect in terms of keeping a part of our ancestral culture and order ... so they won't take things easy later on*” (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008). This idea is very much in line with the spirit of the Chinese Confucian education philosophy. This says that respect towards the teacher is part of learning, and that learning is hard and painful: students (the belief is) have to work hard otherwise they will not learn.

This contrasts sharply with the rhetoric of the reading project, which emphasizes meaningful experience with fun and joy in learning. Consistent with this view, Miss Wang viewed her students as ‘followers’. Using metaphorical language, she compared herself to a “superior” and a “dictator” who is solely responsible for determining what was to be taught and how learning should take place. In this sense the teacher is the morally and intellectually superior as well as dictator, or director. This is perceived to give an indication that learning is taking place:

I want to know whether they have learned from the lesson and whether they can follow my teaching or not (Wang, 3rd follow up interview, Oct 2008)

In her interview, Miss Wang repeatedly used the word ‘follow’ that indicated her underlying belief that students should be followers of the teacher in class. Miss Wang further said that if students followed her teaching closely, they should be able to do all the class work and homework that she assigned. Also, they should be able to go onto primary education without any problem. Thus, she claimed that she expected students to

be independent learners rather than collaborative partners:

After I have told them everything, I'll ask them whether they have any questions. If they don't, they practice and write their class work by themselves. They have to learn to do their work by themselves. Also, I have told them everything already, so what they can do is practice drills on their own (Wang, 3rd follow up interview, Oct 2008).

Here, Miss Wang clearly argues for the importance of hierarchical, or a top-down, teacher-student relationship, which is apparent in the following excerpt in which Miss Wang's likened students to 'sheep':

I think that students are like sheep because sheep are muddled and confused all of the time. They need to follow a shepherd. The shepherd can guide and lead them. It is just same way, students follow the teacher. We guide students (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

b) Mutual relationship

Seeing it differently from Miss Wang, Miss Lyn reported that her teaching began with a simile: the classroom was like a "home". In her interview, she said that a teacher was like another caring parent who should pay attention not only to the student's academic studies but also to their "emotional needs and motivation of learning". That is to say, a teacher's duties were not limited to teaching literacy lessons. She claimed that she should be concerned with the personal development of her students. In the same way, she also argued that a teacher could get her students to talk and share to her/him openly and frankly only if they had a good, mutual relationship. Miss Lyn said that a teacher should be on good terms with her students:

I won't be teaching them like a strict teacher. I teach what I think will make students happy. When they are happy, I'll be happy (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

In the same vein, Miss Lyn emphasized clearly the importance of a harmonious teacher-student relationship which would make "happy learning" possible. This relates to the affective dimension in her learning, working and personal experience. Moreover,

she paid a special emphasize that her own child as positively affected the student-teacher relationship. As she said:

Before, I looked at our relationship as more up here, here is the teacher (higher level) and here is the student (lower level). The teacher was above the student. Now, I look at it more like this (putting her hands at the same level)....We are more equal (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Putting it differently, Miss Liu reported that the students' role as an explorer to search and discover literacy rather than receivers of input. Moreover, Miss Liu reported that her relationship with students that of a "partner or companion" of learning and teaching:

Students should have the right to decide what they want to know, what they want to learn in these themes. Not all of it depends on teachers or the guidelines from the textbook (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

Therefore, she claimed that students should be able to participate in the pair and group work conducted in her classroom. She further claimed that she had a strong preference for using pairs and groups because she thought that collaborative learning increased student interaction between them. Collaborative learning was reflected in the classes that I observed for Miss Liu.

Furthermore, Miss Liu also said that she views herself as a learner, like her students, "*not necessarily as a teacher, the student-teacher relationship is based on equality*" As Miss Liu put it: "*because I teach, it doesn't mean that I don't have things to learn and thing I should know.*" Similarly, she reported that students feel safer to ask any questions because "*they know I won't get mad of them*". She used the metaphor of a sponge and water to describe the role of students and the teacher. She said that when a sponge was placed in the water, it would start to absorb water. In a similar way, when students were placed in an environment which was rich in literacy, they would begin to

learn literacy without conscious effort. In Miss Liu's words, students would start to "interact and absorb" literacy (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

6.4.3.5 Structuring literacy instruction

Findings from the observation data indicated that the structure of literacy instruction can be imagined as a continuum in the nature and quality of literacy lesson. The way participants structured literacy instruction can be placed on this continuum that ranges from controlled practice within the literacy lesson at one end, to co-operation through guided practice towards at the other end.

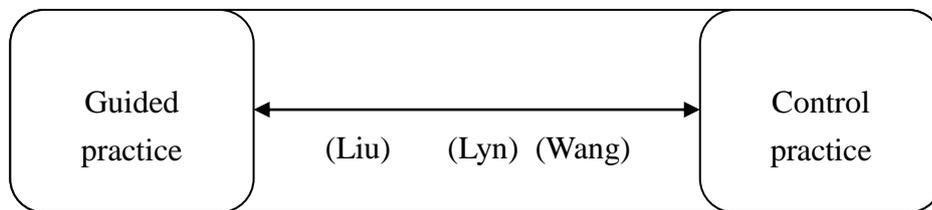


Figure 6.12: Structuring literacy instructions.

Guided practice is the activities delivered in the different slots of theme time, small-group activities, gross motor and inspirer skills development and lots of play within literacy learning. On the other hand, controlled practice are those that take place in the gathering of group time, greetings, weather and calendar, collection of homework and lesson exercise and practice, and weekly assessment. As represented in Figure 6.12, Miss Wang tended to structure literacy instruction towards the control practice end of the continuum, while Miss Liu more towards the guided practice end. Miss Lyn stands in between.

As mentioned in the teaching content section above, as the 'thematic package' and time were scarce resources, Miss Wang reported that she followed the 'thematic package' closely as a prop for her. Therefore, in order to teach as many things as

possible from the thematic package within a given period, Miss Wang's choice of teaching followed the straight forward daily greeting, explaining the day and whether, explaining the Chinese phonetic symbol and word character, practice drills in writing, oral testing the objectives during lesson-writing, and a quiz after the lesson and homework. Therefore, no matter what the schedule for thematic-time of the observed days followed, Miss Wang's literacy arts lesson always followed the same routine.

Miss Wang's morning class began at 9 o'clock as usual. Upon greeting the children with a 'good Morning,' Miss Wang reminded them to put their homework, handwriting and worksheets on the homework collection table situated at the front of the classroom beside her desk, and checked that all had done so. She then asked the children what the date was (in two forms: the Chinese writing of the date and the numerical writing of the date), what day it was and what the weather was for the day; wrote down the day on the blackboard herself as 'instructed' by the children. The purpose of writing down the dates on the blackboard was to prepare the children to copy them into their Chinese handwriting workbooks and their mathematics worksheet. During the introduction, Miss Wang asked the children to pretend to write with their finger in the air. By then, the first 10 minutes of the morning were over. After that the next activity was theme time. Within this 25-30 minutes block, Miss Wang instructed the children to sit on the floor in a group in front of the blackboard, listening to Miss Wang's instructions as below:

1. Miss Wang told the students that they were going to learn fruit, and then asked them to open the textbook on page 46.
2. She put all the related phonetic symbols flash cards on the board. Then Miss Wang pointed to the flash cards one by one and asked her students to follow her to read aloud all the flash cards together.

3. After reading aloud three times, Miss Wang put word character flash cards on the blackboard then explained all the word characters in detail. Then she asked the students to match the phonetic symbols with the corresponding word characters.
4. As Miss Wang expected, the students were still confused about the phonetic symbols and word characters. She showed students the word character flashcards 葡萄 (pu2 tao2; grape) accompanied by the phonetic symbols flash cards and gave students more examples, explaining the situations they should use these symbols in.
5. After that Miss Wang explained how they are going to finish the writing practice from the textbook, she walked around and monitored while students were doing worksheets practice.
6. After the writing practice, Miss Wang gave the students homework and an oral test. She asked each student in the class to take turn to stand up and answer a question related to the word character matched with phonetic symbol. She also tried to make sure that students could pronounce the word and phonetic accurately..... (Field notes, Oct 2008).

This way of literacy instruction resembles the traditional Confucian way of teaching. The teacher is in firm control. Adopting this way of teaching, Miss Wang begins by lecturing or explaining the target lesson. After that, she gets has students practice the symbols and word characters through the use of controlled practice and exercises. Finally, she provides further chances for students to use and practice the symbols or word characters in daily homework. Miss Wang explained that she had this

way of teaching from her Kangaroo nursery colleagues:

What I did, really just from what I learned in this school system... You can say, everyone is teaching in a similar way (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

Almost all of Miss Wang's literacy lessons were based on this type of instruction. But Miss Wang's views about this way of her literacy teaching were ambivalent. On the one hand, she found the pattern a little "boring" for students, according to her own observation in her lesson as well as from students' responses. She also felt that her way of teaching encouraged mainly "one-way" communication:

... My way of teaching is very one way. Did you notice that? I also find this teaching pattern a bit boring ... I can see that some of them feel bored in class (Wang, post interview, Nov 2008).

On the other hand, she reported that her way of teaching was effective because it allowed her to transmit a lot of information to students as well as preparing their skills in time for the transition into primary school:

I have to teach so many things within a short time. That is the most efficient way to teach many things very quickly. Even many education researchers and professors do not approve of my way of teaching. They think that it won't work. But I think there's no way. This is what students need and what their parents want from Kangaroo nursery (Wang, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

This shows that for Miss Wang, there was a tension between the way of teaching that she was used to and making her lessons interesting. From her professional training, she knew that she could make her lessons more relevant and more stimulating to students by using "play, games, pair or group work, or some situations", that is, by using context, meaningful play within activities: in other words, by the whole language approach. However, such activities, in her opinion, would take too much time to set up and run, and so were unsuitable for teachers who had a set textbook to cover.

Miss Lyn introduced the theme by using real objects, namely, she showed the objects to the children during the theme-time and encouraged the children to explore the objects

by, for example, asking each child one-by-one to touch a real fleece, which she then showed the whole class. In another instance, she asked a child to role play the part of a sheep, a shepherd and a wolf, with the children observing what happened. Though the children were not interested in the activities in the beginning, but they were considered by Miss Lyn to be learning through ‘exploration’. During the teaching process, Miss Lyn was concerned with the truth of the knowledge. She claimed that academic knowledge or the traditional way of literacy teaching was not the focus of her class programme. She only imparted this at the beginning and the end of the thematic-time, when an object was drawn by Miss Lyn on the whiteboard, to introduce the Chinese phonetic symbol and word character, or some number concepts, such as the number of sheep from the theme book. However, Miss Lyn’s way of teaching followed the “Presentation in a different way – Practice in different activities – Production” sequence throughout all the literacy lessons. Normally, Miss Lyn conducted her lesson after 5 to 8 minutes of listening to a CD listening in the following way:

1. She showed the whole class the real fleece again, and then started by informing the students that they were going to learn a pair of phonetic symbols and a very important Chinese word character.
2. She wrote this pair of phonetic symbols on the board: ‘一’; ‘尢’ Then she asked the students to join the two phonetic symbols together.
3. After much encouragement, one student suggested an answer: ‘一’; ‘尢’, could be ‘一尢’ (sheep), as in the week’s thematic topic ‘sheep is coming’.
4. As this was the answer Miss Lyn expected, she showed students the flashcards with phonetic symbols written on ‘一’; ‘尢’ and gave students more explanation on how the conjunction ‘一’; ‘尢’; ‘ ’ is used in relation to phonetic symbols.
5. After that, Miss Lyn explained how they are going to play a matching game

called 'Whack-A-Mole'.

6. She explained to students that when she reads out a phonetic symbol, students would have to hit the card with that symbol. After some practice, Miss Lyn changed it to a competition and the students were divided into two groups. After few times playing this, Miss Lyn put all the cards on the board and the students had to locate the card Miss Lyn wanted them to find..... (Field notes, Nov 2008).

Here, Miss Lyn started by eliciting responses in the hope that she could build on students' suggestions. However, after spending some time explaining and encouraging students to respond, she got the answer that she expected. She then gave them different matching activities to play and practice with. Miss Lyn strongly claimed that her way of teaching is an *idea of 'playing' and 'having fun'*.

Through play, they'll always remember the words on their shirts and the words I want them to find. This is my idea of 'playing' and 'having fun'. When students put the matching phonetic symbols in their work books, they'll learn to spell and spelling won't be difficult for them. Right? I prefer this (Lyn, 1st interview, Sep 2008).

Miss Lyn had also to rely frequently on an audio CD. This is part of a set of audio visual material that accompanies the set of books and classroom material that are arranged thematically. She prefers starting the lesson by playing the CD, especially when the focus was on a literacy lesson. So strong was this belief of hers that throughout the interview and observation she kept referring to it. She explained:

I think starting from the set of listening CD gives students a brief introduction to each theme and stimulates the students (Lyn, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

In this way, she reports that the listening CD provides a foundation, as she claimed:

It helps with learning the pronunciation of the words which they will need later to re-read the text book. In general, students must have the confidence to read words aloud. If they don't even

know how to pronounce and match the words, it's difficult to re-tell a story from the text book. So the CD helps with pronunciation (Lyn, 1st follow up interview, Oct 2008).

The learning of the 'Presentation in a different way – Practice in different activities – Production' was different from the learning with a whole language approach of social interaction, which emphasizes 'participation'. There was very little intention to involve children in the instructional process of interaction or integration of learning. Further, Miss Lyn's literacy lesson included role play, discussion about sheep, wool production and colouring and writing practice in the small group time. Students were assigned to each of these activities to consolidate the learning that they received during the theme and subtheme time. Moreover, they rotated groups following the instruction of the teacher. During the group, small group and individual time, Miss Lyn supervised the students. The role play, music, CD or other activities matched the theme and subtheme in one way or another. For example, Miss Lyn made the children role play being sheep, shepherds and wolves, and asked the children to call as sheep when they were following and singing the CD from the theme textbook. However, the children were not given that many choices in the activities.

In Miss Liu's case, she avoided explaining literacy overtly by direct teaching. Instead, she preferred giving plenty of contextual situation, activities and examples in order to help students understand literacy. In short, each of Miss Liu's lessons began with a focus on speaking, listening or reading. As the lesson evolved, other skills were introduced. The following example is an elaborate example of speaking literacy activities as the starting point of her instruction. She directed students' attention to literacy at a later stage of the Chinese character task, and she illustrated the Chinese phonetic symbols system and the Chinese characters by instruction. The lesson excerpt demonstrates this by showing how Miss Liu utilized examples (All from the teaching

guidelines, students' suggestions and her own creation) to introduce 'outer space'. The aim of the task was to help students to learn the Chinese phonetic system and the Chinese characters for 'outer space', which they had just discussed and seen.

1. In the first stage, Introduction, Miss Liu orientated students to the topic of the theme (outer space). Then in the Preparation stage, she co-constructed a story with students orally, and presented it. She did this by asking and interacting with the class, which was involved in the thematic play, where they went, what problems they caused, and what was done to put things finally right. (Speaking and listening)
2. Based on the answers, she re-created the whole story and planned it in simple, easy to understand Chinese and explained it to the students as a guideline for their plan.
(Speaking, listening and reading)
3. Next, in the internalization stage, she helped students to internalize the story by recreating the scenario of the story by eliciting the events from students. This was followed by the performance stage, where she got students to speak out or ask some questions from the story and share their own experience. After that she told the story again so that students had a chance of listening to the events more carefully. (Speaking and listening)
4. In the next stage, Miss Liu directed students to a short language focus, she guided students' attention to some new Chinese phonetic sound symbols system

or Chinese character points used in the story book and plan which they had just discussed and seen. (Speaking, listening and reading)

5. She then created a number of speaking opportunities to check the students' understanding of the new Chinese phonetic symbols system or the Chinese characters and offered brief explanations where necessary. (Speaking and listening)
6. She withdrew her support gradually and also gave them a little quiz in the form of play activities on the new Chinese phonetic symbols system or the Chinese characters, to consolidate learning. (Speaking and listening)
7. Finally, she asked students to work as a group on their topic based on the theme (Outer space) and got the students to find five new Chinese phonetic sound symbols and Chinese characters they just learned from the classroom surroundings and any storybook in the classroom. She asked the students to explain what they find to each other and Miss Liu. (Speaking, listening and reading)
8. As she monitored their performance, she found that some students were still having difficulty with the task. Thus, she spent more time with them after the class. (Speaking, listening and reading) (Field notes, Nov 2008).

As the example mentioned above demonstrates, we can see how Miss Liu's structured her literacy instruction and tendency to expand on instructional materials and support students' ideas, so that literacy was taught in conjunction with other relevant

language items for thematic content. As she explained, a language point from the thematic subject provided a variety of aspects and opportunities for students to learn literacy and other language skills as well:

Students can learn other things at the same time. It was not just for playing or practicing something from outer space thematic subject only. They also can have more practice in the outer space theme and they can learn other things as well (Liu, post interview, Dec 2008).

Moreover, Miss Liu reported that language had to be taught in context. She would make a special effort to create a suitable context and situation for the purpose. In fact, in none of the lessons observed did she engage with literacy content in isolation. Miss Liu strongly favoured an approach which presents literacy in meaningful chunks. As she says:

For literacy practice or Chinese phonetic symbols and Chinese word character practice, sometimes I'll put the words together and use them in a text, so that students will find it more meaningful to read the text (Liu, 2nd follow up interview, Nov 2008).

As Miss Liu said that interactive discourse context could make the process of teaching literacy easier for students:

... it's easier to talk about literacy and vocabulary when there's a story. Pass through all these interactive discourse, students will find it necessary to learn the relevant literacy information and vocabulary (Liu, 2nd follow up interview, Nov 2008).

In the same vein, she explained that when language points were presented in situations which students found themselves to be in, this created a real need for them to learn, internalize, and remember the structures:

... if students are in a certain situation and I teach them the language required for that situation, I think they can remember it for a long time (Liu, 2nd follow up interview, Nov 2008).

6.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the data derived from my interview and observation with the three teachers from the three different nurseries. The data shows that the teachers' reading teaching practices were largely congruent with what they reported about their educational beliefs. There were few inconsistencies between what they said they believed in and their classroom behaviour. However, my interviews and observation revealed the complex and dynamic interaction of issues: the nature of the classroom context, the school curriculum context, the expectations of parents, student needs. These were reflected by the participants and showed how they pull upon the teacher herself, somewhere along a continuum between a 'utopian' whole language approach and a more 'realistic' traditional skills-based teaching. In this respect, individual teachers' interactions with students about reading and literacy did not seem to only consider the reading and literacy learning but had to look at a number of other concerns for the students social and further development, and concerns about the problems they faced in the classroom situation.

However, I have also tried to provide the reader a flavour of how the findings emerged from the data and why I analyzed the data in the way I did. I have also given an impressionistic account of my data analysis from these. I have tried to keep the discussion of each element to a minimum in this chapter. Moreover, this presentation of the data has also thrown light on the differences and similarities between teachers. In the next chapter, I shall discuss what the findings might tell us about the teacher of literacy teaching at a children's nursery school.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters presented the findings of this research. These findings offered a comprehensive picture of teachers' beliefs and practices in nursery classrooms. They also demonstrated a discrepancy between the teachers' stated beliefs about literacy teaching and their daily teaching and practice. The findings also show that underpinning the pedagogical beliefs of teacher are complexities that surround the work the teacher reports. These complexities suggest that the beliefs of teachers shift and that the divergent identities possessed by different key parties articulated in Chapter 6 are formed in response to influential variables, namely, the parents, the nurseries, government and the cultural context. Although the discussion of the findings, discussed in this chapter, will focus on the data obtained from the interviews and observations, reference will also be made to the data from the questionnaire survey, which provides a backdrop of prevalent attitudes against which the qualitative data from the interview and observational findings can be interpreted. The aim here is to explore and discuss how these three teachers teach within the context of the implementation of the whole language approach and in light of their understandings and beliefs consider the extent to which these are reflected in their classroom practices.

However, one of the premises of this study was to examine the 'whole language approach' and specifically to explore the question of whether or not Taiwanese nursery teachers have adopted this approach and how it plays out in the classroom. I had initially intended to classify my participants and data into two types, namely, those whose practice and beliefs had not been affected by the whole language approach, and

those who had. However, whilst undergoing the PhD journey, I gradually shifted my interest to investigating the different ways teachers perceived that they had changed, or been affected in some way, by the whole language approach. This is because I realized that my initial pre-plan of categorizing teachers into the two types would somehow build two towers with a unique western view of the whole language approach and which went against the traditional way of literacy teaching, one that is based on teacher-directed, didactic, drill practice and memorizing. While it is true that these two approaches look at literacy learning from different perspectives, drawing different conclusions about the same landscape (literacy teaching and learning), and becoming more and more distinct when compared with each other, I felt that categorizing teachers into these two types of groups would only simply expose the expected dichotomy and reinforce the view of each group as distinct and homogenous, but not reveal the subtleties of how the different traditions interact with each other. Therefore, the same conflict or clashes would emerge. We rarely give teachers a chance to report or reflect on their thinking, or consider the 'landscape' as they see it, and how they overcome the conflicts or clashes of change in their daily teaching. Certain research approaches have tended to position them as representing static tendencies, only allowing teachers to simply state or choose what they see as if it were fact. The evidence from the data reported here is indicating a more diverse set of possibilities. Similar perspectives can be expressed differently in the classroom; likewise similar behavior can be informed by different perspectives. The aim is that by exploring three individuals in detail and attempting to trace back the conditions and the factors that affect them, it may serve to help to understand and inform teachers' learning and professional development in the Taiwanese context.

