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A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

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Abstract

When China’s Ministry of Education issued a series of curriculum change policies in 2011, major curriculum reform was initiated. Given the significant role that teachers play in curriculum reform, it is critically important to understand their experiences in their professional knowledge landscapes so that intentional and meaningful support for changes can be provided. This information will enrich the scholarly conversation on the theoretical and practical application of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in China and remind policymakers to consider the needs of teachers charged with implementing changes.

Situated in the global and local scholarship of multiliteracies, this empirical study explored the experiences of English literacy teachers when navigating curriculum reforms in contemporary Chinese educational settings. With a pedagogy of multiliteracies and the internationalization of curriculum as the theoretical frameworks, this study married narrative inquiry with the Actor Network Theory to foreground the voices and experiences of six English literacy teachers, paying particular attention to knowledge gaps, difficulties, changes and tensions impacting the teachers’ practice in the face of innovation leading to pedagogical transformation.

The findings revealed that the participant teachers went through a recursive and spiral process of deconstruction-construction-reconstruction, featuring a water ripple effect and being driven by a pull and push force as a result of the interactions between metanarratives and counternarratives. Additionally, the teachers experienced multilayered tensions when negotiating the competing and conflicting stories of students and institutions, which simultaneously produced the desire for professional development and changed teachers at practical, perceptual, and emotional levels. Entangled forces and counterforces, exerted by human and nonhuman entities, were found to co-exist in the sociomaterial world and conditioned the participant teachers’ innovative practices.

The participant teachers processed the “feasible” and “applicable” elements of multiliteracies pedagogy and creatively integrated them into their old schema. Starting by building a level, democratic teacher-student relationship, the teachers began to reconstruct an identity as a
new teacher in the 21st century. To achieve the goals of educational reforms, the participants needed practical guidelines and professional support to determine how best to incorporate and embrace a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom.

Keywords

multiliteracies, a pedagogy of multiliteracies, narrative inquiry, actor network theory, trajectory, tensions, changes, curriculum reform in China, English literacy teachers
Acknowledgments

“Hi Lin,
Your interest is a good fit for my area of expertise. I am on sabbatical for this year but go ahead and contact the grad office and see if you can still put an application in and tell them I would be willing to supervise—assuming your application is accepted. Good luck,
K”

In retrospect, everything seems to have happened only yesterday. I will be forever grateful that my supervisor, Dr. Kathryn Hibbert, kindly offered me a scholarship for the PhD program at Western University in April of 2015, opening the door for me to develop a new understanding of literacy education in the 21st century. Her prompt, encouraging response noted above both impressed and touched me; it caused me to value a healthy, supportive teacher-student relationship and compelled me to rethink the goal of education.

I am forever grateful to Dr. Hibbert for helping me through this tough but enjoyable, productive time. It has been an extreme honour to work with a supervisor who offered me her wisdom, expertise, and friendship. I am very thankful for Dr. Hibbert’s persistent support, especially her openness to different cultures, generous academic assistance, and professionalism and career advice. Her most important trait, however, is her genuine care for students, ensuring that they achieve a healthy work-life balance.

I also must express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Rachel Heydon and Dr. Zheng Zhang. The completion of this study would not have been possible without their insightful guidance and persistent support. Their insightful questions and comments expanded my understanding, provoked additional research on the justification of my research methodologies and the trustworthiness of the findings, and ignited my passion for the study of curriculum reform.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the instructors, colleagues, and staff in Faculty of Education at Western University. My four-year learning experience as a PhD student has been a crucial stage of my life, during which time I gradually grew into a scholar with the capacity to interrogate the grand narratives and an ability to recognize and celebrate differences, multiplicity, and hybridity in this new, changing literacy world.

Immersing myself in the literature of curriculum studies, I have gained a new understanding
of equality and equity in education. I offer sincere thanks to Dr. Wayne Watt for his support and assistance with my qualitative research. Dr. Watt taught me how to design and conduct a dependable study that upheld ethical principles. Additionally, I appreciate the staff in the Grad Office who patiently guided me through the many stages of the program. The librarians also assisted me by providing research resources to support my study.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep love for my husband Yu Hu Li, my parents, my sister, and her lovely daughter. My academic journey was enriched by their love and understanding. I deeply regret that due to my studies in Canada I could not be by mom’s side as she battled cancer. I am now eager to return to my family and provide them with the same love and support they have offered me these past years.

My PhD studies at Western University reshaped me not only professionally but also personally. I love the family-like, inclusive atmosphere in Faculty of Education; it helped me grow and rebuilt my vision and philosophy of education. I will surely continue to be a person of value, demonstrating the spirit of Western, and contribute whatever I can to creating an educational future based on the foundation of equality and equity.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................ ii
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... v
List of Tables .................................................................................................................................... xi
List of Figures .................................................................................................................................... xii
List of Appendices .......................................................................................................................... xiv

Chapter 1 .......................................................................................................................................... 1
  1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 1
    1.1 The Global and Local Scholarship: Responses to the New Literacy World ..................... 2
    1.2 A Statement of Problems: What Did I Look for? ................................................................. 7
    1.3 The Significance of the Study ............................................................................................... 10
      1.3.1 Contribution to Teachers’ Innovative Practices and Practical Knowledge of Multiliteracies .................................................................................................................. 10
      1.3.2 Contribution to Global and Local Discourses of Multiliteracies ......................... 11
      1.3.3 Contribution to Understanding Curriculum Reform in China ............................ 12
    1.4 Outline of the Thesis ............................................................................................................. 13

Chapter 2 .......................................................................................................................................... 15
  2 Literature Review ......................................................................................................................... 15
    2.1 A Changing Literacy World ................................................................................................. 15
    2.2 Reconceptualizing Literacy Education: From Literacy to Multiliteracies ..................... 16
      2.2.1 Social/Sociocultural Perspectives of Literacy ............................................................. 16
      2.2.2 Meanings of Multiliteracies ......................................................................................... 18
      2.2.3 Notions of a Multiliterate Person ............................................................................... 19
      2.2.4 A Critical Understanding of Multiliteracies ............................................................ 19
2.3 Reconceptualizing Literacy Education: From a Didactic Literacy Pedagogy to a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies .............................................................................................................. 21
  2.3.1 Studies of the Pedagogies of Multiliteracies............................................... 21
  2.3.2 Models of Multiliteracies Pedagogy ............................................................ 24
  2.3.3 Empirical Studies of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies .................................... 27
  2.3.4 Interrogations of Multiliteracies Pedagogy .................................................. 28

2.4 The Territory Open for Study ........................................................................ 30

Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................. 32

3 Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology ............................................. 32
  3.1 Theoretical Framework ................................................................................... 32
    3.1.1 A Hybrid of Theories and Methodologies ................................................. 32
    3.1.2 A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Learning by Design ............................... 33
    3.1.3 Internationalization of Curriculum ......................................................... 36
  3.2 Research Methodology .................................................................................. 37
    3.2.1 Narrative Inquiry ..................................................................................... 38
    3.2.2 Actor Network Theory (ANT) ................................................................. 40

Chapter 4 ............................................................................................................. 43

4 Research Methods ............................................................................................. 43
  4.1 Recruitment Process of Prospective Participants ............................................ 43
  4.2 Data Collection ............................................................................................... 48
    4.2.1 Phases of Data Collection ........................................................................ 49
    4.2.2 Relationship Building ............................................................................. 49
  4.3 Methods of Data Collection .......................................................................... 51
    4.3.1 Classroom Observations and Field Texts ............................................... 51
    4.3.2 Narrative Interviews ............................................................................... 55
  4.4 Data Analysis ................................................................................................. 57
4.5 Trustworthiness and Fidelity................................................................. 61

Chapter 5........................................................................................................ 63

5 Landscape of Elementary English Education in China........................................ 63
  5.1 A Booming English Education in China.................................................... 63
  5.2 Curriculum Development of Primary English Education............................. 64
  5.3 Tensions in English Literacy in Primary Education: Problems and Challenges .. 67
  5.4 Territory of Study ..................................................................................... 72
    5.4.1 Xinxin Elementary School................................................................. 72
    5.4.2 Minyue Elementary School................................................................. 74
    5.4.3 Summary ......................................................................................... 76

Chapter 6.......................................................................................................... 77

6 Storied Experience of Teacher Participants ....................................................... 77
  6.1 Qin’s Narratives: A Trip to Learn About Her Students................................. 77
    6.1.1 Qin and Her Students....................................................................... 77
    6.1.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: I Really Didn’t Know Much About Primary Students, About What They Could Do ...................... 79
    6.1.3 Moving Forward Through Wrestling With Tensions: I Wondered Why I Had Been So for So Many Years................................................................. 81
    6.1.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: How to Learn Was the Core of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.......................................................... 96
    6.1.5 Summary ......................................................................................... 101
  6.2 Yi’s Narratives: Addressing Students’ Subjectivities in Learning English....... 102
    6.2.1 Yi and Her Students....................................................................... 102
    6.2.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: The Didactic, Mechanical Type of Instruction Made Them Feel Bored............................................... 103
    6.2.3 Moving Forward Through Celebrating Changes in Practices: Learning Should Be Meaningful for the Students...................................................... 105
    6.2.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Student-Centered Learning Process is Dynamic, Fluid, and Unpredictable ........................................ 123
6.2.5 Summary .............................................................................................................. 127

6.3 Hu’s Narratives: Celebrating Students’ Voices ...................................................... 128

6.3.1 Hu and Her Students .......................................................................................... 128

6.3.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: The Varied Forms of
Representation Activated Their Interest ................................................................. 129

6.3.3 Transformation Through Breaking the Rigidity: I Started to Design
Activities More Frequently From Students’ Perspectives ..................................... 131

6.3.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: The Relationship Between the
Teacher and Students Was Co-Constructors in Class ........................................... 140

6.3.5 Summary .............................................................................................................. 145

6.4 Liu’s Narratives: The Bumpy Road to Breaking Through the Bottleneck of
Professional Development ....................................................................................... 146

6.4.1 Liu and Her Students .......................................................................................... 146

6.4.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: There Was Little Generated
Knowledge ................................................................................................................. 146

6.4.3 Approaching Multiliteracies Through a Push-and-Pull Process: I Realized
Only When Teachers Changed Could They Bring About Changes in
Students ......................................................................................................................... 148

6.4.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: A Multiliteracies Class Was a
Process in Which Students Self-Constructed Their Knowledge ............................ 162

6.4.5 Summary .............................................................................................................. 166

6.5 Ma’s Narratives: A Struggle With the Didactic Instruction ................................... 167

6.5.1 Ma and Her Students .......................................................................................... 167

6.5.2 Stepping Into the Field of multiliteracies: I Didn’t Know How Much They
Could Produce if Situated in a Real-Life Context ..................................................... 168

6.5.3 Approaching a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies Through Wrestling: Now That
I Found the Problems and Knew How to Change, I Wanted to Change ................. 169

6.5.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: A Multiliteracies Class Meant
Giving More Space and Time to Students ................................................................. 178

6.5.5 Summary .............................................................................................................. 181

6.6 Gao’s Narratives: Exploring the Space for Enacting Students’ Agency .......... 181
6.6.1 Gao and Her Students ................................................................. 181

6.6.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: I Was Thinking How to Break Through the Textbook ......................................................... 182

6.6.3 Approaching a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: I Never Thought That I Needed to Attend to Their Experience ........................................ 183

6.6.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: My Understanding of Multiliteracies Was to Think and Understand From Multiple Perspectives ................................................................................................. 193

6.6.5 Summary ...................................................................................... 196

Chapter 7 ............................................................................................ 198

7 Findings and Discussion .................................................................. 198

7.1 Stages in the Process of Constructing Personal Knowledge of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies ................................................................. 198

7.1.1 The Moments of Unbecoming: The Water Ripple Effect .............. 199

7.1.2 Intertwined Moments of Unbecoming and Becoming: The Recursive, Spiral Trajectory of Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction .... 201

7.1.3 The Moments of Becoming: Reconstructing Teaching Philosophy and a Pedagogy of Teaching English .............................................. 204

7.2 Tensions That Conditioned Teachers’ Transformation .................... 207

7.2.1 Tensions Generated as a Result of Interaction Between the Teacher and Students ................................................................................. 208

7.2.2 Tensions That Lived Within the Teachers’ Landscape ................. 211

7.2.3 Tensions Generated from Bumping With Institutions ................. 213

7.3 Change Dimensions of Practices, Perceptions, and Affects .............. 217

7.4 A Sociomaterial Understanding of the Teacher’s Landscape ............ 223

Chapter 8 ............................................................................................ 229

8 Conclusions and Implications ......................................................... 229

8.1 Concluding Remarks ...................................................................... 229

8.2 Implications ................................................................................... 230

8.3 Future Study .................................................................................. 233
List of Tables

Table 1: Profile of Participant Teachers ................................................................. 46

Table 2: Results of Consent Letters (Xinxin School) ........................................... 47

Table 3: Results of Consent Letters (Minyue School) ........................................ 47

Table 4: Observed Periods of Class Time .............................................................. 52
List of Figures

Figure 1: Classroom Observation Sheet for Capturing English Teachers’ Practices of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in Classroom .............................................................. 54

Figure 2: Process of Data Collection and Data Analysis .................................................. 57

Figure 3: Three-Round Recursive Analysis of Significant Events .................................. 58

Figure 4: Group Activity: Make an Invention (Artifacts, Grade 6) ................................. 82

Figure 5: Illustrations of the Process of an Invention ...................................................... 86

Figure 6: Snapshots of “Food Competition” in One Class ............................................... 110

Figure 7: Students’ Writing Assignment: A Food Menu .................................................. 111

Figure 8: Student’s Slides of a Group Presentation of “Elevators in Life” ....................... 116

Figure 9: Students’ Group Presentation on “Healthy Rules” ......................................... 117

Figure 10: A Slide from the Lesson on Farm Animals .................................................. 135

Figure 11: A Snapshot of Class on Birthday Cake ......................................................... 136

Figure 12: A Slide of Telephone Numbers ........................................................................ 139

Figure 13: A Side of “My Weekend Plan” ........................................................................ 148

Figure 14: A Student’s Presentation on “A Monster” ...................................................... 155

Figure 15: A Student’s Mind Map of “A Picnic Plan” ..................................................... 156

Figure 16: A Mind Map of “School Report” .................................................................... 160

Figure 17: A Slide of the Framework of Talking about Weekend Plan ............................ 168

Figure 18: A Slide of “A Summary of Trip Plan” in the Text .......................................... 170
Figure 19: A Running Wheel Game for Practicing Will We Pick…? ........................................ 170
Figure 20: A Slide of a Mind Map of a “Picking Plan”.......................................................... 184
Figure 21: A Snapshot of Two Students’ Role Play................................................................. 185
Figure 22: A Snapshot: Similarities and Differences Between Schools in China and in UK
.................................................................................................................................................. 187
Figure 23: A Water Ripple Effect Chart of Unbecoming Moments........................................ 200
Figure 24: A Recursive Trajectory of Unbecoming and Becoming Moments ................... 202
Figure 25: A Spiral Trajectory of Unbecoming and Becoming Moments............................ 204
Figure 26: The Entities That Condition the Participant Teachers’ Practices......................... 223
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Western Ethics Approval Notice ............................................................... 285

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions Inviting the Participant Teachers’ Stories of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in Class ................................................................. 286

Appendix C: Research on a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies Blurb (for XXX District) ........ 287

Appendix D: General Topics of Workshops ................................................................. 289

Appendix E: Poster of Workshops ............................................................................ 290

Appendix F: Poster of Recruitment ......................................................................... 291

Appendix G: Letter of Information and Consent (for Participant Teachers) ............ 292

Appendix H: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students’ Parents (English Version) ......................................................................................................................... 298

Appendix I: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students’ Parents (Chinese Version) ......................................................................................................................... 302

Appendix J: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students (English Version) 306

Appendix K: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students (Chinese Version) ......................................................................................................................... 308
Chapter 1

1 Introduction

They say—
Radical changes in the literacy world and the educational milieu require teachers “at every point to reconsider what pedagogy means in these circumstances” (Matus & McCarthy, 2003, p. 74).
I say—
English literacy education in China should shift from mechanic drilling and rote learning to an expansive view of literacy that seeks to help students become multiliterate and capable of making meaning with and through multiple modalities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015) in ways that support the development of autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking—all competencies necessary for the 21st century.

My story: How did I get here?

I was a university English teacher for ten years after graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature. Following the completion of a Master’s degree in English Curriculum and Instructional Approaches at Beijing Normal University, I developed expertise by working on municipal and national elementary English curriculum development and course design research projects. This experience allowed me to develop close relationships with local schools and teachers in Beijing.

The first time I ever heard of a pedagogy of multiliteracies was from Dr. Kathryn Hibbert’s personal website in May 2015. I downloaded the article written by the New London Group and excitedly read it. I was attracted by the notion of multiliteracies and agreed with its recognition of changes and differences, multiplicity and diversity, equity and equality. I was also impressed by the claims of multiliteracies pedagogy, which related to my thoughts on elementary English literacy education in China. I believed what multiliteracies assumed and advocated for was what I had been looking for and what could inspire Chinese English teachers to innovate instructional approaches, so I applied to the PhD program under the guidance of Dr. Kathryn Hibbert and stepped into the field of multiliteracies.

As mentioned, before I enrolled in the PhD program in Curriculum Studies at Western University, I worked as a teacher educator and a curriculum consultant for over 10 years in Beijing. I developed seminars on English course design, particularly instructional strategies and skills and assessment in various elementary schools. To assess the quality of course design, I frequently observed classrooms and gave feedback on lesson planning. This experience enabled me to delve into the teachers’ teaching lives and school landscapes, as well as the problems, tensions, and conflicts that often occurred in classrooms. It also offered
me an opportunity to critically juxtaposition what policymakers and theorists assumed happened in the classroom with what actually takes place in real-world classrooms, particularly in the Chinese educational field.

In China, many teachers I worked with previously shared many commonalities. They recognized the importance of the connections between literacy learning and students’ needs in their lifeworld, while still addressing textbook knowledge and skills, and academic instead of functional literacy competence. They used small and large group work in class but usually failed to activate all the learners to participate fully and equitably. They focused on learning products instead of the learning process, and they attended to whole class uniformity more than individual progress. Active learning was often sacrificed in the name of efficiency, and learner autonomy was less desirable than the need for teachers to maintain authority. Standard, official English and classical English literature was privileged for years, so it is no surprise that students experienced failure in authentic communication contexts or in the reading and writing of multimodal texts. Students are afraid of being criticized for speaking non-standard or non-native English, namely “Chinglish,” a form of Cantonese inspired English. So, while the Chinese yearn for the idealistic national standards of English, they are puzzled about how to reach this goal. They want to change but do not know where to begin.

As an English teacher, educational researcher, and teacher educator for more than twenty years in China, I was fully aware that we could not simply transplant and apply western-originating educational ideologies, theories, and pedagogies mechanically into the Chinese contexts. I was also aware that re-conceptualizing English literacy teaching and learning in China could not be accomplished successfully without examining how literacy education is situated in culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies.

This study offers a glimpse into my experience of taking the initial step on the road to literacy development in China. With a passion for empowering English teachers in China to adopt innovative pedagogies and a feeling of responsibility to support those willing to experiment with a pedagogy of multiliteracies in their practice, I began this study of their experiences.

1.1 The Global and Local Scholarship: Responses to the New Literacy World

In 2005, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) issued an executive summary, titled the Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo), to identify “a small set of key competencies [to] help individuals and whole societies to meet their goals” (OECD, 2005). Since then, different countries have initiated research
on core competencies and submitted reports. For China, the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued “The Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)” (‘国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 2010-2020 年’) (MOE, 2010) in 2010 and outlined the strategic goals and themes for the country’s national educational reform. In 2013, the Chinese government funded an interdisciplinary research panel to develop “The Framework of Developing Core Competencies of Chinese Students” (‘中国学生发展核心素养’, hereinafter DCCCS) and published the document in 2016 (MOE, 2016). The educational philosophy of the DCCCS positions the overall development of an individual at its core and defines a cluster of key competencies as the goals of curriculum innovation for each subject. Additionally, it articulates the need to fit into the parameters of global curriculum reform while adhering to Chinese sociocultural characteristics. Subsequently, each subject develops its own framework of core competencies. In English, “The Core Competencies of the English Subject” (‘英语学科核心素养’, hereinafter CCES) consist of Language Competence (语言能力), Learning Abilities (学习能力), Thinking Capacity (思维能力), and Cultural Characters (文化品格) (Cheng & S. Q. Zhao, 2016). To reinforce distinctive national character, the DCCCS framework interprets from the particular sociocultural context of China, under the influence of the Chinese government educational policy and the intended national curriculum standards. It keeps pace with global educational reform but at the same time carries within it covert resistance to being assimilated and homogenized into the discourse of western-centric global core competencies.

To ground the educational philosophy and goals of the DCCCS and CCES in different provinces, cities, and districts, the MOE, provincial, municipal, and local educational bureaus funded multileveled teacher training programs for public school teachers. Educational publishers joined the mainstream by funding collaborative research projects with higher education institutions along with relevant teacher training programs. Yet, the actualization of curriculum innovation draws decisively upon teachers’ prompt and proactive actions at both ideological and pedagogical levels.
This study confines literacy education to the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), which integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing in primary education in China. A review of the literature addressing pedagogy of English teaching and learning in China’s National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the largest journal database in China, found few studies have researched the potential English literacy pedagogies have to help assist elementary English teachers to adapt to and meet the high demands of the DCCCS and CCES. Even fewer studies have traced the broad trajectory of educational innovation through teachers’ narratives. Since teachers themselves are critical to the success or failure of curriculum reform, it is prudent to better understand what happens in “teachers’ professional landscape” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) within the three-dimensional inquiry space of temporality, personal-social interactions, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

I acknowledge the necessity to pay close attention to teachers’ voices and experiences, as they are key players in curriculum making and practitioners of “enacted curriculum” (Doyle, 1992). Foregrounding the teachers’ voices provides a glimpse into the metanarratives or “grand narratives” (Lyotard, 1984) that are assumed to reflect the “transcendent and universal essential truth” (p. 60) ascribed to literacy education. Their accounts also offer counter narratives that reject the grand narratives and provide insight into the implications of policies and grand narratives on teachers’ lived experiences in a contemporary school landscape. Studying experience allows researchers to gain insights into knowledge gaps, difficulties, changes, and tensions impacting teachers’ practice in the face of innovation leading to pedagogical transformation. Given my years working with elementary teachers and curricula, I understood the relational nature of working with educators situated in a context of ongoing change.

In this research, those changing relationships and experiences become central to my inquiry. Understanding each other’s stories of experience and learning from them underpinned the questions in this study:
1. What do English literacy teachers experience when they act and react to curriculum reforms in China? Their experiential responses (both ideological and pedagogical) to policy curriculum reforms help us understand:
   a. the lives of teachers in China;
   b. the ways in which English teaching and learning are impacted and enacted in an era of “New Learning” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012a).

I was particularly interested in the changing nature of elementary English teachers’ perspectives on English teaching and learning in contemporary Chinese educational settings. Educational research has called for repositioning learners’ differences, subjectivity, and voices at the centre of education, challenging the privilege granted to the teachers as the ‘centre’ of learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997, 2009, 2015; Cumming-Potvin, 2007; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003; New London Group, 1996; Stein & Newfield, 2006). I was interested in understanding how teachers navigated the shift required by the “New Learning” with their adherence to the transmission of textbook knowledge to fulfill the mass test-oriented demands. As I studied the experiences gathered in this study, I reexamined the agency of both teachers and students, in particular how balanced subjectivities celebrate the interests and purposes of both teachers and students in classroom as well as equity and equality in education. Additionally, I investigated the dynamics of pedagogical changes in the flow of classroom activities. I endeavored to question how the entangled agency of teachers, students, and institutions competed and compromised for a paradigm shift, that is, from exclusively how to teach classical, heritage knowledge successfully to how to “create learning environments that work better and that provide more equitable outcomes for students” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012b, p. 9).

This study occurred within the global scholarship of multiliteracies as a result of the booming growth of new technologies and increasing globalization. Literacy education at present is situated in “culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies” (New London Group, p. 1). Traditional monolingual and monocultural communication environments have moved into a globalized, multicultural, and multimedia world, generating multiple genres of texts, multiple modes of representation,
and multiple languages (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015). The formal, closed schooling as mainstream institutionalized education has been challenged by digitalized new media at three levels: learning community, curriculum, and pedagogy (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012a). Massive changes in social, cultural and technological territories are occurring and placing education and the formation of new pedagogies at the forefront.

Researchers and educators in different fields have addressed how a changing world demands new literacy pedagogies (Giampapa, 2010; Healy, 2008; Levy, 2008; A. Luke, Dooley, & Woods, 2011; Marshall, Hayashi, & Yeung, 2012; Walters, 2010). Academics argue that the notion of being literate needs to include the multiplicity of texts and discourses and they develop theories and models of multiliteracies to adapt to the diverse literacy world (Anstèy & Bull, 2006; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gee, 2000; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003; A. Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 1996). Differing from traditional literacy’s overemphasis of oral and written modes, the multiliteracies approach believes that “synesthesia is integral in representation” (Cope & Kalantzis, p. 179). In this sense, the written and oral modes are not simply parallel but frequently mixed with multiple modes of representation to make meaning. Different modes of representation can express similar kinds of meaning in alternate ways and the mixing of modes constructs a synthetic but multilayered “semantic web” (Kalantzis, Cope, & Cloonan, 2010). Therefore, proponents of the multiliteracies approach argue that meaning-making is dynamically constructed throughout interactions and switches between different modes of representation (Cope & Kalantzis, 2006).

After researching the educational discourse in China, it is clear that corresponding changes in different domains of the literacy world have been slow to occur. The idea of multiliteracies (多元识读理论) was first expressed in 2007 in China and directly grew out of the studies of multimodality (多模态理论) in higher education. Interest in a pedagogy of multiliteracies in China was motivated by the demand to improve university students’ reading and writing abilities along with a concern about students’ unsatisfactory performance in oral and written communications (Z. C. Huang & Pan, 2010; Liao, 2004; Liu, 2008; S. J. Zhang, 2010; Zhou, 2008; Zhu & Sun, 2010). Recently, Chinese researchers in higher education have joined in the discussion of multiliteracies, giving
rise to the importance of developing students’ multiliterate competence (Cai, 2011; S. Y. Chen, 2013; Gui, 2015; Y. Hu, 2007; Zhan, 2013; Zhu, 2008). They strongly support implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in course design and classroom instruction to enable Chinese students at universities to view and create multimodal texts (Cao, 2015; Guo & Feng, 2015; Z. L. Hu, 2007; Ruan, 2015; Y. J. Zhang, 2011, 2013). A number of Chinese students who studied in an international context conducted research with multiliteracies as the theoretical framework. Their main purpose was to increase the attention paid to EFL/ESL Chinese learners or descendants of Chinese immigrants (Chen, 2010; Liu, 2009; Ruan, 2015; Song, 2012; X. Wang, 2017; Zhang, 2015).

Given the largely theoretical approach to the study of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, there have been relatively few studies in China focusing on implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in English teaching at the school level. The majority of studies centre on the fundamental theory of multiliteracies or students’ awareness of multiliteracies (Cao, 2015; Chen, 2013; Zhan, 2013; D. L. Zhang, 2012; Y. J. Zhang, 2011; Y. S. Zhang, 2008). Only a few studies touch on a pedagogy of multiliteracies (Ge & Luo, 2010; Y. J. Zhang, 2013). A search of CNKI reveals that compared with secondary and higher education, theoretical and empirical studies on English literacy in elementary educational field are limited in China, particularly qualitative, systematic, and intensive studies. To date, there are only six published research journals, doctoral dissertations, or master’s theses in CNKI related to multiliteracies or a pedagogy of multiliteracies in elementary English education (Chen, 2017; Gen, 2017; Li, 2018; Liu, 2018; Ren, 2017; Q. J. Wang, 2016). The limited literature indicates that elementary English education in the Chinese context has not given adequate ideological, theoretical, and pedagogical attention to the radically changing literacy world.