In this chapter I will firstly briefly summarize the findings of the previous two chapters, and then examine the extent to which these teachers appear to have understood the main ideas of the whole language approach, as described in the literature, and how this is evident in their classrooms. Next, I will explore the challenges these teachers seemed to face as they tried to implement the whole language approach, balancing the pushes and pulls they experienced within their social and cultural setting. Finally, I will present a model of how these challenges change in the form of a developed continuum to shed light on the challenges faced by teachers when trying to implement externally imposed policies, particularly when these arise from a particular cultural environment.

7.2 Relationship between Taiwanese nursery teachers' beliefs and the whole language approach

The survey data indicated that none of the Taiwanese nursery teachers adhered strictly to either the very traditional form of lecture-type transfer of lessons, where knowledge is passed from teachers to enable pupils to progress, or the whole language, interactive and socially-constructive activity of teaching. Furthermore, even those nursery teachers' who positively espoused the whole language approach, I formed a very different picture in their classroom practice. To echo Lin (2011), many early literacy classroom activities remained teacher-directed and didactic, focused on drill practice, even where the whole language approach was adopted. Furthermore as Chen (2006) has found, many teachers claimed to have adopted the new approach but tended to implement the teacher-directed way of teaching in classroom practice.

This was also seen when interviewing the three teachers and during the observation. Furthermore, evidence from the results of the questionnaire suggested that the participants held a coherent set of beliefs about the importance of the whole language

approach in the teaching of reading and this, in turn, influenced their selection of teaching approaches. The participants in this study seemed to agree that the whole language approach provides a context for revealing the form and content of pupils' thinking, as well as their ways of knowing and understanding literacy. The teachers who were interviewed appeared to be somewhat excited when they heard about the reform movement of the whole language approach. Moreover, they also seemed to agree that literacy is better learned and developed using the whole language approach. When pupils are offered a whole language experience with literacy-related resources in the classroom, they act in a literate manner. However, as mentioned in the background chapter, although Taiwanese society and educational system preserve the traditional culture and are influenced by Confucianism, these nursery teachers' beliefs about the curriculum are also partly influenced by Western culture. The reason for this may be because Taiwanese society as a whole is receptive to Western culture. Many Taiwanese professors of nursery education were awarded their degrees in the West, especially from the United States; thus, many curriculum materials or idea are often imported, translated and used in the teachers' training curriculum (the Taiwanese PGCE equivalent) or the reform movement in Taiwan. In view of this, it may be difficult to determine the questionnaire items the nursery teachers in this research believe to be appropriate for children, since the whole language philosophy is closely related to what they learned in school and during training; what, in fact, they were explicitly taught.

Nevertheless, the data presented in the interview and observation chapters paints a very different picture. The comments by the three teachers on the issue of implementing whole language teaching illustrate that they face many different constraints, and that difficulties have evolved as a result of conflicting pressures. This needs to be understood in the social and cultural context in which Taiwanese teachers worked prior

to the introduction of the whole language approach. Teachers have traditionally both been ascribed and have adopted an instrumental concept of their role. However, there certainly seems to have been some uniformity within Taiwan's nursery classrooms. In particular, in the after-observation interviews and post-interview discussions, the teachers were able to provide more frank and open information about the constraints and difficulties they faced associated with one or more different elements. However, after a brief summary of the previous two chapters of findings, the following section will examine the extent to which these teachers appear to have understood the main ideas in the whole language approach, as described in the literature, and the extent to which this is evident in their classrooms.

7.2.1 Making sense of real use and immersion in environmental print

An important premise of whole language teaching is that the child learns to speak, listen, read and write by being immersed in a language environment, and the whole language nursery school is one where children are immersed in language and print. Young children learn and practice what they are learning over and over, on their own initiative. The participants in this study articulated views that echo Hall (1987), who stresses the importance of creating contexts which facilitate enquiry and providing opportunities for pupils to learn skills from those who model behaviour in natural use. Furthermore, they also seemed to agree with Bielby (1994:56), who argues that: "environmental print needs to be explicitly used as a teaching resource." Pupils begin to recognize the functions of print and the different purposes it serves by the use of print around the classroom and in displays of their work (Goodman, 1986). The participants in this study claim to have chosen the whole language approach, which involves constructing an environment which is relevant to pupils, and one in which they can easily take part in the learning. Moreover, pupils can bring all kinds of written language

materials appropriate to their interests into the lesson. In one such case, Miss Liu said that she preferred the whole language approach in her overall view of teaching, and considered that her key role as a teacher was to create opportunities and a literate environment to help pupils to construct their own meanings. Miss Liu's classroom contained books, magazines, directories, signs, labels, writing centres complete with a wide range of paper and implements, a library corner, a corner related to thematic projects, posters, and every other kind of related printed materials as would be expected in a whole language classroom. Miss Liu indicated that she preferred to create these environmental print and learning corners around a thematic project, structured to facilitate the integration of all language processes with conceptual learning. Miss Liu claimed that, since the whole classroom consisted of pupils, she just needed to create the opportunities and the environment and learn with her pupils. (The related teaching episodes are presented in detail in Chapter 6).

The importance of carefully designing an environment to foster pupils' learning is not new in theory. According to social-constructivism, cognitive development depends on the interaction between materials and activities in order to learn, and Froebel's 'gifts' have to be systematically planned, as do Montessori's prepared teaching aids and environment (Kwon, 2003; Mooney, 2000). Moreover, as with Vygotsky's ZPD learning, the environment is regarded as being "the third teacher" in Reggio Emilia's approach and the thematic project approach (Fraser and Gestwicki, 2002:109). This means that whole language classrooms should "have a stimulating environment that offers pupils many choices, provokes them to engage in many activities, and encourages them to explore a wide variety of materials" (Fraser and Gestwicki, 2002:109). Providing the appropriate material was a significant part of a teacher's involvement, since it enabled pupils to experiment, explore and interact to assimilate new knowledge into their

existing cognitive structures by being immersed in environmental print and plenty of literacy-related substance. On the observational visits to Miss Liu's classroom, the physical environment was arranged with sufficient space to encourage collaborative learning. Moreover, different observational visits indicated that the poster, decorative displays and environmental print were regularly changed and almost always related to the monthly thematic project topic. This became apparent and helped pupils to create and to foster their attempts to learn literacy.

7.2.2 Making sense of play and social activity

Another whole language key element is comprised of the opportunities and resources by the activities, time, materials and space needed to support the child as a learner and thus as a communicator. Children should be immersed in a print-rich environment with interesting activity and play, with interesting books and materials to read and explore, because children are more interested and active within play and socially interactive activity. As Perkins (2008: 27) has said, "play is a vital part of children's learning and development and play with language is no exception." A child wants to make sense of print by using it. As Moyles (1994:3) argues: "quality links between play and learning seem obvious to many practitioners and parents; yet the dilemma still exists as to whether play can provide any kind of 'excellence' in relation to real learning in early years education contexts ." Similarly, Chen (2011) also observes that the notion of the whole language approach seems to cause teachers, schools and parents to suspect that it is too unstructured to ensure their children's progress and learning process. At a time when teaching is required to be more planned, structured, and rigorous, and control by teachers has been a consistent feature of most literacy education, teachers need to plan, implement, monitor and assess what is to be taught. As Paley (1986) points out, "in complete contrast to the way play was usually viewed. No

one explicitly taught children how to play. Rather it was seen as a process learned more appropriately through apprenticeship” (cited in Hall, 1991:4). This study is located within the traditional view that ‘diligence yields rewards while play gets nowhere’ of thought. Moreover, this is also deeply embedded in traditional Chinese thinking, in which a theory of ‘learning through play’ is often alien. This has influenced me as a teacher and researcher, and also influenced to different degrees the three participants. However, Taiwan has become more westernized gradually in the last two decades.

Evidence from the study indicates that all the participants emphasized a set of beliefs about the value and importance of play in the teaching of reading and its close relationship with the whole language approach. All the participants viewed play as being a means or tool to develop positive or fun learning dispositions: the following is evidence of this from the findings:

I think a student will learn through play and having fun in a relaxed setting. I don't quite enjoy teaching students in a formal conventional way, so I love my students to learn something through the activities we play (LNI, 1)

Hall and Robinson (2000:97) also suggest that this is “because play introduces literacy events in as natural a way as possible.” Furthermore, the participants seemed to agree that play provides a context for revealing the form and content of children’s thinking, as well as their ways of knowing and understanding. The teachers also seemed to agree that literacy is learnt and developed through play, talk and lots of social interaction, as well as through reading and writing instruction. They indicated that, when pupils are offered a play experience with literacy-related resources, they act in literate way. As the evidence from the study, one of the participants claimed that:

Students through the play will always remember the words I want them to find. This is my idea of play and fun activity (LNI, P)

Despite the fact that this reported belief from the three participants sounds quite positive, they chose to work toward different ‘suitable play activities’ in their literacy lessons. Miss Liu, who worked at the Lion nursery, indicated that the nursery’s aim was that pupils should enjoy literacy-related activities. Miss Liu could create more opportunities through play for literacy to be introduced to pupil. Hall (1999:106) suggests that “play, and especially socio-dramatic play, can provide opportunities for young children to act appropriately as users of literacy rather than simply as analysers of literacy.” These types of activities coincide with the evidence provided by the teachers of their classroom practice. Miss Lyn and Miss Liu both acknowledged that ‘dramatic play or role play’ gives pupils a holistic experience in which literacy is appropriately embedded, as would be expected in a whole language approach. It is also regarded as being a tool with which to identify pupils’ capabilities. Using role play, teachers can build on pupils’ existing knowledge and extend their awareness and competence with language in its oral and written forms, while simultaneously providing them with an opportunity to control the way in which they view and experience literacy (Hall, 1994:114-115). Although Miss Lyn and Miss Liu both included role-play during the classroom observation period, in Miss Lyn’s case, the activities chosen were planned by the teacher and reflected the requirements of the textbook, school and parents. The teachers also chose role play in order to achieve their aims. Although Miss Lyn may not be aware, she was in agreement with Clay (1991, 1998), when Miss Lyn suggested the teaching strategies as being effective were those that provided teachable moments, if children are to access knowledge of Chinese phonetic symbols and Chinese word characters, which is more like mixing the whole language approach with a more traditional skill-based approach. But she obviously was unaware of another part of Clay’s argument, which is that those teachable moments in turn were based on children’s choice. On the other hand, Miss Liu’s role play seemed to better represent the

idea that “whole language teachers understand that learning ultimately takes place for one child at a time. They seek to create appropriate social settings and interactions and to influence the rate and direction of personal learning” (Goodman, 1986:29). However, although Miss Lyn and Miss Liu both valued purposeful and functional role-play, they used it differently in order to achieve their aims.

7.2.3 Making sense of teachers’ general position about literacy instruction

The other key element in a whole language nursery school is how a teacher positions themselves. In the whole language classroom, the teacher is the facilitator who organizes a curriculum that incorporates more reading and writing into the daily lives of the children and into their themed investigations. In the questionnaire, the teachers were invited to assess their own approach and the roles they play in pupils’ literacy learning in an early childhood setting while they attempted to introduce the concept of teaching reading to them. A seven-point continuum was given with a whole language, child-centred approach, at one end and traditional, skills-based, teacher-directed approach at the other. 49.1% of teachers claimed to be between these two approaches. Based on the self-assessment evidence, participants seemed to subscribe to the view of Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2001:264), who suggested that “classrooms are complex environments with many overlapping interactions going on between adults, children, materials and conceptual tasks. Teachers respond to this complexity by referring to their own store of beliefs, experiences and priorities, establishing a teaching stance that gets the job done.” Furthermore, based on the questionnaire and case evidence, the study also indicated that participants seemed to subscribe to the view of Riley (2003:18), who argues that in early years education “pedagogy does not necessarily refer to a direct and didactic transmission of knowledge, but rather it will include the considered provision of an effective environment with planned opportunities for play and exploration.

Pedagogy in a nursery setting embraces talking to children, discussing things with children, and drawing facets of a shared situation to their attention.”

In the present study, all the teachers involved expressed confidence in including reading-related activities in their classroom practice. But the three teachers were identified at the outset of the classroom observation as being very different in the ways in which they thought about the whole language approach and the teaching of reading and writing. However, Wilson, Shulman and Richer (1987:120) claimed that a teacher’s “pedagogical reasoning and acting differently” depended on their backgrounds, beliefs and curriculum knowledge, and the goals and aims of the school. In terms of planning reading activities for children, some of the practitioners, such as Miss Liu, argued that they did not plan the activities at all. When interviewed, she said that:

It's up to my students they have to decide what they want to learn (LI, 1). My main role is to stimulate and motivate my students' interest in the world of books. I am just a tool or mediator in the class (LI, L).

Thus, learning to read is considered to be a “natural” process with an emphasis on meaning (Riley, 1999:218). Furthermore, two of the three teachers marked a concerted shift in their view of seeing children differently from how they used to see them. As the evidence from one of the teachers (Miss Lyn) indicated:

I have changed from not only seeing myself as a teacher, but as a mother as well (LI, 1).

However, from the observational evidence presented, there was a choice of different phonetic-system games as structured moments of their day. Moreover, Miss Liu views coincided with those of Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998:15), that in literacy learning, there is essentially no “right” sequence, in that literacy develops concurrently and interrelated, as she claimed that:

Literacy lesson is an integrated lesson where students need to listen, speak, read and write at the same time. And what they speak, listen to, read and write about is all inter-related (LI, 1).

Moreover, this evidence also concurred with Goodman (1986:19), who mentions that language is actually learned from whole to part. In addition, from this study not all the practitioners articulated views that coincided with the argument above. For example, Miss Wang reported that:

Writing is the most important skill. When a student joins primary school, they need it immediately (WI.1).

Furthermore, Miss Lyn also reported that it was very important for all students to ‘receive information’ from the teacher:

Are they listening to me? Have they received my message? Have they received what I said? Have they received it correctly? I need to make sure that they have received the message correctly (LI.2).

However, although the teachers involved in this study appeared to be divided as to how literacy is acquired, one out of the three practitioners seems to have articulated views that parallel those of Strauss, Ravid, Zelcer, and Berliner (1999:263), when they wrote that teachers believe “good pedagogy” involves serving up knowledge in chunk sizes or reducing the complexity of the material so that children will be able to understand and link the material to previously existing knowledge. This is in contrast to those who closely followed the teacher’s manual from the commercial, thematically-packaged textbook, step-by-step, without connecting it to the experience of the children. More specifically, they followed a topic every month as an umbrella, and they presented activities to the children as suggested by the textbook. In these teachers’ minds, literacy learning implies formally instructing skills and practicing listening, speaking, reading and writing for instructional purposes, focusing on the mechanisms of language. The observational data from Miss Wang and Miss Lyn’s classroom indicated that they

focused on the teaching of Chinese phonetic-symbols, word character recognition, and high frequency words, implying a more teacher-directed lesson by lecturing and asking factual recall question (e. g. flash cards, matching words) to give their pupils as many effective ways as possible to recognize isolated characters rather than a teacher facilitated discussion by encouraging children to explore their thinking, as with a whole language approach. However, the discrepancy is obviously found between their stated beliefs and classroom observation.

7.3 The domain of change and challenge

To many teachers, becoming a whole language teacher or implementing the whole language approach was a continuous process of change and shifting perspectives. It can be seen in these three teachers that the basic whole language approach is not without challenges. Could it be that it is extremely difficult to transfer a Western whole language approach to Taiwanese early education, since the implementation of ideas from outside a culture into an existing system means continuous reflection and a battle to adapt? However, the whole language approach served to change and challenge this orientation and promote literacy teaching and learning. It also proposed a very different view of the function of play; teachers' perspectives of children, literacy learning and teaching; organizing the classroom into a literate environment; organizing the curriculum to be more open, flexible and child centered; thus, whole language serves to challenge the comfort zone and act as a catalyst to encourage a teacher's development by providing an authentic learning situation in which teachers encounter the whole language approach, promoting reflection.

In terms of this research, although the participants appeared to have seen an idealized principle of the whole language approach from the West rather than practical

strategies, whenever I talked to them, I detected that the participants were attentive. But as the classroom practice data and reflective interview drew to a close, their expressions become perplexed and they began to ask questions. In this respect, I found that the data indicated that the teachers raised different kinds of ‘yes....but’ answers. It can be argued that every ‘yes, but’ has a reason, belief or something else behind it, whether we recognize it or not. However, if we want to understand whether or not the whole language approach has been successfully implemented, we need to investigate what underlies each ‘yes, but’ arising from the findings, because these ‘yes, buts’ contain an understanding which will shed light on the difficulties underlying teachers’ beliefs and pulling them to receive different information, so that they seemed to see different levels of the whole language approach. However, from these different ‘yes, buts’ a number of areas of difficulty in implementing the whole language approach and literacy teachings were identified in the actions and discourse of the participants. This result parallels Willinsky (1990), who argues that while initiatives such as the NLS adopt pedagogical proficiency, teaching is not like that. It is not enough to learn “the most effective methods and apply them” (DfEE, 1997, paras 26/6). Moreover, Calderhead (1991) noted that teachers could espouse particular knowledge and beliefs which conflicted with those implicit in their practices. Furthermore, as Argyris and Schon (1974) show, in understanding professional practice it is essential to distinguish the espoused theory, which a teacher may say s/he believes in, from the ‘theory-in-use’, which actually influences a teacher’s practice and is not affected by what is said. In this study, the three teachers appeared to have ‘espoused’ the theories of the whole language approach requiring the important premise of literacy teaching and learning, but, when it came to what they did in their classroom, their action seemed to relate more to a ‘theory in use’ which affected how they interacted with children when teaching and with what they felt the needs of their classroom teaching to be at that moment.

7.3.1 Yes, positive rhetoric, but practice?

It has already been noted that three participants said they intended to incorporate whole language approach into their literacy lesson after 2000. In the pre-interviews, as well as the questionnaires, the teachers were able to provide important information about the way in which they implement the whole language approach, including how they provide learning opportunities for their pupils, their individual differences, interaction with the print environment, learning through different activities, and the opportunities they provide for children to talk and integrate literacy learning. The data shows that, with the exception of Miss Liu, the other two teachers were less accepting of the 'whole language approach' than they claimed. For example, Miss Wang claimed that since the Reading Project promoted in 2000, their school adopted a different type of commercial textbook package, called a pre-packaged thematic project textbook. But in terms of teaching practice, she seemed dedicated to a literacy lesson with a predefined lecture structure with a teacher-directed lesson in which groups of children work together. Miss Lyn claimed that her school also adopted a pre-packaged thematic project textbook few years ago. Furthermore, she claimed that she moved from a structured lesson with a teacher lecturing the lesson to one that is more integrated and where a wider range of text was used in a meaningful situation. Different types of play activity had increased. However, the two teachers still planned their literacy lesson from a predetermined list of objectives from the textbook. Despite these significant 'surface' changes, such as teachers' ideology, the two teachers still remained largely consistent in their own pedagogical stance. They both acknowledged that learning through a whole language approach was a desirable change for literacy education in early years education. Following discussions of the value of the whole language approach in teacher education and professional training courses, they could articulate its significance for the development of young children, and they all initially felt frustrated to find that,

in the end, there had been minimal implementation of learning through the whole language approach,

'I know the whole language approach, but all I can see in the field is lecturing teaching. Although the nurseries claim that they want children to learn through whole language, I could not identify any....the children in my classroom seemed to be stiffened by boredom.(WI, P)'

Therefore, Miss Wang's frustration did not extend to a widespread implementation and her perception of the whole language approach in context; instead, she raised some 'yes, buts' when she faced the barriers of the whole language approach and elected to avoid looking at her current practice. The 'yes, buts' seemed to be her way of dismissing uncomfortable theoretical questions. The evidence from Miss Wang's pre-interview indicated that:

'Yes, the whole language approach is an interesting teaching method, but it would take too much time...'

'Yes, pupil learning through the whole language approach might be fun, but we don't have time for it...'

These two examples show that the 'yes, but' function works most frequently as an excuse when facing difficulties in tailoring her existing way of teaching and learning to the adopted approach. Miss Wang's 'yes, buts' tend to be those which reflect the underlying belief that she only has little or no wish or hope to make a decision. Her 'yes, but' may simply be a way of dismissing the contemplation of any new ideas, because she said:

"It would be good if sometimes I can involve the whole language approach to teach the skills. But I can't do that; we don't have time for it....' (WI,1).