1.2 A Statement of Problems: What Did I Look for?

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) prevailed in China since it was regulated as the key language teaching approach in the National Curriculum Standards of English Subject (2001). Scholars published articles to introduce and interpret its principles. Teacher educators conducted various lectures, seminars or workshops, and local educational bureaus organized the head teachers to produce demo lessons mandates for planning. I found that as a result, a three-step
structure—before-task, during-task, and post-task—was ingrained in the English teachers’ minds when I worked with them many years later.

Since 2008, I had been working with a number of primary schools as a curriculum consultant and a teacher trainer and experienced the rise and fall of TBLT in China. Whenever I discussed the lesson planning with the teachers, the first question they asked, with little exception, was, “What is the ‘task’ for this lesson?” I struggled with this question as well because none of the activities in the textbooks could be defined as a “task” prescribed in the original academic books or articles available in China. Moreover, Chinese scholars gave various interpretations of a “task,” and this vagueness confused us. The teachers I worked with often complained that the curriculum required teachers to try innovative teaching approaches, which were good, but they had not gained adequate theoretical and pedagogical support in order to fully understand or practice the approaches in classroom. When they used the textbooks, they found that the textbooks failed to produce adequate teaching and learning materials or task-based activities that corresponded to the intended curriculum. Opportunities for the teachers to consult the professors in higher education who introduced and recommended using TBLT were scarce. They could not get strong pedagogical support from reading the journals because the academic world around them cared little about what was happening in the elementary English classroom or what concerned the elementary English teachers.

I witnessed that the teachers’ passion for TBLT gradually diminished because they were “tortured” by the need to create a “task” for each lesson. When the new version of National Curriculum Standards of English Subject (2011) said TBLT was only one of the recommended English teaching approaches, the teachers from the school I worked with told me that they were relieved they no longer had to consider which “task” should be included in each lesson. Since then, the voice of TBLT has slowly weakened. Now when a teacher uses the word “task,” more often it refers to the “task” in a broad sense rather than the meaning attributed to “task” in TBLT.

Recent global, theoretical and empirical studies of literacy pedagogy outside of China argue that a reflexive, transformative pedagogy of multiliteracies can extend and supplement the didactic literacy pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) in that:

- It proposes to prepare students to participate fully in personal, public, and working lives (New London Group, 1996);
- It aims to develop multiliterate persons with a repertoire of abilities to read and write multimodal texts, particularly critical thinking “as a social practice involving the rational, dialogical examination of reasons” (Gieve, 1998, p. 126);
• It embraces “the multifarious, hybrid texts that are proliferating and ever changing” (Mills, 2009, p. 107), and celebrates the spirit of teachers and students as active designers.

All of these claims resonate with the goals and basic stances of the DCCCS and CCES policies, particularly because by using a pedagogy of multiliteracies, the DCCCS and CCES can situate the learners at the core of literacy education and endeavor to connect all the educational events with the learners’ past, present, and future.

Given this coherence, I had a strong desire to introduce a pedagogy of multiliteracies into the Chinese educational field. I wanted to explore the ways in which primary English teachers in China came to understand and enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom in response to the changing literacy world and the new intended curriculum requirements. The assumption was that through recalibrating, situating, and actualizing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in their particular school settings, primary English teachers reexamined, deconstructed, constructed, and reconstructed personal ideology and personal practical knowledge of English literacy pedagogy adaptable to the new literacy world. Connelly and Clandinin (1985) describe teachers’ personal practical knowledge as “experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a user’s life” (p. 183). Either personal ideology and personal practical knowledge in this context was generated from teachers’ ongoing practices and reflections, and it also built on their previous experiences and perceptions. As the teachers’ personal ideology was reshaped and influenced by a cluster of new beliefs, perceptions, and values, they would adopt and construct new guidelines to direct behaviors and decision-making. The personal practical knowledge was not abstract but concrete, consisting of contextualized multi-techniques and skills that teachers rebuild based on idiosyncratic understanding and innovative trials and experiments.

Understanding English teachers who navigated the paradigm shift from a “didactic” literacy pedagogy that focused on transmitted knowledge, passivity, and compliance to a “reflexive” pedagogy of multiliteracies with the notion of “Design” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015) would be helpful for me when planning how to best support English teachers
through curriculum reforms. In particular, I noted the enablers, sustainers, and barriers encountered when engaging with situated practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Through exploring how teachers interpreted, adapted, and implemented the western-centric multiliteracies pedagogy in the Chinese context, I traced how human and nonhuman entities (Fenwick, 2010) came into play to influence teachers’ innovative process as they had been “living a tension-filled midst” (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010, p. 81).

1.3 The Significance of the Study

Given the significant role that teachers play as change agents in the midst of reform, it is critically important to understand their experiences in their professional knowledge landscape so that intentional and meaningful support for changes can be provided. This information will enrich the scholarly conversation on the theoretical and practical application of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in China and remind curriculum policymakers to consider the needs of teachers charged with implementing changes.

1.3.1 Contribution to Teachers’ Innovative Practices and Practical Knowledge of Multiliteracies

The practice-oriented findings of this study have the potential to inspire primary English teachers inside and outside China to shift from a didactic literacy pedagogy to a transformative literacy pedagogy and to construct new conceptions and models of English literacy education. The narratives of the participant teachers who practiced a pedagogy of multiliteracies offer rich examples for other teachers to reexamine the necessity and possibility of a paradigm shift to New Learning which advocates that “education is more than a discipline—It is an extraordinary interdisciplinary endeavor” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 6). The trajectories of reconstruction unravel the “waving” or “push and pull” moves from the first trial to the end that the participant teachers experienced, from which they observed what changes happened to the students as well as themselves and in what aspects. The changes at different levels described, pictured, and voiced by the participant teachers may move them while at the same time reassure them about the results of trying a new pedagogy as they have been used to testing-oriented
instructional approaches. These insights provide valuable reference for their future practices with a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

Significant implications for ways that teachers can cultivate elementary school students’ multiliteracies competence in the EFL classroom are produced by this study. Teachers can draw insights from the narratives of the participant teachers, the ways that they gradually achieved an understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies and integrated it into authentic classroom teaching practices, the problems or challenges they faced, the strategies they used, and the outcomes they produced. With the theoretical understanding of multiliteracies and multimodality and the practical knowledge of designing teaching and learning activities from multiliteracies perspectives, teachers will be able to better incorporate the concepts into their own practices. They may become more confident in their ability to create the space and opportunity for students to interact with multimodal, multicultural and multilingual texts and be able to better cope with the complex, real-life language environment in interdisciplinary knowledge and skills.

1.3.2 Contribution to Global and Local Discourses of Multiliteracies

Although there has been a great deal of research produced on multiliteracies in English speaking countries, the literature review has underscored the lack of research within the Chinese context. Kalantzis and Cope (2012b) assume that new learning would flow from the local to the global level and back again, suggesting that “if we can negotiate learner and contextual diversity at the local level, we can do it globally; and if we can do it globally, we will be able to do it better locally” (p. 9). I believe that a pedagogy of multiliteracies, as a product of New Learning Era, provides a good opportunity for elementary English teachers in China to experiment with a competency-oriented pedagogy consistent with the tenets of the DCCCS and CCES. It is of great value to describe and present how the participant teachers applied a pedagogy of multiliteracies as a competency-oriented, learner-centered pedagogy and decipher under what conditions a paradigm shift in English pedagogy initiates, develops and continues.

Furthermore, the study aims to raise Chinese teachers’ awareness of joining in global “dialogical discourse in which the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions
that lie behind argumentation are uncovered, examined, and debated” (White, 1988, as cited in Gieve, 1998, p. 125) when localizing the western-centric theory and pedagogy in their particular educational context. The pedagogy of English teaching and learning in China has been strongly influenced by and developed from western-centric discourse. To date, there are only two widely recognized academic books offering a systematic description of the pedagogy of elementary English teaching and learning in China (D. J. Wang & Lai, 2014; Q. Wang, 2013). The majority of the journal articles and books discuss specific instructional approaches or strategies, borrowing the frameworks and basic concepts from foreign theories. They make sense of them through on-going practice and connecting them with the particular Chinese sociocultural context, thus producing a personalized Chinese-style of discourse and instructional approaches. This study addresses either the “waving” trajectories of changes or the articulated interpretations of a pedagogy of multiliteracies derived from Chinese English teachers’ voiced experiences. The findings will construct the Chinese contextualized pedagogical discourse of multiliteracies from local examples and therefore contribute to a more globalized pedagogy of multiliteracies.

1.3.3 Contribution to Understanding Curriculum Reform in China

Few studies have been found to explore the trajectory of educational changes and the complexity of the landscape of innovative pedagogies through the lens of teachers’ lived experiences in China. As a critical narrative inquirer, I believe that it is of great necessity to foreground teachers’ voices and experiences within the micro and macro contexts of education and trace the factors and conditions that facilitate, sustain, impede, or constrain Chinese teachers’ innovative, transformative practices. The results of this study allow the curriculum specialists, educational researchers, policymakers, and school administrators to view the diverse, co-existing actor networks that involve the commonplaces, namely subject matter, learners, and milieus (Schwab, 1973), and how they are at play in teachers’ decision making and actualizing performance. This study will unravel what preparatory work needs to be done before promulgating a new curriculum and what negotiations are needed during the process of enacting policy curriculum reforms in order to negotiate and resolve the conflicts among the commonplaces.
Another reason that this study is special is that it situates a western theory within the Chinese English curriculum landscape where conflicts between globalization and localization co-exist and struggle for authorship in the educational reform discourse. This study also opens a door to China’s educational mechanism for global academics by storying and restorying how a pedagogy of multiliteracies is interpreted, recalibrated, contextualized, and enacted, and how Chinese teachers celebrate differences and pluralism and balance locality and globalization in the elementary English classroom.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 addresses the context in which the multiliteracies approach was generated, traces the paradigm shift from literacy to multiliteracies as well as from a didactic literacy pedagogy to a pedagogy of multiliteracies, and synthesizes the key arguments and research findings. Moreover, the chapter discusses questions raised from multiple perspectives relevant to the theoretical and empirical study of multiliteracies and the pedagogical models of multiliteracies. It concludes with a summary of the possible contributions of this study to the global and local discourse on multiliteracies.

Chapter 3 accounts for the theoretical and methodological frameworks that this study draws on, including a pedagogy of multiliteracies, internationalization of curriculum, narrative inquiry, and Actor Network Theory (ANT). It unravels the epistemological and ontological consideration underneath this study and discusses the relationship and compatibility of the hybrid theories and methodologies. Finally, the chapter justifies the study’s trustworthiness and fidelity.

Chapter 4 details the process used for the recruitment of prospective participant teachers and the specific methods undertaken for data collection. Data analysis focuses on the recursive rounds of narrative analysis, sorting out the codes, categories, subcategories, and themes emerged from the significant events. Networks and counter-networks that impact the teachers’ lived experiences are also mapped.
Chapter 5 discusses the particular educational context in which the study is situated, including the intended curriculum, the core competence discourse, and the changed assessment system.

Chapter 6 offers the multilayered narratives of the individual participant teachers, highlighting their changes, tensions, and contextualized practices at both ideological and practical levels. Various narratives and counter narratives are also examined, along with multimodal artifacts or writing samples either created by the teachers or the students.

Chapter 7 presents the results and discussions, exploring the trajectory, significant changes, and tensions that occurred before, during, and after the participant teachers’ journey to a new transformative pedagogy. This chapter is interwoven with my reflective, deep understanding of recalibrating and contextualizing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in a context where the western and Chinese discourses struggle, compete, and reach harmony.

Chapter 8 provides conclusions based on the discussion of research findings. The new discourse generated about a pedagogy of multiliteracies proves the value of this study and contributes to the global and local conversations of multiliteracies. The chapter raises important questions for further study in addition to articulate the potential implications with the purpose of extending the findings to similar contexts.
Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

Expecting to produce contributions to the theoretical and practical study of multiliteracies, I situated my research in the contexts of global literacy studies and China’s English literacy education. The following sections briefly map previous studies in the domain of multiliteracies and multiliteracies pedagogies, and then review the study of multiliteracies in China, from where the research questions and research significance of this study are located and generated.

2.1 A Changing Literacy World

New technologies influence all the aspects of working, community, and personal lifeworlds. The transmission of information is realized through variable means and modes of communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2006). Digital media platforms and social networks enable communication to cross cultural, community, and national boundaries, changing the nature of interpersonal and intrapersonal communications. Multimodal media reshape the way language used for communication and alter the features of textuality and semiotic systems. Literacy texts follow a unique functional grammar system of meaning-making; digital literacy produces an influx of hypermedia and “non-linear, discontinuous” (Cope & Kalantzis, p. 32) hypertexts such as webpages, blogs and wikis. As a result, meaning is not flattened but multilayered, conveyed through a variety of semiotic systems like visual images, pictures, gesture, and action (Heath, 1999; Kress & Leeuwen, 2001; Mills, 2006).

Globalization also changes the “semiotic landscape” (Kress, 2000). Differences in culture, geography, language, and ethnicity influence the linguistic features of the dominant language and generate a number of variants (Cope & Kalantzis, 2006, 2008; Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003; Marenbon, 1987; Mills, 2006). The “singular, canonical English” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5) is “broken into multiple increasingly differentiated ‘Englishes,’ marked by accent, national origin, subcultural style and professional or technical communities” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 197). Due to the internal divergence,
the dominant language becomes “a network of interrelated models” (Lo Biano, 2000, p. 93). The idea of maintaining the superiority or dominance of one single form of language, literature, or culture is infeasible and unrealistic. Instead, differences are respected and appreciated as the nature of this multicultural and multilingual world which is complex, plural, and globalized, with society valuing equality and participatory culture (Gee, 2004; Haythornthwaite, 2009; Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006).

In general, singular, monolingual, and monocultural communication environments are losing priority, and a globalised, multicultural, multilingual, and multimodal world is more privileged, particularly in communication. The new literacy era calls for an innovative definition of literacy that embraces and celebrates linguistic, social, and cultural differences.

2.2 Reconceptualizing Literacy Education: From Literacy to Multiliteracies

2.2.1 Social/Sociocultural Perspectives of Literacy

Early debates on literacy were mostly concerned with cognition and language development, drawing upon cognitive and psycholinguistic research outcomes. Considered as “an independent variable” (Street, 1993, p. 35) or “a decontextualized technology of representation” (Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1999, p. 83), literacy was basically a set of neutral literacy skills detached from where they were located (Adams, 1993; Liberman & Liberman, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Street, 1999; Street & Lefstein, 2007).

In the 1970s, researchers began to question the neutral aspect of literacy (Heath, 1999). They challenged the literacy thesis, namely the “great divide” between the literate and nonliterate (Goody, 1977; Olson, 1977; Scribner & Cole, 1978) and diverted attention from individual enlightenment and cultural development to understanding literacy as socially constituted practices within particular, diverse sociocultural contexts (Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1999; Street & Lefstein, 2007). The key argument was that
literacy was not skill acquisition, knowledge transmission, or a neutral set of skills rooted in the individual mind. Rather, it was a social practice located in everyday lived literacy events and practices and constructed through interactions between and within people, community, and society (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2001/2013; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Larson & Marsh, 2005; A. Luke & Freebody, 1999; Phal & Rowsell, 2005; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 2000).

Street (1984) creates two basal models of literacy: an autonomous model and an ideological model. An autonomous model assumes that literacy is a neutral, independent, and context-free set of competencies and skills that could be universally used in any context, at any time, and for any purpose, and its consequences on readers’ cognitive and social practices can be clearly traced and studied. In contrast, the ideological model suggests that ideology and culture are embedded in literacy. It takes an extreme sociocultural view of literacy, stressing the socialized process of meaning-making. Heath (1982) generates the term “literacy events” to name “any action sequence, involving one of more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role” (p. 386). Barton and Hamilton (2000) develop a social theory of literacy and use two core terms to describe literacy: literacy events (activities where literacy has a role) and literacy practices (what people do with literacy). They interpret literacy as a set of situated social practices best understood and inferred from observable social events and practices. Moreover, literacy is not static but “fluid, dynamic and changing as the lives and societies of which they are a part” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 13). Gee (2001/2013) creates the term “Discourse” with a capital “D” to stress both language as a linguistic system of patterns and as social languages and genres with social identities. He argues that children acquire genres, social languages, and cultural models through socioculturally situated practices.

Some researchers view literacy through a critical lens and associate literacy with power mediated through class, identity, gender, and belief, in social contexts such as classrooms, communities, and workplaces (Bloome, 1989; Gee, 1990; Heath, 1983; Kress, 1997; A. Luke & Freebody, 1999; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1999; Street, 1984,
Wagner (1999) highlights that “literacy encompasses a wide variety of attitudes, beliefs, and power relations between individuals and groups of individuals” (p. 1).

The key underpinning of these claims from a sociocultural perspective is that literacy is always situated, shaped, and constrained by complex sociocultural systems, including worldviews, social rules and norms, and social relations between people, within groups and communities—it varies constantly with the changing social and cultural contexts (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2012; Street, 1999; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013).

Therefore, moving toward multiliteracies requires an epistemological paradigm shift: Literacy is not comprised of neutral, mechanical skills, but rather situated in meaning-making in a multimodal digitalized literacy world.

2.2.2 Meanings of Multiliteracies

Educationalists and practitioners try to include and describe the full range of lived texts in the contemporary lifeworld. The term “mere literacy” (New London Group, 1996) that refers to a singular national form of language with a stable system is replaced by “literacies” (New London Group, 1996), a term used to describe varieties of representation (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1999; Wagner, 1999). Literacies become the “representational resources” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) of literacy such as film literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, and computer literacy.

New London Group (1996) creates the term “multiliteracies” to address “the multiplicity of communication channels and media and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 4) while Kalantzis and Cope (2005) highlight “the variability of meaning-making in different cultural, social or professional contexts” and “the nature of new communication technologies” (p. 23). Being interested in the multilingual and the multimodal dimensions of literacies, Cope and Kalantzis (2015) elaborate on the meaning of “multis”: “the ‘multi-’ of enormous and significant differences in contexts and patterns of communication, and the ‘multi-’ of multimodality” (p. 3). In this sense, contextualization, diversity, and multiplicity characterize multiliteracies, and the notion of literacy is broadened to encompass a wide range of knowledge, genres, registers, modes, skills, and behaviours (Anstèy & Bull, 2006; Mills, 2009).
2.2.3 Notions of a Multiliterate Person

Since the New London Group introduced the term “multiliteracies,” a large body of literature on multiliteracies has emerged (Callow, 2006; Cole & Pullen, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015; Gee, 2000; Hamston, 2006; Kress, 2000; Westby, 2010). The range of multiliteracies extends beyond the language and culture disciplines to science, numeracy, and emotional multiliteracies (Every & Young, 2002; Exley & A. Luke, 2010; Liau & Liah, 2003; Mills, 2009; Weinstein, 2006).

Academics have reformulated the notion of being literate to include the multiplicity of discourses (Anstèy & Bull, 2006; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Muspratt, A. Luke, & Freebody, 1997; Ryan & Anstèy, 2003). Gee (2000) emphasizes that a good reader is able to contextualize the school-based, academic forms of language and texts, think critically about the systems of power and injustice, and work collaboratively with a team. Anstèy and Bull (2006) define a multiliterate person as a flexible and strategic user of literacy practices and skills with a range of texts and technologies in a diverse world who can fully participate in life as “an active and informed citizen” (p. 23). According to Kalantzis, Cope, and Harvey (2003), a good learner displays “flexibility, autonomy, collaboration, problem-solving skills, broad knowledgeability, and diverse intelligence” (p. 23). Cope and Kalantzis (2009) characterize a multiliterate person as “an active designer of meaning, with a sensibility open to difference, change and innovation” (p. 175). To sum up, a multiliterate person is literate with multiple genres of texts and with multiple modes of presentation and is a successful problem solver with a repertoire of strategies or skills, critical thinking abilities, and effective collaborative skills to suit socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse contexts.

2.2.4 A Critical Understanding of Multiliteracies

Emphasizing multiplicity and diversity in changing cultural and linguistic contexts, the multiliteracies approach faces the challenge of developing a metalanguage, namely “a language for thinking about language, images, texts, or meaning-making interactions” (New London Group, 1996, p. 15) or a theory of communication and meaning-making in
various realms (Lo Bianco, 2000). To date, a number of researchers have explored metalanguages or functional grammars for describing the meaning-making dimensions of multimodal texts, including visual (Burton, 2006; Callow, 2006; Cloonan, 2011; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), gestural (Martinec, 1999), audio (van Leeuwen, 1999), and spatial (van Leeuwen, 2008) metalanguages in addition to general knowledge of multimodal metalanguage (Hull & Nelson 2005; Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2000; Kress, Jewitt, Ogborn, & Tsatsarelis, 2001; Macken-Horarik, 2009; Macken-Horarik, Love, & Unsworth, 2011; O’Brien, 2001; Stein, 2007; Unsworth, 2006).

However, Prain (1997) cautions that a paradox is embedded in the premise of metalanguages. On the one hand, the multiliteracies paradigm claims that language is constantly changing, and meaning-making is not governed by static rules; on the other hand, a metalanguage requires a comparatively stable functional grammar system or a semiotic system to describe and elaborate the formal aspects of texts and the constituent elements of meaning-making (Prain, 1997). A number of other researchers have also interrogated the formal analysis of the linguistic and multimodal elements (Pennycook, 1996; Reid, 1992; Richardson, 1993; Threadgold, 1994).

Some researchers argue that the increasing salience of multiliteracies may polarize locality and globalization (Mills, 2009). Researchers criticize that the selection of classical literatures with “formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language” (New London Group, 1996, p. 1) is value-laden (Anstèy & Bull, 2004; Durrant & Green 2000), depreciating the vernacular, multimedia texts, and mass literature as “inferior or [a] lesser form” (A. Luke, 2000, p. 85). Still, it is believed that removing any literary forms or language form from the literacy regime “disenfranchises many groups and negates valuable opportunities to meet children’s interests” (Mills, 2009, p. 106) because the use of multiliteracies highly recognizes the marginalized texts and literatures. Albright, Purohit, and Walsh (2006) worry that the overemphasis of informal languages and mass literature disrupts the connections between authentic, home literacies, and arbitrary school literacies. It follows that the multiliteracies approach needs to celebrate both local diversity and global connectedness and take a “syncretism” (Albright, Purohit, & Walsh, 2006) perspective to reexamine the local-global
connections. It also needs to consider students’ hybrid subjectivities (Albright, Purohit, & Walsh, 2006; Gregory & Williams, 2000) and reconsider how to link the local literate events and literacy practices to the broader social, cultural, and global contexts (Street, 1993, 2003).

### 2.3 Reconceptualizing Literacy Education: From a Didactic Literacy Pedagogy to a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

With a full understanding of the deficiencies and the obsolescence of traditional literacy pedagogy, Kalantzis and Cope (2000) warn:

> Education has reached a crisis point…the familiar territories of curriculum seem eerily irrelevant…What literacy teaching used to promise to do, we don’t seem to need any more; and even if it is of some use, some of the time, it’s certainly not enough. (p. 147)

Inspired by the “vision of meaningful success for all” (New London Group, 1996, p. 7), a pedagogy of multiliteracies endeavors to navigate the crisis through ubiquitously reflexive and transformative literacy practices.

#### 2.3.1 Studies of the Pedagogies of Multiliteracies

Since the New London Group introduced the term “multiliteracies,” a large array of literature on multiliteracies has been produced (Callow, 2006; Cole & Pullen, 2010; Gee, 2000; Hamston, 2006; Kress, 2000; Westby, 2010). The range of multiliteracies extends beyond the language and culture disciplines to science, numeracy, and emotional multiliteracies (Every & Young, 2002; Exley & A. Luke, 2010; Liau & Liah, 2003; Mills, 2009; Weinstein, 2006). Multiliteracies researchers propose to develop a metalanguage, namely “a language for thinking about language, images, texts, or meaning-making interactions” (New London Group, 1996, p. 15) and for describing the meaning-making dimensions of multimodal texts (Burton, 2006; Cloonan, 2011; Macken-Horarik, 2009; Unsworth, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2008).
The “narrowing” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) traditional literacy pedagogy stresses cognitive, linguistic, and academic competence based on the assumption that literacy is neutral and mechanically skill-based, detaching the learning process from the existing social and cultural contexts. Multiliteracies pedagogy, on the other hand, gives an immediate response to the demand of new literacy contexts, associating literacy education with work, community, and private lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015; New London Group, 1996). To make every student a multiliterate person who is “able to cope with changing times and changing literacies” (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p. 2) and who can easily function in a capitalist world requiring adaptability, speed, flexibility, multiskills, and innovation (Gee, 1994, 2000), multiliteracies pedagogy highlights that “learning is a matter of repertoire” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000, p. 124), a repertoire of skills, abilities, and literacy practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2011; Cumming-Povin & Sanford, 2015; Freebody & A. Luke 1990; Nixon, 2003; Skerrett, 2011; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). Gee (2000) creates the term “portfolio person” (p. 43) to describe a successful reader who has a flexibly rearrangeable repertoire of skill, experience, knowledge, and critical thinking ability. It is obvious that the traditional literacy pedagogy of “old basics” (Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003) fails to produce the portfolio person.

While traditional literacy pedagogy is inclined to monolingualism and monomodality, multiliteracies pedagogy “recognizes complexity, diversity, change and the reality of global connectedness” (Nakata, 2000, p. 119). Traditional literacy pedagogy privileges formal, classical, and standard forms of language and the mainstream culture (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Stevens, 2001). Agreeing that variant is the nature of contemporary language, multiliteracies pedagogy embraces “the multifarious, hybrid texts that are proliferating and ever changing” (Mills, 2009, p. 107), valuing the lived, vernacular languages and popular literature as equally important. Traditional literacy pedagogy favours standardization, homogeneity, docility, and hierarchy in class discourse, whereas multiliteracies pedagogy “highly recognizes minority and marginalized voices” (Rowsell, Kosnikb, & Beck, 2008, p. 112). Admitting that “classroom interactions are never neutral” (Cummins, 2009, p. 42), it incorporates differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, identity, and dialect. With the mission of “building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation” (New London Group, 1996, p. 1), it celebrates a pluralist
process of learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000) and advocates for democratic, hybrid, and equitable education (Cohen, 2001; Cummins, 2011; Fernsten, 2008; Kajee, 2011).

Identity construction and negotiation of identities are central in the pluralist process of learning, a distinctive feature that differentiates a pedagogy of multiliteracies from traditional literacy pedagogy. Multiliteracies pedagogy values language, dialect, and register as identity makers in addition to the subjectivity, voice, and agency of individual meaning-maker. It engages a learner in “a process of creating new persons—persons of self-made identity instead of received identity, and diverse identities rather than a singular national identity” (Kalantzis, Cope, & Harvey, 2003, p. 21). A learner’s subjectivity and agency depend on whether he or she understands how to negotiate multilayered identities in the meaning-making process.

The emphasis on transformation is another difference between multiliteracies pedagogy and traditional literacy pedagogy featured by memorization, understanding, reasoning, and passive compliance (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Giroux, 1983). Multiliteracies pedagogy instead creates the conditions for students to learn actively and critically, not as passive knowledge recipients but as active creators of knowledge and knowledge controllers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Doll, 1993; Kalantzis, 2006). Both teachers and students develop as designers through a set of “transformative transaction” (Doll, 1993, p. 136) with ongoing dialogues, inquiries, and self-reflexivity.

Doll (1993) finds that “closed systems transmit and transfer; open systems transform” (p. 57). Therefore, the open-ended multiliteracies pedagogy is more workable and functional to cultivate students’ multiliterate competencies. On the one hand, it addresses students’ agency and subjectivities in pedagogical activities, and on the other hand it foregrounds transforming students’ experiences and knowledge to satisfy the requirements of personal, civic, and workplace lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015; New London Group, 1996). However, as researchers claim, a pedagogy of multiliteracies was developed from traditional literacy pedagogy; therefore, both pedagogies will continue to coexist and impact each other in a range of contexts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996; Unsworth, 2002).
2.3.2 Models of Multiliteracies Pedagogy

There is no doubt that traditional literacy pedagogy must be extended and modified to embrace multimodality and multiliteracies in order to successfully engage students in multimodal textual practices in diverse contexts. Since 1996, academics have attempted to develop pedagogical models of multiliteracies for the classroom, including A. Luke and Freebody’s (1999) “Four Resources Model” (coder breaker, meaning maker, text user, and text critic), the New London Group’s (1996) pedagogy of multiliteracies (situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice), and Cope and Kalantzis’s (2009, 2015) Learning by Design [emphasis in original] (experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying).

2.3.2.1 Freebody and A. Luke’s Four Resources Model

Prior to New London Group, Freebody and A. Luke (1990) argue that successful readers perform four roles: code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst. They develop a “Four Resources Model” (“Model” hereinafter) in light of these roles. In 1999, they revise the Model into a normative description for identifying the range of required literary practices (Freebody & A. Luke, 1999).

In this new Model, the term “role” is redefined as a family of practices, in which “practices” highlights ongoing actions and dynamic changes, and “family” suggests the practices are relational (Freebody & A. Luke, 1999). The Model has four families of practices, with each family parallel to one literacy competence: code breaker (coding competence); meaning maker (semantic competence); text user (pragmatic competence); and text critic (critical competence). Each competence can be identified by students’ observable performance in a range of reading and writing activities.

Rowlands (2012) take the Four Resource Model as a scaffolding strategy to help the students develop flexible strategies for deciphering terminology.

### 2.3.2.2 New London Group’s Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Taking “an epistemology of pluralism” (p. 11) as the norm of pedagogy and with “the notion of pedagogy as Design” (p. 12), the New London Group (1996) develops a pedagogy of multiliteracies to account for literacy education in the multimedia and multimodal world.

The term “Design” refers to both the organizational structure (or morphology) and the process, including three elements: Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned. In the process of Design, meaning-making becomes “an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rules” (New London Group, 1996, p. 12). The Design of meaning can be analyzed and described by a flexible, open-ended metalanguage with a focus on the multiple forms of meaning and the orders of discourse in various realms (New London Group, 1996).

Multiliteracies is about what while a pedagogy of multiliteracies explores literacy education from the perspective of how, including four components:

- Situated Practice based on the world of learners’ Designed and Designing experiences;
- Overt Instruction through which students shape for themselves an explicit metalanguage of Design;
- Critical Framing, which relates meanings to their social contexts and purposes; and
- Transformed Practice in which students transfer and re-create Designs of meaning from one context to another. (New London Group, 1996, p. 21)

According to this framework, students can be motivated to engage in a variety of literacy practices. Drawing upon their previous background knowledge and experiences, students may immerse themselves in authentic and meaningful practices in order to acquire contextualized specific knowledge skills and experiences that can be applied in lifeworlds (situated practice). This process is referred to as “mastery in practice” (New London
Group, 1996, p. 21). Students may learn about the metalanguage with the teacher’s scaffolding on the key aspects and situate the acquired practices and knowledge in variable domains: historical, social, cultural, political, or ideological (overt instruction). They may reconstruct their own repertoire of knowledge and practices through critically analyzing, interpreting, deconstructing, and reconstructing (critical framing). Also, students may reexamine and reflect on what they have acquired and implement the knowledge and practices in new contexts (transform practice). According to New London Group (1996), “The key here is juxtaposition, integration, and living with tension” (p. 25). The four components of learning are parallel and related to each other in complex ways, neither sequenced in a linear hierarchy nor posited as stages. They may function simultaneously but with different strength of power.

2.3.2.3 Cope and Kalantzis’ Model of Learning by Design

To create “a more productive, relevant, innovative, creative, and even perhaps emancipatory pedagogy” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175), Cope and Kalantzis (2009, 2015) reframe and translate New London Group’s framework into four Knowledge Processes: experiencing (situated practice), conceptualizing (overt instruction), analyzing (critical framing), and applying (transformed practice). The Knowledge Processes are pedagogical moves and each large move contains two small moves: (1) Experiencing with experiencing the known and experiencing the new; (2) Conceptualizing with conceptualizing by naming and conceptualizing with theory; (3) Analyzing with analyzing functionally and analyzing critically; and (4) Applying with applying appropriately and applying creatively. Teachers can mix the moves flexibly and vary the sequence. They determine the next best move, depending on the students’ performance in each previous move (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015).

Cope and Kalantzis (2015) clearly state the epistemological stances of each move, constructing a map of “epistemological theory of learning” (p. 32). The process of Learning by Design goes with epistemological reflexivity rooted in the flexibility and mobility of Knowledge Processes, the relational Knowledge Processes, the connectedness between knowledge in-classroom and knowledge out-of-classroom, the reflection on the
modes of teaching practice, and the effective pedagogical choices adaptable to individual students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). The significance of reflexivity is to develop students’ “capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions” (New London Group, 1996, p. 67).

2.3.3 Empirical Studies of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies pedagogy has been attempted at different levels of schooling on a global scale (Giampapa, 2010; Healy, 2008; Levy, 2008; A. Luke, Dooley, & Woods, 2011; Marshall, Hayashi, & Yeung, 2012; Walters, 2010), focusing on a variety of literacies, including oral literacy (Enciso, 2011; Newman, 2005; Owodally, 2011), audio literacy (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009), spatial literacy (Pearce, 2008), information literacy (Beck & Fetherston, 2003; Hodgman, 2005; Moody, Justice, & Cabell, 2010), and the visual and performing arts (Ajayi, 2011; Barton & Unsworth, 2014; Burton, 2006; Callow, 2006; Danzak, 2011; Mason, 2004; Nixon & Comber, 2001; Noad, 2005; Ntelioglou, 2011; O’Brien, 2001). Additionally, school-based projects on new media literacy studies with a focus on multimodal texts have been done in Australia (Bruce, et. al, 2015; Cazden, 2000; Cloonan, 2015; Exley, 2007; Exley & A. Luke, 2010; Henderson, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; Mills, 2007a, 2007b, 2015; van Haren, 2015; Yelland, 2015), Brazil (MÓr, 2015), Canada (Hibbert, Ott, & Iannacci, 2015; Pirbhai-Illlich, Turner, & Austin, 2009), Malaysia (Pandian & Balraj, 2015; Sameul, 2002), China (Bin & Freebody, 2010), Singapore (Tan, 2008; Tan & Guo, 2014), and South Africa (Bond, 2000; Newfield & Stein, 2000). Some researchers have applied a pedagogy of multiliteracies in teacher education (Abrams, 2015; Arvanitis & Vitsilaki, 2015; Bull & Anstéy; 2010; Hood, 2015; Neville, 2015; Rowsell, Kosnikb, & Beck, 2008). Zammit (2011) suggests that even though not all multiliteracies projects are effective, the stories of success far outnumber the stories of failure. Cumming-Potvin (2007) observes four boys with low literacy performance in a primary school and asserts that a multiliteracies approach can “encourage agency in student learning across contexts” (p. 499). Rennie and Patterson (2010) conduct a survey on the computer literacy practices among 600 students and argue that digital media increases regional and urban youth engagement with reading activities.
A number of studies are situated in the ESL or ELL context (Burke & Hardware, 2015; Denzak, 2011; Kajee, 2011; Stein & Newfield, 2004; Unsworth, 2001, 2002; Unsworth & Bush, 2010). As a pedagogy of multiliteracies advocates an inclusive and pluralist education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), identities and cultural differences in the multiliteracies classroom are two important topics of these studies. As non-native speakers of English, many ESL or ELL students feel marginalized as lower performers or outsiders (Cummins, 2001, 2011; Fersten, 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2004; G. Li, 2012). Researchers argue that a mix of multiliteracies pedagogy and social networking sites can encourage ELLs to form positive writing identities (Ellison & Boyd, 2013; Hughes & Morrison, 2014), strengthen the construction of positive, literate identities (Black, 2009; G. Li, 2012; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009), increase successful communication through using multimodal representations (Cohen, 2011; Hughes & Morrison, 2014), and displace “the traditional power relations that an English-only and traditional text-based conception of literacy upholds” (Cohen, 2011, p. 236). Tan and McWilliam (2007) explore how multiliteracies pedagogy can accommodate traditional literacy pedagogies and find that making a systemic pedagogical shift within formal educational institutions was not easy. Ntelioglou (2011) examines the role of drama pedagogy in the ESL context and confirms that drama learning helps many students build their identities and improve their linguistic and social performances. North and Shelton (2014) report a one-student case study of how a group of U.S. teachers employ multiliteracies to design an English curriculum for a group of Chinese students. They use multimodal literacies and authentic texts from real life for reading, finding that this helped Chinese students feel more comfortable and motivated to use English to express authentic ideas and achieve rapid language development in writing competency.

2.3.4 Interrogations of Multiliteracies Pedagogy

The literature also identifies critiques of a pedagogy of multiliteracies (Hunter, 1991; Pennycook, 1996; Prain, 1993, 1995, 1997; Reid, 1992; Richardson, 1993). There are researchers concerned with the apparent stress on popular, vernacular, and multimedia texts over texts historically considered as quality literary texts (Callow, 2006; Hollingdale, 1995; Mackey, 2003; Mason, 2004; Newman, 2005; Walsh, 2006).

As for the pedagogy itself, Auerbach (2001) interrogates the compatibility of the four pedagogical moves based on irreconcilable ideological stances and cautions that unclear ideological statements might cause distortion or co-option, to which Cope and Kalantzis (2015) offer additional remarks. Cummins (2009) proposes separating the learning and teaching perspectives when discussing pedagogical implications and associating pedagogical moves to identity negotiation and social power relations. Leander and Boldt (2011) criticize how a pedagogy of multiliteracies devalues the notions, practices, and pedagogy developed from textual forms or grammar studies. Similarly, Mills (2009) expresses concerns about the “marginalization of conventional approach” (p. 104) given that multiliteracies researchers privilege new literacies. Researchers also raise doubts about the effects, necessity, and feasibility of including multiple modes of representation and genres of texts in the classroom (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Rowsell, Kosnikb, & Beck, 2008).

Additionally, researchers attend to the technological aspects of the pedagogy. Prain (1997) comments that the capacity for a “global” literacy educational discourse is problematic, and he questions the reality of realizing multiliteracies in classroom because it requires every student to use electronic media and become a “technicist code breaker” (p. 465). Ware (2008) and Warschauer (2007) also interrogate the benefit and the utilization of expensive technologies in classroom. However, Gladwell takes the concerns even further, stating that “technological problems…are the easiest part. The hard parts are the human problems that accompany the rise of technology” (as cited in Simon, 2011, p. 365).

The human dimensions of multiliteracies pedagogy have attracted increased interest. Some researchers worry that the implicit power relations inside and outside of schools will interfere with students’ equal access to multiliteracies, multiliteracies semiosis, and new technologies, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts or in low
socioeconomic areas (Luke, Dooley, & Woods, 2011; Mills, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Simon, 2011). Kress (2000) claims that the “Multiliteracies Project” needs to consider its feasibility, as it puts heavy demands on the communicative abilities of people who might not be capable enough to accomplish the creative practices. Leander and Boldt (2011) observe that a pedagogy of multiliteracies seldom addresses the students’ hidden resistance to the approach, which exists in classroom.

2.4 The Territory Open for Study

After reviewing the literature on the theoretical and empirical study of multiliteracies pedagogy, I found that none of the researchers situated their studies in the Chinese context of primary English education. Considering the current tension-filled Chinese educational context, this study sought an open multiliteracies pedagogy that could engage students in multimodal textual practice with hybridity and diversity. Simultaneously, it favoured a balanced pedagogy of multiliteracies in the Chinese context to accommodate the conflicts of interest in the multifaceted and often polarized learning community. As policy always has a strong influence in education at different levels, the enactment of multiliteracies pedagogy needs to adhere with the DCCCS and CCES as well as local administrative and school policies. Teachers may experience an epistemological collision between multiliteracies pedagogy which stresses multiplicity, hybridity, and transformation and the programmatic curriculum and the accountability system at the local level. This conflict “discourages teachers’ professional capacity, autonomy, imagination, and creativity” as a result of its “hard prescription” (Luke, Weir, & Woods, 2008, p. 34). Meanwhile, there also may be conflict between multiliteracies pedagogy that embraces students’ voices and the democratic spirit and the familiar instructional approach with its hidden hierarchical authority that reinforces homogeneity and similarities. The shortage of language environment demands that teachers create adequate authentic communicative opportunities that activate authentic expressions and the exchange of information inside the classroom. Despite the debates on multiliteracies and multiliteracies pedagogy, we need to admit that “the multimodal quality of texts is a reality of our fast-changing, globalized textual environment” (Mills, 2015, p. 107). Nevertheless, the use of multiliteracies pedagogy comes with its own set of challenges
that must be addressed. For instance, the use of vernacular language and multimedia texts may be problematic for elementary school students with a limited repertoire of English language knowledge and skills. Additionally, the lack of appropriate resources in China, including multimedia texts and real-life texts will be a barrier that may take some time to overcome. Finally, parents are likely to feel uncertain about a grade-based assessment that requires fewer assignments be done at home.

Moving to a multiliteracies pedagogy will no doubt cause tensions in the learning community. However, what exactly these tensions are and how teachers are coping with them has not received enough attention in previous empirical studies. Albeit a number of studies have questioned the applicability of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the actual classroom, the studies have failed to provide a holistic view of the contextual factors and their impact on teachers’ decision making, classroom activities, and approach to learning. The findings of this study not only provide practical implications for teachers and educators in similar educational contexts, but also enrich the overall theoretical and empirical study of multiliteracies. Through the lens of the unique Chinese context, this study has joined both the global and local scholarly conversation on multiliteracies.
Chapter 3

3 Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

How important is a theoretical framework for “messy” qualitative research? Theoretical frameworks are crucial, as they guide data collection and analysis, clarify ideas, unify research work, and justify the researcher’s role (Henstrand, 2006). According to Creswell (2009), a theoretical lens can guide researchers in identifying research questions and participants, recognizing the researcher’s position, and composing the final written accounts. A theoretical framework carries ontological and epistemological assumptions and affects all aspects of research. It provides broad theoretical guidelines and principles for designing and conducting the research process, for understanding the phenomenon under study, and for interpreting the data, discussing research findings and implications, and drawing conclusions.

This study contextualizes a western-centric pedagogy of multiliteracies within the elementary English curriculum landscape in China where implicit and explicit conflicts between “convergence” (Anderson-Levitt, 2008) and divergence co-exist. Theoretically and methodologically, this study marries narrative inquiry with Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Hibbert, Faden, Huda, DeLuca, Goldszmidt, & Seabrook, 2018) within the scholarship of multiliteracies and internationalization of curriculum.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 A Hybrid of Theories and Methodologies

Based on my research purposes and research questions, the overall theoretical framework of this study is constructed from a hybrid of theories and methodologies. A pedagogy of multiliteracies, internationalization of curriculum, narrative inquiry, and ANT all embrace the epistemological stance of multiple realities and celebrate multiplicity, hybridity, fluidity, temporality, and particularity. Therefore, a combination of these theories and methodologies will enable me to study the same phenomenon through different lenses, reinforcing the trustworthiness of the research findings.
The four theoretical and methodological pillars are relational and compatible. Narrative inquiry sets the basic ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions of the study, the methods used to study the teachers’ lived experiences in their professional landscapes, and the principles of justification for the validity of the research design and research findings. A pedagogy of multiliteracies provides the framework to describe and interpret teachers’ practices as a particular kind of learning—the process by which teachers develop personal ideology and practical knowledge. Given that teachers cannot live out stories independent of social, cultural, and political contexts and there are always “countervailing tendencies and oppositional practices” (Apple, 1982, p. 93) underpinning teachers’ practices, ANT enables me to capture, describe, and trace the material things that condition teachers’ learning practices from the study of participants’ insights and lived experiences. ANT offers a “symmetry” of human and nonhuman entities, drawing particular attention to “relatively neglected elements” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011) such as textbooks, schedules, equipment, paperwork, policies, and technologies. Viewing teachers’ narratives as “relational effects” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, emphasis in original) affords a better understanding of “materiality of practice” (Hibbert, et al., 2018, p. 515, emphasis in original) and contributes to the understanding of how teachers’ narratives are “constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). D. G. Smith’s (1999) classification of imaginary and facticity, Rizvi’s (2007) discussion of “situatedness” and A. Luke’s (2011) examination of recontextualization and recalibration within the literature of Internationalization of Curriculum require me to view the western-centric theory and pedagogy of multiliteracies in the Chinese context from critical and aesthetic perspectives.

3.1.2 A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Learning by Design

Since relevant research on a pedagogy of multiliteracies in primary English literacy education in China is scarce, this study can be of great value to introduce a pedagogy of multiliteracies to primary English teachers. They can use the framework to guide their own innovative practices, rebuild their personal ideology, and gain practical knowledge about a pedagogy of multiliteracies.
The key theoretical framework of this study is *Learning by Design* (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015). It stands out from other models and fits this study well in that it builds on New London Group’s (1996) foundational conceptual framework by offering simple, easy-to-understand language for teachers. In addition, its reflexive, transformative stances echo the philosophy and goals of the DCCCS and CCES, which were issued as guidelines for the new round of educational reform in China. Finally, *Learning by Design* has proven its practicability and applicability with significant empirical evidence from the global practices.

*Learning by Design* consists of four knowledge processes with a set of small pedagogical moves: experiencing (situated practice), conceptualizing (overt instruction), analyzing (critical framing), and applying (transformed practice). Comparatively, the knowledge processes of analyzing and applying are crucial in that they encourage students to creatively transform academic, disciplinary knowledge into real-life knowledge (Cape & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015) and empower students to engage in critical analyses of events, contexts, cultures, and the world, challenge the status quo, and make sense of what is meaningful for them (Kim & Slapac, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; A. Luke & Elkins, 2002). The relation across and between different pedagogical moves is not linear; rather, it is like “weaving” (Cazden, 2006; Exley & A. Luke, 2010) back and forth. *Learning by Design* advocates a “synesthesia” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) of pedagogical moves in which multiple modes of representation and knowledge processes are interrelated and integrated to form powerful learning.

*Learning by Design* asserts that Design is “an active, transformative process” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175), involving two agents but different “subjectivities” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2006) such as interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes. Teachers and students are co-designers of knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015) and create “participatory culture” (Jenkins, 2006). On the one hand, teachers are designers of activity types, ranges, sequences, assessments, and they determine the next steps based on students’ performance in previous knowledge processes. On the other hand, students are designers of what they like to learn, how they can learn, and how to present the outcomes at different knowledge processes. They have voices and develop greater control over their
own learning. In this sense, they shift from passive receptors or reproducers of the established and authoritative knowledge to proactive meaning makers and creative knowledge designers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015). Throughout the alternation and transaction between knowledge processes, the relationship between the teacher and students changes from an authoritative, hierarchical relationship to a fluid, flattened, and dialogic relationship. Through the collaborative decision-making process, students are highly engaged with their learning and develop greater control over learning. They shift from “passive receivers of preordained truth” (Doll, 1993, p. 8) to proactive knowledge creators, knowledge controllers and creative knowledge designers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Kalantzis, 2006). In general, a learner in the transformative pedagogy is “an active designer of meaning with a sensibility open to differences, change and innovation” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175).

Meanwhile, Cope and Kalantzis (2015) attribute Learning by Design to a “reflexive pedagogy” (p. 14). Teacher’s reflexivity is rooted in the flexibility and mobility of knowledge processes, the relational knowledge processes, the connectedness between knowledge in-classroom and knowledge out-of-classroom, their reflection on modes of teaching practice and effective pedagogical choices adaptable to individual students. As for students, reflexivity promotes their “capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions” (New London Group, 1996, p. 67).

Drawing on Learning by Design, this study places an emphasis on reflexivity and transformation. However, implementing Learning by Design in China needs to take an aesthetic “connoisseurship,” namely, “the art of appreciation” (Eisner, 1976, p. 141) towards Chinese educational traditions. It also needs to embrace the synesthesia of ideology, theory, and practices to adapt to the complex, rippling school landscapes impacted by the unstable national, local, and school policies (Lam, 2002, 2005; M. Li, 2007). For example, a pedagogy that celebrates multiplicity, diversity, and critical interrogation of the status quo epistemologically collides with the standardization-oriented accountability system with “hard prescription” (A. Luke, Weir, & Woods, 2008, p. 34). Again, the vernacular, real-life languages and multimedia texts contradict standard, official school literacies that privilege summative assessment. Potential risks
and challenges need to be controlled and minimized. For example, the varieties of texts and even the English language itself are demanding for Chinese primary students with limited English linguistic knowledge and language skills as well as little exposure to variants of English. The digitalized aspect of Learning by Design challenges English teachers and elementary students with limited informational and technological skills.

3.1.3 Internationalization of Curriculum

Recently, the idea of a global curriculum or the internationalization of education has been a key topic of discussion, particularly in higher education (Berry, 2014; Billingham, Gragg, & Bentley, 2013; Breit, Obijiofor, & Fitzgerald, 2013; Childress, 2009; Clifford & Montgomery, 2015; Knight, 2003, 2004; Leask, 2013; Robson, 2011; Schuerholz-Lehr, Caws, van Gyn, & Preece, 2007). Inspired by the notion that “western ideas had a powerful cultural allure” (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p. 356), global education has emerged as a way to modernize and empower education (Rizvi, 2007). Within the discourse of the internationalization of curriculum, this study explores the contextualization and recalibration of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the Chinese context, highlighting imaginary and facticity (D. G. Smith, 1999) in western-centric theory and pedagogy.

D. G. Smith (1999) develops two fundamental modalities for understanding globalization: imaginary and facticity. Globalization as imaginary refers to an assumption of universal form, hegemonic culture, or “a common vocabulary for curriculum and pedagogy” (Anderson-Levitt, p. 363). Globalization as facticity refers to planned, deliberate efforts to break down national and local identities through globalization, as well as the unconscious employment of “creative strategies of resistance and recombination” (D. G. Smith, 1999, p. 4) to globalization or “hidden resistance” (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1981) to the hegemonic languages, institutional and cultural narratives on a global scale.

Internationalization develops from globalization as the key strategic response to globalization in education (Leask, 2013; Maringe & Foskett, 2010). Internationalization is not neutral (Leask, 2008), but rather linked with social power, locally, nationally, and globally. The internationalization of curriculum privileges student-centred, inclusive
pedagogy “toward social justice and ecological sustainability” (Pinar, 2008, p. 502) and equal opportunities for ensuring success and better learning experience for all students as global citizens (Haigh, 2002; Leask, 2001, 2008; Robson, 2011). While valuing and preserving nation-states and “national patterns” (Anderson-Levitt, 2008), internationalization gives rise to possible tensions between globalization and localization and “reproduce[s] asymmetrical power relations” (Rizvi, 2007, p. 394). Therefore, educational reform should consider the “situatedness” and the “unique positionality” (Rizvi, 2007) of “pedagogical philosophies” (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p. 358). As “we are entering a new, eclectic, ‘post’ era” (Doll, 1993, p. 157), any type of transformation, extrapolation, and implementation of curriculum innovation should begin with critical recalibration and recontextualization instead of renormalizing and marginalizing national, regional and cultural traditions (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; A. Luke, 2011; Rizvi, 2007; Z. Zhang, 2015).

3.2 Research Methodology

This study falls into the interpretivist, social constructionism paradigm. Research finds that “ANT focuses not on what texts and other objects mean, but on what they do” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 3, emphasis in original). Therefore, ANT extends the social constructivist approach to unfold the dynamics of “how minute relations among objects forge connections and bring about the world” (p. 1).

Social constructivism makes sense of reality through human discourse and social relations. The general underpinning argument is that knowledge is in some sense ideological, political, and value-laden (Schwandt, 2000). Social constructivists believe that meaning-making is “socially determined” (James & Busher, 2009, p. 11), meaning any interpretation, implication, conclusion, theory or methodology is context-bounded, not decontextualized (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Additionally, social constructivists recognize that the truth is fluid and dynamic instead of fixed and static (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2014).
Epistemological awareness is “an important and informative part of the transparent research process” (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, J. Smith, & Hayes, 2009, p. 687) that avoids the study being “random, unintentionally intuitive, or nonsystematic” (p. 696). To unravel how the participant teachers proactively construct their knowledge of a pedagogy of multiliteracies and rebuild their identities as “multiliteracies” teachers, I employed narrative inquiry supplemented by the sociomaterial constructs of ANT. This study shares the ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances of narrative inquiry, exploring participant teachers’ lived experience in school landscapes.

Orlikowski (2007) argues, “[T]here is no social that is not materials, and no material that is not also social” (p. 1437). Taking tension and change events as entireties of interactional context, ANT offers me a relational network ontology to trace and understand every entity, human and nonhuman, that goes into teachers’ landscape to enact force on teachers’ practices and “examine its interactions with its social and material environment” (Bhatt & Roock, 2013, p. 5).

### 3.2.1 Narrative Inquiry

As a methodology drawn on a pragmatic ontology of experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), narrative inquiry studies lived and told stories that are personal, social, cultural, or institutional (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through living and telling, retelling and reliving stories, narrative inquirers and the participant jointly create and recreate their lives, communities, and the lifeworlds (Clandinnin, 2006; King, 2003). By studying an individual’s experience in the world, narrative inquirers “seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). Narrative inquiry is recognized as an effective teacher education approach to help student teachers construct their practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, 2000; Conle, 2000; Crag, 2006; Hogan, 1988; Miller, 2005; Phillion, 2005). It is also considered suitable for studying educational experience (Bruner, 2002; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Dunne, 2003; Lata & Kim, 2010).

As a “relational inquiry” (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010), narrative inquiry starts with relationship construction and engages in a process in which the participants’
and the researcher’s stories are reshaped into “collaborative stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12). Xu and Connelly (2010) argue that no valuable narratives or inquiries are guaranteed unless the researcher and the participants have built a trusting relationship. Such a relationship can be constructed through ongoing “negotiation of entry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) into the tension-filled school landscape.

Additionally, narrative inquiry is a process of acquiring identity and crafting sense of self (M. C. Clark & Rossiter, 2008; Gee, 2011; Murphy, 2010; Ritivoi, 2011). Identity construction through narrative inquiry builds a “multiplicity of self” (Striano, 2012, p. 149) that is culturally and socially situated. Through “mutual storytelling and restorying” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4), the participants construct and reconstruct social identities and create a new understanding of themselves (Dunlop, 1999). Meanwhile, while narrative inquirers listen to the participants’ stories, reflect with them, dive into their transformative experiences, construct variable meanings from their stories as “co-authors” (Ruth & Kenyon, 1996), and experience the ongoing “self-reflexivity” (Asher, 2010) of “joint production” (Chase, 2005), they reshape “the researcher identity” (Norton & Early, 2011).

Thinking narratively and critically, narrative inquirers fully recognize the complexity and multiplicity of lived experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Through “an interdisciplinary approach, from multiple perspectives and with multiple tools” (Striano, 2012, p. 148), they approach the participants’ lived experiences through restoried multivocal and multilayered stories. Narrative inquirers also recognize “the power of the particular for understanding experience” (p. 24) and the multiple meanings of a narrative, believing that the meaning-making process is subjectively and recursively analytical, interpretive, and reflexive (Patton, 2015) and that meaning-making itself is temporal and contextualized. Compared with quantitative research, the size of narrative inquiry is very small, but the purpose of narrative inquiry is to “understand rather than control and predict” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 30). Eisner (1998) argues that narrative inquiry is not for generalizing a single reality but rather used to open up new possibilities and questions for further inquiry. That is to say, the research process and findings are
uncontrolled and open to multiple variables, understandings, interpretations, and discussions.