On this point of principal, it can be argued that Miss Wang's 'yes, but' freezes existing constraints, and is a silent acceptance of the status quo. Miss Wang seems unwilling or unable to recognize the whole language approach; therefore, she has the

responsibility, as well as the right, to examine it and even change it. By refusing to look beyond the practice of the whole language approach and its underlying constructs, Miss Wang builds her practice in the shadow of another practice, which is the one expected by parents and nursery schools. Furthermore, Miss Lyn's interview data also indicated another 'yes, but'. Miss Lyn's response indicates a partial implementation of the idea. For example:

"I think whole language is very good..., but the goal cannot be successfully and thoroughly achieved in reality. As for me, I'll see what will be best for my students and that'll be what is used in my class."(LNI,1)

This suggests that the teacher tends to incorporate prominent features of the approaches, such as having learning areas or centres, and adopting play activity in the literacy lesson. The case showed that participants' ways of enactment were superficial replicating at the beginning of the process and there were tendencies to stop the inquiries at that very early stage, because participants thought that they had successfully put theories into practice, whereas in fact they had not shown that it would work on a consistent basis over time. Hence, the teacher tended to manipulate the way she could fit whole language approach into her daily teaching, such as providing information to pupils and instructing them to make something out of it. For example, Miss Lyn concentrated on coaching pupils to do models, which was supposed to be a prominent feature of the whole language approach. Miss Lyn explained:

Every topic of my themed project, I started off introducing basic knowledge. Then I asked the pupil to do some related activity and artwork.

This indicates that Miss Lyn has only partly transferred her teaching from a teacher-directed to whole language approach. From Miss Lyn's point of view, she tended to replicate the physical features of the approaches. However, she neglected the "social interaction, learning from whole to part and exposure to the environment"-

learning qualities. In other words, the teaching reform was conducted mechanically and simplistically – ‘old’ wine into a ‘new’ bottle. On the other hand, it is also indicated that early-year classrooms in Taiwan are in a different progressive phase and that classrooms have a blend of traditional Chinese pedagogies and Western whole language approaches. Hence, based on the Miss Lyn’s interviews and observation, the classrooms can be characterized as being ‘whole language with Chinese characteristics’. While Western ideas are evident in pedagogy, the characteristics of the Confucian culture continue to dominate the social milieu of the classroom where Chinese traditional views are interwoven with Western ideas of early learning.

The participants found it difficult to generate meaningful framing and reframing in context, and found that the ideas which they had acquired from their teacher education course were inadequate to meet the demands of the reality they perceived. They both tended to avoid frustration and uncertainties by resorting to the literacy lesson from their own experience at school. Furthermore, their practices were not reflecting what they had expressed earlier. They appeared to be more concerned with their own agenda and eager to tell the children what to learn and practice rather than encourage a children-centred approach. Teachers’ talk and teacher-directed activities led to the children taking a very passive learning role, even though the teachers were qualified, warm and friendly and liked the whole language approach.

The teachers’ assistance in children’s learning in terms of achieving learning outcomes was observed. The number of child-initiated activities was limited, and it was evident that teachers tended to manage the children’s behaviour rather than encourage active learning. Simply put, the teachers delivered a highly structured curriculum with an emphasis on learning outcomes, with good time management, and they pleased the

school administrator, parents, as well as being kind to the children. When teachers introduced firm and clear rules instead of a too abstract idea and encouraging the active construction of the learner's knowledge through learning experiences and activities or play, they were leaning towards teaching a young child literacy skills at the initial stage of development (Berliner, 1992). This implies that the nursery teachers perceived their role as being a managerial role, rather than one of building scaffolding. From this point of view, this seems to indicate that the teacher in the nursery relied on their own perceptions and experience to deal with the change.

However, not every teacher emphasizes academic learning and teacher-directed instruction in early childhood education. The data also show that the other teachers' 'yes, but' functions in a different way. Miss Liu's 'yes, but' was an expression of considering how to adopt the whole language more thoroughly. For Miss Liu, the same words, 'yes, but' represented a first step toward building a closer relationship between the whole language approach and classroom practice. Her hesitation was generated by the problems she could foresee when developing along the continuum, representing a concern with the practical 'how to' and 'yes, but'. The following is evidence of this from the findings:

Miss Liu: *"How can I get enough books and other materials? And "How do I incorporate literacy with maths or science?"*

Furthermore, there are 'yes, but's' which relate to the teachers role; for example, how she shifted the emphasis from the teacher being 'the only one in the classroom who knows anything' to creating an environment in which the children's resources are also recognized and used. Some evidence of this is shown by Miss Liu:

.....yes, the teaching guidelines also provided a stock of literacy idea to cover in lesson. But this is not my literacy lesson; it is my students' lesson. They need to decide what they want to learn (LI,1).

There are 'yes, but's' which focus on the pupil and how they learn. There are questions about discipline when pupils are permitted to work more independently.

After all the above discussion and 'yes, but' findings, the researcher could have simply enjoyed the findings 'as they are', or chose to dig deeper to further explore teachers' understanding of the whole language approach. As mentioned earlier, the pure quantitative research I conducted before had an unsatisfactory outcome; thus, I had an appetite for a more in-depth understanding of the implementation of the whole language approach devised in the West. Moreover, this is a path that can lead to a richer awareness of the complexity of teachers' beliefs. However, readers may question the connection between these 'yes, but' findings and the participants, their literacy lessons and their nurseries and this study. The answer is that the discussion of these 'yes, but' findings is very important because they are part of their more deep-rooted beliefs. This also reflected the findings of Calderhead (1991), who drew the attention of the teaching profession to conflicts between the teachers' thoughts and actions. Furthermore, a pattern of behaviour articulated by Schon (1983) seemed to have taken root in these two teachers. Schon (1983) warned teaching professionals that the more routine the activities of practitioners became, the more acute was the danger of what they were doing. Ultimately, he argued, practitioners would lapse into patterns of behaviour that could no longer be corrected. Two of these teachers seemed unaware of what they were doing because they were obsessed with their intentions. Treating the traditional way of lecturing and passing on literacy knowledge solely as 'routine', the teachers developed undesirable behaviour similar to that identified by Schon (1983), including:

1. A loss of concern for the children, e.g. the teaching and copying of difficult words that were inappropriate to the development of young children as well as involving non-interactive classroom behaviour.

2. A tendency to treat children in a detached, mechanical manner, e.g., uniform and didactic teaching was exhibited by both of them.
3. A tendency to rationalize failure by blaming the clients or the system, e.g., both teachers mentioned that the school's requirements hindered the implementation of 'whole language' into their curriculum.
4. A resistance to change, rigidity and lack of creativity, e.g., rigidity of the timetabling, with Miss Wang insisting that a writing lesson was not drawing a line to 'play or other activity'.

These behaviours were unfavourable for teacher development. It is a problematic cycle which cannot be easily broken with the input of an intelligent 'whole language' theory. However, these 'yes, buts' indicate how teachers construct and negotiate the organization of their everyday teaching. When referring to the above 'yes, but' findings of the study, several distinctive dimensions of the difficulties in implementing the whole language approach emerged. As Connelly and Clandinin (1997) have argued, theory and practice are inseparable; problems of practice have to be seen as theories-in-use and vice versa. Key dimensions derived from the theories-in-use of the informants helped to address the difficulties of implementing the whole language approach in practice. Two aspects seemed to emerge from the data: (1) parents' and schools' expectations; and (2) the traditional cultural and governmental context.

7.3.1.1 Parents and School expectations

The above findings indicate a deeper finding; that teachers seem to be ambivalent about the whole language approach and even their way of teaching literacy in the nursery classroom. Pressure and external forces from schools and parents seem to have a substantial influence on teachers' practice. For example, parents' expectations

informed their curriculum and practices, so that the recommended change to the whole language approach by the MOE and early education scholars had either not taken place or taken place slowly. On the other hand, although they seemed to be aware that the ‘whole language approach is more fun’ (LNI, 1); ‘children like the whole language approach more’ (WI, 1), the teachers were faced with parental demands for strict academic achievement. They could not see the need to adopt the ‘whole language approach, play or children-centred’ teaching, but rather interpreted the parental demands as a signal to slow down or to stop advocating the whole language approach. Furthermore, they were seemingly inclined to blame people and factors as the cause of their own lack action to change things or to reproduce the selected approach in their classroom context. For example, when faced with the classroom constraints, Miss Lyn made remarks such as:

I think it is a good method, but I can only apply it to a certain extent.... because, parents are very anxious about mastery of writing and ...skills of their children. I should say parents don't think whole language is important. But they may complain if we cut short those activities.

It is similar to the explanation from Miss Wang:

... Parents are heavily relying on the teacher's instructions when their children learn anything. It's hard to re-educate parents. Parents are the boss.

However, when the teachers faced constraints, a blame cycle emerged, which acted as a psychological justification for practice to remain somewhere along a continuum moving towards the whole language approach, but harking back to previous practice. It is likely that, if the teachers changed their teaching without the support of parents and schools, their professional development would be obstructed. Therefore, their frustration did not extend to widespread implementation, and as expressed in the post-interviews, their perception of the whole language in context ultimately lacked both clarity and the knowledge that the whole language approach was no more than learning through play or children-centred activities. They were unable to appreciate the practical

difficulties and complexities of implementing learning through the whole language approach in context.

However, as mentioned earlier in the background section of Chapter Two, a very high percentage of nurseries in Taiwan are outside the formal educational system, being privately owned, and the Government does not have direct responsibility for these (although this is going to be part of compulsory education in the future, but it is taking time to implement the policy). To some extent, the success of the nurseries is reflected by their popularity and the number of pupils enrolled every year. Thus, to recover their operational costs, nursery schools must meet parents' expectations and make them happy so that they will not take their children out of that particular nursery. This raises increasing concerns about developing a curriculum which is accountable to parents, since a worthwhile curriculum may mean an effective transition to primary education for their children. Therefore, it could be argued that parents' hidden partnership is an underlying reason for resisting change. Moreover, the nursery schools employ teachers with minimal qualifications. Many of them are graduates of non-early childhood education departments or untrained. They themselves may very likely have adopted rote-learning and been taught by ineffective learning strategies during their own schooling. With such a background, it is questionable whether teachers will be able to grasp the abstract concept of the 'whole language approach' and be sufficiently confident to face the challenge of uncertainty in teaching. To what extent could they be brave enough to handle the tensions and contradictions of the rhetoric and scaffold children's learning by high quality interaction in a supportive learning environment? Are they likely to be sufficiently skilful and reflective to operate the 'whole language approach' as an inconspicuous curriculum dimension to stimulate a sense of playfulness in the children?

7.3.1.2 Traditional culture and government Context

As Krashen (1999, 2001) argues, the current understanding of the progression in learning through the whole language approach is not well developed, which makes it difficult to support the sometimes grandiose claims which are made as to its efficacy as a medium for learning. The theory of the 'whole language approach' does not fit well within the traditional Chinese culture, with the influence of Confucian philosophy setting regarded as somehow 'unenlightened', and Western theoretical pedagogy as representing 'progress'.

However, the introduction of the whole language approach is not a panacea, as evidence presented here illustrates. Teaching methods can be delivered in different ways by different teachers. Furthermore, a government's implementation of theoretical pedagogies, such as the whole language approach, has not been wholly successful in the West either. Moreover, Government agencies in Taiwan work alone, with no executive power to force and to apply pressure, and few assigned resources to lend support. The apparent isolationism of the nursery educational system (Chen, 2008) results in a lack of co-ordination between policy-makers and nursery school practitioners. On the other hand, governmental agencies revealed that they also worked without overall co-ordination and with very little authority. However, the concerns of teachers were not about government policy or reform and any particular promoted project but about immediate matters or issues affecting their every day teaching work. Teachers did not feel obliged to carry out the wishes of government agencies because there was no pressure to do so and, more importantly, a lack of support to assist in the process.

Moreover, traditionally, teaching and learning styles in Taiwan seem to be characterized by the adoption of pre-selected activities and an emphasis on outcomes,

while being less flexible to changing circumstances. Even early childhood teachers in Taiwan are put under great pressure to prepare their pupils for the next part of academic learning in primary schools; thus, text books, formal writing practice and didactic instructions are more acceptable and visible in Taiwanese early childhood literacy lessons. A well-known Chinese proverb about education and teaching is “rearing without upbringing is the fault of the father; teaching without disciplining is the flaw of the teacher.” In Chinese culture, teachers are expected to be stern and strict (Cheng, 1994); thus, allowing children to learn by following what the whole language approach suggests, i.e. playing, and teachers taking a non-directive role, would be likely to be regarded as negligence by much of the Chinese community, as well as by the teachers themselves. Moreover, because of the emphasis on hierarchical human relationships in Confucianism and Chinese culture, there is an old Chinese proverb which says “you need to respect your teacher for your whole life as you respect your parents, even though he may only teach you for one day.” Thus, for Taiwanese people, the authority of the teacher is second only to that of their parents and many Taiwanese parents are willing to authorize teachers to do anything to ensure that their child is a ‘good’ student in school. This may explain why Taiwanese nursery teachers believe that it is important for them to direct instruction and demand respect from their students. Although nursery teachers may have come to realize that children may benefit more from the whole language approach, it is still not easy or natural for them to relinquish their authority to control their pupils’ development and allow them to plan their own activities. Although Taiwan has become increasingly Westernized, the saying ‘diligence yields rewards while play gets nowhere’ is embedded in the Chinese psyche.

All things considered, the theory of the whole language approach is alien to the Chinese cultural background and personal learning experience. The adoption of the

whole language approach in the curriculum in Taiwan is vividly reflected in the criticism of by Wen (2010, p. 148-149) of the curriculum reform.

There is a tendency in Taiwan to import curriculum innovations, which are seen as embodying the opposite features of the local education system. Innovations are therefore not chosen with regard to the realities of the existing context, which both defines and constrains the action of teachers and pupils. They are instead chosen because they conform to official perceptions of what constitutes a desirable curriculum. The gap between plans and practice is therefore maximised, as some innovations are perceived to be dysfunctional or unworkable.

On the other hand, while highly structured activities are not looked on very favourably by many western educators, they are common in Taiwan as well as other Asian countries. Smith (1994: 23) argues that “rote learning is used considerably in Oriental countries, and a generally high level of academic achievement is found there” (cite from Stevenson & Lee, 1990) which hardly suggests that it is a disaster. However, disaster has been witnessed.

7.4 The gap between espoused theory and practice

In general, if a new programme, approach or reform has not been adopted after a few years, perhaps naturally and inevitably, policy-makers, teacher-educators, parents and researchers, as well as the general public, readily blame teachers for failing to implement it. However, I believe that it is unfair to expect practitioners to shoulder the sole responsibility. Ironically, the policy, reform or approach (for example, the whole language approach) is still seen as being perfect by scholars and practitioners (Lin, 2011), as such the whole language approach is still in the top choice for nursery schools applying for academic-tutorship funding from the government (Lin, 2011). Is it because the essence of the theory is either not grasped or is deliberately ignored that it falls flat?

The present study however was designed to investigate the implementation of the whole language approach and explore the understanding that teachers have of it. The case studies indicate that, although all the participants acknowledged that the whole language approach is the 'best' teaching and learning approach, almost all of them could not stop talking about what 'good' it does. They had all tried hard to grasp what has been advocated as the most appropriate pedagogical technique for young children, with a lot of different thinking and struggling to make it fit into their own understanding of the whole language approach reform; furthermore, the findings from this study also indicate that this view fails to incorporate the complexity of teaching in reality. The participants were obsessed with their intentions and unaware of unintentional consequences.

Of the three teachers, Miss Liu seemed to be most able to resolve classroom problems and negotiated with parents in ways which enabled her to implement learning literacy through the whole language approach and balance it with a traditional approach in use. The others shied away or slowed down their rate of implementing a constructivist conception of the whole language approach into their curriculum through various rhetorical subterfuges, but experienced real pressure. Miss Liu was learning to implement it practically, while the others were perhaps hesitating to take immediate action or were just taking a different path. Therefore, the question is, what lesson may be learned in explaining these three teachers' beliefs and actual practice? The answer to this question lies in the way that teachers beliefs were found to be in a state of flux and each of them had found a way to work that suits them, and their understanding of learning through the whole language approach, as might be expected, continually shifting along a changing period. This can be seen as a continuum, with traditional literacy teaching skill anchored at one end and the whole language approach anchored at

the other. However, no-one is exactly at either end (see Fig.7.1 below) because teachers' beliefs are seen as not being fixed, but shifting. One moment they identified with the whole language; in the next they shifted, altered or rejected it. Therefore, teachers' practice is located along a continuum, rather than being either a whole language approach or in the use of traditional teaching skills.

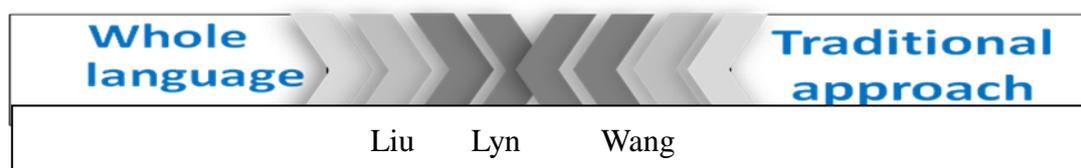


Figure7.1: A continuum view.

Furthermore, it could be argued that Miss Liu was able to identify the difficulties in existing practice. She met the implementation challenge by demonstrating a strong sense of commitment to what Palmer (1998) calls the “connectedness” of formal theory with her daily practice, which is similar to Gee (2001:110), who claimed that “ways of being certain kinds of people,” or specifically, “certain kinds of teachers,” that emerge from how the teacher was talked about and the recognition of particular traits by others. It is through the social process of recognition that affinity groups (A-Identity) interact with their institutional identity (I-Identity). The data demonstrates that Miss Liu had successfully manipulated the balance between “challenge and change” by mediating in the affinity groups (A-Identity) and institutional identity (I-Identity) loop (Gee, 2001). She was able to provide support to herself. Influenced by her own personal experience, she was committed to search for support to meet the challenges of change, and was able to frame puzzles in her own context. She was able to reconstruct and readapt the external challenges into internal ones. Instances included the determination to help children to be active learners, and the attempts to use different means to connect children’s literacy experiences. Miss Liu was able to manage the implementation of change by mediating in a continuous self-reflexive loop the challenge and support of the

affinity group and institutional identity. Her process of implementing the whole language approach re-affirmed ideas concerning the development of expertise posited by Bullough and Baughman (1995):

.....often expertise is thought of as a stage of being, when clearly it is more a matter of becoming, of pushing back boundaries here and there, and as energy is made available for identifying and confronting new and more complicated problems.

While Miss Liu's thinking and beliefs about the whole language approach had progressed more deeply, the other two teachers remained at a superficial level of professional literacy mastery. There was an imbalance in their perception between implementing change and support, with the former outweighing the latter. Their classroom performance reflected issues in their professional preparation. For decades, the Taiwanese government provided minimal resources for the support of early childhood teachers. Experienced teachers, such as Miss Wang and Miss Lyn, had to fall back on messages received on the job within a traditional didactic teaching culture, as well as their teacher education. Without deep critical understanding, they learned how to teach by following the teacher's manual from commercial curriculum packages, the advice of head teachers, and lesson plans shared with colleagues.

Palmer (1998) argues that teaching cannot be reduced to technique, because that kind of professional learning fails to touch the heart of a teacher. Moreover, Palmer points out that teaching "comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). Gee (2001) argued that as identities are validated in response to personal allegiances, this confirms the idea that teachers will need to know that others share their pedagogical values and practices if conceptions about teaching priorities are to change. Without the establishment of such 'affinity groups' and associated processes that allow for 'participation' and 'sharing' (Gee, 2001:105), change will be harder to effect. Such is the case with these two teachers portrayed here. They were content with the traditional

teaching mode, and followed it with ease. As they teach within this type of traditional 'affinity group' (Gee, 2001) they could respond to it with personal allegiance. Furthermore, it could be argued that they responded with what Lacey (1977: 72) described as internalized adjustment in which "the individual complies with constraints and believes that the constraints of the situation are for the best."

However, as social cultural theorist James Gee (2001) has argued, everyone can be recognized as being a certain 'kind of person', which means that we each have a 'natural identity' more foregrounding, for ourselves and others across contextual work with which to categorize and organize the endless stream of complex information we absorb every day. However, this 'certain kind of person' is neither a good nor a bad; it is simply a way of being, at a given time and place, that can change from moment to moment in social interaction, can change from context to context, and it can be seen as unstable. Returning to the teachers in this study, 'a certain kind of teacher' could be related to their jobs and they could attempt to do their job well to fulfill the duties of the position. However, in some cases, they may perceive that their position has been imposed on them and either forced to do or relinquish certain activities they may not have chosen to do otherwise. This can be put in a continuum in terms of how actively or passively the occupant of a position fills or fulfils their role or duty. Therefore, it should be noted that these individual teachers are not the only ones to deal with singular and separate beliefs. When teachers come together, their own nature, the position they occupy in society, their individual accomplishments and achievements as recognized by others, and also the experience they have had within certain type of nursery school, are not separate from each other, but have been developed and formed, and interact with their beliefs (Gee, 2001). Furthermore, they are all inter-related and governed by collective, deeply-held beliefs and assumptions of individuals. Moreover, having held or

adopted a belief about the world, it becomes more ingrained as they continually and unconsciously ‘select’ or ‘shift’ the data that supports that belief.