Narrative inquirers understand and interpret the participants’ lived experiences from a sociocultural stance (Cladinin & Connelly, 2000). They locate the participants’ stories in the social, cultural and institutional contexts in which they are attended to and described instead of decontextualizing them (Moss, 2004). Critical narrative inquirers caution that various factors may shape the macro and micro interactions between the society, the participants, and the researchers where grand narratives conflict with counter-narratives that challenge the commonly accepted, mainstream discourse (Iannacci, 2007). There has been heated debate about the validity of narrative inquiry in terms of “truth,” “authenticity,” “fidelity,” “uncertainty,” “rationality,” and the approach being “personalistic and individually idiosyncratic” (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Barone, 2001; Casey, 2011; Conle, 2001; Coulter & M. L. Smith, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Doyle, 1997; Fenstermacher, 1997; Mayer, 2000; Olson & Craig, 2005; Philips, 1994, 1997; Xu & Connelly, 2010). Drawing on Habermas’ (1981/1984) validity claims, Conle (2000) translates the rationality of narratives into four scales: truthful representation, socially acceptable, factual contents, and comprehensible language. Some researchers suggest that stories are meaningful and trustworthy within the three-dimensional inquiry space of temporality, personal-social interactions, and place (Cladinin & Connelly, 2004; Cladinin, et al., 2010; Conle, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2010), strengthened by the concrete particularities of narratives (Chase, 2005; Cladinin, 2009; Cladinin, et al., 2010; Connelly & Cladinin, 1990) and the varied points of view and multiple voices in narrating (Coulter & M. L. Smith, 2009). As to the critique of chaos, M. C. Clark and Rossiter (2008) state that “coherence creates sense out of chaos by establishing connections between and among these experiences” (p. 62).

3.2.2 Actor Network Theory (ANT)

With both a “look up” and a “look down” approach, ANT closely examines phenomena, foregrounding the significance of materiality (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011; Law, 2004). ANT coins a language with specific vocabulary of terms to describe the elements of the
working system: actor, entity, effects, space, agency, network, materiality, translation, assemblage, negotiation, immutable mobiles, scale, and so forth (Callon, 1986; Hetherington & Law, 2000; Latour, 1987; Law, 1999). Proponents view ANT as “an array of practices” (Fenwick & Edwards, p. viii) or “a disparate set of tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis” (Law, 2007, p. 595) for approaching complexity in the world and its problems and for tracing the ways that things come together, act, persist or decline.

ANT treats human and nonhuman entities equally as actors, termed as “symmetry” (Latour, 1987). Nonhuman entities can be “everyday objects and parts of objects” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 2). ANT examines “all the elements that go to make up a heterogeneous network, whether these are elements are devices, natural forces, or social groups” (Law, 2012, p. 124). ANT de-centres humans and their cognition in exerting the agency to form links, assemble knowledge and realities, and bring about changes through negotiations between human and nonhuman entities (Corman & Barron, 2017; Fenwick, Nerland, & Jensen, 2011; Latour, 1992). Locating this working system in temporality, spatiality, and materiality dimensions (Dolwick, 2009), ANT proposes to “faithfully trace all of these negotiations and their effects” (Fenwick & Edwards, p. 3), although critics claim that this can be extremely difficult (Dolwick, 2009).

A body of research combining ANT with educational research has been created (Clarke, 2002; Fenwick, 2011; Fountain, 1999; Gough, 2004; Hamilton, 2009; Hunter & Swan, 2007; Landri, 2010; McGregor, 2004; Mulcahy, 2007; Nespor, 2011; Waltz, 2006). ANT assumes that when a new theory arrives and grounds in a new context, there are two forces working in juxtaposition: the force that homogenizes educational philosophies, values, and pedagogies, and the counterforce that tends to diversify and localize them to local cultures and patterns (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011). Such forces range over political-social-economic factors, such as educational policy, school culture, administration systems, assessment system, resources, personal philosophies, beliefs and values, and previous experiences. ANT observes the play of vigorous forces and presents both a dynamic and fluid power battlefield and “the nuances and ambivalences within this performance of power” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 13).
This study examined the participant teachers’ landscapes from an ANT perspective because “ANT’s network ontology is particularly useful for enabling rich analyses of contexts, which have become increasingly important in educational analyses of pedagogy, curriculum and educational change” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 6). ANT captures my attention on the role of nonhumans with unintentional agency and enables me to realize that within the messy complexities of a school landscape, filled with human actors, an infinite number of nonhuman actors with equal importance also created the realities that impacted the teachers’ experiences. It is valuable to explore these actors, as they often exerted force to order and govern teachers’ practices and emerged and retreated alternatively in the school landscape. Acknowledging the participant teachers’ enactment of a pedagogy of multiliteracies as “sociomaterial practices” (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006), this study employed ANT to highlight the nonhuman entities that exerted unintentional agency and generated relational effects throughout the teachers’ innovative implementation. Therefore, ANT in this study was not a rigid framework but “a sensibility, a way to sense and draw (nearer to) a phenomenon” (Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 1), which allowed me to understand the realities of teachers’ practices as well as the role of materiality in changes and tensions. However, this study leaves “open who or what the actor is” (Mol, 2002, p. 143).
Chapter 4

4 Research Methods

Qualitative research is often considered value-laden. One general potential threat to qualitative research validity is researcher bias, which results from selectivity and subjectivity (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Previous heated debates on and critiques of narrative inquiry have reminded me to be cautious when justifying the validity of my research. To improve the trustworthiness of this study, multiple methods of data collection and a wide range of data were used to maximize the coherence within the research findings.

4.1 Recruitment Process of Prospective Participants

Before the research began, with the approval of the Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) and two district educational bureaus in Beijing, I contacted the chief administrators in charge of elementary English teaching and learning in the target districts. We knew each other because they frequently invited me to conduct teaching training workshops and seminars for English teachers in their districts when I worked as a curriculum consultant and a teacher trainer. They welcomed me to conduct workshops in their districts not only because they recognized me as an educational expert but also because they encouraged teachers to learn about new theories and pedagogies of English teaching and learning.

When discussing the specific dates of workshops, one district could start from the second week of the new semester while the other was able to start from late March. Considering the schedule of data collection and the distance between the two districts, I finally selected one district as the site for the study.

The chief administrator helped me set a date and time when more teachers were available to attend the workshops because they usually taught at least three days a week. The chief administrator provided the poster advertising two free workshops (three hours each) on the topic of multiliteracies pedagogy as well as my personal contact information to all the
schools and teachers in their district. They also uploaded the recruitment poster on their website, including the research title, need for voluntary participants, and recruitment procedures. I expected that the schools and teachers would contact me and inquire about the research before the workshops and then I could invite them to join the workshops for more information on the research topic. However, I did not receive any response before the workshops. Although I did not know in advance who would attend or the number of individuals, I presented at the workshops as scheduled.

One elementary school where I worked as a curriculum expert allowed me to conduct the workshops in an auditorium equipped with a large screen and a projector. To my surprise, more than one hundred English teachers interested in the topic voluntarily participated in the workshops. Some of them only participated for one session, though, because they had classes to teach the other day.

The two successive workshops on a pedagogy of multiliteracies aimed to help the teachers: (1) develop a full understanding of the changing literacy world; (2) reconsider what literacy pedagogy is meaningful and significant in this increasingly diverse literacy world; (3) recognize the importance of shifting to a pedagogy of multiliteracies; and (4) understand the meaning of multiliteracies and the Learning by Design model with epistemological stances. The first session focused on the “why” and “what” of multiliteracies, whereas the second session discussed the “how”, namely a pedagogy of multiliteracies. In the last section of the second workshop, I introduced my research and invited teachers to participate voluntarily. I left the Letter of Information (LOI), written in English, on the table and said that they could take a copy to read at home when they left the workshop. I explained that they could either text me or talk to me on the phone if they decided to participate in the study.

On a voluntary basis, thirty-four English teachers from different elementary schools either texted me through WeChat (a social media platform widely used in China) or called me, expressing interest in participating in the study. Considering the time of transportation, the types of eligible teachers from the same school, and the rank of the school in the district based on the criteria set for this study, I selected nine participants
from three elementary public schools. The three schools were ranked as regular, good, and prestigious, based on the annual quality evaluation results of English teaching from successive reports provided by the district educational bureau. Each school had three types of teachers as participants: highly experienced (above 8 years), experienced (3-8 years), and inexperienced (below 3 years). One of the three teachers from the same school was the head of English Studies for her grade-level of teaching. Selecting different types of schools and teachers was assumed to strengthen the trustworthiness and justification of the research findings in addition to providing the opportunity to observe variations and commonalities in the teachers’ narratives.

Guided by the ethical requirements of the NMREB, I made an appointment with all three participants from the same school, considering their schedules. I met each group in a quiet meeting room at the school. When we met, I introduced my study in detail, answered their questions, and clarified any unclear points in the LOI. Although they were English teachers, I interpreted the content of the LOI in Chinese including the identity of the researcher (that was me), the purposes of the research, its foreseeable risks, its potential benefits, ways to ensure privacy and confidentiality, the authorized access to collect and use the data, the responsibilities of the participants, and the participant’s right to withdraw from the research at any time. I confirmed that I would request process consent when necessary during the research process. With a full understanding, all the participants signed the informed consent letter and provided their personal contact information (name, school, department, rank, years of teaching English, preferred methods of personal contact). Then, I created a WeChat group to include the teachers from the same school to facilitate regular communication.

The process of seeking consent from the participant teachers went as scheduled. However, three prospective participant teachers from one school (ranked as regular) decided to leave the study one week later after they signed the LOI. They told me that they were burdened with a heavy workload. Apart from teaching, they were required to take on extra management responsibilities, such as assisting the homeroom teacher in managing the class and preparing for two large school activities held that semester. They were also concerned with their constantly changing class timetable. They needed to set
aside one lesson for the foreign teacher every two weeks. Additionally, they often took part in school activities such as field trips, films or theatre, sports events, annual cultural festivals, teaching competitions, and teaching supervision. Therefore, they had to adjust their timetable or cancel lessons to coordinate these events. As a result, they could not guarantee that I could observe the scheduled lessons every week and collect enough data for the study.

Since every participant teacher had the right to retreat from the study at any time, I only had six participant teachers remaining and collected data from two sites: Xinxin School (ranked as prestigious) and Mingyue School (ranked as good) (See Table 1 for the profile of the six participant teachers). The three participant teachers from Xinxin School taught students at different grades, whereas the teachers from Minyue School taught students at the same grade but had different years of teaching experience.

### Table 1: Profile of Participant Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teachers/Rank</th>
<th>Highest Degree/Diploma</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xinxin School</td>
<td>Ms. Qin</td>
<td>MA in Applied Linguistics</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Yi</td>
<td>BA in English</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>English teacher / Head teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Hu</td>
<td>BA in Business English</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minyue School</td>
<td>Ms. Liu</td>
<td>BA in English</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Ma</td>
<td>BA in Translation (English)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>English teacher / Head teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Gao</td>
<td>BA in Business English</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the participants in my study were teachers and I would not be interviewing or observing students directly, I still sought informed consent from students and their parents in the participant teachers’ classes. This was important, as students could become part of the data in situations where the teacher’s activity was directly related to a student who was captured in videos and images, and the students’ artifacts of work produced from their lessons could be used as data. Only data from those students who had consented were used. The participant teachers from Xinxin School each selected two classes due to the time available for class observation. The participant teachers from Mingyue School selected one class.
Considering the feasibility of collecting the consent letters from the students and their parents (difficult due to the unstable school schedule, class size, and protecting parents’ contact information from disclosure), the participant teachers suggested that they help me collect the LOI with the consent letter for the parents and the assent letter for the students. The teachers suggested they could explain the research and the content documents to the students in class and parents via an online platform. Students who agreed to participate signed the assent letter in class. They gave each student a copy of the LOI to take home to let their parents read it and sign it at home. Meanwhile, they sent the parents a note about the study and the purpose of the LOI and consent letter. Parents who had questions could contact the participant teachers. My contact information (email) was clearly presented on the LOI; therefore, parents had access to me if they had any questions before they signed. Students brought the consent letter back to the teachers the next day (some turned in one or two days later).

Table 2: Results of Consent Letters (Xinxin School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Xinxin School</th>
<th>Number of Class</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Student Consent</th>
<th>Parental Consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participation (agreed)</td>
<td>Participation (disagreed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Qin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Yi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Results of Consent Letters (Minyue School)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minyue School</th>
<th>Number of Class</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Student Consent</th>
<th>Parental Consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participation (agreed)</td>
<td>Participation (disagreed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Liu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Gao</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total number of students from the two schools was 316 (See Table 2 and Table 3 for the number of signed consent letters). One unexpected result was that although 315 students signed the consent letter except for one student, 17 parents declined having their children videotaped or their children’s assignments used as data. 12 parents in one class from School 2 expressed their disapproval. When I asked the teacher about the possible reasons, she told me that it was likely because the parents had never had this kind of experience before and they did not trust her yet; she was a new teacher and had only taught their children for one semester. With all the consent letters returned and collected, I commenced the study. To exclude those students from being videotaped in class, I zoomed in and focused the camera on the teacher herself. I also paused the recording when they stood up and spoke. However, I took notes of their responses when necessary.

4.2 Data Collection

Locating this fieldwork study in public elementary school settings, I appeared in the field as a full participant observer, a co-designer of lessons, and a researcher. I switched my roles according to the context I was situated in. In the field as a full participant observer, I obtained a holistic and comprehensive view of teachers’ practices and the overall sociomaterial context from both emic and etic perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In the field as a co-designer of lessons, I contributed my experience and knowledge to the participant teachers’ explorative practices of situating Learning by Design in the Chinese elementary classrooms and honed their instructional strategies and skills, particularly the inexperienced teachers, which at the same time deepened my understanding of multiliteracies pedagogy. In the field as a researcher, I conducted multiple interviews and observations on site and gathered first-hand, rich descriptive research data to produce a solid, multilayered “thick description” (Geertz, 1987, p. 6) of teachers’ beliefs, values, knowledge, and behaviours. As a sensitive inquirer in the field, I could grasp the significant events and multilayered stories as well as the human and nonhuman entities that emerged and interplayed to act on teachers’ practices through a pedagogy of multiliteracies.
4.2.1 Phases of Data Collection

The raw data was collected in two phases. In Phase I, under my guidance and assistance, the participant teachers situated and practiced reflectively with the Learning by Design model in regular English classes. They kept weekly writing journals and joined in the group seminars to share their experiences. I provided theoretical support for the participant teachers when necessary. Meanwhile, I observed the classes, collected field texts, interviewed teachers, and transcribed the interviews. In Phase II, I composed the interim research texts based on the interviews, observations, and the collected field texts, and provided them to the participants for member-checking of the data accuracy gathered and to add their own interpretations, ideas, comments or reflections as co-constructers of the interim research texts, followed by a revision to incorporate the teachers’ feedback.

4.2.2 Relationship Building

The relationship building and negotiation of entry have been commonly seen as an ethical matter in qualitative inquiry and central to the creation of field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I had been in a close relationship with the two sites. Xinxin School was the experimental school that had participated in a six-year municipal research project on constructing an innovative, overall elementary English curriculum, which was hosted by the institute I worked for. When the project was completed in 2008, they appointed me as the curriculum consultant and supervisor to continue the experiment and develop it into a school-based English curriculum. Mingyue School invited me to supervise their English course as a curriculum consultant and teacher educator when the school was pressured to build a strong team of English teachers and improve the quality of English teaching and learning. This cooperative relationship lasted for nearly two years before I was enrolled into the PhD program.

Due to my special “expert” role in the field, an image that the participant teachers had been familiar with, I started the relationship building through de-authority. I made explicit the research purposes and my position not for evaluation but for a collaborative exploration of implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in elementary English.
education. I explained that the participant teachers and I were co-meaning-makers and co-researchers throughout the inquiry process. On the one hand, my previous close relationship with the two sites facilitated my ability to build a rapport with the participant teachers that was built on mutual trust and respect and to collect sufficiently valid and consistent data. On the other hand, the participant teachers considered the experience a valuable learning opportunity and my involvement motivated and sustained their innovative practices.

Due to ethical considerations, I kept on negotiating entry whenever it was necessary or required. I tried to make the participant teachers feel comfortable with the data-collection work instead of interrupting their daily routine or increasing their workload. Before collecting the data, I negotiated with them the details of the schedule, including the date and time of my first entry into the classroom, the position of the video recorder, the days of regular classroom observation, the interview time, method, and place available to them, and the time for collecting the field texts. It took nearly one hour to travel from Xinxin School to Minyue School. To accommodate this, I negotiated with the participant teachers to create a schedule of classroom observation and interviews, reaching the agreement that I went to Xinxin School every Monday and Thursday and Minyue School every Tuesday and Friday. If they were not available to finish the interview at school after class, we could set a date and time for the interview via WeChat. As to the field texts, out of the concern for their daily schedule, they would collect and give them to me whenever they were ready.

During the data collection period, I was particularly concerned about the teachers’ affective states, which I believed was crucial for building a rapport with the participant teachers. As a narrative inquirer, I should be “empathetic” (Josselson, 2007, p. 539) and “comfortable dealing with complex and painful emotions” (p. 546). I seized every opportunity to tell them how excited I was. I spared no effort in providing positive and constructive feedback on what I observed in classroom. Meanwhile, I tried to empathize with their particular situation. When a participant teacher hesitated to invite me to observe the lesson because she felt unprepared, I did not pressure her; rather, I reassured her that I could just come by another day instead. When a teacher was not in the mood to
be interviewed, I combined the two interviews in one week into one interview. Sometimes, when a teacher did not feel good about the lesson, I allowed her to vent her frustration to me. I let the conversation naturally flow, and then transitioned back to the interview questions when the teacher calmed down. I took it as a natural effect because there are always “up and down” moments when experimenting with and exploring a new pedagogy. When a teacher was stuck on an activity, I either raised questions to inspire her or shared my ideas, making an effort to facilitate their designing practices. I believed that a rapport between the researcher and the participant teachers was built on a full understanding of the teachers’ affects, which made them feel safe and free of anxiety, allowing them to be themselves.

4.3 Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection included observations, interviews, field texts, and journal writings. Field texts, including videos, audio recordings, field notes, memos, journals, photographs, artifacts, and student’s written assignments were collected as the raw data to capture concrete particularities and significant events for composing “the interim research texts” (Clandinin, et al., 2010, p. 85). The research data from a range of resources enabled me to do follow-up analysis, describe and interpret what was going on in the field with breadth and depth and “make the world visible in different ways” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4)

4.3.1 Classroom Observations and Field Texts

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the teachers’ life space, I conducted multilayered observations of the teachers’ practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom, attending to all the elements that exerted influence on the teachers’ practices and decision making.

Before the real observation began, I presented in the classes to get the students familiar with me and to make both the teacher and the students comfortable with my presence. The participant teachers helped me identify the times that I needed to present in the classroom because they knew the students better than me. On the first day, the teacher
simply introduced me as a teacher who would stay in the classroom to observe and videotape how the teacher taught English. I only stayed in each class twice with a video recorder positioned in one corner of the classroom, and the teachers told me that students behaved as usual and that they felt comfortable with my presence. I was told that some of the classes had many opportunities to do open classes because they were ranked as a class of high academic achievement. Therefore, they quickly got used to the changes in their classroom.

The observed classes were videotaped as part of the data resources to legitimize the inner trustworthiness of the data and analysis. According to “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” (2011 Version) (MOE, 2011b), the period of one class time is 40 minutes with two periods every week for grades 1 to 2 and three periods every week for grades 3 to 6. Within three months, or 12 weeks of data collection, I planned to observe two lessons each week with one individual teacher followed by an on-site or online interview for no more than half an hour after each lesson. That is to say, I expected to observe 24 lessons of each participant teacher with 144 periods of classroom observation in total. However, due to multiple different reasons, I did not meet that goal. Instead, the total number of observed lessons was 90 (See Table 4 for the list of observed periods of class time). Sickness, adjusted class time, cancelled lessons, quizzes, and holidays were the main reasons that decreased the number of the observed lessons.

**Table 4: Observed Periods of Class Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School &amp; Teachers</th>
<th>Xinxin School</th>
<th>Minyue School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. Qin</td>
<td>Ms. Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Periods of Class Time</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjusted class time</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cancelled lessons</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module tests</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holidays</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sickness</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparatively speaking, Xinxin School facilitated a more successful rate of data collection than Minyue School. Apart from sickness and holidays, teachers from the two schools cancelled classroom observations for a variety of reasons, including attending a school sports meeting or school singing competition, preparing for an open class, practicing for a teaching competition, assigning the lesson to a foreign teacher, or feeling unprepared to be observed on the scheduled day.

Table 4 shows that the participant teachers from Minyue School used over three lessons for module tests. They told me that as a matter of routine, they used two lessons to learn one module and four lessons to complete the module tests on every two modules. There were two primary reasons that they set aside so much class time for testing: to record the scores on the school reports as formative assessment results and because they believed that only when they explained the items in the test one by one could the students “grasp” the new knowledge and achieve high scores on the final examination. They held this view and followed the routine before they practiced a pedagogy of multiliteracies. On the contrary, the participant teachers at Xinxin School rarely spent time on tests during the three-month data collection period. When the mid-term examination occurred, they set one lesson aside and completed it without changing the schedule of observation. As a result, I observed more lessons and collected richer data at Xinxin School than at Xinyue School.

During the classroom observation, I used the observation sheet (See Figure 1) to record the activities, the mode of representation, the role of students, and the knowledge process that the activities involved. I wrote down the significant events that related to the research questions as well as my immediate responses or comments on the teacher’s practices. I also attended to the “particularity” (Chase, 2005, p. 661) such as the scene, time, settings, body language, attitudes, feelings, or freeze specific moments as well as my own feelings, comments, questions, and reflections in self-reflexive memos. These notes were the reference used to identify what I should transcribe as the interim research texts and what I should clarify, confirm, or go further into when I interviewed the teacher, exploring the process of decision making.
Figure 1: Classroom Observation Sheet for Capturing English Teachers’ Practices of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in Classroom.

I collected teachers’ lesson plans, artifacts, and student’s written assignments simultaneously as supplementary resources. The participant teachers wrote weekly journals on what, how, and why in regard to their practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in class as an independent type of interim research text. My plan was to collect the students’ work weekly; however, I found this was not feasible. I did not collect most of the students’ artifacts and work until the end of the data collection period. The first reason for this was that the majority of the observed lessons at the two sites were focused more on listening, speaking, and reading. The second reason was that it took nearly three weeks to complete one unit at Xinxin School, and students usually only were assigned one written assignment or one project in each unit; teachers at Minyue School rarely asked the students to do written assignments apart from the module tests due to limited class time. The third reason was that there was a policy of homework issued by the local educational bureau that strictly constrained the teachers from assigning homework to the students. In terms of teachers’ lesson plans, I found that both schools did not make clear, specific rules about them. In most cases, teachers simply
outlined the procedures and main activities, collected the materials, and created a PowerPoint deck to present the content, instructions, and multimodal texts.

4.3.2 Narrative Interviews

Chase (2005) calls for “a shift in understanding the nature of interview” (p. 660) in which the interviewer raises broad questions to “invite stories” (p. 661) and both the interviewee and researcher are narrators with stories to tell and a voice. This kind of storytelling is “a two-way process that is constantly in flux, in which individuals both construct and reconstruct their sense of reality through hearing, sharing, and telling stories” (Cooper & Hughes, 2015, p. 29). In this way, the narrator’s story is flexible, variable, and shaped by interaction; thus, it is a joint production of narrator and listener (Chase, 2005).

Multiple interviews functioned well in this study because of the disruptive day-to-day school time schedule and the intensive workload that each teacher had to navigate. The total time of interviews was 45.45 hours (2727 minutes), regularly varying between 15- and 30-minute sessions. Sometimes it was a long conversation, whereas other times it was short, depending on the stories that the teacher wanted to tell and the continuity of storytelling. The mid-term and the final interviews lasted longer, with the purpose of unfolding and exploring how the teachers understood and constructed their personal ideological and pedagogical knowledge of multiliteracies.

The site and time for interviewing were flexible. The site could be a classroom, a conference room, a library, or the teacher’s office. The time could be during class recesses, the lunch hour, or after the students left at the end of the school day. If we found no time for interviews during the workday, I negotiated with the teachers and interviewed them via WeChat. Three of the participant teachers were mothers and they often had to rush home to fulfill family obligations. The interviews with the teachers were mainly based on the records included with the classroom observation sheet. To ensure that the interviewed teachers fully understood the questions and were free of anxiety, clearly expressed their ideas and opinions, and felt comfortable to respond during the professional discussion, I used Chinese as the medium of communication throughout the interviewing process.
The conversation usually started with a broad, open question, such as “How did you feel today?” and then moved into the details. Details discussed included the purpose of the activity, the instructional strategy, the use of modes, the problems that emerged from the class and the possible reasons, the design of the procedure, the responses from the students, the assessment, the use of teaching aids, the new trials, or their prior teaching experience. As prompted by the teachers, I might respond to their questions as a helper, sharing my understanding of the text, expressing my point of view on the issue, contributing my ideas for lesson planning, offering suggestions for revising the activity, or recommending new resources. When I saw that they felt confused with a concept related to a pedagogy of multiliteracies, I asked the teachers questions as a director to activate their in-depth reflection on what they did, why they did it, and how they did in class. I might interpret or clarify the concept in my own words with examples as a co-constructor and invite them to make sense of it in their own words in their own particular context. I attended to their voice as well as their independence as a professional academic and encouraged them as a facilitator to think independently and critically from their own perspectives. I had no intention to teach them as an instructor. Instead, I facilitated them to bridge the abstract theory with their specific practices. I might reiterate the concept throughout the study when I observed that they tried it in class and create the space for them to transform the new knowledge through making connections between the concept and what they did previously or at present in the classroom.

I recognized the importance of avoiding and controlling any conflict of interest with the school and the teachers. When it emerged, I disclosed it, negotiated it, or removed it from the research when necessary. During the interviews, I did not merely confine the conversation to my study. Instead, I listened carefully to their excitement and joy as well as their complaints and frustration. If they felt what they were trying might collide with what their supervisor expected, particularly when the supervisor came to observe their classes, we analyzed and worked out compromises to readjust the lesson plan together. With over twenty years of work experience in the educational field, I completely understood the dilemmas that every teacher experienced while trying to reconcile administrative requirements with the classroom reality. After the interview started, if they wanted to discuss issues not closely related to my study, I usually kept the conversation
flowing naturally, going back and forth to the research topic at intervals. Sometimes, we even stopped and switched to the specific topics they were currently interested in.

4.4 Data Analysis

The narrative analysis in this study was used to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study from multiple perspectives. The participant teachers and I co-composed the interim research texts, the research texts, and the narratives. Additionally, we co-produced “the subjective interpretation of the content of text data” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

However, narratives cannot record all of the events. After completing the classroom observations and interviews and collecting the field texts (See Figure 2), I started to file the data. Narrative analysis in this study began with selecting, identifying, and highlighting the interim research texts with the codes determined from theoretical and methodological frameworks and eliminating those that were clearly redundant. The selection criteria for coding was “significant events” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11), including key events, key actions, critical events, turning points, and key decision points. Each code had its own unique categories and subcategories that structured the teachers’ lived experiences.

Figure 2: Process of Data Collection and Data Analysis

I watched and re-watched the videos, listened and re-listened to the audio recordings, read and re-read the teachers’ journals and students’ work until I could finalize the
significant events that emerged from all of the field texts. Significant events were identified recursively in three rounds (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Three-Round Recursive Analysis of Significant Events

The first round of analysis was concerned with the significant events related to personal ideology construction, personal practical knowledge construction, and self-identify construction that reemerged from the interim research texts and the teachers’ journals. The second round of analysis focused on changes, tensions, and recalibration and the contextualization of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. The third round of analysis examined the entities that conditioned the participant teachers’ practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies by scrutinizing the interim research texts for personal ideology construction, personal practical knowledge construction, and self-identify construction, with a particular focus on the entities that perpetuated, sustained, interrupted, or hindered the participant teachers’ new practices.

I filed the field texts with significant events into the interim research texts and included the video and audio transcripts translated from Chinese into English when necessary. To
add authenticity and trustworthiness to the narratives and to improve the reliability of the research findings, I uploaded the interim research texts of transcripts on OWL and sent links to the teachers separately for member-checking. The main purpose of this was to ensure that these transcripts accurately and fully captured what the teachers said in the interviews. Additionally, this process enabled me to delete anything that the teachers felt uncomfortable with including in my dissertation. Meanwhile, I attached my analysis of the codes and their categories that emerged from the significant events. The interim research texts were revised to include teachers’ feedback and were then finalized as research texts. Finally, I composed the research texts into Self or Other narratives and sent them to the teachers again for member-checking. I revised them when necessary and finalized the narratives that could be used as data for further analysis. Finally, I grouped the significant events into clusters of relevant meaning and into the emergent themes, codes, categories, and generated the research findings.