One can imagine, based on this research, a nursery school where there is growing tension among the different key dimensions of difficulties, such as acceding to school and the requests of parents or wishes and a concern for the children’s development or needs, as well as a concern for traditional culture and the expectation of the whole language approach reform. The teacher would probably not say, ‘I believe that the whole language approach is not a useful approach to match parental desire for literacy’. Instead, like the participants in this study, they would be more likely to say, ‘the whole language approach is good but...’, and this is a big difference. By not acknowledging that this is merely their own belief, they make it difficult for themselves and the researcher to explore it. By stating that ‘the whole language approach is good but...’ as a fact, the teacher creates a situation in which change is unlikely to occur. This seems to echo Gee (2001), who argued that when we are asked how we would behave under certain circumstances, the answer usually given is our identity shifting espoused of the certain action. It is the theory to which we give our ‘allegiance’ and which we communicate to different others. In this regard, Sfard and Prusak (2005) remind us that identity is not simply what is claimed for oneself but is also, and maybe most pertinently, the identity assigned by others.

7.4.1 A transitional model of pedagogy

Presumably, this process of adapting and changing takes time and may be regarded as being a continuum within a transitional model of pedagogy or teacher change (see Figure 7.2 below). However, none of the teachers will be exactly at the end of any continuum in their actual practice because different factors act on them differently and

result in different implementations of the whole language approach. Thus, even though the whole language approach reform movement is the same, the factors affecting each teacher are different. They make their own choice depending on how they can balance it within their daily teaching. As Gee (2001) suggests, a teacher acts and interacts within a given context as a certain ‘kind of person’, or even several different ‘kinds’ all at once. Since the time and context change moment by moment, no teacher can stay stable in one type of teaching approach. However, the continuum indicates that teachers may be in a transitional phase in their thinking, and they may be in the process of accommodating the conflicting notions behind the traditional and modern Western approaches.

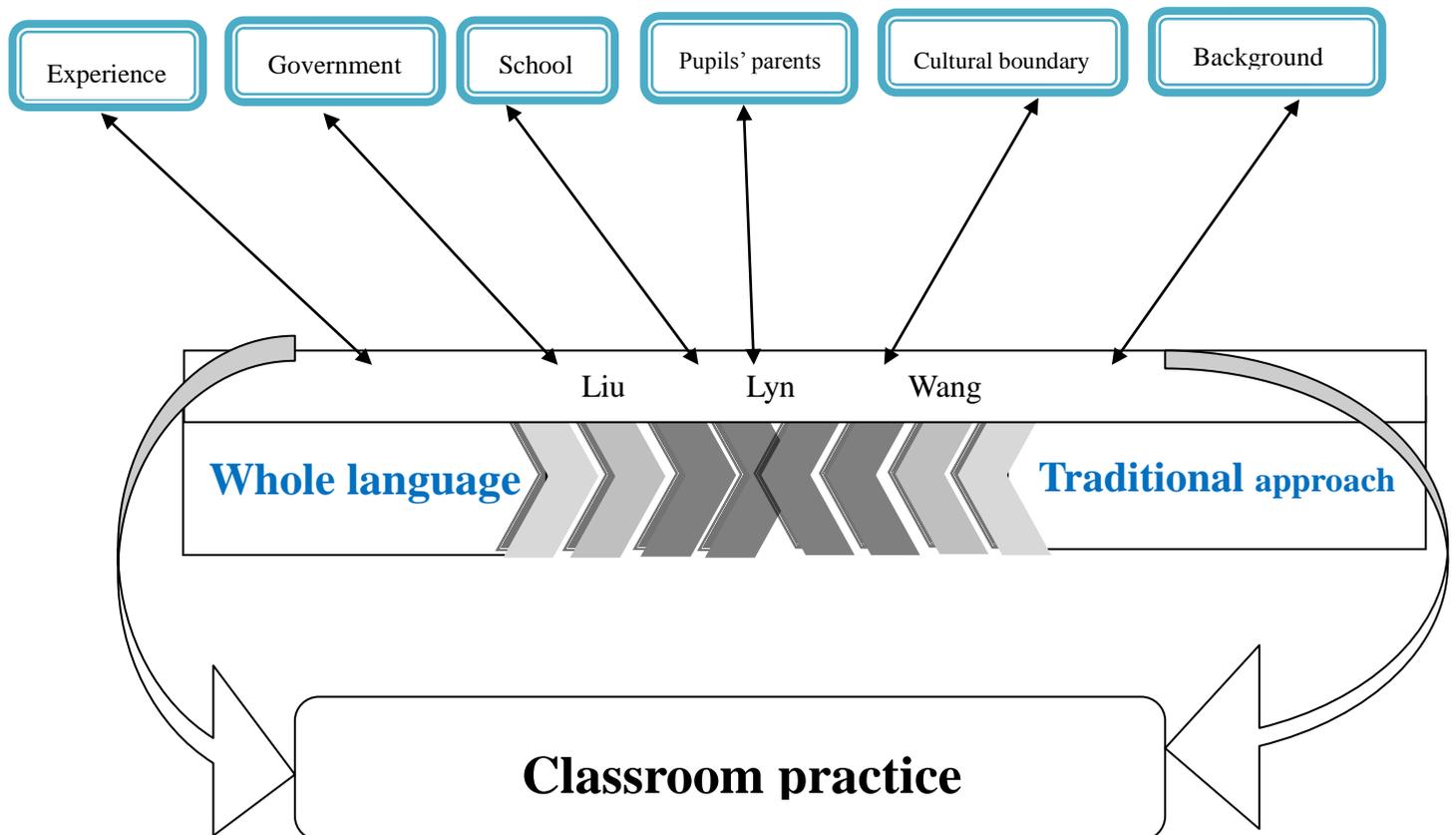


Figure 7.2: A continuum within a transitional model of pedagogy.

The critical point is that at the end of this study, two of the three teachers appeared to admit that they did not, in fact, fully understand the whole language approach,

although they claimed that they had known about the Western whole language approach before. According to Shulman (1986, 1987), the ability to give answers to questions about teaching reflects practical experience and theoretical understanding about particular issues. The data in this study seems to reveal that uncertainties and difficulties are common during the change process in the translation or transmission of theories and ideas to Taiwanese teachers from the West, and that they face problematic situations in which theoretical knowledge (such as the whole language approach) were too abstract to be able to overcome the complexity of practice. Therefore, some teachers such as Miss Wang and Miss Lyn were subject to a great deal of pressure to complete the syllabus and satisfy parents' expectations and the schools' demand that pupils achieve a high level of literacy competence. Moreover, their day-to-day practical knowledge may have been inadequate to resolve or adapt these problems. Furthermore, traditional teaching methods are seen to be more efficient at transferring information to children, so teachers resort to this method when they feel they are under pressure. Thus, they fell into a continuum along which they may have become stuck and were likely to relinquish their planned curriculum changes or slide into a more secure traditional conformity which became safely embraced by a somewhat simplistic, superficial and mechanical literacy teaching. However, pressure from schools, parents and traditional culture may be seen as casting a substantial shadow, pulling teachers' practices into a transitional model along the continuum.

On the other hand, parents, schools and traditional culture seemed to be external forces or pressure affecting change, but some of these forces could also be attributed to the teachers own internal benefit in avoiding the change. The parents were not partners of the education process; they were seen as consumers, and therefore, the inside of these beliefs are complex and layered. This seems to indicate that schools and teachers

recognize the parents' need for tangible proof of learning, and that this is the aim of the teaching, rather than focusing on the children's interests or needs. According to Pramling-Samuelsson and Asplund-Carlsson (2008), teachers, parents and schools are all preoccupied with the "object of learning" but not the "act of learning." Therefore, it could be argued that schools, teachers and parents appear to have hijacked 'what children need' to satisfy adult and social culture. Furthermore, the teacher in the nursery gave the need to maintain cultural connectedness and cultural trust as reasons for not changing too quickly. The teachers from this study even commented that the MOE or school principal should conduct workshops to educate parents rather than children on the value of whole language approach. However, the teachers support of current practices in meeting parents expectations rather than children needs, which allows teachers to fall back comfortably to the traditional practice of working from, and teaching through, a textbook and avoiding the whole language approach reform as suggested by MOE. Though the teachers interviewed said that they understood the benefits of the whole language approach, they did not implement it. As the interview findings also indicated, some teachers appeared to admit that the whole language approach in an early childhood setting required extra effort, time to plan, organize and implement. Therefore, they were reluctant to implement many of the whole language ideas as the current practice of traditional approach continued.

The Reading Project proposed in Taiwan recommends a shift from traditional rote-literacy teaching to a social constructivist whole language approach to teaching and learning. The Project has led to changes in views about children and literacy teaching and learning, and since some of these reforms were based on western ideals of democracy and freedom, which are not totally congruent with Chinese cultural traditions, this has led to some difficulty in implementation.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) group (2001) poses the following question at the end of their second evaluation report (cited in Fisher, 2006), how deep are the changes in teaching that occur as a result of the reform? The findings of this study were linked with the findings of Fisher (2006), who conducted a longitudinal study of two teachers who were involved in a large-scale program to change the way literacy was taught in England. The study involved interviews and observations over three years. Fisher found that teachers made considerable changes to the organization, and management of their teaching as well as to planning and contents. But their pedagogical approach did not change. In other words, this study revealed the unchanged ability of teacher practice. Evidence regarding participants' change of beliefs was not provided. However, over the past decade and up until today, early childhood education practice and scholars in Taiwan have presented a fusion of traditional Chinese and Western/American views about early literacy learning and teaching. Therefore, it can be argued that part of teachers' beliefs remains closed to change and challenge, and part stays tacitly in the shadows. In this case, clashes are inevitable. For example, as may be remembered from the study, Miss Wang seemed to be afraid that her traditional literacy teaching methods would be criticized by the researcher, as well as her knowledge of the whole language approach. Therefore, she gave a "Model answer" to defend herself to the researcher because, as she claimed, the 'Model answer' always covers her agitation well. Furthermore, when I suggested that Miss Lyn should teach and do things in a different way in the whole language movement, she admitted that she felt that someone had pulled the rug out from under her very understanding of the world of literacy teaching without any concern or consideration for her daily teaching. Therefore, her instinct was to take an aggressive stance to protect her view of the world.

Teaching involves a complex interplay between what the teacher does and what they think. Whilst much can be changed by external imposition, more deep-rooted, internal change may involve a more individual and reflective engagement with the issues than an externally imposed programme allows. The whole language approach in Taiwan has resulted in impressive increases in levels of attainment up until now. However, the findings of this study have implications for the potential influence of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, background and contextual information that may help to explain the reason for the failure of some of the reform proposals and the large scale of survey research without any significant findings in the past few years. Furthermore, although teachers are clearly aware of the changes brought about by the Reading Project reform of literacy education, in order to successfully implement the implementation of the whole language approach, they need to be helped to critically examine their implicit social and cultural-based notions of effective teaching and learning.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter contains a concise review of the entire research journey. The significance of the present study is followed by an assessment of the limitations encountered during the research. Furthermore, recommendations for the government, nursery schools, teachers and future researchers are also discussed in this chapter.

8.2 The journey begins

The call for an improvement in children's literacy has been one of the key educational issues of the past two decades. In particular, research has indicated the difficulty of implementing change in literacy classrooms. While governments can mandate or suggest changes, studies show a theory practice gap (Huang, 2006). In Taiwan, official expectations were published to guide and influence the services of nursery education. In response to these, a whole language approach was recommended as a mode of pedagogy for young children in Taiwan. Child-centred services and play based on the practice of integrated literacy learning to nourish a child's holistic literacy development were advocated in an official project report to promote reading in 2000 (Lee, 2007), and this was considered to be the primary guideline for early childhood education for the next millennium. Therefore, many nurseries and kindergartens claim that they have applied the whole language approach as part of their teaching policy and see it as being an important element of their curriculum design. However, nursery education quality inspection reports (Taiwan Education Commission, 2004/2005, 2006/2007, 2008/2009) indicate that contemporary children's literacy education is still conducted in a teacher-directed way, which regards young children as being passive

recipients of literacy knowledge. The desire to explore the implementation of the whole language approach and investigate the understanding of teachers motivated me to conduct this interpretive study. The aim of the study was to interview teachers to explore their understanding of the whole language approach and their beliefs about teaching literacy, as well as observing their pedagogical practice and investigating the complexities which underpin their pedagogical beliefs, which, to some extent, lead them to use their own particular pedagogical model.

Many previous studies of teacher beliefs (particularly in Taiwan) have adopted a large scale survey approach (Huang, 2003/2004; Lin, 2011). These have tended to obscure the complexity of factors that influence the choices teachers make. This study makes a contribution to our understanding of the complexity of teachers' beliefs, particularly in the context of the introduction of a Western approach to pedagogy in a setting with different cultural values.

8.2.1 Summary of teachers' complex beliefs and practices

Pools of data and piles of transcripts were produced from classroom observation and teachers' interviews, together with responses from a questionnaire survey. These data were analyzed for the diverse pedagogical features of a whole language approach. The teachers' reported beliefs were collected and a comprehensive analysis of the cause of the belief-practice gap was conducted. Thus, the two key research questions, 'what are Taiwanese teachers' beliefs about teaching literacy in an early year setting?' and 'what do teachers believe to be the difficulties in teaching literacy using a whole language approach in the nursery phase?', were explored, and some proposals to enhance the quality of the schools and the teachers' professional delivery of this pedagogical practice in early learning and teaching were able to be made based on these

findings and analyses.

The findings from the questionnaire survey illustrated that, in terms of literacy teaching and learning, most of the teachers claimed to prefer neither a traditional skills-based approach nor a whole language approach. In practice, they report tending to adopt a blended method and technique, which is a combination of the whole language and the skills-based approach. That said, 50.3% of the teachers nevertheless agreed with concept of the whole language approach and understood its value and relevance in improving Taiwan's early year's literacy teaching. However, 81.1% of them also emphasized that this approach should be accompanied by a consideration of the detailed methods and practicalities. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 7, unlike the primary and secondary education sectors, Taiwanese nurseries have never been recognized as a formal sector in the education system. Most nurseries are run as private businesses and are market-orientated. Therefore, the findings from the three cases indicated that teachers perceive that this peculiarity creates a difficult working environment in which to articulate the discrepancy between their conceptual belief in the whole language approach and their pragmatic concern about the actual amount of learning it produces. The research demonstrated that the conceptual conflict of the three nursery teachers about the potential of the whole language approach to foster literacy learning is particularly influenced by the intervention of external and internal factors, which include the contextual situation of their nursery schools in terms of a) the expectations of the parents; b) the teachers' personal background; c) the teachers' teaching experience; d) the government's proposed guidelines, and e) cultural demands. All three qualified nursery teachers reported that the whole language approach echoed their own aspiration about early literacy learning, with its child-centred features of fun, playfulness, relaxation, engagement, pleasant atmosphere, activity, meaningfulness,

respect for individual needs, and encouragement of social and peer interaction. However, these characteristics were seldom observed in their classroom practice. Instead, a teacher-directed type of practice and instructional learning, which was contrary to some of their reported beliefs, was commonly found in nursery classrooms. Moreover, during my school visits, two of the three teachers expressed their frustration in finding that they were only able to minimally implement the whole language approach. This gave me cause to develop the idea of a beliefs/practice continuum. This indicated that teachers' beliefs were in a state of flux, and as may be expected, their understanding and implementation of teaching and learning using the whole language approach continually shifted along a transitional continuum, with the traditional literacy teaching pedagogy anchored at one end and the whole language approach at the other. However, no teacher is exactly at one end or the other because teachers' beliefs are seen as being not fixed, but shifting. One minute they identify with the whole language approach, and the next, they shift, alter or reject it. Therefore, teachers' practice is located and moving along a continuum rather than simply using either the whole language approach or traditional teaching skills.

8.2.1.1 Teachers' teaching experience

This continuum is formed by different internal and external conflicts, and the findings indicated an obvious internal conflict between the perception by the teachers of what counts as ideal nursery literacy education and their actual practice. However, the teachers seldom mentioned in the study period that professional support was available for their professional training in the whole language approach. Indeed, two of the three teachers commented that they did not think they were sufficiently prepared in terms of training for the complex pedagogy of the whole language approach. The 'whole language approach' is given an official expectation by government and scholars, but it is left to be absorbed through a self-exploration and self-discovery of the way of teaching

the approach in their literacy classroom. Further details about what this whole language is and how this exploring and discovery will be facilitated are somewhat lacking. However, the problem with Goodman's whole language approach lies partly in the type of abstract knowledge it draws on. Therefore, the link between reading and 'making sense of whole language' does seem lacking from teachers' teaching experience.

8.2.1.2 Nursery schools' requirements and parents' expectations

Since they operate under a bureaucratic and hierarchical management structure, the teachers reported that they are expected to follow the directions of their schools' management. They have to obey and follow both the schools' instructional strategy and the choice of materials and textbooks to use in their thematic project curriculum. A top-down hierarchical management was obvious, since the teachers reported that their position in the school was a subordinate one, and their role was as a mere executor of the decisions passed down by the management. A traditional Confucian culture of the interplay of influence was noted in that the hierarchical relationship indicated that the schools' management perceived the teachers as simply being employees rather than qualified professional practitioners, and this despite the fact that traditional Confucian culture also strongly demands respect for teachers. However, since the orientation of these schools is business and profit, the teachers reported that they were manipulated to act in the way the management deemed would attract more business. Two of the three teachers reported that, due to the bureaucratic-hierarchical relationship with the schools, they felt powerless to take action in implementing the whole language approach.

On the other hand, they also accepted this hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, justifying it in the light of parental expectations and responded to the situation by simply obeying orders. As already mentioned most Taiwanese nurseries are run as private businesses and are market-orientated. Therefore, they are not only focused on

the type of educational services they offer, but also need to emphasize their profits. From this perspective, one of the basic concerns of the nurseries is to enroll more students to secure their income and safeguard the balancing of their budgets. Thus, since parents are the key providers of income for nursery education services, schools tend to strive to meet their expectations, rather than satisfying their children's needs; moreover, respecting and accommodating parents' desires or needs is perfectly reasonable from a business-orientated perspective. This was experienced and perceived by the teachers, who indicated that the majority of parents greatly value the academic learning outcomes of their children, and they tend to entrust their children to a nursery which is operated by a teacher-directed and didactic approach. They believe that a programme which emphasizes rote learning and the whole-group instruction of narrowly-defined academic skills can help their children to secure a place in a good primary school, as well as preparing them for future study. Thus, they opt for instructional learning which they believe can achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Eventually, parents' expectations and the nursery schools become a shadowy dominant power, one that over-rides the choice of learning and teaching practice in class, and some teachers reported that they have limited freedom to make their own pedagogical choices. This was especially found when a teacher declared that the whole language approach could not completely survive in her classroom because it is not a learning activity which is recognized by parents as guaranteeing academic attainment. This was perceived, informed and experienced as being a shared concern of the teachers and the subject of conflict between parents, nursery schools and themselves. Therefore, one teacher chose to provide the 'model answer' to the researcher, which was that she had implemented the whole language approach in her classroom, whereas a didactic, lecturing, supervisory and monitoring type of learning and teaching was commonly

applied to respond to the pedagogical practices demanded by external expectations.

Nevertheless, the findings also indicated that the teachers argue that they have not abandoned their belief in the whole language approach teaching strategy, but simply use a different way or different path in adjusting to it. They argued that by continually shifting their belief and practicing didactic, lecture-type instructional learning and teaching, they are able to secure the kind of more solid academic learning outcome for the children to meet the preferences of parents. Furthermore, they are also able to secure a certain 'kind of personal' and 'affinity perspective (A-Identities)' in their daily teaching to achieve a balance in terms of how they position themselves between conflicting and ambiguous situations (Gee, 2001).

However, the findings also indicated that these teachers were aware of the internal and external conflict, and the ambiguity between their perception of the ideal whole language approach and their actual classroom practice. Furthermore, one teacher also acknowledged that the early literacy learning experience she is imposing on her pupils is a bit boring and unpleasant. All the same, the teachers felt that they had little alternative but to subscribe to parental expectations.

In this study, the usual pattern of two of the three teachers' responses to the demands of nursery schools and parents and their conformity to management styles consisted of words such as conformity; obey; disobey; justification or negotiation. The other teachers use her professional competence to assert professional preferences and put up a strong defence of the whole language approach. As revealed in the interviews, some teachers' find that their teacher training has, in fact, empowered them to protect their pedagogical beliefs, and they are able to react in a positive way to influence their

nursery schools and the parents. Some teachers find that teacher training courses and professional development workshops are useful and sufficient to support them to meet and communicate the divergent interests of the nursery school and parents in real settings. On the other hand, one of the teachers felt that it was difficult to use the professional competence they gained from teacher training to protect their own professional preferences. As they claimed in the interview, training courses are too theoretical and provided them with insufficient support to negotiate with different parents' demands in their real teaching activity. Thus, teachers are vulnerable to the interference of contextual and societal factors, as well as their habitual responses of conformity and compliance.