This study deliberately selected and presented snapshots of Self narratives and Other narratives, including the participants’ and my stories as well as social, cultural, and institutional stories (Clandinin, 2006). The teachers’ personal ideology of multiliteracies was represented through narratives of construction, deconstruction, and re-construction (Iannacci, 2007, p. 57), while the narratives related to the teachers’ personal practical knowledge of multiliteracies pedagogy were grouped under knowledge process narratives. The process of constructing personal ideology and the practical knowledge of multiliteracies pedagogy was embedded with a teacher’s reflexive reconceptualization of English teaching and learning and deliberate recalibration and contextualization rather than unquestioned borrowing from foreign theory and the pedagogy of literacy education. As to the change dimensions, the teachers’ self-identity construction process was storied into “unbecoming and becoming moments” (Fox & Allan, 2014, p. 101). Tensions were categorized into “competing stories which lived in dynamic but positive tensions with dominant stories of school and in conflicting stories which collided with dominant stories of school” (Clandinin et. al., 2011, p. 82).

Undoubtedly, there was power shift or struggle underneath the changes and tensions. Recognizing the significant events of tensions and changes as the effects of the
negotiations between different entities, I observed and described “what happens when entities, human and nonhuman, come together and connect, changing one other to form links” (as cited in Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 4). I traced both human and nonhuman entities that occurred and reoccurred throughout the participant teachers’ ongoing practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. I conducted the analysis case by case, following similar steps: I marked the entities occurring in the interim research texts and traced their functions in the deconstruction-construction-reconstruction process of personal ideology, practical knowledge, and self-identify. I marked all entities with either “F” (force) or “CF” (counter-force) for each significant event and identified their relationship to the generated tensions and changes. I examined the assemblages of the actors in metanarratives and counter-narratives of individual participant teacher, addressing moments of translation (Callon, 1986) to “describe what happens when entities, human and nonhuman, come together and connect, changing one other to form links” (as cited in Fenwick & Edwards, 2011, p. 4). Based on the results of individual case analysis, I adopted a holistic view of the six participant teachers’ professional landscapes and mapped the process of the network working system: how different actors gathered together as forces, sustained together, assembled a relational network or counter-network, shaped and developed strength, executed and negotiated power, and finally generated tensions or brought about changes through which a more specific portrait of the teachers’ changes and tensions was revealed.

The conflicts and struggles behind the network working system foster the interrogation of dominant, hegemonic cultures, and institutional narratives on a global scale. Enlightened by D. G. Smith’s (1999) modalities model of imaginary and facticity, the interpretation highlighted the teachers’ “creolization and resistance” (Anderson-Levitt, 2008, p. 359) to the introduced, borrowed pedagogies from the western educational field within the scope of the internationalization of curriculum.

Narrative interpretation in this study adopted a holistic, analytical strategy (Spector-Mersel, 2010) drawn from the three dimensional inquiry space of narrative structure, namely, temporality (past-present-future), the interactions (personal-social), and the situation/place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in which narratives were positioned in the
macro interactions in larger society and the micro interactions between participants. It referred to macro interactions addressed the teachers’ life spaces and curriculum internationalization discourse while the micro interactions referred to the teachers’ life spaces and national and local education systems in this study.

4.5 Trustworthiness and Fidelity

As previously mentioned, a potential threat to qualitative research fidelity is researcher bias, which results from selectivity and subjectivity (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Drawing on Chase (2005), Iannacci (2007), and Johnson and Christensen (2014), I adopted a variety of strategies to minimize the potential impact of research bias on my research findings. I decreased the researcher bias as much as possible by “fully disclosing the subjectivity of the research process” (Iannacci, 2007, p. 57). During the research process, I selected the participants, the things to be observed, the questions to ask, and the phenomena and codes to be studied. The omissions and filters of significant events noted down in my memos and field notes were defined based on my own criteria. When composing the interim research texts and interpreting the narratives, I brought my values, experiences, and knowledge into the process. I understood that it was inevitable that my presence in the field influenced the teachers’ performance and my personal stances, biases, and filters were present during the process of co-creating the narratives and influenced the interpretation of meanings. I admitted that all of the above threatened the credibility of the research.

Admitting the limitations of narrative inquiry, I structured and presented the narrative writings and interpretation with enough attention to relevant details and particularities through multiple lenses and multiple voices to avoid “authorial surplus” (M. Smith, 2009). I strategically presented the chosen narratives with “authenticity” (Rosen, 1988) or “narrative truth” (Spence, 1982), using place, time, plot, scene and pictured details to appeal to emotions, familiarities, or trustworthiness and gave a place for the voice of each participant through the narrative strategy of “multiple I’s” (Chase, 2005). Moreover, I positioned myself as a co-participant, retelling and reliving the teachers’ stories as if I was “experiencing experience” (Xu & Connelly, 2010, p. 354) to reinforce the
descriptive and interpretive fidelity. I ensured that particularities, multiple lenses, and multiple voices worked together to create wholeness, consistency, and coherence, as well as authentic and trustworthy narratives (Chase, 2005), but I also recognized that too many details might negatively affect the wholeness.

To improve the trustworthiness, multiple methods of data collection and a wide range of data maximized the coherence of the research findings. To ensure the information was sufficiently trustworthy for the research findings, I kept writing memos from the first “open coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12) until the end of data collection. Additionally, I engaged in the meaning-making process through constant dialogic interactions with the participants throughout the inquiry process. As member-checking is considered one of “the most significant methods within qualitative research for establishing or strengthening the credibility of a study” (Doyle, 2007, p. 889), I employed it to ensure that the participants agreed with my analysis of the research texts and acknowledged the analytical interpretations were “reasonable representations of their realities and experiences” (Doyle, 2007, p. 889). The trustworthiness was strengthened as the participants acted as co-constructors of narratives and co-meaning makers of the field texts created by themselves and their students. I approached each chosen narrative as “a whole unit” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p 214) and interpreted it through “analytic-interpretive process” (Iannacci, 2007, p. 59). I frequently made transparent the decisions I made and the roots of my interpretation alongside my findings. Moreover, I constructed, negotiated, and interpreted the meaning of narratives through constant dialogic interactions with the participants throughout the inquiry process.

The final strategy I employed was a balanced ethical perspective. Recognizing that the teachers were “not just as data sources but […] human beings with their own distinctive individuality and autonomy” (Smythe & Murray, 2000, p. 317) evoked more trustworthy stories. I sought “process consent” (Smythe & Murray, 2000, p. 320, italics in original) to increase the accuracy and fidelity of the data and to ensure the continuity of data collection.
Chapter 5

5 Landscape of Elementary English Education in China

Hu and Adamson (2012) argue that “Social ideologies have played a decisive role in educational systems” (p. 2). Curriculum policy change and curriculum reforms in China have been closely associated with national science-technology-economy development, civic quality, moral education, cultural understanding, and global status (Dai, 2010; W. Z. Hu, 2009; F. Q. Huang, 2004; J. F. Liu, 2013; J. J. Wang, 2012; Q. Zhong, 2003). Overall, curriculum policy change is a social construct far beyond the boundary of the educational system and curriculum change is the product of curriculum policy change (Q. Q. Zhong & Tu, 2013).

5.1 A Booming English Education in China

Compared to other English-speaking countries, English education in China has a relatively shorter history, particularly in terms of elementary education. English education in China has experienced burgeoning development since 1978. According to Chinese curriculum specialist Professor Qiang Wang (2007a), English educational development has experienced four historical stages since 1978: the restoration phase (1978-1985); the rapid development phase (1986-1992); the reform phase (1993-2000); and the innovation phase (since 2000). Based on her framework, I have added a fifth phase (2010 onwards): “the reconstruction phase.” During this phase, English curriculum has moved into a stage of reconceptualizing all the elements of English curriculum, including goals and aims, curriculum content, curriculum structure, and curriculum assessment within the frameworks of national curriculum policies (Gao, 2018; Pan, 2016; K. L. Zhao & J. Zhang, 2018).

In China, English education has been highly recognized by the government, the public, and the schools (D. Y. Hu, 1999; Nunan, 2001, 2003; Q. Wang, 2011, 2013; X. Wu, 2011). It has become increasingly important since the “Opening Door” policy was enacted in 1978, when overseas companies swiftly relocated to Mainland China and
increased the demand for bilingual employees. From the early 1990s, rising economic development accelerated China’s globalization process, and the country began to adopt a more international stance (Lam, 2002; J. F. Liu, 2013; S. J. Zhang, 2010) to cater to the demands of the international stage. English education reached its peak between 2000 and 2010 due to three milestone issues: China’s entry into the WTO, the successful bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, and the Shanghai 2010 World Exposition. Along with the government-initiated nationwide foreign languages learning campaign from 2001-2010, English gradually became the most popularly learned foreign language in China, the most important foreign language to further China in the global community, and the only foreign language designated as a compulsory subject in national curriculum systems throughout primary, secondary, and higher education.

5.2 Curriculum Development of Primary English Education

In retrospect, there was no unified standardized curriculum but only a syllabus available before 2001 (Q. Wang, 2007a). The 1978 syllabus was the first unified syllabus that designated English as a compulsory subject in primary education, allowing two beginning levels, from either primary grade three or junior high school grade one. Lacking sufficient qualified English teachers, the actual offering of English in almost all the schools began from junior high school (Q. Wang, 2007a). The objectives of the syllabus were restricted to the cognitive domain, stressing basic language knowledge, including phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and basic language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. There was only one unified English textbook series published by the People’s Education Press in 1978, and the pedagogy was a blend of audiolingualism for oral drilling the patterned sentences in dialogues and grammar-translation for reading texts (R. Hu & Adamson, 2012; Q. Wang, 2007a).

2001 was a benchmark year in the history of primary English curriculum development. With a deep concern about the quality of English education and new challenges at the turn of the century, the Chinese government decided to “revive school curriculum” (Q. Wang, 2007a, p. 93). In January, the Chinese government disseminated The Ministry of Education Guidelines for Vigorously Promoting the Teaching of English in Primary
Schools, proclaiming that “education should be oriented to the needs of the modernization, the globalization, and the future” (教育要面向现代化，面向世界，面向未来’) (MOE, 2001a). These guidelines stipulated that offering English courses in primary schools was a crucial component of national curriculum reform in the twenty-first century. English regained a legitimate position as a national compulsory subject in primary education. The MOE supported all primary schools to set up English courses from grade three, first in cities and counties, and then gradually in towns and villages (2001a).

Corresponding to the MOE’s new policy, the National Center for School Curriculum and Textbook Development (NCSCTD), under the MOE, issued the first intended, unified curriculum standards in 2001: “The English Curriculum Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education and Senior High Schools” (Trial Version) (MOE, 2001b). This document sketches an overall and comprehensive curriculum framework, including ideologies, goals, leveled standards, assessment, and operational guidelines for primary and secondary education and emphasizes quality education, student creativity, and practical language abilities (Q. Wang, 2007a).

A new round of English curriculum reform was initiated in 2010 when the MOE published The Outline (2010-2020), a landmark document in China’s educational reform. Correspondingly, considering the regional differences and the equality of education, the NCSCTD made some minor revisions in the Trial Version to make it more operational in terms of graded requirements, assessment devices, and demo lesson plans (Q. Wang, 2013) and enacted “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” (2011 Version) (MOE, 2011b) in the same year. This version is the latest English curriculum standards applicable for both elementary and junior high schools to date.

“The English Curriculum Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education” (2011 version) sets “overall ability in language use” (综合语言运用能力’) as the key goal of English curriculum, including language knowledge, language skills, learning strategies, affect and attitudes, and cultural awareness (MOE, 2011b). It defines that English curriculum has dual nature of instrumentalism and humanism.
In terms of instrumentalism,

English curriculum is accountable for developing students’ fundamental English competencies and thinking capacities. In other words, students are enabled to master basic English language, develop the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, cultivate the basic abilities of communication with people, and promote thinking abilities, all of which lays the base for continuing the learning of English and other relevant knowledge of science and culture through learning English (‘英语学科承担着培养学生基本英语素养和发展学生思维能力的任务. 即学生通过英语课程掌握基本的英语语言知识，发展基本的英语听、说、读、写技能，初步形成用英语与他人交流的能力，进一步促进思维能力的发展，为今后继续学习英语和用英语学习其他相关科学文化知识奠定基础’). (MOE, 2011b, p. 2)

In terms of humanism,

English curriculum is responsible for developing students’ comprehensive human competencies, in other words, students can broaden visions, enrich life experience, develop cross-cultural awareness, reinforce spirit of patriotism, cultivate innovative capacities, and form good characters, right living, and social values. (‘英语课程承担着提高学综合人文素养的任务，即学生通过英语课程能够开阔视野，丰富生活经历，形成跨文化意识，增强爱国主义精神，发展创新能力，形成良好的品格和正确的人生观与价值观’). (MOE, 2011b, p. 2)

It encourages a combination of instructional approaches with a focus on communicative competence and student-centeredness such as Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) and celebrates both formative assessment and summative assessment. Information technology, for the first time, is highly recognized as a means to expand and enrich teaching resources. The MOE encourages educational publishers to bid for the national textbook projects, conceding that different areas may use different textbooks from the approved list issued by the National Center for School Curriculum and Textbook Development (NCSCTD).
As Eisner (2002) argues, “the public school curriculum seldom reflects a pure form of any single ideological position” (p. 52). To deepen and promote the ideologies embedded in the 2001 Trial Version, the 2011 Version foregrounds the value system of moral characters, social adaptability, quality of citizenship, as well as scientific, innovative and cross-cultural talents (MOE, 2011; Q. Wang, 2013). The key ideologies, including whole-person development, learner-centeredness, active learning, humanistic qualities, meaningful and authentic language environment, and multilayered assessment (Q. Wang, 2013) are embedded in the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. This version of curriculum marks an ideological shift to the “whole child” (Eisner, 2002, p. 71), one who is seen as “a social and emotional creature, not only as an academic or intellectual one” (Eisner, 2002, p. 71).

“The Framework of Developing Core Competencies of Chinese Students” (DCCCS) sets the task of education as developing morality and cultivating the students. It rethinks two basic questions of education in a new context: What kind of talents are we going to develop? And how? The framework regulates the goal of education as becoming a well-rounded person who possesses six core competencies: learning to learn and healthy life under the category autonomous development, humanities heritage and scientific spirit under the category cultural foundation, and responsibility and accountability and practice and innovation under the category social participation. It serves as a guideline for curriculum system design, classroom teaching practice, educational assessment and learning goals. However, similar to any educational policy, its implementation is largely constrained by social, political, economic, and educational policies at national, provincial, municipal, district, and school levels (Gu, 2012).

5.3 Tensions in English Literacy in Primary Education: Problems and Challenges

Problems always align with challenges in educational reform. Kalantzis and Cope (2012b) contend that new learning calls for deliberative changes in eight dimensions: the social significance of education, the institutional locations of learning, the tools of learning, the outcomes of learning, the balance of agency, the significance of learner
differences, the relation of the new knowledge to the old, and the professional role of the teacher. At the start of the 21st century, English literacy in elementary education in China has achieved remarkable success in the equity of educational opportunities, ensuring every child has the equal right to study at school, as well as in the study of curriculum development (R. Hu & Adamson, 2012; Q. Wang, 2007a, 2013). However, taking into account Kalantzis and Cope’s (2012) dimensional model as the conceptual framework of reflection on curriculum reform, the literature on English education, and my own previous professional and research experiences with local schools and teachers in China, it is clear there remains significant issues and challenges to be addressed.

The 2011 version of “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” states that “English curriculum that unifies instrumentalism and humanism contributes to a basis for students’ lifelong development” (工具性和人文性统一的英语课程有利于为学生的终身发展奠定基础) (MOE, 2011b, p. 2). The emphasis on developing learners’ humanistic characters through learning English echoes the DCCCS in that they both pinpoint cultural and cross-cultural awareness as the basic competencies. However, pedagogical activities suggested in English textbooks fail to direct students to compare and contrast different cultures and cultivate personal cultural values.

Meanwhile, some researchers express concern about the overemphasis of instrumental quality over humanist quality in English education in a variety of theoretical and practical discussions in recent journal articles (Cai, 2017; Cheng & S. Q. Zhao, 2016). Han (2010) finds that “generally, most English teachers merely view the communicative function of language and its instrumentalism and neglect its cognitive, sociocultural and biological attributes” (‘大多数英语教师一般只看到语言的交际功能, 语言的工具属性, 忽视了语言的认知、社会文化和生物属性’) (p. 300). The standardized testing system has an arbitrary impact on English teachers’ decision-making processes (Dong, 2003; Du, 2010; Fu, 2006; Han, 2010; Q. Wang, 2011; X. Wu, 2011). To ensure high effectiveness and efficiencies, many teachers still address textbook-based knowledge and academic literacy skills related to standardized tests, frequently minimizing the opportunity to engage students in critical thinking on the social, cultural, and ideological differences within texts. To a larger extent, English literacy is still treated as a neutral, skill-based practice (Street,
1984, 1999), detached from the social and cultural contexts where it is located. It is important to explore new pedagogies of English teaching and learning to integrate instrumentalism with humanism in course design and instructional approaches (M. Cao, 2011; Hao, 2017; Qi, 2017; Wang, 2012).

The neutral concept of literacy (Street, 1984) has had a strong and lasting influence on generations of English teachers and students in China. English learning in primary education has been basically decontextualized from the authentic purposes. Students learn English as a school course in the EFL context with limited exposure to authentic English that native people use and limited opportunities to use English for authentic, real-life communication (D. L. Zhang, 2012). Real-life English out of the site of school learning, namely, the language used for communication in English-speaking countries, has variants with variable genres, but English textbooks used in formal schooling still privilege texts with “single, official or standard forms of language” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015, p. 1) and therefore they are “boring, rigid, and drab” (‘枯燥、死板、不鲜活’) (Han, 2010, p. 301). The closed, mono-site of English learning at school restricts students’ access to the lived, varied Englishes with varied modes in varied contexts. The majority of the imported original children’s literature or videos from English-speaking countries are detached from the context that Chinese students are living in and exclude the experiences they are familiar with. The limited availability and accessibility of grade-adequate, authentic literacy resources also constrains primary English literacy teaching (Hu, 2007; M. Li, 2007; D. B. Zhang, 2012). In short, prior approaches toward official and standard language, monomodal texts, and textbook-based learning has detached literacy education from its authentic, diverse cultural and social contexts with varied meaning-making semiotic systems.

To a larger extent, English literacy pedagogy in the Chinese classroom context reinforces “a regime of stability and uniformity” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 175). One-size-for-all instructional models still dominate most of the classrooms for efficient instruction in large-sized classes. Learner differences are rarely considered in the process of lesson planning and assessment designing out of the concern for class time. As a result, students who do not fit the norm of standards are likely to be excluded from participating in
pedagogical activities in the classroom. Kalantzis and Cope (2012a) argue that “we need customized learning aimed at equivalent or comparable, but not necessarily the same, outcomes” (p. 89). This means schools must create high-quality education that meets students’ different needs, interests, and abilities. This idea echoes the United Nations’ (2010) declaration that every child has the right to an education that develops “the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (Article 29). New curriculum reform argues for empowering the learner’s agency and subjectivities in the process of learning and positions the learner as a co-designer with autonomy and the right expressing their individual voice. A successful narrative of educational reform must at the same time equally consider the meaningful success of every student rather than only the elite (New London Group, 1996).

Historically, primary English literacy education in China has been examination-oriented. Although formative assessment’s equal importance has been officially stated in “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” (2011 Version), scholars argue that summative assessment still dominates and assessment has become a prominent and urgent topic in the new round of curriculum reform (Y. J. Cao, 2016; Hu, 2017; Luo & Li, 2017; Xia, 2017; Yao, 2017; Yin, 2017; L. L. Zheng, 2017; Y. Zheng, 2017; Zhu, 2017). To achieve the goal of equality and equity of education in nine-year compulsory education, that is, to ensure every child recruited into the regulated secondary schools in the district share equal educational resources of high-quality rather than being ranked by their academic achievement through unified standardized tests, the Chinese MOE issued the “Nearby Enrollment Policy” for nine-year compulsory education in 2014. The policy requires that 19 large cities must ensure that 100% of the elementary school students and 95% of the secondary school students are enrolled according to the “Nearby Enrollment Policy” and decrease the enrollment ratio of students with special gifts to 5% by 2017 (MOE, 2014a, 2014b). The government report issued by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission (2018) confirms that the enrollment ratio of students with special gifts will decrease to zero in 2019 and ensure 100% of secondary school students will be recruited according to the “Nearby Enrollment Policy.” Along with the gradual rollout of the “Nearby Enrollment Policy” in nine-year compulsory education throughout the country, the assessment system is undergoing changes. However, the district that my study was
situating in still used unified standardized tests from grade 3 to 6 in the year I collected the research data during the period of onsite study. Students were ranked according to their total scores in Chinese, Math, and English, and the top 5% of the students in grade 6 were qualified to compete for admission to a prestigious junior high school in the district. Meanwhile, the MOE and local governments had issued official notices calling for the reduction of the study load for elementary and secondary school students since 2002. Correspondingly, the local educational bureau created relevant regulations. For example, the Beijing Municipal Education Commission issued the “Notice on Effectively Reducing the Overweight Academic Burden of Primary and Secondary School Students” (‘关于切实减轻中小学生过重课业负担的通知’) (Beijing Municipal Education Commission, 2013), which stipulated that “no homework should be assigned to elementary school students at grade 1 and 2; appropriate load of homework could be assigned to students at grade 3 and 4 for Chinese, Math, and English; no more than 30 minutes of homework for students at grade 5 and 6” (‘小学一至二年级不布置家庭作业；三至六年级语文、数学和英语可适量布置家庭作业，三至四年级每天作业总量不得超过 30 分钟，五至六年级每天作业总量不得超过 1 小时’) (paragraph 4). The limited English exposure plus the limits on homework time create challenges for elementary school English teachers in China, considering the demands of the English Curriculum Standards, the DCCCS, and the CCES.

The new literacy world requires students to be “able to cope with changing times and changing literacies” (Anstèy & Bull, 2006, p. 2). To empower them to be literate with a variety of multimodal English texts, it is important for English pedagogy in China to review and reconceptualize its basic notions of literacy pedagogy in the 21st century, including the nature and objectives of literacy pedagogy, the new basics, a multiliterate person, agencies and subjectivities, and multiliteracies assessment (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015). It needs to reconstruct an “ideological model” (Street, 1984) of literacy instruction that views literacy as social practice (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2001/2013; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 2000) and that accentuates intersections and connectedness between literacy learning and students’ everyday lifeworld. Meanwhile, the newly issued the DCCCS and CCES, as well as the
restructured enrollment policy for nine-year obligatory education, constantly challenge the teacher-centered instructional models and the high-stakes assessment system. Consequently, English literacy teachers, as the enacted curriculum designers that translate, ground, and actualize the goals, aims, and objectives of the DCCCS and CCES in the classroom, need to give prompt ideological and pedagogical responses to the new literacy context through a paradigm shift to student-centeredness.

5.4 Territory of Study

5.4.1 Xinxin Elementary School

Founded in 1950s, Xinxin Elementary School used to be a small-sized elementary school. There were 6 classes in every grade and 36 classes in total. The average size of a class was 24-26 students. The old teaching building was torn down and rebuilt into a cluster of buildings equipped with new technology. There was multimedia teaching equipment in each classroom, including a computer, a large screen, and a projector. Teachers could use campus WiFi logging in via a personal account, but the students could not. The school allocated one classroom with a separate WiFi installation for the teachers to conduct online learning activities and provided iPads for one class of students to use in class.

The school collaborated with educational institutes and initiated school-based English curriculum reform in 2003. Two years later, Xinxin Elementary School was recognized for its students’ excellent performance in various open classes and in the district unified examinations and gradually became a prestigious key school in the district within the following four years. The number of students increased to 35-36 students per class and 10 classes per grade.

I was one of the witnesses of the school’s celebrated transformation. After graduating with a Master’s degree in English Curriculum and Instructional Approaches in 2003, I was recommended to work in at a research institute on a research project that aimed to reconstruct an innovative elementary English curriculum system, a project collaborated with a team from a distinguished university in China. Xinxin Elementary School was one of the experimental schools. The common consensus on the significance of the
collaborative research among the experimental schools included: (1) it would promote the overall quality of English teaching and learning through participating in the research project, (2) the research team would bring in new educational ideology, pedagogy and instructional models of English teaching and learning, and (3) the research team’s supervision of English teachers’ practices would promote their professional development in terms of lesson planning, teaching strategies, and assessment.

The theoretical foundation of the research project was the whole language approach, integrating the theory of multiple intelligence and task-based language teaching. The research project developed and experimented with a complex English curriculum composed of three types of courses: an integrated English course as the core course with a focus on the basic language knowledge and skills; a reading course addressing reading and writing skills; and an audio-visual-oral course focusing on listening and speaking skills. Each course used different learning materials. For instance, the integrated English course used a regular textbook designed for ESL learners by two educators in the US. The materials for the reading course were original picture books in English, whereas the materials for the audio-visual-oral course were original English cartoons. All the original learning materials were printed in China and imported by educational presses with the copyright. In this sense, the English curriculum developed during the research project celebrated a multimodal approach and multiple literacies, although it did not state this explicitly because the terms “multimodality” and “literacies” were not known to the research team that I was involved in as the team leader.

This project was considered groundbreaking English curriculum reform. Firstly, the new curriculum adopted a complex structure and addressed interdisciplinary connections, whereas the mainstream English curriculum was confined to one widely-used English textbook across China, highlighting English listening and speaking competencies. Secondly, it experimented with two brand new courses, namely the reading course and the audio-visual-oral course. Considering that limited references were available in China, the research team and the teachers at the experimental schools worked together to design the curriculum and lesson plans. When the research project was completed, the team produced a compendium of patterned lesson plans.
The school planned to continue the English curriculum reform after the six-year collaborative research project ended successfully in 2008, so they invited me to stay and work as a curriculum expert to continue the project in order to sustain the leading role in English teaching and learning in the district. English teachers at the school followed the lesson plans developed during the research period, as these lesson plans had been proven to be effective. All the new recruited English teachers were required to follow the fixed teaching procedure. Xinxin Elementary School was widely considered a leader in English curriculum reform in the district and enjoyed wide recognition in China, particularly for its pioneer program in leveled English reading for elementary school students. After being recognized as a prestigious elementary school, the school obtained strong support from parents, even if their children experienced a heavy study load during their English courses (Focus group seminar 2, 2017).

5.4.2 Minyue Elementary School

Minyue Elementary School was a public school founded in 1950s. Unlike Xinxin Elementary School that established English curriculum reform as its specialty, its strengths lay in other subjects.

The school appointed me as the curriculum expert two years before I study abroad because they wanted to construct a strong team of English teachers and improve the quality of English teaching and learning. They assigned two periods of class time for English at grade one and two and three periods from grade three to six, following the local policy. Except for the regular English textbook regulated by the district educational bureau, they did not use any other materials systematically. One tradition of the school was that each year addressed on theme of teaching and research such as learning autonomy, and then every teacher designed and presented an open lesson on this theme. All the seminars or workshops throughout the semester would address this theme. From the chief administrator of the English department at the school, I learned that they struggled to recruit qualified English teachers because the school was not considered “famous” or “attractive.” When I worked with the teachers, I found that the young teachers were inexperienced—none of them had graduated with a degree in English
education—and hesitant to try new teaching approaches, whereas the experienced teachers adhered to the traditional, didactic pedagogy because due to the school ranking system they were under significant pressure for their classes to perform well on the final unified examination held in the district. I fully understood the problems and challenges that the school principal and the chief administrator were facing and made efforts to assist them. This collaborative relationship lasted for nearly two years until I moved to Canada and entered the PhD program.

Differing from Xinxin Elementary School, the relationship between the students’ parents and the school was not very harmonious at Minyue Elementary School. During my time with the school, I heard many complaints about the parents from the administrators and the teachers. They told me that there were conflicts now and then, which extremely constrained the school and teachers’ innovative practices. The school and teachers were concerned with making changes because not all the parents understood and supported the changes. In the past, parents who were unhappy with changes directly contacted school board authorities, who would then call the school principal and administrators to have a “talk” about the issues. As a result, teachers and administrators were cautious about every decision they made and strictly enforced the district’ educational policies and regulations.

When I returned to the school to conduct research, the situation had changed substantially. After the new round of educational system reform, the school had expanded to become an educational group in 2016, including three branch schools located in different areas. One branch school enrolled the students at grade one, the second one was for students at grade two and three, and the original school was for students from grade four to six. The participant teachers told me that there were 16 classes in each grade and every English teacher taught four classes. Lacking head teachers, some of the English teachers were assigned to be a head teacher apart from teaching English, which meant these teachers took on more workload than the regular English teachers and the regular home teachers who usually only needed to teach one class.

Through my daily conversations with the participant teachers, I learned that some of the young teachers had undergone significant professional development, with some even
winning a number of prizes in the district teaching competitions. Now that the educational bureaus at different levels encouraged schools to renew the educational ideology of teaching and learning English and to try innovative instructional models and approaches, the teachers enacted changes, such as using levelled picture books to teach reading. The school encouraged young teachers to give open classes assigned by the district educational bureau. Usually, each teacher had to present an open class every semester. Due to the distance between the three branch schools, daily discussions on teaching and learning mainly occurred among the teachers who worked at the same branch school. Regardless of the progress made, however, the school educational reform was still greatly constrained by the parents (Focus group seminar 2, 2017).

5.4.3 Summary

Albeit located in the same district, the English educational context at Xinxin Elementary School and Minyue Elementary School differs in terms of school philosophy, curriculum structure, periods of class time, teaching materials, requirements, school-parent relationship, school size, and so on. This study is interested in the impact these elements have on the participant teachers’ innovative experience. Generally speaking, Xinxin Elementary School creates a more favourable environment than Minyue Elementary School in that it has already approached some key elements of multiliteracies such as multimodality, multiple literacies, thinking abilities, and constructive learning. The school benefits greatly from its previous school-based English curriculum reform and therefore provides a platform for English teachers to practice the new theory and a pedagogy of multiliteracies. On the contrary, teachers from Minyue Elementary School face bigger challenges. They have been examination-oriented and teacher-centered whereas a pedagogy of multiliteracies advocates educational philosophy and instructional approaches with the learner as the center of teaching and learning,
Chapter 6

6 Storied Experience of Teacher Participants

In this chapter, I present the variable narratives co-created by the participant teachers and me. However, a narrative inquirer is not simply a storyteller, but also a meaning maker of the personal, social, and institutional narratives. The meaning-making practices were situated in the three-dimensional inquiry space, namely, the temporality, personal-social interactions, and place. I made connections between the participant teachers’ experiences in the past, at the present, and in the future and explored the materiality in the school landscape to reach a full understanding of the participant teachers’ practices with a pedagogy of multiliteracies. I was not the only narrator. I invited the participant teachers to be simultaneous narrators. I valued the unique trustworthiness of voices delivered by the insiders in the inquiry space because the participant teachers’ voices exposed genuine thoughts, struggles, compromises, resistances, and an embracing of both “the said and the unsaid” (Britzman, 2003, p. 37).

6.1 Qin’s Narratives: A Trip to Learn About Her Students

6.1.1 Qin and Her Students

Entering Qin’s classroom, I saw cabinets with no locks lined up along two walls. These cabinets were where the students placed their personal belongings. There were four air purifiers on the walls; teachers turn them on when it becomes especially smoggy. At the front of the classroom, the national flag of China was placed in the middle of the wall right above the two boards. Multimedia equipment in the classroom included a computer, a projector, and a large projector screen, with the computer connected to a large TV positioned in the upper left corner of the classroom. Qin used the large screen TV more frequently than the large projector screen because its clarity is higher when presenting words and images.

The classroom did not function as a collaborative learning environment. The seats were lined up closely but separately, occupying almost all of the space. There was no empty
space at the front of the classroom for group activities. To protect the students’ eyesight, students rotated to the next line of seats every month. Based on my previous understanding, seating the students separately was done to maintain good discipline, as the distance between students limited disruptions.

The classroom environment provided very limited support for learning. There were two large boards at the back of the classroom where teachers could post excellent student work selected from different courses (mainly in Chinese). Considering the size of the class and the number of subjects, I would say two boards were far from sufficient. The teacher explained that the local administrative Department of Education regulated the school environment and required classrooms to be kept clean and tidy. Therefore, the school designated a specific area to post items in the classroom and each classroom followed the same style and management to maintain consistency. The classroom was thereby designed to provide basic teaching equipment and one “Display Wall.”

Qin had two classes involved in this research. One class had 35 students and the other had 36 students. She picked one class for this research at the beginning simply because “their English proficiency was the best among the four classes I taught” (Interview 1, March 13, 2017). Yet, three weeks later, she asked me if she could add a new class because she felt the students in the first class were not meeting her expectations. She appeared to be a little frustrated and embarrassed, as she wanted to show me successful lessons, but her students were not listening to her carefully in class or completing their assigned homework.

As a teacher educator, I understood the conflicts between her and the students and acknowledged that these conflicts could not be solved immediately. As a researcher, I did not want to place her in an awkward situation or risk her self-confidence, as she had been a very successful English teacher at secondary schools for nearly eight years. Instead, I appreciated her courage to continue rather than retreating from the study. Qin’s narrative drew my attention to the force of affects and tensions in teachers’ practices when they use innovative pedagogy. She was not scared of tensions or overwhelmed by negativity. On the contrary, she admitted tensions, faced them, and transformed them into a drive for
change. I agreed to add one class, so after we obtained consent from both the students and their parents, Qin then had two classes participating in the study.

6.1.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: I Really Didn’t Know Much About Primary Students, About What They Could Do

The core philosophy of the English curriculum at Xinxin Elementary School was the well-rounded development of the students. Language competency was only one component of English literacy education. The curriculum addressed the connection between language learning and thinking, unlike what Qin had seen in her previous career where high scores were the exclusive goal of teaching. Seeking knowledge on what to change and how to accomplish it, Qin participated in this research project.

Qin impressed me greatly when I went into her class before I started to observe. She spoke beautiful English, which I rarely heard among the elementary school English teachers that I had been working with. I learned that she had a BA degree in English at a Normal University and an MA degree in Applied Linguistics related to second language acquisition. It was no wonder that she was at ease with speaking English.

Everything, however, has two sides. Out of the concern over students’ limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, elementary school English teachers often carefully design task instructions. Teachers are encouraged to use multimodal ways simultaneously to help students fully understand what they are required to do and how to do it. On the contrary, Qin’s classroom instructions were usually composed of compound and complex sentences and she spoke fluently with few pauses in or between the sentences. I observed that she described the requirements for one task all at once, no matter if it was simple or complex. As a result, in most cases, only the top students could easily keep pace with her speaking and responded to her immediately. After class, we discussed what she believed to cause many of her students acted passively. I tried to discover her understanding of the situation and what she thought might improve it. However, I soon realized that she was not aware of her students’ passivity could be in related to her teaching style.
Qin had only taught English for one semester to grade 6 students at Xinxin Elementary School before she participated in my study. Qin used to teach English at secondary schools and changed roles after giving birth to twin girls. In the first interview, she said that she had high expectations of elementary students at the grade 6 level. Qin believed that grade 6 students should be: responsible for their own study, self-disciplined and possess good learning habits such as listening carefully in class; fully understanding the teacher’s instructions and working efficiently in groups; using learning strategies effectively and asking questions actively; finishing homework and turning it in on time, and so on. Her previous experience with secondary school students impacted Qin’s approach to teaching English in elementary school. She was used to a teacher-centred context where she was positioned as the authority who passed knowledge to her learners. Knowledge was always in the teacher’s possession and could be delivered directly and fully to the students. The teacher had the unquestionable power to judge what to do and how to do it, or to determine right from wrong. Students were not expected to question, doubt or challenge the authority and expertise of their teachers. Instead, they were trained to be docile and obey their teachers.

Qin recognized that the situation in elementary school was widely different from her assumptions; however, she still maintained her initial view when she started practicing a pedagogy of multiliteracies. She admitted that she felt uncomfortable with the changing position:

Personally, I felt a little detached from my students. This was not their fault but mine. I was not used to this changed role yet. I did not talk much with my students after class because I could not say that I really liked them at this moment because time was too short and because secondary school students were different from elementary school students. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)

I really didn’t know much about primary students, about what they could do. The supervisor who observed my class this morning also said that the lesson was too difficult for the students. Perhaps, I cared more about the top students and thought all of them should be the same. (Interview 14, May 4, 2017)

For the first time, Qin recognized that she should cater to her students. Such a shift to learner-centeredness compelled her to reexamine her ideology of English literacy education and instructional approaches in the following months of the study.
6.1.3 Moving Forward Through Wrestling With Tensions: I Wondered Why I Had Been So for So Many Years

Since the first observed class, Qin practiced with adjusting her teaching style and lesson plan from the perspectives of elementary students and diligently tried different teaching strategies and skills to motivate the students. However, she experienced conflicts and challenges throughout this process. I observed a clear fluctuation of affect; sometimes she was happy and excited with the new change and sometimes she was frustrated and even displeased with the reoccurring problems involving class discipline and incomplete assignments. Whatever type of affect it was, positive or negative, she never showed a desire to retreat from the study. I only saw a revival of hope and vigor the next day when I met her in the classroom.

6.1.3.1 Practicing a Multimodal Approach

The first lesson was about inventions. Qin entered the classroom carrying a number of materials, such as stickers, chopsticks, cards, tissues, double-sided tapes, paper clips, and plastic caps. Putting all the materials on the table and turning on the computer connected to the projector, she drew a picture of toy gun on the board.

The bell rang. She invited two boys to describe what the gun looked like, what it was made of, and what people would use it for. The purpose of this activity was activating the schema, that is to say students were required to use the learned sentence structures and vocabulary to describe the invention. The two students introduced the invention fluently with details, and she was quite satisfied with their performance.

Following this task, she presented all the materials she brought and the requirement of a new task: How can you put all the materials together to make an invention? She first gave 10 seconds for the students to discuss what they were going to create. Then students worked in groups of three to create the inventions. The whole class was excited and highly engaged in the task. They discussed and negotiated how to invent, tried different ways, adjusted the design, and finally created the artifacts (See Figure 4). I saw the girls were also highly engaged in making the artifacts. Qin walked around the classroom,
monitoring and intervening in the group work when necessary. The students enjoyed the free space and time for making their own artifacts. The project time lasted for 20 minutes, and Qin stopped the exercise even though some of the groups had not finished their inventions.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 4: Group Activity: Make an Invention (Artifacts, Grade 6)**

Qin invited six representative students to introduce their invented artifacts from three perspectives: What does it look like? What is it made of? What might you use it for? The first student presented an invention called “Future,” followed by the other groups who introduced a mouse trap, a paper parachute, a swirling tool to make wind, a kite, and a bell as a decoration, respectively.

This was Qin’s first trial of designing a multimodal task for the students to apply creatively what they had learned. Rather than using a paper test, she allowed the students to demonstrate their knowledge through the introduction of an artifact of invention. The scope of language was expanded to integrate what they had learned in this unit and in previous units. The subject knowledge was not limited to English itself but involved life experience and science. For the first time, Qin saw that all the students were interested in her lesson. She was very excited to see these changes.

Students in this lesson were thinking actively. Some of the students had their own ideas and could easily express themselves in English, although some of the students merely echoed others. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)

Qin guided the activity, reiterated the key points, and provided feedback. The class listened attentively and sometimes even applauded the presenters. In the end, Qin asked the class to improve their inventions after class and introduce them the next class.
6.1.3.2 Shifting to Active Meaning Making

In the lesson about “Stories of Inventions,” Qin reviewed the invention of donuts, computers, ice cream cones, and aircraft, all topics that had been learned with pictures and then written down on the board. She started with the question, “What do you want to know about the invention?” This invited the students to think carefully about their interests.

To involve more students and increase their engagement, she modified the activity in the textbook and created group work. Every two rows of students read about the same invention. Then, every four students who read about the same invention sat together and checked their answers in the group. After that, she asked each group to reread the texts, helping each other to determine the meaning of the words and sentences and deepen their understanding of the text. Finally, each group was asked to read the text to the whole class and answer the questions raised by other groups.

After one group read the text of the invention, the others challenged the presenters by asking questions. To answer the challenging questions correctly, the presenters must be very familiar with the content. In the end, Qin asked the students to decide which inventions required hard work and which were invented by accident. The whole class was highly engaged in the process of meaning-making. Qin relinquished authority and left the inquiry space to the students. The students co-constructed meaning through interactions and interrogation among themselves. They were co-designers of meaning-making.

Another story of success happened in an audio-visual-oral lesson. Students were going to learn the second part of a video. After the reviewing the first part of the video, Qin asked the students to write down four questions about the next part. Then students exchanged their questions between the groups. She gave them some time to discuss the written questions and clarify the meaning. When the students were ready, she played the second part of the video.

Students watched the video with great attention. When the video was over, they discussed and shared their answers in groups. Students helped each other, trying to determine the
correct answers. They also ticked the questions they recognized as “good” on the worksheet. During the presentation period, each group chose two reporters, one read the questions and one answered the questions. Students raised their hands high in order to be selected to report. Other students listened, made judgments, and provided feedback on the answers.

During the whole process, every student was highly motivated and listened to each other carefully. The class was well-organized under Qin’s supervision. Qin’s heartfelt laughter and joy during the interview revealed that she was very happy to see these changes happening to herself as well as the students.

My big change in designing this lesson was that I changed from how to teach the knowledge to how to organize the students’ activities well. I cared about what activities but rarely about how to carry out them. I seldom attended to the details of how to organize activities. With the changed perspective, I considered how to help the students complete the task step by step and then knew clearly what they would do. Previously, I merely told them the task and let them do it. (laughed) I considered how they could learn now. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)

The successful experience caused Qin to profoundly reflect on the teacher-student relationship:

I thought about my teaching seriously. I wondered why I had been the way I was for so many years. I had been concerned with how to teach the students or how to teach the students to learn the knowledge. I took the wrong stance. Later I understood that I must change my stance and consider how the students could learn about the knowledge. The changed stance led to changes in perspectives (laughed). I should support and help them to make the impossible possible. But still they carried out the task by themselves. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)

Qin interrogated her stance as a teacher and the authority she had wielded in her previous teaching experience. Although “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” (2011 version) had regulated that the “English course should be a process in which students construct knowledge, develop skills, expand visions, activate thinking, and demonstrate personalities under the teacher’s guide” (MOE, 2011b, p. 3), only at this moment did Qin acknowledge the importance of being a facilitator for students.
6.1.3.3 Using Online Resources for Transformative Learning

In the unit about inventions, the textbook introduced each invention in one short paragraph and the information was confined to who and when. Students raised similar questions about each invention, such as who invented it or what was invented. When Qin discussed this problem with me, I suggested that she reread the texts again and see if she could ask new questions about them. She recognized that the texts were not adequate enough for the students to construct an overall understanding of each invention.

I thought the quantity of content in the book was not enough. I merely focused on the book itself. If I expanded the scope of knowledge, it would be richer and more interesting. The text was easy for the students. Students gradually lost interest because they learned nothing new. (Interview 3, March 20, 2017)

Qin decided to add extra materials to enrich the information about these inventions. However, she expressed worries that the supplementary reading materials available on the Internet might not be appropriate for the students:

I found that the information collected from the Internet did not match the topic. It depended on whether the students could bridge the “gap,” and whether they could achieve the targets. For example, when I searched the Internet, I found the materials were far more difficult than the textbook. I just wondered whether they could deal with it, whether they could judge what was valuable. (Interview 2, March 16, 2017)

As an experienced teacher, Qin determined how to solve this problem:

I wonder if it is necessary for the teacher to give a demo of how to search for the information, how to reorganize and revise the gathered information, how to simplify the language, how to deal with the new words, and how to use synonyms to replace the complicated words. (Interview 2, March 16, 2017)

Qin learned, however, that this type of modeling was not easy. The next class she searched a few texts from the Internet that introduced a number of inventions and assigned the scripts of inventions to different groups of students. She asked the students to read the script of one invention as a group first and then drew the pictures that illustrated the process of the invention on the board (See Figure 5). Students demonstrated the meaning-making results by visual representation. It was not surprising to see that the whole class was actively working on the task and students worked well
collaboratively while preparing for the presentation. When the performance time came, each group raised their hands high.

Figure 5: Illustrations of the Process of an Invention

The presentation went smoothly, but a problem puzzled Qin. When she invited the class to raise questions to the presenters, no one responded. She wondered why and asked the class if they understood what the presenters had said. The class replied to her with “No.”

After class, Qin realized that the texts were too difficult. The science texts were challenging for the students even though the students were familiar with the inventions because the texts used technical terms to describe the materials, structure, and operating mechanics of the inventions. She could give some instructions on the language points such as be made of/from, the working system, the function of, and so on, which the students then might use to introduce the inventions at the presentation. Instead of using the texts found from the Internet directly, she could simplify the language and modify the terms. She reflected on the reasons why this lesson did not achieve the objectives:

If the materials were appropriate for the context and their language proficiency, they could transform the knowledge faster through the collaborative work…. I should consider the learning conditions more in future teaching. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)

After this experience, Qin performed another trial. This time she simplified the texts about a few new inventions by deleting the information that she identified as irrelevant. She asked the students to write down the key words in the key sentence, reorder the inventions, and explain why. The task was supposed to be easy because the texts were modified and the language was simplified, but the results were the opposite of what Qin
expected. It seemed that students did not know what the key words were, and they failed to sequence the inventions in the right order. Qin was confused with the results and disappointed at students’ unsatisfactory performance on this task.

The passages for the morning class were longer and more difficult, but they still finished the tasks on time. This class didn’t do a good job. I thought they didn’t think seriously, and they just echoed each other blindly. (Interview 14, May 4, 2017)

Qin was a little bit displeased with the students’ performance. When she calmed down, we compared the texts she had used for her two classes. In the texts used for the afternoon class, there were only one or two sentences about each invention. It was not easy to identify the key words. The clues were very limited for the students to infer the sequence of these inventions because she deleted the time of the different inventions and the students did not know some of the inventions. In comparison, the original reading she used for the morning class provided richer information about the invention. There was a story about the invention and each text had a topic sentence supported by the details. She then understood that oversimplified readings might not always be appropriate for the students to make meaning.

The process of modifying the online resources engaged the students in transformative learning. They needed to fully understand the meaning of the texts with a critical lens, strategically process the information into condensed texts with meaningful information and represent them effectively with multimodal aids. These innovative practices impressed Qin, arousing an in-depth reflection on transformative learning:

I think transformation is rather important because it is related to thinking. But if the students don’t understand it and have no input, there won’t be any output. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)

To transform knowledge, the students need to be familiar with the knowledge. They need to understand it. It is also related to phonics because they need to know how to read it. They also need to practice it. Any problem with any one of them may influence the students’ output. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)

We often talk about transformation of knowledge. But in fact, it is not as easy as we have imagined. Actually, it is a rather difficult process. First the students need to understand the meaning, then they can transform and generate their own ideas.
As a teacher, you need to know how to help the students transform knowledge. This is a question that a teacher needs to think about carefully. For those good students, they can transform fast. However, we only see the outcome and we don’t know how it happens. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)

The meaning of transformation from Qin’s perspective at this stage was a learning process related to deep thinking, going beyond knowledge acquisition. She constructed her personal theoretical knowledge of transformative learning through her own practice-based exploration and observation.

6.1.3.4 Creating the Space for Students to Practice Information Skills

The limited availability of textbooks also compelled Qin to think about how the students themselves could make use of the resources on the Internet. She described the dilemma:

I also considered how to let the students search for the information and how to make it feasible. Students were not allowed to bring cellphones to school. Even if they could, the availability of WiFi at school was a problem. So I decided to find the materials or information for them. I revised it to suit their language proficiency, but some of the vocabulary was still difficult for them. (Interview 4, March 23, 2017)

Therefore, Qin designed some tasks for the students to try at home. She assigned a task that required the students to search for information about the invention they wanted to introduce to the whole class and create a poster as a group.

When she saw the posters that the students turned in, Qin was very upset. She found that only some groups researched on the Internet and most of the information on the posters was in Chinese. Some groups downloaded the information in Chinese and then used online software such as Baidu Translate to translate the material into English without reviewing or proofreading. Other groups simply pasted the long, original texts without editing or modifying. When Qin asked them what the texts were about, the students said they did not know, which meant they did not read them. Qin explained,

Such mechanical copying didn’t achieve my purpose of practicing their English. I had expected them to read the information in English and then compose it into useful information. This made me angry. (Interview 12, April 20, 2017)
Qin acknowledged the issues that constrained the students. There were limited resources in English available via the Internet browsers in China, they did not have access to some foreign web browsers such as Google and YouTube, and some foreign websites were slow to open or even blocked. Qin did some research on the websites that were accessible in China and found a variety of resources in English. She found that the “360 search engine” in China was a good choice for the students because it had a separate column named “English.” Qin decided to introduce the platform to the students and instructed them on how to use it in class. She stated,

Such skills could be used in their future life and work. This was what they could do by themselves and I should support them as a helper. This lesson let them find out the problem and solve the problem. (Interview 12, April 20, 2017)

To improve the students’ skills to find and manage online information, she designed a lesson to teach them how to search, revise, and compose information from the Internet. She started with a discussion about how to design an effective poster. Then she asked the students to think how to find the information they wanted on the Internet. Instead of blaming them, she invited students to voice the problems they had experienced when they searched for information on the Internet and what they needed to solve the problems. Qin’s attention to the students’ learning experiences was a step forward, demonstrating her new teaching practices.

Following this, Qin presented a text in Chinese and then the translation done by the Baidu translate app. Then students compared the Chinese version with the English one and judged whether or not it was a good English translation. They needed to support their decision with the evidence from the text. Qin explained,

I gave them some instructions and approaches, at least they knew how to judge the correctness of the translation done by the software…. I wanted to make them aware that the translation done by the software had big problems, at least they must read the translation, correct the mistakes and revise it before they use it. (Interview 12, April 20, 2017)

Qin developed the students’ information skills through a problem-solving learning process. This demonstrated her new understanding of English education; she realized it went beyond mere language competency.
6.1.3.5 Celebrating Multiple Voices and Critical Thinking

Unlike the previous test-oriented instruction, Qin became more sensitive to students’ voices and appreciated opinions from different perspectives in class, particularly in classroom discussions. She used the book *Night Workers* for a reading lesson. After the students read the book, Qin raised the question: If they had to take on night work, what job would they do? Students share their attitudes toward this kind of job. Some students said they would take it. However, some said they would not, a response not in line with the prevailing view in society. She expanded the question into a whole class discussion. Qin recalled,

> Students expressed different ideas. I thought all of these responses were acceptable because different people make different choices. I thought life was full of choices. You can choose to do or not to do. (Interview 6, March 30, 2017)

Qin’s reflection showed that she considered the multiple answers as normal and natural, not simply judging them as either “right” or “wrong” from the perspective of moral education. When she asked the students to read the texts about inventions that were sourced from the Internet, she let them compare what the textbook said with what the referential materials said about the same invention. Qin outlined to me the intentions behind this exercise:

> In fact, I wanted them to understand what history was. I believed that history was what the textbook told us when I was a child. In fact, that wasn’t the case. When I grew up, I understood what history was. I understood that history was written by people and it implied subjectivity, depending on what perspective you took. If people viewed the same question from different perspectives, they would reach different conclusions. I planned to direct them to this point and my sketches on the board revealed this as my purpose. (Interview 13, April 24, 2017)

Qin did not require the students to accept the ideas in the textbook as the norm. Instead, she deliberately made the classroom “a particular social environment of development, a collective Third Space” (Gutiérrez, 2008), allowing the students to challenge the status quo through their own independent, critical lens. The students constructed meaning of the texts and learned about social values through authentic interactions with their teacher and
their peers. Qin demonstrated a more “constructive view of learning spaces” (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997).

6.1.3.6 Establishing Connections to the Real-Life World

In a video lesson designed by Qin, the main characters were discussing how they could make the community better. To help students understand the meaning of a community, Qin showed a few pictures of a community in China and explained what a community could accomplish at the beginning of the class. After that, Qin asked the students if they would like to do anything to help out their community. The students were silent. She further asked them to think and write down what they would do and why if they had the chance. When Qin walked around, she found some students had nothing to write. When she invited them to share their ideas, students simply mentioned that they could do some chores at home, sweep the floor, pick up litter, or plant trees.

Realizing that the students had little knowledge of community, Qin asked them to compare what they thought they could do for their community with what the characters in the video did. Before the class was over, she gave them an assignment: think of different things that they could do for the community. She suggested that they survey their communities.

When designing this authentic task, Qin realized that she also struggled with the definition of community:

I took community as the background instead of a core concept in this cartoon. I didn’t know what a community meant and what a community could do for the residents. I didn’t give them a clear explanation either. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

In the unit on the world, Qin used the world map to help students construct an overall understanding of a set of countries. She redesigned two group activities in the textbook into a game. In the first group activity, the students were supposed to develop geographical knowledge about the countries. The second group activity addressed the specific features of the country from different perspectives such as clothes, products, national flags, and famous buildings. All the information could be found in the world
map. The purpose of the activities was not only to motivate the students but also to draw their attention to countries they had never noticed or travelled to. With this preliminary knowledge of other countries, they could appreciate other cultures and achievements, inspiring them to consider other countries as equally important as their mother country.

Connecting what was learned in the classroom with the real-life world required bridging the gap between in-class knowledge and out-of-class knowledge. Tasks addressing the real-life world were authentic, which indirectly enhanced the students’ motivation to learn and apply the knowledge.

6.1.3.7 Developing Students’ Self-Reflectivity

Qin had a class to discuss the test results of a unit. The usual way of teaching such a class was that the teacher explained every item on the test paper. Instead, Qin explained during an interview that she wanted to apply multiliteracies pedagogy during this class. The first step was to clarify the purpose of the test. Following this, she picked the items that most students had made mistakes on and asked the students to discuss the right answer and why. She also invited two students who sat together to compare their mind maps of the unit and determine how they were similar or different. Qin wanted them to learn from each other and reflect on their learning collaboratively because she believed “reflective learning was very important for them” (Journal 6, April 1, 2017), which underlined her perspectives on the value of self-reflexivity:

Although I wasn’t confident in designing this type of lesson, I wanted to apply multiliteracies into lesson planning. The purpose was to let the students reflect on their process of learning, not only on knowledge but also on learning strategies and skills. Based on their reflection on the strengths and weaknesses in learning English, they improved their learning abilities. (Interview 7, April 1, 2017)

I thought the reflexive ability was very important for the students. I didn’t focus on knowledge itself but let them find out what they did well and what needed to be improved, summarized, discussed, and reworked. (Interview 7, April 1, 2017)

Qin also practiced peer assessment between groups. In the first trial, she developed a peer assessment worksheet that each group used to give feedback to the other group’s performance. However, it was not very successful, according to her feedback, mainly
because she had never used it before. The second time she used peer assessment it worked very well. Students used the worksheet to record what they learned from the other group’s presentation and responded to other’s questions before Qin graded their answers. She commented on the value of peer assessment on students’ learning:

I rarely thought about peer assessment before. Now I realized that peer assessment was rather good. It increased the interactions between the students and increased their attention and participation in class. They listened to each other more carefully and the interaction was not only between two students but also among the whole class. During the process of responding to the questions, disputes occurred among the students. However, they reached an agreement through arguing and it was very useful. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)

Qin reflected on formative assessment and felt sorry for neglecting its impact on classroom organization:

I considered the use of classroom assessment seriously and I thought the primary students did care about the value of formative assessment. When I taught in junior high school, the students didn’t care about the classroom assessment. I didn’t realize this before. Therefore, I didn’t pay much attention to assessment. But today I saw it did work and the class was different and became well-organized. (Interview 16, May 11, 2017)

Qin gave students the opportunity to practice peer assessment in class. She used their records handed in when class was over as a reference for assessing the individual student’s performance in class. She believed that this would make them take the peer assessment activity seriously: “They paid more attention to it because they saw that I would talk about their assessment sheet and gave feedback the next class” (Interview 16, May 11, 2017).