8.2.1.3 Significance of the study

This study has revealed a comprehensive picture of these three teachers' literacy beliefs and pedagogical practices in nursery classrooms. It has also unearthed the characteristics of the teachers' beliefs and the influential factors which interfere with those beliefs and practices. Taken together, these findings have demonstrated that the underpinning of teachers' beliefs actually flows and shifts in the complexities of the working environment. In fact, these complexities denote the diverse kinds of interference perpetrated by different key parties, as articulated in chapter 7, as influential, shadowy, factors, namely, the parents, the nursery school, the teachers' background and experience, and cultural and governmental guidelines. Education studies worldwide recognize the fact that parents, nursery schools, teachers, cultural and governmental guidelines or policies are the key parties and influential factors in teachers' beliefs and practices. Nursery year studies conducted in Taiwan seldom indicate that teachers' beliefs are seen as shifting, rather than being fixed. Yet, in this study, the teachers were found to identify with the whole language approach one minute, and in the next, they shifted, altered or rejected it in their classroom practice. Despite

part of teachers' beliefs that has significant been influenced or changed, each teacher still remains largely consistent in their own pedagogical stance.

Furthermore, the studies conducted in Taiwan have also seldom probed all of these parties in a single piece of research. Most local studies investigating nursery education have revealed one of the key parties individually, such as Taiwanese parents and their academic concerns about their children's nursery education (Hung, 2006; Wu, 2005; Houg, 2004); the educational service of nursery schools in Taiwan (Jan, 2007; Duan and Chung, 2003); the pedagogical practice of Taiwanese nursery teachers (Yang, 2005; Liu, 2005); and the teacher training for nursery teachers in Taiwan (Cheng, 2008; Hsu, 2002). Very few local studies have dealt with two key parties at one time. Thus, although the present study uses a small-scale mixed-method with only three teacher informants, and therefore may be limited in its capacity for generalization, it distinguishes itself by incorporating teachers' expressed of concerns for these six key parties and divulging the dynamic interplay among the influential factors with teachers' beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the present study comprehensively maps out the complex influences underpinning the teachers' shifting beliefs and their daily teaching practice when the conflicting interests of the key parties confront one another.

8.3 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations, the first of which is the number of participants. The study only provides information about three early years teachers. Therefore, the findings of this case study cannot be generalized, nor replicated in a positivist sense. However, its strength is the richness in depth of the data that can be obtained from a small number of participants as opposed to the broad brush of a larger sample. As Patton (2002:460) explains, "the purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to

represent the case”. In other words, this case study will help to understand the influences on teachers’ beliefs and practices as a result of implementing the whole language approach. Moreover, their beliefs about teaching literacy and the extent to which those beliefs are reflected in their classroom practices can also be understood.

Secondly, although non-participant observations were conducted, the presence of a researcher may have influenced the participants’ behaviour. According to Patton (2002:306), “the observer may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways”. Therefore, although the participants said that they felt comfortable being observed and interviewed, I wonder if my presence did add some tension or pressure to the situation, not only because of what I was doing, but in terms of their self-awareness and responsibilities as a teacher, since all the interviews and observations were carried out in the workplace during work time. Other staff in the nursery would have been conscious that they were not there to carry out their particular share of teaching responsibilities, and there may have been children and staff who needed assistance.

The third limitation is the length of the study, the aim of which was to investigate the beliefs and practices around literacy and the results of implementing the whole language approach over a fourteen-week period. Yet, teachers’ beliefs and practices will continue to develop, shift and change over time. As Patton (2002) argues, “field work should last long enough to get the job done – to answer the research questions being asked and fulfil the purpose of the study.” I observed the teachers interacting with their pupils for only 60-90 minutes each time; however, since literacy events occur many times throughout the school day, there were events I was unable to witness.

Fourthly, although I conducted an entry survey, I was more interested in teachers who have changed because of the implementation of the whole language approach; thus,

I paid more attention to the three case interviews and observation data than the entry questionnaire survey. This is because I was more attracted to the complexities of the change procedure than the outcome. As Patton (2002:51) notes, “the investigator’s commitment is to understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence with regard to any conclusion offered”.

8.4 Recommendations

Some recommendations can be made based on the results of this study.

8.4.1 For further research

- a) Firstly, it is recommended that a wider sample of participants be chosen. This study focused on a very small number of teachers in one county and generated theory that should be explored beyond the immediate context of this research. A larger sample from different schools, areas, or parts of the world with more available types of nursery would develop the theory and increase the generalizability of the findings.
- b) It is recommended that future researchers examine the extent to which teachers’ own education affects their beliefs about the whole language approach, literacy teaching, learning and their classroom practices. As stated earlier, an in-depth research of this question was beyond the scope of this study. However, future research in this field can explore whether or not teachers’ own educational level offers an explanation for the discrepancies between their beliefs and their classroom practices.
- c) It also is recommended that future research be conducted to determine what effect, if any, onsite training in the area of literacy would have on the teaching

practices in a nursery classroom. In other words, future researchers could offer literacy training to nursery instructors based on their initial response to interview questions and observations. The training could be followed by additional observations and interviews to determine if and how teachers' responses had changed following training.

8.4.2 Practical recommendations

As indicated in the study, the teachers' beliefs worked in a very complex pedagogical situation, confronting diverse pull and push forces, conflicting values, and power struggles. This unsettled situation restricted their beliefs about teaching literacy and diverted their pedagogical practice from their expectations of the official whole language approach. A balanced internal and external situation is necessary if teachers are to restore the professional quality of nursery services. Therefore, the recommendations for improvement consider both internal and external perspectives.

8.4.2.1 Recommendations for Government

The first recommendation adopts an external vantage point, proposing the need for government subsidies and funding for nurseries. This will help to stabilize the financial situation of nurseries, which have always operated as private businesses driven by market forces and mainly generated by parents' expectations. With government funding, nursery education will shift from being a private business to a public service. The official investment will enable the nursery schools to rid themselves of their over-riding concern with sustaining a balance between revenue and expenses, while simultaneously supporting them to counteract the market force of parental influence. The general imbalance among nursery schools, teachers and parents will be reformed and improved, and the confronting pull and push forces among them will be eliminated. Then the

conflict between their beliefs and practices will be minimized as a result of a shared understanding. The nursery schools will retain their pedagogical control and the teachers will be able to have their theoretical beliefs and make their own choices. Hence, the nursery education services are more likely to follow the official reform movement or any teaching approach proposed by the government.

The relationship relocated (see **Figure 8.1** below) as a result of government funding would put nursery schools, teachers and parents on a balanced footing in the education service, and the nursery education would change direction to focus on the young children's needs rather than their parents as consumers. As the figure below indicates, these external and internal systems can be seen as a form of tripartite win-win relationship. They could encourage close collaboration among the key parties or influence them to work for the best education to benefit the children.

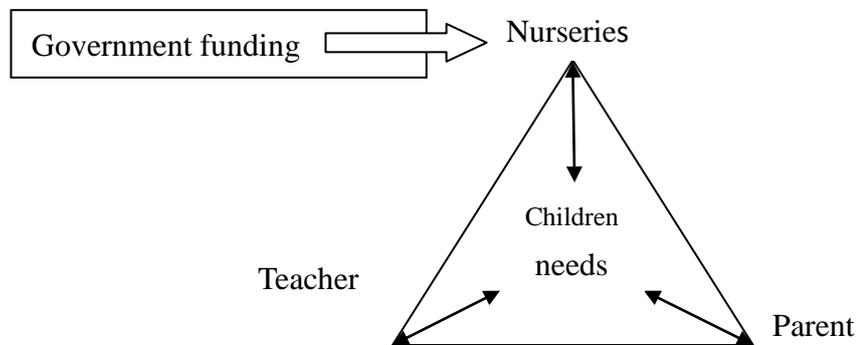


Figure 8.1: The relationship relocated nursery system

8.4.2.2 Recommendations for nursery schools

Nursery schools are recommended to undertake a restructuring of their top-down management, to move the control or push from pedagogical and curriculum control, and share it with the teachers. Such positive management measures would enable the staff of the entire school to cooperate in the pursuit of quality early learning and teaching. Furthermore, teachers should be regarded as being valuable professionals and should

further be invited to establish a partnership with parents. In turn, this would promote better communication and negotiation among parents, teachers and the school, so that they would respect each other's interest in the children's education. Schools and teachers could also take the opportunity to exchange information with the parents for a better understanding of the learning and developmental needs of their children.

8.4.2.3 Recommendations for teachers

Nursery teachers need to be empowered; thus, it is recommended that various methods be adopted to enhance their pedagogical coherence. These include promoting their in-depth understanding of the core values of nursery education over a cognitive knowledge base; fostering their pedagogical reasoning over the technical performance of 'how to teach'; reinforcing their experiential learning to complement their conceptual learning; and broadening their professional knowledge base. All these recommendations point to a command of pedagogical knowledge and understanding, which is conceptually, theoretically and practically grounded.

What is more, when following these recommendations, an appreciation of social norms should also be cultivated. It has been shown that cultural values play a critical role in the forging of pedagogical knowledge, affecting inner pedagogical reasoning and judgment and shaping teaching habits (Husu, 2002).

In short, the implementation of these recommendations can sustain nursery years learning and teaching, as well as enrich teachers' own holistic personal development, which is equally important to their professional career training and ongoing development. Individual teachers' potential and professional talents; their pedagogical thinking, reasoning, judgment and problem-solving skills; their interpersonal and

interpersonal communication among colleagues and with parents; their awareness of self-understanding and building of self-esteem; and their sensitivity to social values can all be developed. New skills, new learning and new experiences are likely to be generated and followed, until the teachers are able to proficiently transform their professional knowledge. They will also be more confident in defending their ideal of nursery education against any threatening situations and intervening forces, and it will be possible for them to make contextually-sensitive and responsive pedagogical decisions, hence narrowing the beliefs-practice gap.

As well as empowering the teachers, teacher training has to be revamped. Teachers must be supported to exercise pedagogical reasoning and make sound judgments on “what they ought to do in any particular situation...How should they live and act in their work” (Husu, 2003:4). Therefore, a growth approach should be adopted in teacher training to help teachers to develop their proficiency in reflection and enable them to think critically, be pedagogically reflective and be flexible when making decisions (Phillips & Hatch, 2000). Their ability to substitute the whole language approach to playful and manipulative learning activities for the traditional teacher-directed and academically-orientated nursery curriculum will then become stronger, as will their ability to support the children in constructing their own knowledge and learning how to learn. In so doing, teachers will be able to assume the reformative role expected of them to change “from someone who transmits knowledge to someone who inspires students to construct knowledge” (Lin, 2004).

The recommendations for improvement proposed in this chapter attempt to determine internal-external and social and cultural environments for teachers to defend their theoretical beliefs and perform their pedagogical roles. With these implications,

they are better placed and prepared to function in an increasingly complex teaching environment. Furthermore, it is also hoped that this study's evidence highlights the importance of recognizing the complex, interactional context of the classroom and to acknowledge the changing of teaching is difficult, and the importance of an individual teacher's pedagogical stance in how and to what extent any reform, new approach, guideline will be implemented. Successful teaching of literacy depends as much on the individual professional capacity of the teacher as much as any programme of content or techniques.

Appendices

Appendix One

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (English Version- Blank)

Dear Teachers,

The purpose of the current study is to explore what teachers of kindergartens and nursery schools think about reading pedagogy. In your opinion, what role does reading play to children? As well, what are the approaches to teach children read? If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The information collected is for research purposes only and all information will remain confidential. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

Ling-Ying, Huang.

Personal Background

Gender: (1) Male (2) Female

Age:

Education level: (1) Vocational high school (2) College (3) Graduate (4) Postgraduate

Educational major (Department):

Department of _____

Years of teaching in the Nursery:

Job title:

Level of current class of teaching:

(1) Reception class; Lower- class (2) Middle class (3) Upper-class (4) Mixed ages

Size of the kindergarten:

(1) Less than 2 classes (2) 3-5 classes (3) More than 6 classes

Number of pupils in your class:

(1) Less than 10 (2) 11-15 (3) More than 16

How often do you read?

(1) Daily (2) Weekly (3) Monthly (4) None

How much time of your is dedicated to reading?

- (1) Less than 30 minutes (2) 1 hour (3) 2 hours (4) More than 3 hours

What types of texts do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

- (1) Newspapers (2) Magazines (3) Ordinary books (4) Picture books (5) Mails (6) Emails or on-line articles (7) Audio books

Why do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

- (1) Personal interest (2) Job requirement (3) To broaden my mind (4) To educate children (5) Religious purposes (6) Exams (7) To kill some time (8) Expand skills in daily life (9) Necessary for life/travel

Part 2: teachers' reading instruction

Have you participated in seminars regarding reading pedagogy in the past 12 months?

- (1) Yes, _____ times (2) No.

When you teach, how do you come to decide the teaching content of reading?

- (1) To conform to governmental content standards (2) To conform to teacher's manual (3) To conform to kindergarten's/nursery school's curriculum (4) In accordance with pupils' interests (5) Other

How would you describe the extent of your teaching autonomy in teaching reading?

- (1) 0% (2) 50% (3) 100%

How much does the kindergarten/nursery school you're working for value the following classes?

Valued classes	Very much	Equally valued	Not really	Not at all
Reading				
Spelling and writing				
Speaking, listening and others				

Materials of reading and frequency of usage:

Frequency \ Materials	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or Never
Children's reading books				

Textbooks				
Flashcards				
Materials from different learning fields				
Children's newspapers or magazines				
Teaching reading software				
Spelling and writing handouts or assignment booklets				

Reading activities employed in your class and the frequency of usage:

Frequency Reading activities	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or never
Reading story books or poetry for children				
Using plots of the story to introduce new words				
Allowing children to participate in and share story telling				
Individual reading: library corner time				
Teaching Mandarin Chinese phonetic symbols and spelling				
Recital of idioms and phrases				
Practice writing				

Does your class have a dedicated library corner or book shelf/shelves?

(1) Yes, with roughly _____ books. (2) No.

How often is the class library corner open for use?

(1) Everyday-Almost every day (2) 1-2 times/ week (3) 1-2 times/ month (4) Almost never-Never

Part 3: Teacher’s Beliefs About Literacy

		SD	D	A	SA
1	There is very little difference between the skills needed by the beginning reader and those used by proficient readers.	1	2	3	4
2	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	1	2	3	4
3	Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualizes a component skill of language.	1	2	3	4
4	Teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text	1	2	3	4
5	Learning to read should involve attending closely to the print on the page.	1	2	3	4
6	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	1	2	3	4
7	Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills.	1	2	3	4
8	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	1	2	3	4
9	Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	1	2	3	4
10	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	1	2	3	4
11	Proficient readers pay very little attention to the details of print when reading.	1	2	3	4
12	For effective learning, literacy programmes should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	1	2	3	4
13	Children learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral language skills.	1	2	3	4
14	Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell.	1	2	3	4
15	Teachers should regularly test spelling.	1	2	3	4
16	The use of spelling lists is essential for learning how to spell.	1	2	3	4

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (English Version- Completed)

Appendix One (Miss Wang)

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (English Version)

Dear Teachers,

The purpose of the current study is to explore what teachers of kindergartens and nursery schools think about reading pedagogy. In your opinion, what role does reading play to children? As well, what are the approaches to teach children read? If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The information collected is for research purposes only and all information will remain confidential. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

Ling-Ying, Huang.

Personal Background

Gender: (1) Male (2) Female

Age: 24

Education level: (1) Vocational high school (2) College (3) Graduate (4) Postgraduate

Educational major (Department):

Department of _____

Years of teaching in the Nursery: 15

Job title:

Level of current class of teaching:

(1) Reception class; Lower- class (2) Middle class (3) Upper-class (4) Mixed ages

Size of the kindergarten:

(1) Less than 2 classes (2) 3-5 classes (3) More than 6 classes

Number of pupils in your class:

(1) Less than 10 (2) 11-15 (3) More than 16

How often do you read?

(1) Daily (2) Weekly (3) Monthly (4) None

How much time of your is dedicated to reading?

(1) Less than 30 minutes (2) 1 hour (3) 2 hours (4) More than 3 hours

What types of texts do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

(1) Newspapers (2) Magazines (3) Ordinary books (4) Picture books (5) Mails (6) Emails or on-line articles (7) Audio books

Why do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

(1) Personal interest (2) Job requirement (3) To broaden my mind (4) To educate children (5) Religious purposes (6) Exams (7) To kill some time (8) Expand skills in daily life (9) Necessary for life/travel

Part 2: teachers' reading instruction

Have you participated in seminars regarding reading pedagogy in the past 12 months?

Yes, 1-2 times (2) No.

***When you teach, how do you come to decide the teaching content of reading?**

(1) To conform to governmental content standards (2) To conform to teacher's manual (3) To conform to kindergarten's/nursery school's curriculum (4) In accordance with pupils' interests (5) Other

***How would you describe the extent of your teaching autonomy in teaching reading?**

(1) 0% (2) 50% (3) 100%

How much does the kindergarten/nursery school you're working for value the following classes?

Valued classes	Very much	Equally valued	Not really	Not at all
1 Reading		✓		
2 Spelling and writing	✓			
3 Speaking, listening and others		✓		

Materials of reading and frequency of usage:

Frequency	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or Never
Materials				
4 Children's reading books	✓			
5 Textbooks	✓			
6 Flashcards	✓			
* 7 Materials from different learning fields	✓			
* 8 Children's newspapers or magazines		✓		
9 Teaching reading software		✓		
10 Spelling and writing handouts or assignment booklets	✓			

Reading activities employed in your class and the frequency of usage:

Frequency	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or never
Reading activities				
11 Reading story books or poetry for children		✓		
Using plots of the story to introduce 12 new words	✓			
Allowing children to participate in and share story 13 telling		✓		
Individual reading: library corner time 14		✓		
Teaching Mandarin Chinese phonetic symbols and spelling 15	✓			
Recital of idioms and phrases 16	✓			
Practice writing 17	✓			

18 Does your class have a dedicated library corner or book shelf/shelves?

Yes, with roughly 10-20 books. (2) No.

How often is the class library corner open for use?

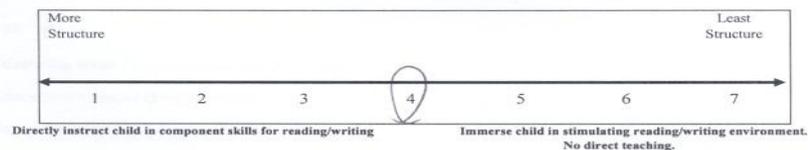
(1) Everyday-Almost every day (2) 1-2 times/ week (3) 1-2 times/ month (4) Almost never-Never

Part 3: Teacher's Beliefs About Literacy

		SD	D	A	SA
✖ 1	There is very little difference between the skills needed by the beginning reader and those used by proficient readers.	1	2	3	4
✖ 2	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	1	2	3	4
✖ 3	Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualizes a component skill of language.	1	2	3	4
✖ 4	Teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text	1	2	3	4
✖ 5	Learning to read should involve attending closely to the print on the page.	1	2	3	4
✖ 6	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	1	2	3	4
7	Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills.	1	2	3	4
8	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	1	2	3	4
✖ 9	Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	1	2	3	4
10	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	1	2	3	4
✖ 11	Proficient readers pay very little attention to the details of print when reading.	1	2	3	4
✖ 12	For effective learning, literacy programmes should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	1	2	3	4
13	Children learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral language skills.	1	2	3	4
✖ 14	Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell.	1	2	3	4
✖ 15	Teachers should regularly test spelling.	1	2	3	4
16	The use of spelling lists is essential for learning how to spell.	1	2	3	4

✖ 17	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	1	2	3	4
✖ 18	Words learnt in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing.	1	2	3	4
✖ 19	Spelling is best learnt incidentally through regular reading and writing activities.	1	2	3	4
✖ 20	Spelling involves careful listening to sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
21	Young children's phonemic awareness skills predict their ability to learn to spell in the early years.	1	2	3	4
✖ 22	Learning to spell depends almost entirely upon vision (e.g. look-cover-write-check), rather than attending to the sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
23	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of spelling.	1	2	3	4
✖ 24	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years.	1	2	3	4

25. On the scale from 1 to 7 below please circle the number to indicate what you believe to be your own position concerning how the first stages of reading and writing should be organized for young children, from child-centred and unstructured (7) through to teacher-directed and highly structured (1).



26. Do you understand how to adopt whole language approach in the literacy classroom?

(1) Yes (2) No idea about it, (3) No, won't consider about it,

Appendix One (Miss Lyn)

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (English Version)

Dear Teachers,

The purpose of the current study is to explore what teachers of kindergartens and nursery schools think about reading pedagogy. In your opinion, what role does reading play to children? As well, what are the approaches to teach children read? If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The information collected is for research purposes only and all information will remain confidential. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

Ling-Ying, Huang.

Personal Background

Gender: (1) Male (2) Female

Age: 33

Education level: (1) Vocational high school (2) College Graduate (4) Postgraduate

Educational major (Department):

Department of _____

Years of teaching in the Nursery: 15

Job title:

Level of current class of teaching:

(1) Reception class; Lower-class (2) Middle class Upper-class (4) Mixed ages

Size of the kindergarten:

(1) Less than 2 classes (2) 3-5 classes More than 6 classes

Number of pupils in your class:

(1) Less than 10 11-15 (3) More than 16

How often do you read?

(1) Daily Weekly (3) Monthly (4) None

How much time of your is dedicated to reading?

(1) Less than 30 minutes 1 hour (3) 2 hours (4) More than 3 hours

What types of texts do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

Newspapers Magazines Ordinary books Picture books Mails Emails or on-line articles (7) Audio books

Why do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

Personal interest (2) Job requirement To broaden my mind To educate children (5) Religious purposes Exams (7) To kill some time (8) Expand skills in daily life (9) Necessary for life/travel

Part 2: teachers' reading instruction

Have you participated in seminars regarding reading pedagogy in the past 12 months?

Yes, 2 times (2) No.

* When you teach, how do you come to decide the teaching content of reading?

(1) To conform to governmental content standards (2) To conform to teacher's manual (3) To conform to kindergarten's/nursery school's curriculum In accordance with pupils' interests (5) Other ?

* How would you describe the extent of your teaching autonomy in teaching reading?

Why (1) 0% 50% (3) 100%

How much does the kindergarten/nursery school you're working for value the following classes?

Valued classes	Very much	Equally valued	Not really	Not at all
1 Reading		✓		
2 Spelling and writing		✓		
3 Speaking, listening and others		✓		

Materials of reading and frequency of usage:

Frequency Materials	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or Never
4 Children's reading books	✓			
5 Textbooks		✓		
6 Flashcards		✓		
7 Materials from different learning fields		✓		
8 Children's newspapers or magazines			✓	
9 Teaching reading software			✓	
10 Spelling and writing handouts or assignment booklets		✓		

Reading activities employed in your class and the frequency of usage:

Frequency Reading activities	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or never
11 Reading story books or poetry for children	✓			
12 Using plots of the story to introduce new words		✓		
13 Allowing children to participate in and share story telling	✓			
14 Individual reading: library corner time	✓			
15 Teaching Mandarin Chinese phonetic symbols and spelling		✓		
16 Recital of idioms and phrases		✓		
17 Practice writing		✓		

Does your class have a dedicated library corner or book shelf/shelves?

✓ (1) Yes, with roughly 16 books. (2) No.

How often is the class library corner open for use?

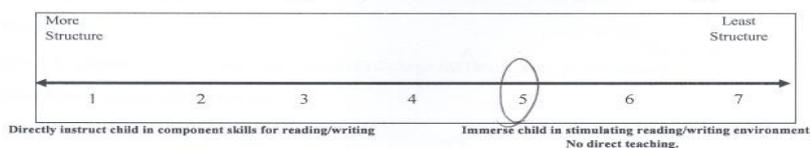
✓ (1) Everyday-Almost every day (2) 1-2 times/ week (3) 1-2 times/ month (4) Almost never-Never

Part 3: Teacher's Beliefs About Literacy

		SD	D	A	SA
1	There is very little difference between the skills needed by the beginning reader and those used by proficient readers.	1	2	3	4
2	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	1	2	3	4
✗ 3	Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualizes a component skill of language.	1	2	3	4
✗ 4	Teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text	1	2	3	4
✗ 5	Learning to read should involve attending closely to the print on the page.	1	2	3	4
✗ 6	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	1	2	3	4
✗ 7	Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills.	1	2	3	4
8	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	1	2	3	4
9	Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	1	2	3	4
10	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	1	2	3	4
✗ 11	Proficient readers pay very little attention to the details of print when reading.	1	2	3	4
✗ 12	For effective learning, literacy programmes should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	1	2	3	4
13	Children learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral language skills.	1	2	3	4
✗ 14	Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell.	1	2	3	4
15	Teachers should regularly test spelling.	1	2	3	4
16	The use of spelling lists is essential for learning how to spell.	1	2	3	4

✗ 17	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	1	2	3	4
✗ 18	Words learnt in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing.	1	2	3	4
19	Spelling is best learnt incidentally through regular reading and writing activities.	1	2	3	4
20	Spelling involves careful listening to sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
✗ 21	Young children's phonemic awareness skills predict their ability to learn to spell in the early years.	1	2	3	4
22	Learning to spell depends almost entirely upon vision (e.g. look-cover-write-check), rather than attending to the sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
23	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of spelling.	1	2	3	4
✗ 24	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years.	1	2	3	4

25. On the scale from 1 to 7 below please circle the number to indicate what you believe to be your own position concerning how the first stages of reading and writing should be organized for young children, from child-centred and unstructured (7) through to teacher-directed and highly structured (1).



26. Do you understand how to adopt whole language approach in the literacy classroom?

(1) Yes, (2) No idea about it, (3) No, won't consider about it,

Appendix One (Miss Liu)

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (English Version)

Dear Teachers,

The purpose of the current study is to explore what teachers of kindergartens and nursery schools think about reading pedagogy. In your opinion, what role does reading play to children? As well, what are the approaches to teach children read? If you choose to participate in this study, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. The information collected is for research purposes only and all information will remain confidential. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

Ling-Ying, Huang.

Personal Background

Gender: (1) Male (2) Female

Age: 28

Education level: (1) Vocational high school (2) College (3) Graduate (4) Postgraduate

Educational major (Department):

Department of _____

Years of teaching in the Nursery: 4-5

Job title:

Level of current class of teaching:

(1) Reception class; Lower- class (2) Middle class (3) Upper-class (4) Mixed ages

Size of the kindergarten:

(1) Less than 2 classes (2) 3-5 classes (3) More than 6 classes

Number of pupils in your class:

(1) Less than 10 (2) 11-15 (3) More than 16

How often do you read?

Daily (2) Weekly (3) Monthly (4) None

How much time of your is dedicated to reading?

(1) Less than 30 minutes (2) 1 hour (3) 2 hours (4) More than 3 hours

What types of texts do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

Newspapers Magazines Ordinary books Picture books (5) Mails (6) Emails or on-line articles (7) Audio books

Why do you read? (You can choose more than one items)

Personal interest Job requirement To broaden my mind To educate children (5) Religious purposes (6) Exams To kill some time (8) Expand skills in daily life (9) Necessary for life/travel

Part 2: teachers' reading instruction

Have you participated in seminars regarding reading pedagogy in the past 12 months?

Yes, 1 times (2) No.

When you teach, how do you come to decide the teaching content of reading?

(1) To conform to governmental content standards (2) To conform to teacher's manual (3) To conform to kindergarten's/nursery school's curriculum (4) In accordance with pupils' interests (5) Other

How would you describe the extent of your teaching autonomy in teaching reading?

(1) 0% (2) 50% (3) 100%

How much does the kindergarten/nursery school you're working for value the following classes?

Valued classes	Very much	Equally valued	Not really	Not at all
Reading	✓			
Spelling and writing			✓	
Speaking, listening and others	✓			

Materials of reading and frequency of usage:

Frequency	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or Never
Children's reading books	✓			
Textbooks		✓		
Flashcards		✓		
Materials from different learning fields		✓		
Children's newspapers or magazines		✓		
Teaching reading software				✓
Spelling and writing handouts or assignment booklets				✓

Reading activities employed in your class and the frequency of usage:

Frequency	Almost everyday	1-2 times/ week	1-2 times/ month	Almost never or never
Reading story books or poetry for children	✓			
Using plots of the story to introduce new words		✓		
Allowing children to participate in and share story telling		✓		
Individual reading: library corner time		✓		
Teaching Mandarin Chinese phonetic symbols and spelling		✓		
Recital of idioms and phrases		✓		
Practice writing				✓

Does your class have a dedicated library corner or book shelf/shelves?

(1) Yes, with roughly 151 books. (2) No.

How often is the class library corner open for use?

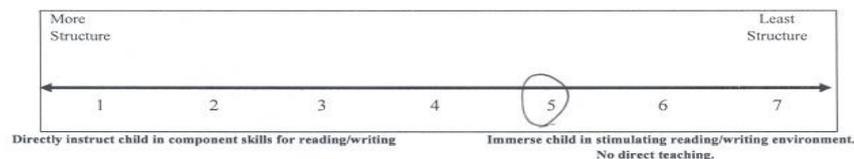
(1) Everyday-Almost every day (2) 1-2 times/ week (3) 1-2 times/ month (4) Almost never-Never

Part 3: Teacher's Beliefs About Literacy

		SD	D	A	SA
1	There is very little difference between the skills needed by the beginning reader and those used by proficient readers.	1	2	3	4
2	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	1	2	3	4
3	Devoting specific time to word study in isolation is undesirable since this practice decontextualizes a component skill of language.	1	2	3	4
4	Teachers should select books for children to read based on the difficulty level of the text	1	2	3	4
5	Learning to read should involve attending closely to the print on the page.	1	2	3	4
6	Flashcard drill should be used to build up children's sight vocabularies.	1	2	3	4
7	Beginning readers should be taught phonic skills.	1	2	3	4
8	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	1	2	3	4
9	Direct teaching of phonics is not necessary as children can learn all they need to know about the alphabetic code by being helped with their daily reading and writing activities and by observing others.	1	2	3	4
10	Sight vocabulary learnt in isolation does transfer to text reading.	1	2	3	4
11	Proficient readers pay very little attention to the details of print when reading.	1	2	3	4
12	For effective learning, literacy programmes should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition and phonics.	1	2	3	4
13	Children learn to spell in the same natural way that they acquire oral language skills.	1	2	3	4
14	Teachers should choose the words children need to learn to spell.	1	2	3	4
15	Teachers should regularly test spelling.	1	2	3	4
16	The use of spelling lists is essential for learning how to spell.	1	2	3	4

17	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	1	2	3	4
18	Words learnt in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing.	1	2	3	4
19	Spelling is best learnt incidentally through regular reading and writing activities.	1	2	3	4
20	Spelling involves careful listening to sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
21	Young children's phonemic awareness skills predict their ability to learn to spell in the early years.	1	2	3	4
22	Learning to spell depends almost entirely upon vision (e.g. look-cover-write-check), rather than attending to the sounds within words.	1	2	3	4
23	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of spelling.	1	2	3	4
24	There is an important place for direct instruction in spelling in the early school years.	1	2	3	4

25. On the scale from 1 to 7 below please circle the number to indicate what you believe to be your own position concerning how the first stages of reading and writing should be organized for young children, from child-centred and unstructured (7) through to teacher-directed and highly structured (1).



26. Do you understand how to adopt whole language approach in the literacy classroom?

(1) Yes, _____ (2) No idea about it, _____ (3) No, won't consider about it, _____

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (Chinese Version- Blank)

親愛的老師您好:

這個研究的主要目的在探討幼稚園、托兒所教師對閱讀教學的看法。您認為對於孩子而言，閱讀扮演了甚麼樣的角色？您覺得應該如何教導孩子閱讀？請您依照自己最真實的感受填寫。您所填寫的資料僅供研究之用，絕不對外公布。請安心填寫。

非常感謝您的幫忙！

University of Exeter 研究生 黃齡瑩 敬上

第一部份: 個人背景資料

性別: (1)男 (2)女

年齡: _____ 歲

教育程度: (1)高職 (2)專科 (3)大學 (4) 碩士以上

教育背景 (所讀科系) : _____ 系

任教年資: _____ 年

職稱 :

任教班級: (1)小班 (2)中班 (3)大班 (4)混齡班

園所規模: (1)少於 2 個班級 (2) 3-5 個班級 (3) 6 個班級以上

班級人數: (1)少於 10 個 (2)11-15 個 (3)16 個以上

您從事閱讀活動的頻率? (1) 每天 (2) 每星期 (3) 每月 (4) 沒有

您每次平均花多久的時間從事閱讀活動 (1) 少於30分鐘 (2) 1小時 (3) 2小時 (4) 3小時以上

您平日閱讀的資料類型? (可複選):

(1) 報紙 (2) 雜誌 (3) 一般書籍 (4) 兒童繪本 (5) 信件 (6) 電子郵件或是網路文章 (7) 有聲書籍

您閱讀的原因 (可複選):

(1) 個人興趣 (2) 工作需求 (3) 增廣見聞 (4) 教育孩子 (5) 信仰 (6) 應付考試 (7) 打發時間 (8) 增加生活技能 (9) 生活/旅遊需要

第二部分: 教師閱讀教學信念

您最近一年內是否有參加過閱讀教學方面的研習?

(1) 有-- , 大約__次 (2) 沒有

在教學時, 您如何決定閱讀教學的內容?

(1) 遵守政府規定之課程標準(2)遵守教師手冊 (3)遵守園所課程大綱 (4)依據孩子的興趣 (5)其他

您在閱讀教學課程的自主權為多少?

(1) 0%的決定權 (2) 50%的決定權 (3) 100%的決定權

您所服務的園所對下列課程的重視程度？

重視項目	非常重視	同等重視	不重視	完全不重視
閱讀				
拼寫				
說話/聆聽 及其他課程領域				

您所使用的閱讀材料種類與使用頻率？

使用頻率 閱讀材料	幾乎每天	每週 1-2 次	每月 1-2 次	從不或幾乎沒有
兒童閱讀書籍				
課本				
閃卡(認字卡)				
不同學習領域的材料				
兒童報紙或雜誌				
教導閱讀的軟體				
拼寫學習單或作業簿				

您在課堂中所進行的閱讀活動與使用頻率

使用頻率 課堂閱讀活動	幾乎每天	每週 1-2 次	每月 1-2 次	從不或 幾乎沒有
唸故事書或詩歌給孩子聽				
使用故事中的情節介紹新字				
讓孩子參與和分享說故事				
獨立的閱讀-圖書角時間				
教導注音符號和拼音方法				
記誦詞彙				
練習抄寫				

您的班級中是否有設置圖書角或圖書櫃?

- (1) 有-- , 藏書量大約__本 (2) 沒有

班級圖書角開放使用的頻率?

- (1) 每天或幾乎每天 (2) 每週 1-2 次 (3) 每月 1-2 次 (4) 從不或幾乎沒有

第三部分: 教師閱讀教學信念

以下問題是為了瞭解您對閱讀教學的看法:請您依據真正的感受,勾選出最適合的描述。

		非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
1	在閱讀技能的運用上,初學者和精熟技巧的讀者之間只有些許不同。	1	2	3	4
2	孩子以一種相同且自然的方式學習聽、說、讀、寫。	1	2	3	4
3	教導孩子重複練習抄寫、記誦詞彙等閱讀技巧是不受歡迎的。	1	2	3	4
4	老師應該依照課程進度來挑選適合孩子閱讀的書籍。	1	2	3	4
5	學習閱讀的技巧應包含注意印刷品的內頁是否排版精美。	1	2	3	4
6	閃卡訓練應該被使用於建立孩子的詞彙量。	1	2	3	4
7	孩子應被教導拼音技能。	1	2	3	4

8	教室裡應以認識詞彙量的多寡來進行閱讀分級制。	1	2	3	4
9	直接教授拼音不是必要的，因為孩子能藉由日常生活中的讀寫活動，以及觀察他人來學習他們所需要了解的文字。	1	2	3	4
10	生字詞教學，將有助於文本閱讀。	1	2	3	4
11	精熟讀者在進行閱讀時，不太注意其印刷品的敘述。	1	2	3	4
12	為達到有效的學習,讀寫活動可區分為拼音、寫字、理解力..等單一課程來教授。	1	2	3	4
13	孩子以一個自然漸進的過程學會閱讀，也以同樣的方式學習口說語言。	1	2	3	4
14	教師應選擇孩子需要學會讀寫的字詞來進行教學。	1	2	3	4
15	教師應定期地進行讀寫測驗。	1	2	3	4
16	拼字學習的用途是為了學會如何讀寫。	1	2	3	4
17	孩子自行發明與文字有關的讀寫知識，會加深他們的壞習性。	1	2	3	4
18	拼音學習的成效，可以成功地反應在國小兒童的寫作能力上。	1	2	3	4
19	最佳學習拼音的方式，是在不經意的情況下透過規律的閱讀來學習。	1	2	3	4
20	拼音能力也包括仔細聆聽”字”的語音。	1	2	3	4
21	孩子的口語能力可預測他們在初期學會讀寫的能力。	1	2	3	4
22	孩子學會拼音的能力幾乎取決於視覺，而不是注意”字”的語音或意義。	1	2	3	4
23	每星期的課堂中，都需要有特定時間教導孩子拼音和注音符號。	1	2	3	4
24	學齡前階段是一個教授拼音能力的絕佳時機。	1	2	3	4

25. 下列為閱讀教學自我評估表,請從 1 至 7 當中自行圈選您對自己的幼兒閱讀教學傾向.

背誦,讀寫							遊戲中學習	
←	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	→
傳統式直接教學				全語言教學				

26. 妳了解全語言教學嗎?

(1) 是, _____ (2) 不知道全語言是什麼, _____ (3) 不知道, 也不考慮深入了解或引用

TBALQ Questionnaire for the study (Chinese Version- Completed)

親愛的老師您好：

這個研究的主要目的在探討幼稚園、托兒所教師對閱讀教學的看法。您認為對於孩子而言，閱讀扮演了甚麼樣的角色？您覺得應該如何教導孩子閱讀？請您依照自己最真實的感受填寫。您所填寫的資料僅供研究之用，絕不對外公佈。請安心填寫。非常感謝您的幫忙！！

第一部份：個人背景資料

性別：(1)男 (2)女

年齡：34 歲

教育程度：(1)高職 (2)專科 (3)大學 (4)碩士以上

教育背景(所讀科系)：幼兒保育系

任教年資：15 年

職稱：教師

任教班級：(1)小班 (2)中班 (3)大班 (4)混齡班

園所規模：(1)少於2個班級 (2)3-5個班級 (3)6個班級以上

班級人數：(1)少於10個 (2)11-15個 (3)16個以上

您從事閱讀活動的頻率？(1)每天 (2)每星期 (3)每月 (4)沒有

您每次平均花多少的時間從事閱讀活動 (1)少於30分鐘 (2)1小時 (3)2小時 (4)3小時以上

您平日閱讀的資料類型？(可複選)：
 (1)報紙 (2)雜誌 (3)一般書籍 (4)兒童繪本 (5)信件 (6)電子郵件或是網路文章 (7)有聲書籍

您閱讀的原因(可複選)：
 (1)個人興趣 (2)工作需求 (3)增廣見聞 (4)教育孩子 (5)信仰 (6)應付考試 (7)打發時間
 (8)增加生活技能 (9)生活/旅遊需要

第二部分：教師閱讀教學信念

您最近一年內是否有參加過閱讀教學方面的研習？
 (1)有，大約 1-2 次 (2)沒有

在教學時，您如何決定閱讀教學的內容？
 (1)遵守政府規定之課程標準 (2)遵守教師手冊 (3)遵守園所課程大綱 (4)依據孩子的興趣 (5)其他

您在閱讀教學課程的自主權為多少？
 (1)0%的決定權 (2)50%的決定權 (3)100%的決定權

您所服務的園所對下列課程的重視程度？

重視項目	非常重視	同等重視	不重視	完全不重視
1 閱讀	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
2 拼寫	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
3 說話/聆聽及其他課程領域	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

您所使用的閱讀材料種類與使用頻率？

閱讀材料	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不成幾乎沒有
4 兒童閱讀書籍		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
5 課本		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
6 閃卡(認字卡)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
7 不同學習領域的材料		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
8 兒童報紙或雜誌			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
9 教導閱讀的軟體			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
10 拼寫學習單或作業簿		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

您在課堂中所進行的閱讀活動與使用頻率

課堂閱讀活動	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不成幾乎沒有
11 誦故事書或詩歌給孩子聽		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
12 使用故事中的情節介紹新字		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
13 讓孩子參與和分享說故事		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
14 獨立的閱讀-圖書角時間		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
15 教導注音符號和拼音方法		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
16 記誦詞彙		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
17 練習抄寫		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

您的班級中是否有設置圖書角或圖書櫃？

(1)有，藏書量大約 10-20 本 (2)沒有

班級圖書角開放使用的頻率？

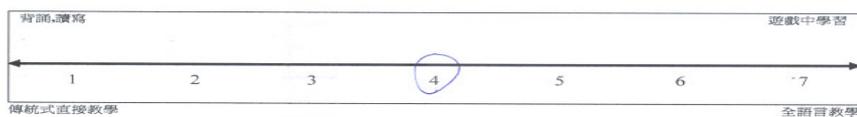
(1)每天或幾乎每天 (2)每週1-2次 (3)每月1-2次 (4)從不成幾乎沒有

以下問題是為了瞭解您對閱讀教學的看法：請您依據真正的感受，勾選出最適合的描述。

		非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
1	在閱讀技能的運用上，初學者和精熟技巧的讀者之間只有些許不同。	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	3	4
2	孩子以一種相同且自然的方式學習聽、說、讀、寫。	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	3	4
3	教導孩子重複練習抄寫、記誦詞彙等閱讀技巧是不受歡迎的。	1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2	3	4

4	老師應該依照課程進度來挑選適合孩子閱讀的書籍。	1	2	3	4
5	學習閱讀的技巧應包含注意印刷品的內頁是否排版精美。	1	2	3	4
6	閃卡訓練應該被使用於建立孩子的詞彙量。	1	2	3	4
7	孩子應被教導拼音技能。	1	2	3	4
8	教室裡應以認識詞彙量的多寡來進行閱讀分級制。	1	2	3	4
9	直接教授拼音不是必要的，因為孩子能藉由日常生活中的讀寫活動，以及觀察他人來學習他們所需要了解的文字。	1	2	3	4
10	生字詞教學，將有助於文本閱讀。	1	2	3	4
11	精熟讀者在進行閱讀時，不太注意其印刷品的敘述。	1	2	3	4
12	為達到有效的學習，讀寫活動可區分為拼音、寫字、理解力..等單一課程來教授。	1	2	3	4
13	孩子以一個自然漸進的過程學會閱讀，也以同樣的方式學習口說語言。	1	2	3	4
14	教師應選擇孩子需要學會讀寫的字詞來進行教學。	1	2	3	4
15	教師應定期地進行讀寫測驗。	1	2	3	4
16	拼字學習的用途是為了學會如何讀寫。	1	2	3	4
17	孩子自行發明與文字有關的讀寫知識，會加深他們的壞習性。	1	2	3	4
18	拼音學習的成效，可以成功地反應在國小兒童的寫作能力上。	1	2	3	4
19	最佳學習拼音的方式，是在不經意的情況下透過規律的閱讀來學習。	1	2	3	4
20	拼音能力也包括仔細聆聽”字”的語音。	1	2	3	4
21	孩子的口語能力可預測他們在初期學會讀寫的能力。	1	2	3	4
22	孩子學會拼音的能力幾乎取決於視覺，而不是注意”字”的語音或意義。	1	2	3	4
23	每星期的課堂中，都需要有特定時間教導孩子拼音和注音符號。	1	2	3	4
24	學齡前階段是一個教授拼音能力的絕佳時機。	1	2	3	4

25. 下列為閱讀教學自我評估表,請從 1 至 7 當中自行圈選您對自己的幼兒閱讀教學傾向.