6.1.3.8 Uncertainty With Classroom Management

The openness of a multiliteracies classroom challenged Qin with its fluidity of ideas and knowledge. Previously, she took over all the work: set the objectives, designed activities, and regulated the process and time. This was in line with the traditional, hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the students in China. In a word, she was clear about what the students would do and what they could produce at each step. However, now the
learning process was open, and the students took on the majority of the responsibility, not her. This change impacted Qin’s impression of teaching:

I had a feeling of “float” (虚) about this lesson because I felt I couldn’t “catch” (抓住) anything in some activities. I could not control anything because the students were free, and the lesson was fluid. If I couldn’t control, I must supervise. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)

From the very beginning, Qin experimented with the degree of control when she created the space for the students to learn autonomously and express their ideas and opinions freely in their own words, trying to find the “balanced point” between the controlled and the uncontrolled. For example, when the texts were easy, she let the students read either by themselves, in pairs, or in groups; however, when the task was complex or challenging, she provided scaffolding to enable them to achieve successful outcomes. She “switched” between and within the activities. To ensure the students could finish the task on time, Qin clearly described what to do in each step first, then she relinquished control and let each group schedule the steps and the timetable to finish the task. She monitored the time and supervised the progress but allowed the students to decide what to present and how to present their results. Even after Qin had tried the new pedagogy for a few weeks, she still felt confused about when she should “control” and when she should “free” the students. She said, “it was really hard for me to achieve a balance” (Interview 14, May 4, 2017).

One significant problem for Qin was the perceived lack of classroom discipline. Quite often, particularly in the first few weeks, the classroom was messy and loud. When she left the space for the students to work on projects or group performance, she found it difficult to manage the class, especially the use of Chinese. She had never been concerned with disciplinary problems before, as her previous teaching style was authoritative, and the students had been required to be docile and obedient. Classroom management suddenly became a prominent issue when she tried the new pedagogy:

I thought that designing the activities was simple, but I didn’t think carefully about how to organize the tasks, the steps, the rules, and the produced outcome. I really need to think about what classroom rules need to be employed and how to make the lesson more organized. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)
Qin implemented some class rules by the fourth class: “Listen carefully,” “Follow the instructions,” and “No Chinese.” She observed some immediate changes in the students’ behaviour. Students were more attentive to what she or the other students said:

I started to set up classroom rules for the activities. With these rules, they completed the task as groups quickly. After I explained these rules to the students, they followed the rules in group work. But I still needed to adjust the rules in the process of teaching. Students spoke less Chinese in class and they discussed in English. Chatting rarely happened. They contributed more to the group work. Whatever way of learning it was, they helped each other and focused on the task. I could see that they liked this class. (Interview 4, March 23, 2017)

However, consistently changing behaviour took some time. Sometimes Qin had to interrupt a few times and ask students to listen to her or others and remind them to speak English instead of Chinese. She repeatedly reminded the students about these rules at the beginning of lessons.

Another strategy Qin practiced was group assessment. She tried to model for the students by not speaking Chinese in class, and then she assessed the groups on their use of Chinese:

Whenever they spoke Chinese, which was not permitted, I reduced their grades in the classroom assessment. I saw that this rule reduced the use of Chinese at the same time as it improved their disciplinary behaviours; they used to constantly talk about irrelevant things in Chinese. (laughed) … I used the group assessment as a device for classroom management. I collected their group worksheet with the assessment after each class. I counted the correct and incorrect answers and gave them the feedback next class. I graded them based on the results and I saw they did care about the grades. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)

Qin acknowledged that group assessment encouraged students to use English to communicate, and as a result she believed that it would improve their oral English competence. She explained,

The students now would restrain themselves and tried to use English to express and communicate which would help improve their English oral expressive competence. I saw that they were more attentive to what I said and what other students said. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)
As mentioned previously, Qin struggled with classroom discipline throughout the research process. Students’ final performance impacted her affect greatly. In one lesson, she required the students to solve 14 puzzles within 10 minutes. She introduced the complex rules for the puzzles at the same time as presenting the rules on the TV screen. However, the TV screen was not big enough to clearly show the written rules. Although her instructional language was clear, the majority of the students concentrated on the worksheet of puzzles and paid little attention to the oral component of her lesson. She gave the students’ the knowledge and time needed to solve the puzzles by themselves. However, they did not complete the task well as she expected. This made Qin extremely upset:

I couldn’t deal with such a class because they didn’t understand what I said to them. I thought I had delivered very clear instructions, but they still didn’t get it. They didn’t understand what I wanted them to do. They didn’t know how to work on the task. I felt I couldn’t continue the lesson. They didn’t cooperate with me. They didn’t respond to whatever I said to them. (Interview 15, May 8, 2017)

The unsatisfactory learning outcome influenced Qin and made her emotions swell and subside. After class, she reflected on how she had planned the puzzle activity:

There has been “a blind zone” in pair work for me. I didn’t think it was necessary for me to teach the students who did this and who did that. I didn’t know that students didn’t know how to solve puzzles. Therefore, I took for granted that they knew how to work in pairs to solve the puzzles and the activity was organized badly. (Interview 15, May 8, 2017)

Qin now realized the importance of considering the specific steps when organizing activities because elementary school students need more scaffolding and monitoring on activity organization than secondary school students.

6.1.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: How to Learn Was the Core of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

A pedagogy of multiliteracies was a brand new literacy theory to most English teachers in China. By learning how to create a space of freedom for the students, Qin gradually reconstructed her ideology of English teaching and learning through recursively practicing, modifying, and reflecting at different levels. Pedagogically, she explored the
four knowledge processes of multiliteracies pedagogy through employing innovative instructional approaches involving activity design, organization and management, as well as classroom assessment.

At the initial stage, a pedagogy of multiliteracies was very abstract to Qin when she read the materials and participated in the workshops. A number of new concepts abruptly came to the forefront, provoking her deep reflection on the status quo:

The first time I read about multiliteracies, I didn't understand the multimodality of meaning construction and why the modes of meaning representation are multiple. For example, I only needed to tell the meaning of a word directly. I attended to the meaning of the text itself. Even if you translated the key information for us, I still felt it was too abstract. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

Qin intended to rebuild her relationship with the students when she tried to create the space for the students to learn autonomously and voice their personal thoughts. She practiced a variety of roles and shifted her roles according to the context. In regard to a jigsaw reading activity, she said,

They had more time to read independently and discuss the texts. They introduced what they read to other students. I was an assistant and a helper. When they did not know the meaning of a word, they raised their hand and asked me. (Interview 2, March 16, 2017)

Before Qin asked the students to research the information on the Internet, she gave them a demo of how to search for the information. She took every chance to model how she used mind maps to structure the content or main ideas before the students drew independently. She wanted them to think about what to do and how to do it. She no longer held on to her authoritative role as a questioner, allowing the students to raise questions before they watched a video:

Actually, we were co-designers of the meaning. I didn’t design the questions. It was them who designed the questions, found the answers and checked the answers. I was merely an organizer and instructed them what to do when they had problems. (Interview 10, April 13, 2017)

Group work, a regular form of organization, was the experimental approach Qin was eager to try more in the future. When designing group work, she considered how to
organize the activities well. During the group work, out of the concern that students might not finish the task on time, she managed the time and monitored the process. Without doubt, she tried to break through the original instructor-follower model of teacher-student relationship and constructed a co-designer model because she and the students “could co-design meaning together” (Interview 10, April 13, 2017). Qin summarized,

The basic difference between a pedagogy of multiliteracies and traditional pedagogy was the teacher’s roles. Traditionally, the teacher was a transmitter of knowledge. Now, teachers must consider how to help the students make up the knowledge they didn’t have. (Interview 14, May 4, 2017)

In our final interview, Qin portrayed a clearer understanding of the new relationship she had forged with the students:

Previously the students learned what the teacher taught without autonomy. The teacher finished teaching the textbook and that was all…. The teacher was a resource provider. Instead, the teacher should have a deep understanding of the concept and find out its relationship with real life. This makes teaching have width and depth. Students are not passive recipients of knowledge but rather active learners. The class is a process that students co-construct with the teacher. The knowledge they generate is limitless. In my previous classes, I did what I wanted to do, and the students produced what I wanted. But when teachers give the students more space and freedom in this kind of classes the students produce richer output than you expect. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

Unlike previously attributing the fault simply to the students, Qin gradually examined the students’ unsatisfactory performance from her own perspectives. In the first interview, she said, “I understood that I still designed the activities from the perspective of a teacher. I should shift to the perspectives of the students” (Interview 1, March 13, 2017). Qin’s “confessing” words reoccurred in the interviews and journals, highlighting her deep, pointed self-reflection on her daily teaching practices.

The problems with activity design and organization occurred daily in her classes, causing Qin to think of the necessity of changing her perspective from teacher to student, de-centralizing her previous unquestionable authoritative role. She started to consider the students’ needs, interests, motivation, and voices; learning competency development; and the value of knowledge and learning. Qin stated,
For me, one element of multiliteracy is to give the students chances to construct their learning and give them more freedom and more time to speak about their ideas. Teachers should stand in the students’ shoes to think what they want to learn. In short, it should be student-centered. (Journal 5, March 27, 2017)

The theory showed me that teaching must be fluid. Teachers must think first what they think and what the students think. They must think what gap there is between them and the students and how to bridge the gap. You must use multiple ways to stimulate them and then let them think and make their own judgement. Teachers offer appropriate instruction. This is my understanding of multiliteracies. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Qin interpreted a pedagogy of multiliteracies as a process of constructing a concept from multiple perspectives through multiple channels:

Multiliteracies to me firstly, just like its name, is about literacy. It refers to the understanding of a concept and it is multiple. As to its “multi-,” it means to experience from multiple perspectives, audio, tactile, and so on. It also refers to multi-levelled thinking, how people think and perceive in different contexts and backgrounds, how people view the things. It refers to comprehensive understanding of the concept, not limited to the textbook. The understanding of the concept should be live, specific, vivid, and connected to their real life. In the process of connection, they will be inspired to find out the gaps between the real-life world and their understanding, which makes them think about how they should interpret the concept. This brings about a deeper, richer, and three-dimensional understanding of the concept. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Qin changed her way of teaching new words from simply explaining the literal meaning of a word to using a multimodal approach:

I taught the new words with a new method. Multiliteracies suggests learning about a word through multiple ways. Students understood the meaning of descriptive words through gestures and sounds. I hadn’t tried it before. I saw that the students liked this type of activity. After this, they would have a deeper understanding of the meaning of the content. (Interview 16, May 11, 2017)

Qin fully recognized the importance of teachers modelling for their students to be a multimodal learner. By the end of the research, she said,

After more than two months study, I have had a deeper understanding of the multimodality of meaning representation. Along with pictures, I can also present with graphs. For example, after reading material, we use mind maps. For the tactile mode, I use act out or making a sound. I know the representation of meaning must be multimodal, but I think if you expect the students to be
multimodal, a teacher must be a good facilitator. Teacher’s guidance is critical for the students. Teachers should help the students construct meaning together. You just teach what they don’t know. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

Compared with what Qin did before, she now generated the key features of multiliteracies classes. The first was interdisciplinary, in other words, it addressed the connection between English learning and thinking, between learning and students’ lives:

The first is that it develops the students’ thinking. It makes the students think with the language. The outcomes of deep thinking are related to their lives, and are very helpful for their study, living and working. It goes beyond language learning itself. It aims to develop students’ life and learning competencies. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

In this way, teaching was not limited to the textbook itself; instead, it also needed to closely relate to the real-life world. However, Qin realized that this change increased the demands on teachers:

Now I think the textbook is merely the starting point and teachers need to have a deeper understanding of the text. The teacher is a resource provider. The teacher should have a deep understanding of the concept and find out its relationship with real life. This makes the teaching with width and depth. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

According to Qin, a teacher should act as a resource and co-constructor of knowledge with their students, offering the students space and time to release their agency and generate their knowledge:

What I have learnt from this lesson was that the classroom was the place where students and teachers co-designed the knowledge together. When students have difficulty, the teacher should give them help and serve as a good resource. (Journal 13, April 24, 2017)

Previously the students learned what the teacher taught without autonomy. The teacher finished teaching the textbook and that was all. … Now the teacher is a resource provider…. Students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active learners. The class is a process in which the students co-construct knowledge with the teacher. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)

The knowledge that students can generate is limitless. The teacher gives students more space and freedom in this kind of class. Therefore, the students will produce richer output than you would have expected. (Interview 18, June 22, 2017)
Qin had a new understanding of the student-teacher relationship, believing now that a teacher should trust the students’ potentiality and create the space for the students to express themselves freely and learn autonomously.

6.1.5 Summary

The biggest challenge that Qin experienced was how to shift from teaching to learning. She was used to designing lessons from the teacher’s perspective. She began to attend to the students’ perspective as a result of this research project. Even though she occasionally experienced problems, she continued to try and experiment with the ways to break down the barriers. She designed activities to experiment with student-centered instruction, questioned her previous teaching philosophy, tested new strategies, and reflected on the effectiveness of her approach.

When the data collection was completed, Qin identified that one of her essential jobs was to trust students and create a positive learning environment where they could think and express their ideas in English. She summarized two remarkable changes in her class. Firstly, ever since she set the rule of no Chinese being used in English class, she had developed the habit of speaking English all of the time, and students conversed more in English. They listened to her carefully and followed her English instructions during class activities. Secondly, she became more adept at designing lessons based on how learners learn rather than how she should teach them. She paid more attention to the learners’ activities, caring about what they knew, what they did not know, and what she could do to help them gain knowledge beyond their current capacities. For those who more easily grasped the concepts, she designed activities to give them an extra opportunity to express their ideas. For those who were struggling with the concepts, she offered them help or resources to reach their goal.
6.2 Yi’s Narratives: Addressing Students’ Subjectivities in Learning English

6.2.1 Yi and Her Students

When Yi was hired to work at Xinxin Elementary School in 2012, I was appointed to be their English curriculum consultant and often participated in their seminars. However, Yi and I did not have much contact. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English but had not taken any courses related to education or curriculum. After graduation, she taught Chinese to foreign students in Thailand for one year. She applied for a teacher certificate when she returned to China and obtained the job at Xinxin Elementary School. Although she had experience teaching Chinese to adults, she had never taught English to elementary school students. Yi was fully aware of this weakness. Therefore, she started developing her lesson planning, English teaching strategies and skills, and so on. As a novice English teacher, under the school requirements, Yi spent the first two years on familiarizing herself with the students, English curriculum, teaching materials, lesson plans, assessment system, and daily routine. She learned through observing and imitating how the experienced teachers taught English. When we met again in 2017, Yi was ranked one of the key teachers at the school. Although she had won a number of prizes in competitions, Yi recognized that her teaching could still be improved. She took this study as a good opportunity to learn of new ways to develop professionally.

Yi taught students at the grade 3 level and selected two classes for data collection. She had been teaching these particular students since the second semester of grade 1. According to Yi, she selected these two classes because the students had good learning habits and their parents were cooperative. The students could easily follow instructions, either verbal or gestural. Usually, group work in these classes went smoothly, and they had no problem helping each other. The students could complete tasks successfully and meet the requirements. Generally, they were good listeners and well-disciplined. Whenever Yi designed demo classes or participated in competitions, she would select from these two classes. In Yi’s opinion, the two chosen classes were the “best” two
classes among the four classes she taught, although they were not at the top in terms of test scores.

6.2.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: *The Didactic, Mechanical Type of Instruction Made Them Feel Bored*

After the first research group workshop on a pedagogy of multiliteracies, Yi started to design new lessons that addressed learning and learners’ subjectivities. The first observed class was also an open class. She taught the same story in her other classes. In the lesson, Yi first presented the cover page and invited the students to predict the what, who, when, where, and how. She allowed them to raise questions about what they wanted to know from the story. However, Yi had some questions about this new design:

I couldn’t continue because the students had no experience asking questions and predicting in that way. Without daily practice on questioning strategies, it was impossible for them to use this skill immediately. Students would be motivated more by such a design. I also let the students to read by themselves in other classes, however, I didn’t know what followed after the self-study. What’s more, I gave them a question for group discussion, but each group got to the answer at a different pace. Then, some groups had nothing to do but wait while the other groups needed more time. I couldn’t give consideration to every group. After the group discussion, I didn’t know how to give feedback on the questions, should I evaluate the whole set of questions or one question at one time? I tried several methods in other classes, but I still didn’t know. I also felt puzzled by what else I could do because it was very easy for them to find the answers to the questions. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)

Being uncertain about the new instructional approach and the students’ final performance, Yi reverted back to her original lesson plan on the first observation day to feel more comfortable.

The original lesson plan followed a fixed teaching procedure, which meant no matter what picture book it was, the activities and their sequence would be the same. In this lesson, Yi started with a picture walk, followed by a question-answer activity, choral reading, and acting out the story. The students followed her instructions, answered the questions about the content effortlessly, and completed all the tasks successfully. When a new word appeared in the reading (e.g., an island), she simply presented a picture of an
island with no discussion on what an island was. Interactions were simply between Yi and one student, although she did communicate with the students about her own ideas. As usual, this lesson went smoothly; however, the majority of the class acted passively.

The students’ performance and passivity urged Yi to reflect deeply on her lesson plan. This was an open class in which she was expected to “show and prove” how well students could perform in front of all the class observers. She preferred that students read the story by themselves because it was an easy story. For the first time, Yi sincerely acknowledged that a lesson design must be based on what the students needed or what they were interested in. Yi explained,

I could let them share the questions they had about the texts within the groups and argue for their findings about the questions. I could pause the discussion to check the outcomes at the appropriate time, scaffold for the students, and ask questions to evoke deep thinking about the story. Students could retell the story in their own way rather than following and repeating mechanically what I said. (Interview 1, March 13, 2017)

Yi recognized that she had been over-controlling the flow of learning and should instead allow the students to make sense of the story by themselves. Yi said, “Students loved to discover things by themselves and wanted to express their ideas” (Interview 1, March 13, 2017). In fact, the students needed more space and time to practice reading strategies and skills to make meaning. Over-instruction on what the students already knew was redundant and meaningless.

A few weeks later, when Yi recalled her previous teaching, she stated that “students didn’t like to follow the teacher mechanically. The didactic, mechanical type of instruction made them feel bored” (Interview 4, March 23, 2017). Acknowledging that she needed to shift to learner-centeredness, Yi began the journey of exploring the what and how to actualize it.
6.2.3 Moving Forward Through Celebrating Changes in Practices:  
*Learning Should Be Meaningful for the Students*

6.2.3.1 Constructing Meaning From Multimodal Perspectives

Yi’s innovative practices started with vocabulary learning, which she believed was the basic component of language development for elementary Chinese students at a grade one level. Yi did not simply tell the students the meaning of a new word; instead, she created learning opportunities for students to construct a word’s meaning from a multimodal perspective.

Yi planned the lessons for the “Food” unit in which the students were supposed to be able to use quantifiers to indicate the quantity of food. She designed three types of activities. In the first lesson, she asked students to paraphrase the meaning of quantifiers and fruit before teaching the vocabulary directly. Although they felt a little confused at the beginning because they had never thought it would be their responsibility to make sense of the new words on their own, the students quickly caught on. In fact, they enjoyed this new way of learning words, judging by their active participation in this activity.

Following this, Yi showed pictures of various fruit, asking the students to describe their shape, color, and taste in order to help them construct the meaning of the fruit. Students constructed the multilayered meaning of each word, which reinforced their memory and understanding. In the next lesson, Yi brought real food objects into the classroom, such as cheese, bread, yogurt, grapes, and pop, as well as container objects such as a glass, bowl, and jar. She took them out of a paper bag one by one, asking the students to describe each object in a group of three.

To her surprise, Yi saw that the students not only used the learned quantifiers to modify the type of food but also produced a rich discussion about how the food tastes and feels. Yi was very excited with the changes happening to the students:

> I thought the students’ oral presentations were very good. They attended to my instructions seriously and they were willing to express their ideas. This didn’t happen in the previous lessons. Although they were in the classroom, they had been absent-minded. Now they paid attention to what other groups said and
observed how they were similar and different from other groups. They did think
and act. (Interview 3, March 20, 2017)

To help the students understand the differences between “a slice of” and “a piece of,” Yi
cut a slice of apple in front of them. Sometimes, she invited a few of the students to taste
the food. The significance of authenticity was highlighted for Yi:

It was easier for them to speak with authentic experience (touch the objects).
Previously, they had learned new words in an obsolete way. Now I found that
they could express a lot. Those specific, concrete objects activated and inspired
their ideas. Previously, when they described what they saw in groups, they did not
listen to each other. Now they were engaged in real, authentic communication.
(Interview 3, March 20, 2017)

Authentic expression must be situated in an authentic context. I felt at least they
were willing to speak, and they had something to say. What they said was not
superficial, or already known; instead, it something rich in content and contained
their own opinions. They wanted to share with others. (Interview 3, March 20,
2017)

Changes in the method of teaching vocabulary brought about changes in the students’
performance. These changes were very impressive, causing Yi to reexamine her prior
instructional approaches:

Previously, I taught what they might have learned by themselves before the class.
Now they wanted to learn and wanted to know. They learned what they wanted to
learn. They not only learned by themselves but also with and from other
students…. This lesson allowed the students to have rich experience with the new
knowledge, not only through pictures, but also through touching the concrete
objects. I argued with them, which made them think deeply. I felt more interested
in my teaching. (Interview 3, March 20, 2017)

Yi motivated the students through self-discovering problems and allowed them to make
sense of meaning in their own ways, bringing any food with a package into the class:

I didn’t teach quantifiers before. I asked them to bring things from home based on
their understanding of the quantifiers. Some students brought the right things.
Other students didn’t and they discovered their problem. I thought it was a good
thing that they discovered the problems by themselves. Different students had a
different understanding of the same concept. A boy brought a French loaf that had
hard crust, and this made me a little surprised. He said that the bread was hard and
invited me to touch it. It was good to let the students know that bread could be
soft as well as hard. One student made hot tea and then put milk in a cup in class
to show what “a cup of” meant. Students made sense of the quantifiers in their own ways. This morning, in another class, one student brought canned fish to explain “a can of.” That was another use of “a can of” which I didn’t think of before. I only thought of using “a can of” to describe different types of drinks. Although it took a lot of time, I thought it was worth doing. (Interview 4, March 23, 2017)

Yi compared the students’ performance in this class with what she saw in previous classes and understood that a “teaching plan was not merely about how to teach, which was a little boring” (Interview 3, March 20, 2017). Yi now understood that letting students voice and share their own ideas would motive them more than simply repeating the facts in the texts. Yi stated,

Although students put up their hands to answer the questions they did not answer from their heart. That kind of learning was not meaningful and significant to them. The students did not care about discussion, real or not. But now they did have a discussion with each other. Even those who were “slow” were happy to participate in classroom activities and they felt very interested. They talked and thought together. (Interview 3, March 20, 2017)

Yi saw that the new activities made the students happy and engaged, even though they were usually tired and bored on summer afternoons. Students now actively participated in the group presentation. They were more attentive to what other groups brought and how they described the objects with the quantifiers than when they were only listening to the teacher. Students promptly responded to other group presentations and reflected on their own presentations when they watched.

The changes in the students influenced Yi’s affective state as well:

When I saw the students happy in the class, I felt happy too. The students also inspired me. A lot of things I didn’t think of. We learned together. Now I felt my teaching was more like a natural conversation with the students. (Interview 4, March 23, 2017)

The positive experience in the previous four lessons enabled Yi to find the way to approach a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Some of the concepts emerged in her mind—authenticity, space, needs, multiple modes, real-life world—and forged a new understanding of teaching and learning. Yi interpreted and implemented learner-centeredness with actual teaching practices.
6.2.3.2 Constructing Meaning From Sociocultural Perspectives

English curriculum is supposed to promote cross-cultural understanding, according to the National Curriculum Standards of English Subject in China. The English textbook Yi’s school used in class was developed by scholars from the United States. Therefore, the content of the textbook would enrich the students’ knowledge of American culture. Nevertheless, there were little connections made between the textbook knowledge and the students’ real-world daily life, which required the English teachers to adapt the content.

When Yi asked the students to draw what they ate for breakfast, students rarely presented the Chinese food that they ate. Yi explained,

    In fact, we discussed how what we usually ate was not western foods such as jam and toast. On the contrary, the students always ate Chinese food for breakfast, such as soybean milk and deep-fried dough sticks. These are typical foods that people eat every morning in China and people like them. (Interview 6, March 30, 2017)

Therefore, Yi decided to add expressions of Chinese food familiar to the students. When she presented the pictures and expressions of Chinese food on the screen, all the students spoke out excitedly the names of the food. They were excited about discussing the breakfast they ate every day and describing its taste, flavour, and ways of eating based on their personal experience. Moreover, the students discussed healthy eating habits through comparing different foods.

Yi used videos quite often in class. Previously, the purpose was simply to activate the students’ prior knowledge and to make connections with the topic. Yi used to be concerned about whether the students felt happy with or interested in the video. Now Yi expected that what she presented and taught in class formed the links with the real world around the students. Yi explained,

    Now I would consider what message I wanted to convey to the students when I selected the video. For example, when I showed the video Take a Ride for the reading class, I wanted to tell the students that society was progressing, and we needed to constantly change our ideas. I wanted to point out the trend of the thing they were learning. It was a complement to their life experience. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)
The criteria for selecting the video was authentic life; it needed to be related to authentic life. It served as supplementary cross-curricular knowledge and highlighted the contrast between eastern and western culture. The Chinese culture they knew was different than western culture shown in the textbook. I added extra knowledge. But I had wanted something more. I wanted to make the students understand all of the things were around them...When the students saw these videos and pictures, they felt quite authentic and real. They were using them and saw them around…. What we communicated was real rather than focusing on the textbook or things happening more in the western countries. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

The limitations of the textbook made it necessary for Yi to deliberately select supplemental learning materials. She believed that such an adaptation of the curriculum content could familiarize the students with both Chinese and western culture.

6.2.3.3 Constructing Meaning Collaboratively as Co-Designers

The project in the “Food” unit in the textbook was to write a recipe for making yogurt. Yi realized that not every student liked yogurt and decided to revise the project. She expanded the scope of the project, asking the students to bring the ingredients and materials to school next day to make a recipe of their choice in class. In addition, Yi wanted to create a space for the students to self-obtain new knowledge through experiencing and applying it, as well as connecting it with their life experience. She only acted as a guide and director in the inquiry process. Yi had little experience designing and organizing such a complex project, but she was willing to give it a try.

Before the class was dismissed, Yi divided the students into groups of four and let them discuss what food they would like to make in class. She assumed that the students would have only a few ideas about it. To Yi’s surprise, they came up with many creative ideas:

I only thought of sandwich or hotdog. I found my perspective was limited. Before the class, I prepared a list of foods for the students. One student said they wanted to make coffee, which was beyond my expectation. That student’s answer inspired me and made me realize that I should give them time to think, discuss, and make their decisions. I also realized that sometimes my limited perspectives would limit the students’ perspectives. (Interview 6, March 30, 2017)

Students brought the materials for making a recipe to the next lesson. Yi wore an apron, dressing like a cook. As an observer, I was impressed by her courage to challenge herself
by trying new things. Yi strategically designed and organized the activity step by step. She first introduced the steps and rules of the food competition, emphasizing “No Chinese.” Then she explained the assessment rubric for the group’s presentation. After that, the students worked in groups of four (See Figure 6). They talked about the ingredients, condiments, and seasoning brought from home, full of interest and excitement. Taking out the bowls and wearing gloves, the students made the food while discussing the steps in English. They reminded each other not to speak Chinese. Every group was busy, trying to prepare the food within the time limit. The groups made vegetable salads, fruit salad, sandwiches, pancakes with beef and vegetables, and hot dogs. When the food was ready, they divided it into seven dishes.

When time was up, Yi introduced the steps for the group presentation: introducing the food and menu and then tasting it as a group. To ensure that everyone in the group was engaged and spoke during the presentation, the students taught each other the names of the ingredients in their groups and practiced the presentation together, integrating the knowledge that they had learned with their authentic experiences. Some groups prepared flash cards, a regular teaching method used by Yi. They duplicated what they observed in the classroom and worked collaboratively. Yi walked around the classroom, monitoring time and procedure, and intervening when necessary.