26. 妳了解全語言教學嗎?

(1) 是, _____ (2) 不知道全語言是什麼, _____ (3) 不知道, 也不考慮深入了解或引用

親愛的老師您好：

這個研究的主要目的在探討幼稚園、托兒所教師對閱讀教學的看法。您認為對於孩子而言，閱讀扮演了甚麼樣的角色？您覺得應該如何教導孩子閱讀？請您依照自己最真實的感受填寫。您所填寫的資料僅供研究之用，絕不對外公布。請安心填寫。非常感謝您的幫忙！！

第一部份：個人背景資料

性別：(1)男 (2) 女
 年齡：33 歲
 教育程度：(1)高職 (2)專科 (3) 大學 (4) 碩士以上
 教育背景(所讀科系)：幼保教育 系
 任教年資：15 年
 職稱：
 任教班級：(1)小班 (2)中班 (3)大班 (4)混齡班
 園所規模：(1)少於2個班級 (2) 3-5個班級 6個班級以上
 班級人數：(1)少於10個 (2) 11-15個 (3)16個以上
 您從事閱讀活動的頻率？ 每天 (2)每星期 (3)每月 (4)沒有
 您每次平均花多久的時間從事閱讀活動 少於30分鐘 (2) 1小時 (3) 2小時 (4) 3小時以上
 您平日閱讀的資料類型？(可複選)：
 報紙 (2)雜誌 一般書籍 兒童繪本 (5)信件 電子郵件或是網路文章 (7)有聲書籍
 您閱讀的原因(可複選)：
 個人興趣 (2)工作需求 增廣見聞 教育孩子 (5)信仰 (6)應付考試 (7)打發時間
 增加生活技能 生活/旅遊需要

第二部分：教師閱讀教學信念

您最近一年內是否有參加過閱讀教學方面的研習？
 有，大約 7 次 (2)沒有
 在教學時，您如何決定閱讀教學的內容？
 (1)遵守政府規定之課程標準(2)遵守教師手冊 (3)遵守園所課程大綱 依據孩子的興趣 (5)其他
 您在閱讀教學課程的自主權為多少？
 (1) 0%的決定權 50%的決定權 (3) 100%的決定權

您所服務的園所對下列課程的重視程度？

重視項目	非常重視	同等重視	不重視	完全不重視
閱讀		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
拼音		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
說話/聆聽及其他課程領域		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

您所使用的閱讀材料種類與使用頻率？

閱讀材料	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不或幾乎沒有
兒童閱讀書籍 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
課本			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
閃卡(認字卡)			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
不同學習領域的材料			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
兒童報紙或雜誌				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
教導閱讀的軟體				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
拼寫學習單或作業簿			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

您在課堂中所進行的閱讀活動與使用頻率

課堂閱讀活動	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不或幾乎沒有
唸故事書或詩歌給孩子聽		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
使用故事中的情節介紹新字			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
讓孩子參與和分享說故事		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
獨立的閱讀-圖書角時間		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
教導注音符號和拼音方法			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
記誦詞彙			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
練習抄寫			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

您的班級中是否有設置圖書角或圖書櫃？

有，藏書量大約 16 本 (2)沒有

班級圖書角開放使用的頻率？

每天或幾乎每天 (2)每週1-2次 (3)每月1-2次 (4)從不或幾乎沒有

以下問題是為了瞭解您對閱讀教學的看法:請您依據真正的感受,勾選出最適合的描述。

		非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
1	在閱讀技能的運用上,初學者和精熟技巧的讀者之間只有些許不同。	1	2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	4
2	孩子以一種相同且自然的方式學習聽、說、讀、寫。	1	2	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3	教導孩子重複練習抄寫、記誦詞彙等閱讀技巧是不受歡迎的。	1	2	3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4

		DS	D	A	SD
4	老師應該依照課程進度來挑選適合孩子閱讀的書籍。	1	2	3	4
5	學習閱讀的技巧應包含注意印刷品的內頁是否排版精美。	1	2	3	4
6	閃卡訓練應該被使用於建立孩子的詞彙量。	1	2	3	4
7	孩子應被教導拼音技能。 <i>in</i> <i>7. learned to read but the fact is learning a lot - why</i>	1	2	3	4
8	教室裡應以認識詞彙量的多寡來進行閱讀分級制。	1	2	3	4
9	直接教授拼音不是必要的，因為孩子能藉由日常生活中的讀寫活動，以及觀察他人來學習他們所需要了解的文字。	1	2	3	4
10	生字詞教學，將有助於文本閱讀。	1	2	3	4
11	精熟讀者在進行閱讀時，不太注意其印刷品的敘述。	1	2	3	4
12	為達到有效的學習，讀寫活動可區分為拼音、寫字、理解力..等單一課程來教授。	1	2	3	4
13	孩子以一個自然漸進的過程學會閱讀，也以同樣的方式學習口說語言。	1	2	3	4
14	教師應選擇孩子需要學會讀寫的字詞來進行教學。	1	2	3	4
15	教師應定期地進行讀寫測驗。	1	2	3	4
16	拼字學習的用途是為了學會如何讀寫。	1	2	3	4
17	孩子自行發明與文字有關的讀寫知識，會加深他們的壞習性。	1	2	3	4
18	拼音學習的成效，可以成功地反應在國小兒童的寫作能力上。	1	2	3	4
19	最佳學習拼音的方式，是在不經意的情況下透過規律的閱讀來學習。	1	2	3	4
20	拼音能力也包括仔細聆聽"字"的語音。	1	2	3	4
21	孩子的口語能力可預測他們在初期學會讀寫的能力。	1	2	3	4
22	孩子學會拼音的能力幾乎取決於視覺，而不是注意"字"的語音或意義。	1	2	3	4
23	每星期的課堂中，都需要有特定時間教導孩子拼音和注音符號。 <i>but why?</i>	1	2	3	4
24	學齡前階段是一個教授拼音能力的絕佳時機。	1	2	3	4

25. 下列為閱讀教學自我評估表,請從 1 至 7 當中自行圈選您對自己的幼兒閱讀教學傾向.



26. 妳了解全語言教學嗎?

(1) 是, (2) 不知道全語言是什麼, (3) 不知道, 也不考慮深入了解或引用

親愛的老師您好：

這個研究的主要目的在探討幼稚園、托兒所教師對閱讀教學的看法。您認為對於孩子而言，閱讀扮演了甚麼樣的角色？您覺得應該如何教導孩子閱讀？請您依照自己最真實的感受填寫。您所填寫的資料僅供研究之用，絕不對外公布。請安心填寫。非常感謝您的幫忙！！

第一部份：個人背景資料

性別：(1)男 (2)女

年齡：28 歲

教育程度：(1)高職 (2)專科 (3)大學 (4)碩士以上

教育背景(所讀科系)：幼兒教育 系

任教年資：4 年 3 個月

職稱：

任教班級：(1)小班 (2)中班 (3)大班 (4)混齡班

園所規模：(1)少於2個班級 (2)3-5個班級 (3)6個班級以上

班級人數：(1)少於10個 (2)11-15個 (3)16個以上

您從事閱讀活動的頻率？(1)每天 (2)每星期 (3)每月 (4)沒有

您每次平均花多久的時間從事閱讀活動 (1)少於30分鐘 (2)1小時 (3)2小時 (4)3小時以上

您平日閱讀的資料類型？(可複選)：

(1)報紙 (2)雜誌 (3)一般書籍 (4)兒童繪本 (5)信件 (6)電子郵件或是網路文章 (7)有聲書籍

您閱讀的原因(可複選)：

(1)個人興趣 (2)工作需求 (3)增廣見聞 (4)教育孩子 (5)信仰 (6)應付考試 (7)打發時間 (8)增加生活技能 (9)生活/旅遊需要

第二部分：教師閱讀教學信念

您最近一年內是否有參加過閱讀教學方面的研習？

(1)有，大約 1 次 (2)沒有

在教學時，您如何決定閱讀教學的內容？ 依教材

(1)遵守政府規定之課程標準 (2)遵守教師手冊 (3)遵守園所課程大綱 (4)依據孩子的興趣 (5)其他

您在閱讀教學課程的自主權為多少？

(1)0%的決定權 (2)50%的決定權 (3)100%的決定權

您所服務的園所對下列課程的重視程度？

重視項目	非常重視	同等重視	不重視	完全不重視
閱讀	✓			
拼寫			✓	
說話/聆聽及其他課程領域	✓			

您所使用的閱讀材料種類與使用頻率？

閱讀材料	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不成或幾乎沒有
兒童閱讀書籍		✓			
課本			✓		
閃卡(認字卡)			✓		
不同學習領域的材料			✓		
兒童報紙或雜誌			✓		
教導閱讀的軟體					✓
拼寫學習單或作業簿					✓

您在課堂中所進行的閱讀活動與使用頻率

課堂閱讀活動	使用頻率	幾乎每天	每週1-2次	每月1-2次	從不成或幾乎沒有
吟故事書或詩歌給孩子聽		✓			
使用故事中的情節介紹新字			✓		
讓孩子參與和分享說故事			✓		
獨立的閱讀-圖書角時間			✓		
教導注音符號和拼音方法			✓		
記誦詞彙			✓		
練習抄寫					✓

您的班級中是否有設置圖書角或圖書櫃？

(1)有，藏書量大約 15 本 (2)沒有

班級圖書角開放使用的頻率？

(1)每天或幾乎每天 (2)每週1-2次 (3)每月1-2次 (4)從不成或幾乎沒有

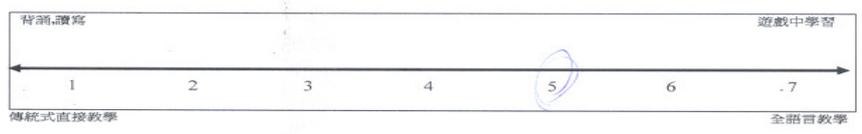
以下問題是為了瞭解您對閱讀教學的看法：請您依據真正的感受，勾選出最適合的描述。

	非常不同意	不同意	同意	非常同意
1. 在閱讀技能的運用上，初學者和精熟技巧的讀者之間只有些許不同。	1	2	3	4
2. 孩子以一種相同且自然的方式學習聽、說、讀、寫。	1	2	3	4
3. 教導孩子重複練習抄寫、記誦詞彙等閱讀技巧是不受歡迎的。	1	2	3	4

		1	2	3	4
14	老師應該依照課程進度來挑選適合孩子閱讀的書籍。	1	2	3	4
5	學習閱讀的技巧應包含注意印刷品的內頁是否排版精美。	1	2	3	4
6	閃卡訓練應該被使用於建立孩子的詞彙量。	1	2	3	4
7	孩子應被教導拼音技能。	1	2	3	4
8	教室裡應以認識詞彙量的多寡來進行閱讀分級制。	1	2	3	4
9	直接教授拼音不是必要的，因為孩子能藉由日常生活中的讀寫活動，以及觀察他人來學習他們所需要了解的文字。	1	2	3	4
10	生字詞教學，將有助於文本閱讀。	1	2	3	4
11	精熟讀者在進行閱讀時，不太注意其印刷品的敘述。	1	2	3	4
12	為達到有效的學習，讀寫活動可區分為拼音、寫字、理解力..等單一課程來教授。	1	2	3	4
13	孩子以一個自然漸進的過程學會閱讀，也以同樣的方式學習口說語言。	1	2	3	4
14	教師應選擇孩子需要學會讀寫的字詞來進行教學。	1	2	3	4
15	教師應定期地進行讀寫測驗。	1	2	3	4
16	拼字學習的用途是為了學會如何讀寫。	1	2	3	4
17	孩子自行發明與文字有關的讀寫知識，會加深他們的壞習性。	1	2	3	4
18	拼音學習的成效，可以成功地反應在國小兒童的寫作能力上。	1	2	3	4
19	最佳學習拼音的方式，是在不經意的情況下透過規律的閱讀來學習。	1	2	3	4
20	拼音能力也包括仔細聆聽"字"的語音。	1	2	3	4
21	孩子的口語能力可預測他們在初期學會讀寫的能力。	1	2	3	4
22	孩子學會拼音的能力幾乎取決於視覺，而不是注意"字"的語音或意義。	1	2	3	4
23	每星期的課堂中，都需要有特定時間教導孩子拼音和注音符號。	1	2	3	4
24	學齡前階段是一個教授拼音能力的絕佳時機。	1	2	3	4

非常不同意
不同意
同意
非常同意

25. 下列為閱讀教學自我評估表,請從 1 至 7 當中自行圈選您對自己的幼兒閱讀教學傾向.



26. 妳了解全語言教學嗎?

(1) 是, (2) 不知道全語言是什麼, (3) 不知道, 也不考慮深入了解或引用

Appendix Two

Seeking volunteer for taking interview and observation

(English Version)

Request for Interview Participants

Seeking Interview Volunteers

Each interview will be arranged at the participant's convenience and will take place at a neutral site. The purpose of the interview is to gain greater insight and elaboration on responses to the questionnaire and inventories. The interview will take less than one hour of your time and will make a positive contribution to the outcome of this study. Interview volunteers will be invited to bring instructional materials. All interview and document data will remain confidential. Not all participants who agree to an interview will contact.

Would you participate in a follow-up interview regarding your responses to this survey?

Yes

No

If you answered yes, please complete the professional contact information below:

Professional Contact Information

Name:

Contact Telephone:

School Telephone:

E-Mail:

Seeking volunteer for taking interview and observation (Chinese Version)

親愛的老師您好:

謝謝您願意給我這個機會陳述自己的研究目的及研究方法。這個研究的目的旨在探討幼稚園、托兒所教師對閱讀教學的看法。我想進一步了解老師認為”閱讀”在孩子的生活中扮演了什麼樣的角色？以及老師覺得應該如何教導孩子閱讀？這份研究將採取訪談和班級觀察兩種方式。訪談次數共為兩次，而班級觀察次數則為三至四次。

訪談：第一次訪談的時間為進入班級觀察之前；第二次訪談的時間為完成班級觀察後。

班級觀察:主要以觀察語文課程或語文活動為主，次數共為三至四次。

所有的訪談內容和資料都僅供研究之用，絕不對外公佈。

非常感謝您的幫忙與協助!!

研究生: 黃齡瑩 敬上 17.09.2008

Appendix Three

Pre interview protocol (English Version)

Thanks for contributing your professional expertise and valuable to me to this interview. This interview is intended to solicit your ideas on reading instruction and give you the opportunity to elaborate on how you make decisions regarding reading instruction. It will be an open-ended interview in order for you to give your ideas and thoughts on reading instruction. Feel free to talk about any experiences or ideas that come to mind as we proceed.

1. Tell me about what do you think important for these children to learn to read?
2. How did you learn to read?
3. What reading do you do now?? (It's for pleasure 、 for work 、 for everything?)
4. How do you think children learn to read?
5. How do you think children learn to writer?
6. Can you tell me what effected you beliefs about teaching literacy?
7. What do you see the main purpose of literacy teaching?
8. Share your opinions about the different style of literacy instruction.
9. What are the nurseries that an efficient literacy instruction should contain?
10. In every lesson, what are the important parts that you would never skip?
11. Has the Reading Project (whole language approach) resulted in any change to your think about that?? And any change to your practice??
12. What other influences have resulted in changes in recent years?
13. What are the factors that hinder and /or facilitate your practice of your ideal literacy instruction?

Pre interview protocol (Chinese Version)

1. 妳覺得孩子學習閱讀的重要性為何??
2. 在妳成長的過程中...你如何學會閱讀?
3. 妳現在有閱讀任何書籍或閱讀材料嗎?
4. 妳如何看待孩子學習閱讀這件事
5. 妳如何看待孩子學習寫字這件事
6. 請你聊聊有哪些因素會影響你的閱讀教學信念
7. 妳認為閱讀教學的主要目的為何?
8. 請你告訴我”你認知裡的語文教學”形式(方法)
9. 妳認為有效率的閱讀教學必須包含哪些要素?
10. 在每一堂課當中(閱讀課 OR 語言課), 有哪些部份是妳覺得相當重要, 不能略過不上?
11. 閱讀政策的推行對妳有任何影響或改變嗎? 在實際教學上有任何改變嗎?
12. 近幾年還有哪些影響導致妳在教學上有所改變
13. 妳認為有哪些因素會妨礙或幫助你進行理想中的閱讀教學?

Appendix Four

Post-Interview Schedules

Miss Wang's post interview questions:

- **Explanation on what do you think about transition to primary school for the children?**
- **Explanation on what do you think about your daily literacy lesson?**
- **Explanation on what is thematic lesson?**
- **Explanation on your relationship with children in the classroom?**
- **Clarification on the biggest challenges or conflict in your daily teaching?**
- **Explanation on what is the daily home work and test?**
- **Explanation on the role of school and parents.**
 - ✓ What do you think school and parents view of the daily test and homework?
- **Clarification on the learning area?**
- **Explanation about library in the school:**
- **Clarification on the questionnaire she filled in earlier.**
 - ✓ Her questionnaire Part2 teachers' reading instruction question (2, 3, and 7, 8). As well as Par3 TBALQ (1.2.3.4.5.6.9.11.12.14.15.17.18.19.20.22.24).

Miss Lyn's post interview questions:

- **Explanation on what is successful literacy lesson mean to you?**
 - ✓ Does this include a successful transition to primary school for the children?

- **Explanation on what is thematic lesson?**

- **Explanation on how to use learning area?**
 - ✓ Does the learning area change following the theme? Why? And why not?

- **Clarification on the whole language approach and Reading project:**
 - ✓ What do you see as the major challenges or constraints for the whole language approach to be successfully applied?
 - ✓ The reading project also includes sharing reading, and reading aloud. What do you think about these?

- **Explanation on the school and parents' role:**
 - ✓ Involvement? Support or help?

- **Explanation about library and book (reading) area in the school:**
 - ✓ Any funds to buy books for the school library and reading area in the classroom?

- **Compare Lyn with her past (Her long time experience with Montessori school).**

- **Clarification on the questionnaire she filled up earlier.**
 - ✓ Her questionnaire Part2 teachers' reading instruction question (2, 3, and 5). As well as Part3 TBALQ (3.4.5.6.7.11.12.14.17.18.21.24).

MissLiu's post interview questions:

- **Explanation on what do you think about the whole language approach as a nursery teacher's point of view?**
- **Explanation on how to connect learning area with theme curriculum?**
- **Explanation on how do you help children be successful? Aside from leaving here, what does mean for them to be successful?**
- **Clarification on the leadership at lion nursery.**
- **Clarification on your relationship with children in the classroom.**
- **Explanation on your relationship with parents and school.**
- **Explanation on library's management and funds in the school.**
- **Clarification on the questionnaire she filled in earlier.**
 - ✓ Her questionnaire Part2 teachers' reading instruction question (2, 3, and 4, 5). As well as Par3 TBALQ (4.5.7.9.14.15.17. 22.23.24).

Appendix Five
Observation field notes (Blank Version)

Classroom Observation Field Note	
Date:	Time:
School:	Class:
Teacher:	No of children:
Lesson task (Theme):	
Brief description of the task today:	
Description:	
Question for followed up recall interview:	
Researcher notes (Personal notes):	

Observation field notes (Completed and Translated into English)

Classroom Observation Field Note	
Date: 15.10.08	Time: 945
School: Lilly	Class: Lilly
Teacher: Miss Lyn	No of children: 15
Lesson task (Theme): The sheep are coming	
Brief description of the task today: Recognition and understanding the sheep's name and function of the body	
<p>Description:</p> <p>Miss Lyn started by listening to a themed CD for 5-10 minutes, but at the same time, she also drew a sheep on the whiteboard. After she finished, she stopped the CD and gathered the children into a semi-circle at the centre of the classroom. She asked the children to observe and compare the differences between the sheep's body and the bodies of other animals.</p> <p>T: Look at this sheep on the whiteboard. Could you carefully observe the sheep's body and think about the names and what types of function they have.</p> <p>C1: Mouth, sheep have mouths. The mouth can help the sheep to eat a lot of grass.</p> <p>T: What else? (T tried to touches the belly as a hint to the children)</p> <p>C2: I know! A belly...a belly can hold all the grass.</p> <p>T: Good, what's next then? (T touches her head and also uses her finger as a horn)</p> <p>C3: Sheep have a head and on top of their head, as you can see, is a claw. The claw is to protect the sheep itself and to fight with an enemy.</p> <p>T: But on top of sheep....is it called a claw or horn?</p> <p>C4: It is sheep's horn.</p> <p>T: Do sheep only eat grass? (whole class keeps silent)</p> <p>T: I have been to a farm to see sheep before. I also fed sheep some grass. But I was so afraid about the sheep might eat my hand. So can you all guess what happened to my hand in the end?</p> <p>C: Cut off, been eaten..(only 2-3 children try to answered)</p> <p>T: No! The sheep didn't bite off my hand. Because I was so afraid to give the sheep grass...so I gave up feeding the sheep.</p>	

T: So back to the sheep's body. Except these bodies name...any part of body that comes off the top of your head? Also, what is there function? What can be used to do....(Teacher try to blink her eyes as a hint)

C5: eyes

T: tell us what function of the eyes?

C5: Because of eyes, you can see the grass and good friends.

C1: Also eyelashes!

C6: As well as the ears. Ears can be used to listen to sound.

T: What type of sound? Such as to hear the sound of bad person, like a thief right?

C: Yes!

C7: Sheep also have noses in order to breathe in and out.

T: how about feet? Do sheep have feet?

C: yes!

T: Then what is the function of feet? (whole class silent again)

T: Feet can walk! Hey, you all forget! Without feet, how can sheep go home or walk!

C: (Nodding, but silent)

T: how about teeth? Do sheep have teeth?

C: Yes!

T: Remember that sheep must have teeth, in order to chew the grass.

T: anything else? Do they have a tongue?

C8: Yes, a tongue can help sheep to drink plenty of water, as well as to clean their dirty hair. I think a tongue has these two functions.

T: Good! How about C9, C10, C11, C12, C13, C14 and C15... Can you think of anything else? Or is there anything you want to share with us?

C: Oh! Hair as well...sheep must have hair. Then they will not feel the cold.

C: Also a tail.

T: Well done! Everyone is amazing. Remember that everyone has to find the body of a sheep from your thematic textbook. And copy all the names I've just written down on the whiteboard before you go home today.

T: Next, we're going to look at the things other children have brought from home, and Miss Lyn also brought something from home to share with all the children here.

Miss Lyn then brings out some photos and some different type of woollen products, such as a sweater, scarf, clothes and a bag of real fleece)... She was eager to involve the children by asking them if they had ever seen sheep before and engaging them in the

introduction some photo.

C: this is the shepherd helping with the sheep shearing.

T: Yes, this is Alan, who went to the farm last week. They took the picture when the shepherd was helping with the sheep shearing.

T: What's next?

C: (whole class silent: no one responds!)

T: Let's ask Tony what his mom prepared for us? (at the same time, Miss Lyn set out different type of wool products in front of the children)

C (Tony): its wool, or sheep hair! It's real!

T: Look! You have to pay attention to this! This is real wool. What is its true colour?

C: A bit yellow...and dirty!

T: How about the touch? I will let you touch and feel it one by one! Let you feel how the difference! (T took a bag of wool, let each children touch and feel it in turn). After all the children finished touching and feeling it, Miss Lyn tells the children that she will leave the wool, other objects and picture in one of their learning areas.

The class hasn't finished yet!

Miss Lyn used another 10-15 mins to introduce the writing of the Chinese characters '羊'; '羊毛' and the Chinese phonetics '一'; '尤'; '宀'. The worksheets and homework were designed by the commercial theme package. It is very different from the beginning introduction to the animal theme, which started with 'sheep', and in this 10-15mins to introduce the writing Chinese characters was quite formal teaching. Miss Lyn seemed also to notice that the children were not interested in this part of lesson, so she skimmed through the teaching. After that, Miss Lyn started to ask children to think when they can use the word they had just learned in daily communication. Every child in the class was all expected to give an example for Miss Lyn to write down on the whiteboard, as the earlier section (Recognition and understanding the sheep's name and functions of the body). After this, all the children returned to their own seats and copied the writing from the whiteboard to their worksheets. They had to finish this assigned activity by the end of the lesson. Then they could move to the any learning area in the classroom to have free play only after they finished their writing activities.

Questions for follow up recalled interview:

- What did you enjoy the most from this lesson?
- Do you consider it to be a successful literacy lesson?
- Does the lesson is always take such a long time?
- So normally you won't follow the schedule?
- Who is the one who arranges the schedule?
- Does the lesson always start with listening to the CD and ending with word recognition?

- Do you intend to let each pupil give an answer during the lesson?
- So do you think in answering the question you gave...it's a way to help the pupils understand or engage with the lesson?
- What you are saying is that you have given them a chance to speak and listen and a positive learning experience of the time they are with you, and that you believe that you have given them a valuable literacy experience for the long-term?
- So what you are telling me is that you believe the success of a literacy lesson is when pupils are able to listen and answer your questions?

General: The teacher started from understanding the parts of the sheep's body to the understanding of the relevant textbook, picture and real wool experience. But, it's a non-stop, continual long lesson. There was a bit of a lack of engagement between pupils and teacher.

Teacher: shows passion- even when there is silence in the classroom.

Pupils: responsive to teacher from time to time. But not all the pupils. Engaged, but needing a little bit more support.

Researcher notes (Personal notes):

A useful observation in Miss Lyn's classroom. It really gives me a sense of what the place is really like and what the literacy lesson is in the Lilly. Miss Lyn wants to set 'question-answer' targets for all the pupils in her classroom. But I am not sure whether this approach is appropriate or not. Only particular pupils answered her question only and sometimes there was very limited response from the pupils. So was there enough engagement?

But Miss Lyn seems to be positive with her idea of the literacy lesson for pupils. They apparently have worked this way for a long time.

After the observation, we had a quick follow-up interview. We discussed the issue of starting by listening to the CD. Miss Lyn believes that listening to the CD is also linked to the literacy lesson as repeating learning (her own words: spontaneous recall). And this can make pupils remember the content itself - well, I will think about this!

I left while the children returned to their own seats and were still copying the writing from the whiteboard on to their worksheets. But the two special needs kid is sitting there and doing nothing. So, is Miss Lyn's listening to the CD, question-answering and copy-writing universal in the literacy lesson? I am still uncertain about it.

Appendix Six

Observation checked list (Blank Version)

Observation checking list

Date: School:		Class: Teacher:				
Check list Element	Item	Exemplary	Strong	Basic	Inadequate	Deficient
<u>Classroom Environment</u>	Organization of the classroom environment					
	Contents of the classroom					
	Accessibility of materials					
	Condition of materials, display of child work					
<u>Classroom Management</u>	T/S ratio					
	Teachers interaction					
	Different area					
	Signs, posters, photographs, pictures					
<u>Teachers' Role</u>	Opportunities for child choice and initiative					
	Daily Schedule					
	Engaging children in conversation					
	Children's participation					
<u>Classroom practice activities</u>	Integrated approach					
	Children's contributions to learning					
	Controlled practice					
	Guided practice					
<u>Literacy Environment</u>	Organization of book area					
	Characteristics of books					
	Books for learning					
	Approaches to book reading					
	Environment about print resources					
	Early writing environment					

Observation checked list (Criteria and judgements)

Criteria and judgements (Observation)

Classroom Environment	<p><u>An exemplary classroom environment meets the following conditions:</u> The classroom is bright and spacious. There is an established traffic flow and the environment is stimulating. All space is clearly visible to the teacher and researcher. Moreover, the classroom is rich in learning materials that are easily accessed. Also, the materials are often changed to reflect current themes as well as to integrate many subjects, skills and interests.</p>
	<p><u>A strong classroom environment meets the following conditions:</u> The classroom is roomy. Teacher and students can move around the room freely. Furniture size is appropriate and meets the student's needs. Also there some materials for use but very few are related to current themes, subject and interests.</p>
	<p><u>A basic classroom environment meets the following conditions:</u> The classroom is a proper size but is cluttered and barren with unused material. Therefore, it affects the movement and flow to different activities. There are few materials for use but no materials that reflect the current subject and themes.</p>
	<p><u>An inadequate classroom environment meets the following conditions:</u> The classroom space is sufficient. It is neither attractive nor inviting for daily learning. Basic furniture such as tables and chairs are provided. However, there are very few accessible materials. Also, there are no soft furnishings, toys or other materials (except textbooks) to give children opportunities for relaxation and comfort.</p>
	<p><u>A deficient classroom environment meets the following conditions:</u> The physical environment is poorly organized for learning. Furthermore, the classroom materials are cluttered. They are neither appealing nor inviting for children to learn.</p>

1

Classroom Management	<p><u>An exemplary classroom management meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher-student ratio should not be more than 1 to 10. Moreover, the arrangement of learning area is comfortable (rug and cushions or comfortable seating) and filled with a wide range of materials of varied styles, content and different levels of complexity. (This requires variety within the types of material offered e.g. books would be on many different topics, story books about animals, people and imaginary creatures. Sizes and formats should be varied. Also the learning areas are clearly defined. Furthermore, the space in the classroom is arranged to allow individual, small group and large group learning experiences. Also, there are more than 10 children's original works displayed in the classroom.</p>
	<p><u>A strong classroom management meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher- student ratio is about 1 to 12. Different stimulating areas are set up for the children to use daily. There is a variety of materials in different areas so that they are readily available for children to use (variety means more of each type of item so that several children can use the same materials at once. But also a greater variety of items as well, e.g. 5 or more). Pictures/ posters are displayed or used to generate discussion about themes. Furthermore, displays show evidence of 10 original works by children.</p>
	<p><u>A basic classroom management meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher-student ratio is 1 to 15. There are no clearly-defined learning areas where materials are accessible. However, sometimes the materials are discussed and relate to current subject that children are learning at the time. Sometimes children are encouraged to recognise words in their environment (e.g. words on labels or posters and children's names). Less than 9 pieces of children's works displayed. Some posters and pictures on the wall as characters and alphabets.</p>
	<p><u>An inadequate classroom management meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher- student ratio is 1 to 20. Very few areas are set up in the classroom (e.g. less than 2 examples are present and visible). There are few materials, resources and books for children to use and activities available for children to join in. Moreover, no student work is displayed on the walls, and only a few posters of various alphabet letters, Chinese phonetic symbol and characters.</p>
	<p><u>A deficient classroom management meets the following condition:</u> The teacher-student ratio is 1 to more than 21. No evidence of a learning area, learning resources, displays, books or activities.</p>

2

Teacher's Role	<p><u>An exemplary teacher's role meets the following conditions:</u> Teachers encourage children to use different areas, and are always creating opportunities for them to use these areas. Teacher very often provide scaffolding for children's conversation with them. Furthermore, teachers regularly use open-ended questions to extend language through talk (e.g. what do you think would happen if ...? how did you make...?). Learning about maths, science, social studies, health, and other subjects are all integrated through meaningful activities. Also, the emphasis here is on different types of activity and discussion - small group/whole group/ circle times. Moreover, children are encouraged to ask questions and share experience (e.g. a trip a child has been on outside of school). In addition, teachers accept and extend children's verbal contributions in conversation.</p>
	<p><u>A strong teacher's role meets the following conditions:</u> Regularly, interesting experiences are partly planned by teacher and drawn upon to encourage talk and sharing of ideas. Moreover, children are regularly encouraged to ask and answer questions in a more extended way (requiring answers of more than yes or no such one word answer). Teacher also regularly create one to one opportunities to talk with children by initiating conversation with individuals.</p>
	<p><u>A basic teacher's role meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher regularly focuses on the children's intellectual development (skills based) without recognition of a child's development and interest. Some conversation between teachers and children occurs. Furthermore, children are allowed to talk amongst themselves with some teacher intervention (e.g. the teacher asking closed questions).</p>
	<p><u>An inadequate teacher's role meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher spends a great deal of time focused on practising skills and demand children to sit and be quiet. There is very little encouragement or opportunity for children to talk or share. Furthermore, most verbal attention from teacher is of a supervisory nature.</p>
	<p><u>A deficient teacher's role meets the following conditions:</u> Scaffolding for children's conversation is never commented on in ordinary lesson or daily routines. Furthermore, children are not encouraged to read or share ideas and materials. Moreover, children are not encouraged to explore aspects of their own interest related to the current theme.</p>

3

Classroom Practice activities	<p><u>An exemplary classroom practice activities meets the following conditions:</u> There is often discussion about stories and print as well as involvement with different activities. There is supporting material for the children to engage with stories, maths or science by themselves (e.g. displays, books, tapes, flannel board). Furthermore, there is shared reading, one-to-one reading with children. All children are actively encouraged to take part in literacy lessons in a variety of contexts, e.g. role play, snack time, sharing time. (Several instances should be observed: should be looking beyond the obvious situations which lend themselves to reading and sharing, ideas from a wide range of contexts, both formal and informal, and with small groups and individuals as well as the whole group).</p>
	<p><u>A strong classroom practice activities meets the following conditions:</u> Children sometimes take an active role in group reading during which the words and story are usually discussed. Furthermore, children are encouraged to think about and comment on the text, e.g. on what they think the character will do next. Teachers incorporate into their planning working with children on specific literacy activities (e.g. matching words to words or words to pictures). Teacher reads with the children sometimes (e.g. with groups or individual children).</p>
	<p><u>A basic classroom practice activities meets the following conditions:</u> A few (once a week or less) literacy activities such as sharing book, rhymes, songs are used with the children. Literacy is named as part of routine activities. Children sometimes participate in whole class, highly-structured, teacher-directed instruction. The teacher sometimes does most of the activity for the children, such as preparing everything for role play, cutting shapes, and deciding the characters in the role play activity. However, the teacher sometimes read to the children. (Reading could be formal or informal, with the whole group, small groups or individual children). Literacy lesson includes commercial posters featuring words, numbers or songs, books/ games. (Resources do not need to be accessible daily).</p>
	<p><u>An inadequate classroom practice activities meets the following conditions:</u> Children are expected to sit down, watch, be quiet, and listen (more than 25 minutes or more) to participate in whole class, teacher-directed instruction. Furthermore, literacy teaching is very much managed and controlled by the teacher each time. Moreover, children rarely take part in different activities except text book learning. Moreover, the teacher directs all the activity, deciding which children will do what and when. Very few resources are available to encourage the children to take part in literacy activity.</p>
	<p><u>A deficient classroom practice activities meets the following conditions:</u> The teacher directed all the activity. Furthermore, the teacher never reads to the children. (Reading could be formal or informal, with the whole group, small groups or individual children). Moreover, there are no activities or materials for children to engage in the literacy lesson.</p>

4

Literacy Environment	<p><u>An exemplary literacy environment meets the following conditions</u></p> <p>There is an inviting and orderly book area in the classroom with a reading area with more than 26 books. Also, the books in the classroom range in different levels, and are easy to access with at least 4 or more books related to the current theme. Furthermore, books are included in learning areas outside the book area. Additionally, there are more than 2 types of writing materials (eg: pen, paper) that are available in the learning area as well as clear labels in Chinese phonetic symbols, Chinese characters and pictures in each area. Book areas are used independently by children outside group reading times. Environmental print is discussed and often relates to objects the current theme.</p>
	<p><u>A strong literacy environment meets the following conditions:</u></p> <p>Book areas are located in the classroom but only 20-25 books available in the area. Furthermore, the area has less than 2 books related to the current theme and can be available only in certain areas (eg: book area). There are many labelled pictures, symbols and characters (5 or more) are on view to the children. Children are also encouraged to recognise printed words in their environment.</p>
	<p><u>A basic literacy environment meets the following conditions:</u></p> <p>There is an arranged bookshelf but not a clearly defined book area. About 10-20 books are present and visible to children and have easy access. However, teachers only occasionally sometimes engage the current theme with book area. Furthermore, although there are examples of environmental print around the classroom, but not much child interaction with print noted.</p>
	<p><u>An inadequate literacy environment meets the following conditions:</u></p> <p>The bookshelf has a very limited number of books (less than 10) located in one corner of the classroom. Books are unattractive and not of suitable age level. (This refers to the books itself and not the way of displayed, e.g. some books are damaged, or unsuitable age level). Furthermore, children see some environmental prints (2-4 examples) around the classroom. However, child rarely interact with book area and print and or not encouraged by the teacher.</p>
	<p><u>A deficient literacy environment meets the following conditions.</u></p> <p>There is no area set aside for the use and display of books. No labelled pictures are visible to the children. Also the teacher never selected any book for the session, or conducted engaging reading and discussions to promote learning (except from the textbook). No print (except textbook) relevant to children is on display.</p>

Observation checked list (Completed Version)

②

Observation checking list

Date: 27/09/08 School: ✓		Class: K Teacher: Waj				
Check list Element	Item	Exemplary	Strong	Basic	Inadequate	Deficient
Classroom Environment	Organization of the classroom environment			✓		
	Contents of the classroom				✓	
	Accessibility of materials				✓	
	Condition of materials, display of child work				✓	
Classroom Management	T/S ratio					1 : 19
	Teachers interaction				✓	
	Different area				✓	
	Signs, posters, photographs, pictures				✓	
Teachers' Role	Opportunities for child choice and initiative				✓	
	Daily Schedule			✓		
	Engaging children in conversation				✓	
	Children's participation				✓	
Classroom practice activities	Integrated approach				✓	
	Children's contributions to learning				✓	
	Controlled practice		✓			
	Guided practice			✓		
Literacy Environment	Organization of book area			✓		
	Characteristics of books			✓		
	Books for learning			✓		
	Approaches to book reading				✓	
	Environment about print resources				✓	
	Early writing environment			✓		

Observation checking list

Date: 15/10/08 School: ✓		Class: L114 Teacher: L114				
Check list Element	Item	Exemplary	Strong	Basic	Inadequate	Deficient
Classroom Environment	Organization of the classroom environment			✓		
	Contents of the classroom			✓		
	Accessibility of materials			✓		
	Condition of materials, display of child work				✓	
Classroom Management	T/S ratio					1 : 15
	Teachers interaction			✓		
	Different area			✓		
	Signs, posters, photographs, pictures			✓		
Teachers' Role	Opportunities for child choice and initiative				✓	
	Daily Schedule			✓		
	Engaging children in conversation			✓		
	Children's participation			✓		
Classroom practice activities	Integrated approach			✓		
	Children's contributions to learning			✓		
	Controlled practice			✓		
	Guided practice			✓		Between
Literacy Environment	Organization of book area			✓		
	Characteristics of books				✓	
	Books for learning			✓		
	Approaches to book reading			✓		
	Environment about print resources			✓		
	Early writing environment			✓		

Appendix Seven

Certificate of ethical research approval



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: LING - YING, HUANG

Degree/Programme of Study: PHD

Project Supervisor(s): DEBRA MYHILL Ros Fisher

Your email address: lin64216@yahoo.com.tw

Tel: 07875747579

Title of your project:

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TAIWANESE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING READING AND THEIR CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN THE EARLY YEARS

Brief description of your research project:

In this study interpretative paradigm will mainly be employed. Through a questionnaire survey on preschool teachers in Taichuang County, through interviews with teachers, and through classroom observation I will investigate teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in reading instruction in preschool.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): 100 preschool teachers'

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

In this study, all the participants will be responsible and voluntary. I will inform the teacher about the research purposes and explain them the conduct of each stage. I also point out possible disruption caused by the recording tools. Most importantly, I will tell them that I will be happy to clarify any procedure-related doubts, and inform them that they can withdraw from the research at any time. Moreover, all the participants in this study will be guaranteed that their information and identities will be known only by me (the researcher). Before I start the data collection, I will make sure that the participants have no doubts about the process. In order to ensure agreement with the participants, I will ask them to sign a consent form, saying that they agree to be interviewed and observed.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

In this study, the data collected through the questionnaire, the interviews, and classroom observations will be used to address the research questions. The questionnaire will be analyzed by using the SPSS statistic program for Windows. The data collected from interviews and observation will be analyzed by using preliminary analysis, data reduction, data sorting, searching for patterns, data display, data interpretation.

In this study, I will retain anonymity by using codes instead of the participants' name and referring to each school by this type. Others' names existing in the participants' accounts also become aliases. Moreover, all the participants in this study will be guaranteed that their information and identities will be known only by me. All the participants in this study are surveyed and interviewed in friendly and trustworthy conditions. I will respect the participants' contribution in this study. Each piece of information is valued. After the study is complete, all the data will destroy deliberately only by me.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.
I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: LING-YING HUANG date: 10/12/06

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
October 2005

This project has been approved for the period: Oct. 2006 until: Sept. 2009

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):*[Signature]*..... date: 15.12.06

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference:*D/06/07/11*.....

Signed:*[Signature]*..... date: 31.9.07
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from
<http://www.education.ec.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.

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