![Figure 6: Snapshots of the “Food Competition” in One Class](image)

The presentation time finally arrived. Each group put their food under the overhead projector. While one student introduced the ingredients, another student pointed at the ingredient mentioned. They described how to make the food and how it tasted. After that, they offered each group a dish to taste. When all the groups finished the presentation, they tried the dishes one by one and wrote down their feedback on the food.
After class, Yi assigned homework: writing a food menu. From the multimodal work done by the students, she saw that they could use the quantifiers and the learned expressions flexibly to describe the food, the ingredients, and the steps (See Figure 7). Yi was very satisfied with students’ overall performance:

The food they made and the language they used were not prescriptive and predetermined based on the textbook but based on their own interests and choices. I found that project-based study triggered more output than I had expected. One student brought a weighing machine, which surprised me a lot. This meant they related the textbook knowledge to their real life. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

![Figure 7: Students’ Writing Assignment: A Food Menu](image)

Yi was confident that without mechanic drilling and rote learning, the students still could internalize new knowledge and even achieve more:

I didn’t think the knowledge of food and quantifiers constructed in this way would not be “solid” because it was gained through the students’ own analyzing. They would memorize the knowledge deeply. The ingredients and life experience from the real world and their authentic experience of making the food brought in new knowledge of food from outside the school and enriched their knowledge of the topic. This also helped them review the classroom knowledge better. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

In addition, Yi found that project-based study triggered more output than she had expected. Throughout the activities, the students were involved in authentic discussion in this class. They used English as a medium of communication and tried to express themselves clearly with the language they had learned. They agreed or disagree with each other and every single student participated in the discussion. Although there was some dispute between them, they all worked towards their goal.
6.2.3.4 Constructing Meaning Through Addressing Subjectivity

Yi made full use of questions to identify the students’ needs when reading a new text, for example, what they wanted to know, why they wanted to learn, and what information they were interested in. She believed that the students would be motivated to read only when they saw the “gap.” Yi said,

When I designed the lesson, the first question I considered was the “gap” between the text and their knowledge. I also considered what the students knew about that topic. I think comprehension should focus on vocabulary and the deep meaning behind the literal words. (Interview 16, May 18, 2017)

The questions Yi gave the students created space for them to think. They were more willing to participate, as the students were keen to help create the lesson. Although not all of the students’ answers were correct, the students had the opportunity to improve their expressive ability of English through the process of discussing and arguing.

When it was time to learn the cartoon Franklin Takes the Bus, unlike in previous classes in which Yi asked questions while students watched and answered, this time Yi asked students to think what they wanted to know about the story. Students shared their questions in groups of four and selected one question that all of them were interested in. The questions they raised were not limited to the literal recall of who, what, where, and when, but instead were related to the inferential meaning behind lines such as: Why did Franklin take the bus? How did Franklin take the bus? Franklin and who took the bus? Rather than giving them feedback right away, Yi displayed five still pictures from the cartoon one by one. She let students observe the pictures and look for the clues to answer their questions. Students inferred some answers from the pictures, but not all of them.

Later, Yi played the whole clip of the cartoon. Students listened, watched, and looked for more clues to answer their questions. Yi observed,

With questions, they had a stronger motivation or curiosity to watch the cartoon. They wanted to test their predictions…. Watching the video with questions was a new way of starting the process of learning. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)
Sometimes Yi designed the whole class as a process of predicting and testifying. She listed the questions and the students wrote down their predicted answers before watching the cartoon:

Students first predicted what happened in the story and then they made the second prediction with the pictures as clues. After the prediction, they watched the cartoon and tested their assumptions. (Interview 10, April 17, 2017)

Students were more attentively watching and listening because they wanted to know whether their predictions were correct or not. They actively constructed the meaning drawing on different cue systems independently or collaboratively. Yi transferred this idea of designing to a reading lesson in which the students were going to read the story *Wake Up*. Unlike before when she asked the students to predict the plot, she started by asking them questions about their experience of getting up in the morning. Then she invited them to think about the questions in regard to this story in order to activate their interest in reading. She let students exchange their questions between groups, which she had never tried before. Yi believed that they would like to share with other students of the same age instead of her and that they would be interested to see if their classmates raised the same questions or answered similarly when they checked the answers together. According to Yi, “The process they used raised questions, answered questions, and retold the story using contained self-construction of meaning and analysis of the information” (Interview 16, May 18, 2017).

6.2.3.5 Constructing Meaning Through Creative and Critical Thinking

Usually, Yi asked questions to direct the students to think deeply about the texts they read or viewed. Instead, she decided to allow the students to raise their own questions in order to give them the space to think creatively and critically.

In the study of the cartoon *Franklin Takes the Bus*, Yi raised a number of questions to draw the students’ attention to the hidden value behind the story: What could happen if we don’t tell the truth? If you want something from others, what should you do? Can I borrow it? If others want something from you without asking, what will you do? What
have you learned from the story? She expected that the students would think about how to be a good, polite person. If they wanted to borrow something from others, they should ask first; if they made mistakes, they should be brave and admit them and apologize; and when others make mistakes, they should forgive them. Yi achieved the objective of moral education successfully through the dialogue with the students. These ideas would direct their future behaviours and actions. What significantly satisfied Yi was that students had more critical awareness than before. Students actively responded and were highly engaged in the discussion on the topics related to their life experience. Apart from that, Yi told me,

I used a new design in this lesson, which was writing something you wanted to say to the characters. I thought they had their own comments for different characters. They had many choices. They were not confined by the teacher because they asked the questions they wanted to ask, just like the questions I raised for discussion. This time I allowed them to express their real opinions about the characters, no matter if they were positive or negative comments. (Interview 12, April 24, 2017)

Chant was one of the popular genres of text in the textbook. There was a lesson using the chant approach about a boy named *Wee Willie Winkie*, who disturbed the people in the town at nine o’clock in the evening by knocking at windows and shouting in keyholes. The regular way of teaching this lesson would include Yi playing the chant, teaching the new words or phrases while the students identified the rhymes and chanted repeatedly after the audio recording. Finally, they would read the chant together as a group in front of the class. This time she wanted to stress the process of meaning making. The chant really resonated with students because they had similar life experiences: they had been woken up by noises at night.

Yi asked the students to predict the setting, character, and events, drawing on the visual clues in the picture. After that, she presented the chant on the screen and let the students make their predictions. They disputed whether it happened in the morning or in the evening and why the boy knocked at the windows. She let them defend their stances and gave her feedback now and then. Students were highly attentive to other students and expressed their own opinions, agreeable or disagreeable. They argued, adjusted, and learned at the same time. Sometimes they used gestures to assist with expressing
emotions while they chanted, which they rarely did before. The classroom atmosphere was very good, full of joy. Finally, Yi asked the students to think about and discuss the following: If you lived in this town, would you like him? Why or why not? What would you say to him? How could you help remind him that the children in the town go to sleep early? She wanted to inspire the students to reflect on the character’s behaviour and to think about how to solve problems in daily life, not just decode the meaning of the text. Yi reflected,

This lesson design gave the students a lot of time to think deeply. Students thought actively and imagined boldly what would happen. They expressed many good ideas about what made the characters angry and what they should do. (Interview 14, May 4, 2017)

The thread running through my lesson plan was deep thinking and multiple perspectives of thinking. I thought whatever they said was acceptable. This kind of teaching procedure went smoothly, coherently, and naturally. (Interview 14, May 4, 2017)

Two problems, however, still frequently bothered Yi. The first problem was that the children’s language proficiency was not good enough to allow them to express their rich thoughts in English. The second problem was that class time was not adequate for students to work on complex, multimodal tasks in class. They needed time to discuss what to present and in what modes of presentation, as well as the time to practice before presentations and to work together after class. As a solution, Yi decided to give the students more days to work on the task and hand it in before they started the new unit.

6.2.3.6 Constructing Meaning Through Making Connections

One of the obvious changes that happened to Yi was that making connections between textbook knowledge and students’ life experiences and knowledge became a focus in her class. Her previous procedure of teaching songs was rigid. Students listened to the song, read the lines, and then sang along with the song repeatedly. Now, she asked the students to write a song that told their parents about their needs. They sang about their real needs, making text-to-self connections. In addition, Yi started to frequently ask questions such as: Have you ever watched …? What can you do to …?, trying to bring the students’ experiences into the class. While communicating, the students creatively used what they
had learned to express themselves, and were given more time to organize, process, and modify their own English language system, no longer restricted to the language patterns in the textbook. Based on their responses, Yi realized that the alterations to her pedagogy were enriching the students’ life experiences and their understanding of the world around them.

The original English books used for reading classes were composed for children living in English-speaking countries and reflected their life. In addition, the information presented was not about what was happening in the present but in the past. Making connections between the material and the real world could address these weaknesses. For example, when designing a lesson on the non-fiction book *Take a Ride*, Yi encouraged the students to search for information about various elevators on the Internet and allowed the students to present their findings a multimodal way to the whole class as a group (See Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Student Slides from a Group Presentation called “Elevators in Life”*

This student introduced the dumb waiter, and elevators used for sightseeing, vehicles, ships, and construction. The richness of the content went far beyond Yi’s requirements as well as her expectations:

> Before they did this assignment, I also did research on the Internet and gave them some clues. But I think the students found rather comprehensive information including the escalators used to carry food. Other students were very attentive when she presented. A lot of things they knew but had never thought of in regard to their daily life. When they shared their knowledge about the riding tools, I also learned a lot from them and was enlightened by them. (Interview 12, April 24, 2017)
Before the class ended, Yi showed a video that introduced some new inventions not included in the book. When the students watched the video, they shouted with admiration, saying “Cool,” “Funny,” or “Wow.” Yi did this with the intent of “arousing their interest, expanding their knowledge, and realizing that such fantastic riding tools in the world can bring great convenience for people” (Interview 12, April 24, 2017).

6.2.3.7 Constructing Meaning Through Multimodal Presentations

Presentation was a regular activity in Yi’s class. She treated it as a co-design learning process among the students. She designed a task discussing good and bad habits in which the students would prepare a presentation as a group of four. She told them they could use different ways to help them present, such as pictures and gestures. Before they started, Yi asked the students to do a survey on what habits the other students wanted to know about. Yi said,

Their investigation helped them understand the other students’ needs. Then each group had a clear direction to search for information. This task was significant because they considered and met the needs of the audience. Along with what they wanted to introduce, they added what the audience was interested in. They prepared for the task with clear objectives, which motivated them more. (Interview 11, April 20, 2017)

Figure 9: Students’ Group Presentations on “Healthy Rules”

Based on the results, the groups decided which health rule they would present on. The students selected different modes to present (See Figure 9). The group in the first picture created a PowerPoint on the topic of “Do Exercise Everyday.” Along with the oral presentation, one student acted out the presentation at the same time. The group in the second picture displayed the rules in written format but also used gestures to illustrate, helping the audience understand the rule “No smoking.” The group in the third picture created performance art to illustrate the rule “Don't overweight.” There was another
group that explained the positive and negative effects of sleep. They quoted research reports to support their stances. Finally, they composed and performed a dialogue to showcase the topic “Get Enough Sleep.” The students enjoyed the free space to select and design the way of presenting the information, and they were full of creativity. This task integrated English learning and other subject knowledge and a multimodal presentation integrated language skills and art skills.

Yi again observed changes happening to her and the students:

I saw changes in my class. Previously, I thought the students should accept what I taught them. Now I considered what they wanted to know and what they wanted to learn. I considered what they wanted to learn could be learned by themselves through cooperation, communication, and negotiation inside and outside of the classroom. (Interview 11, April 20, 2017)

Now they were accountable for their self-study competence. They had a lot to do. I just showed them a direction. They did research, analyzed, discussed, cooperated, constructed, and accomplished through cooperation. Now they were active learners. They gradually developed the competence of cooperation and grasped the general routines required for cooperative work. I thought their overall self-study competence was improved and their interest in and passion for learning English was reinforced. (Interview 11, April 20, 2017)

Witnessing the students’ outstanding performance, Yi argued that teachers should change their perceptions of students, recognizing their potential capacity for learning and encouraging them to learn in their own ways. Yi explained,

I thought they couldn’t do this or that before. Out of this distrust, a lot of activities in my classes couldn’t be done. Their potentiality was underestimated. Even if they didn’t prepare for the activity before class, they could accomplish the cooperative work. In fact, they had the desire to learn. Previously, I highlighted transmitting knowledge to them, neglecting the potential of self-study. Now I saw that firstly, they liked to learn; secondly, they were capable of doing it; and thirdly, they were willing to learn… If a teacher was too conservative and always thought that the students couldn’t do anything, then the students had no opportunities to try new things. A teacher should be open and have multiple perspectives. (Interview 11, April 20, 2017)

I felt at the beginning of the class, it was the teacher who controlled the process, not letting the students learn, perhaps worrying that the students were too young, unable to do or unable to speak. But now I thought we could give students the time and opportunity, through group cooperation and a focus on their needs and
interest. Through the variable modes of presentation of every group, although students varied in terms of English levels, I could see that students applied the language they learned and presented with multiple modes. I could see I changed my view of my students. I always thought they were incapable. Previously I liked to impose my will on the students, but I found that students liked to learn in their own way better. They liked to cooperate in their preferable ways in accordance with their age and habits. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

Yi gave the students the chance to do their presentations and addressed what they needed to pay attention to when needed. She was happy to hear other teachers say they did not need to teach her students PowerPoint and presentation skills because they had already learned those skills in English class. Yi summarized, “Whatever I think will be helpful or useful for them, I will teach them” (Interview 18, May 27, 2017). Learning that designing and delivering presentations in English class enabled the students to succeed in other subjects as well, Yi realized that any general skills learned benefitted students and should be introduced and practiced.

6.2.3.8 Catering to Individual Students Through Peer Assessment

In most cases, it was Yi who orally assessed the students’ performance in class, giving feedback such as “Good,” “Excellent,” and “You’ve done a good job.” Considering the limited class times and large size of class, Yi thought this approach was efficient. However, the majority of the students did not receive any feedback on their learning during the whole lesson. Therefore, Yi decided to experiment with ongoing assessment in the class and took peer assessment as the starting point.

While reviewing a lesson, Yi designed three peer assessments on reading comprehension: (1) Ask and answer. Each student thought of two questions about the story and wrote them down on the assessment worksheet. Then two students exchanged their worksheets and answered the questions. After that, they exchanged the worksheets again. They checked each other’s answers to the questions and graded with “Super,” “Not bad,” or “Needs practice”; (2) Read the story aloud. Two students read the story in turn and graded each other’s performance in terms of pronunciation, voice, and intonation. After that, Yi invited one student to read one part of the story and other students gave oral feedback on his/her reading from the three scales; and (3) Find the verbs in the past tense.
Students reread the story and wrote down all the verbs in the past tense on the worksheet. Then two students exchanged their worksheets and checked the verbs in the past tense written on the worksheet. When this activity was finished, Yi and the students checked the answers together. Although she did not include the results of peer assessment as part of the final assessment, she believed that their assessment results were objective and effective. Yi also believed that peer assessment was a valuable learning experience for the students and could promote their learning:

I think peer assessment positions students as the assessors as well as the assessed. The rubrics of assessment could be the guideline when they presented learning outcomes because they knew what would be assessed and what they should pay attention to. They used the assessment to adjust their activities and their performance. (Interview 17, May 22, 2017)

I cared more about the process of assessment. I saw that they were all engaged in the process. I didn’t hear complaints about the grades. They evaluated based on the students’ on-site performance, without any bias. This kind of assessment was a kind of encouragement for the students who used to be considered not good enough. I respected their comments. (Interview 17, May 22, 2017)

To sum up, Yi thought that peer assessment helped the students diagnose their own areas of improvement and assisted others with identifying their areas of improvement as well. This peer assessment was authentic, effective, and meaningful.

6.2.3.9 Exploring With Complex Emotions

During the three months of the study, I came to consider Yi a very persistent person. She would try her best to overcome any difficulties and continuously practiced until she found solutions. She was also an optimistic person who always believed that she could overcome problems. I never heard her place the blame for problems on others. She experienced fluctuations in emotions as she moved from teacher-dominated to student-centered classes.

Yi fully acknowledged that a student-centered classroom required demanding professional competencies due to its distinctive features: dynamic, fluid, and unpredictable. Yi explained,
I revised and adjusted every lesson in each class. It seems it is a lesson about student presentation; it puts a high demand on the teacher because the organization requires careful design and the situation is more complex and uncontrolled as the student-centred learning process is dynamic, fluid, and unpredictable. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

She was occupied with the sense of uncertainty and with the appropriateness of instructional approaches and the students’ learning needs:

I think my classes reveal more student-centeredness than teacher-centeredness. Previously, I was quite assured of how to teach this lesson or how to ask the students to practice, but now I feel “uncertain” because I gave up my authoritative position and transferred it to the students. Sometimes the class goes beyond my control and pushes me to think more. I consider what “real” knowledge they gain in this class and whether it is what they want to know and learn. I feel “tired” (laugh) because I cannot tackle these “puzzles.” Sometimes I don’t know how to respond to students (laugh). (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

After practicing a pedagogy of multiliteracies, I care more about the students’ needs. But I feel it is hard to find out their needs and how to design the lessons based on their needs. In the process of teaching, I sometimes feel puzzled because they may be interested at the beginning, but they sometimes lose interest quickly. It makes me reflect on the problems. Sometimes I feel I know where to go, but sometimes I get lost. I feel happy that the students have the desire to learn not because I ask them to learn. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Such uncertainty produced a sense of being “unsafe” within the flow of teaching:

What made me feel a little worried was the presumptions I should have made before the class. Nothing was controlled by me. I didn’t have a sense of safety. (She laughed.) I didn’t know what the students would say at the next step. What I should say to follow up their conversations and how to deal with the prompt responses was unknown to me. (Interview 19, June 5, 2017)

At the same time, Yi changed the pressure into a desire to improve and moved on:

I think it is a good thing. You have to go through this hard and painful process if you want to grow. If you do the same thing repeatedly every day, you won’t make progress. Even if sometimes I feel like I have no idea how to design the lesson, I still think it is quite helpful for me. I would like to change the form of activities while teaching different classes. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

This made me understand that a good teacher must make have high goals and accumulate more knowledge about the topic, not only words, sentences, or grammar in the textbook, but also knowledge relevant to the topic, either Chinese or western culture, within the same category. (Interview 19, June 5, 2017)
The students’ positive responses to Yi’s changes incited a sense of “guilt,” which at the same time aroused more self-reflexivity on her prior teaching:

I reflect on every lesson and my previous teaching as well. I feel sorry for the students because of my previous “mechanic” style of teaching. I know students like the present instructional approach…. I merely followed the regular patterned models and steps of teaching before. Now I design activities with some challenges. It takes extra time to revise, adjust, and finalize the best lesson plan, but I think this is the process of learning. I found out the problems with my previous teaching while trying the new activities. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Yi’s explorative journey was not always full of joy and success. For example, she felt unconfident designing a lesson to teach a nonfiction text because it was a challenge for her to identify the topic of a unit. She also found it hard to balance the knowledge in the book with the supplemental knowledge needed in order to construct a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Yi said,

Non-fiction reading has no plot and it focuses on information. I don’t know how to design this lesson, really. After I learn about multiliteracies, I think there is a lot for the students to think and I should add a lot of extra information for them. I am occupied by different ideas and it feels hard to sort them out. I want to talk about many things. It’s hard for me to figure out the logic that runs through the different parts. I feel it is hard to balance the text with the supplementary information. Students have no problem with reading the text, but they have some problems with finding the logical relations. I had the similar problems and find it hard to sort it out. (Interview 19, June 5, 2017)

Yi experienced an inner pressure as a result of the uncertainty, self-exposing her limited professional competence. She realized,

The pressure came from myself. Due to the limitations of my professional knowledge, I failed to think about an appropriate approach to teach while planning a lesson, particularly when teaching nonfiction reading materials…. I felt sometimes my scope of thinking was still narrow and fixed. (Interview 19, June 5, 2017)

She attributed this limitedness to her previous practice, in which she had followed a formularized procedure of teaching for a long time. Now it was more flexible and dynamic and therefore many more aspects that she must attend to.
6.2.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Student-Centered Learning Process is Dynamic, Fluid, and Unpredictable

Ongoing reflection runs through Yi’s innovative practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. She experimented with designing new lessons, interrogated her customized teaching behaviours and modes of thinking, and constructed a new philosophy of teaching and learning through innovative practices.

When Yi first began practicing the pedagogy, she only understood a pedagogy of multiliteracies as devices, in other words, she only attended to the function of multiple modes of representation in the process of meaning-making from a teacher’s perspective. She simply attributed it to the teacher’s privilege. While the study was occurring, Yi realized that the students could employ a multimodal approach in learning and reach a better understanding of their new knowledge. Yi explained,

At the beginning stage, at two or three weeks, I cared only about the devices, for example, I needed to use more modes of representation, such as visual and spatial. Then I cared more about the students’ interests and the relationship to real life, according to different particular content. I cared more about what to learn, why to learn and how to learn. (Interview 13, April 30, 2017)

I thought multiple modes only referred to the teacher. It was only I who used multiple modes. By the end I understood that they were not only used by me but also used by the students to present their knowledge. They could use variable modes of representation. Previously they usually used the written mode, similar to the teacher, and they spoke with no other modes to assist their speeches. In fact, I found that when I used a variety of modes to present, I could touch upon different perspectives of one thing, which could help the students have a deeper understanding of the thing. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

Yi’s first conceptualized knowledge was that learning should be related to real-life experiences. In one class, she asked the students to bring in one real object from home and introduce the object with quantifiers. This design connected what was learned in the classroom with real life. Yi provided an overview of how she designed this type of lesson:

When I designed the activities, I considered what knowledge could be useful in the real-life world and how the activities could connect new knowledge with real
life. I suggested the students go to the supermarket and see what things are put into containers. They can take photos or take notes. (Interview 4, March 23, 2017)

Addressing authenticity was one crucial strand of her teaching philosophy that permeated all of the activities. She observed how students were motivated:

Today I designed an authentic context for them to use the sentence structures to communicate. They communicated with the authentic purpose of seeking friends who ate the same food for breakfast or lunch. I think they communicated actively out of authentic purpose. (Interview 6, March 30, 2017)

Yi’s understanding of English education was not confined to linguistic knowledge and competence development. Rather, she highlighted its social significance to personal development by asking value-laden questions about texts:

I could let the students talk about what they learned from this lesson from two perspectives: at vocabulary level, for example, what they learned about the “school bus;” at moral level, for example, they should ask for permission when they wanted to borrow something from others. I could let them talk about other traffic rules that they knew. (Interview 5, March 27, 2017)

I want them to think about what value and competence they need to develop as students. They know about health habits from textbook and they must keep these health habits in mind and distinguish good habits from bad habits. I expected that they not only know but also understand why it is good or bad. Parents only tell them “not to do” but we must explain why to the students. Students can learn through understanding, searching the information, or observing from life. Learning can transmit an attitude of life. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

Yi had the awareness to develop the students’ critical thinking, and she believed multiliteracies highlighted and interpreted critical thinking as a capacity needed to make judgments:

Critical thinking for me means analyzing and finding out good and bad points and summarizing why we should and shouldn’t do things. Then the students critiqued and found out the reasons. (Interview 17, May 22, 2017)

Yi reflected on the questions that should be asked to foster deep thinking, for example, Why should we think about it critically? Why is this opinion right or wrong? In what context? She thought there was no right or wrong judgment because some opinions might be reasonable even if they did not align with the widely accepted opinions. Yi stated,
It was important to lead the students in the appropriate direction. For example, to the question about when their parents allowed them to watch TV, one student said, “I turn on the TV without the approval of my parents.” I didn’t attend to what the student said at that time because I simply thought of asking them a question. In fact, I needed to respond to what they said, and their opinions must be guided. I thought that teachers also need to think deeply. I wanted to develop students’ critical thinking, but I must respond to their thinking. I was more aware of this and I must pay more attention to it. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

After three weeks of the study, Yi defined the value of multiliteracies as active learning, and being competency-oriented:

It aims to cultivate students’ active attitudes of learning. The knowledge is one they want to learn. The teacher helps create the environment from transferring from being required to learn by the teacher to having the desire to learn through setting up the visual, audio context to engage students naturally. It takes competency, as the focus is no longer knowledge acquired through mechanic drilling. I think multiliteracies is of great significance from this perspective. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

I felt that a class design following a pedagogy of multiliteracies and was quite flexible and dynamic. There was not much that a teacher could predict. What I had planned for this lesson or what I pre-assumed, if I followed the new lesson plan, there were many things hard to control. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

Yi summarized the features of active learning as goal-oriented and autonomous. She explained,

When I presented a task, I told the students what we were going to complete in the unit before we learned it from the text, so they know their objectives and the teacher can give them more space to decide their way to present. They made all the decisions and they wanted to do it. Their learning was active learning with this objective because they had their own direction and they knew what aspects they needed to pay attention to in order to achieve this objective. This was active learning. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

These changes inspired Yi to reexamine and redefine the student-teacher relationship and rethink the roles that a teacher could take on in the classroom: co-designers of classes, supporters to help address problems, cooperators of tasks, and co-constructors of learning. She interpreted the role with specific examples. Yi defined her relationship with the students as not one-way but as bi-directional, in other words, they were both learners and teachers. This new type of relationship suggested equality and mutual respect. The
change in the teacher’s role in the process of learning motivated the students to participate in active learning. Yi said,

Let them know that when they have a problem, the teachers can help them, and they can solve it collaboratively as well. This would be good for their future…. I think teachers and students are co-designers of classes. I mainly provide support for them while they decode the meaning and construct the concept. I give them some examples and then they try to explore, discover, and build their knowledge, such as compound words. In most cases, students are masters of knowledge while I act as a supporter. They understand that whenever they need help, I am always there. I just give what they need. (Interview 11, April 20, 2017)

Yi emphasized that the teacher and the students were co-designers. Teacher gave students a topic and they reached an agreed point based on the students’ interest. They co-designed the lesson. They co-constructed what to learn and decided the way to learn. She thought that the co-designer relationship between teacher and students was more equal and facilitated closeness and collaboration. Yi provided insight into how her teaching process had changed:

Previously, in most cases, I asked questions and they answered. Now we co-design the questions. We are more equal. When they need help, I help them deal with the problem, I found that I had more communication with them, and they find they do need this help. Before I assigned the task and they were forced to finish the task. Now they want to design the task, and they realize that with the teacher’s help they can finish a task better. We are cooperators and we are close to each other. We have the chance to negotiate with each other and they have the chance to make authentic communication. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

She was now approaching the tenets of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. It was no longer a detached, abstract theory. Yi defined a pedagogy of multiliteracies in her own language:

It consists of several levelled literacy processes: from experiencing old knowledge and real-life experiences, to acquiring new knowledge, to analyzing and conceptualizing the new knowledge. Such learning integrates the students’ personal ideas and opinions, their analysis of what it is, why they learn and how to use it. Through experiencing, self-constructing, and analyzing, they reach the highest level of applying. In the process of learning, the teacher uses multiple means and modes to help them achieve their learning purposes. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Yi realized how her perspectives had changed, particularly what should be highlighted when designing a lesson:
Multiliteracies broadens my view of designing. I understand that my teaching should not merely centre on experiencing. Now I consider how the students apply the knowledge after learning it, how they apply the knowledge in authentic contexts, and why I should teach or they should learn this knowledge. I understand that I need to balance the students that need to be instructed with the students that need more freedom. I highlight knowledge less while I focus more on critical thinking. I stress the application of language and analyzing the problems. I shifted from merely looking at the sentence structure or words in the unit to changes to the perceptions of the ideas of the events. (Interview 8, April 6, 2017)

Previously I only considered what to teach in class, the knowledge that students must learn, and I what I must teach. Now what I considered more was what the students wanted to learn, what activity could best connect the text with the students’ real life and why, the value of this connection to the students’ present and future life, and how they could apply the knowledge learned in this class. (Interview 20, June 12, 2017)

Based on her practices, Yi addressed the shift from being knowledge-centered to multi-focal when designing a new lesson and considered the balance between overt instruction and active meaning-making, between experiencing and applying, and between language learning and thinking. Yi had discovered that lesson planning should cater to the students’ needs, life experience, and connections.

6.2.5 Summary

Yi summarized that a pedagogy of multiliteracies addressed the depth of thinking and multimodal representations in the process of teaching and learning a language. She changed her understanding of teaching English through continuous experimentation with new instructional strategies and skills. Yi’s trajectory of changes was very clear and obvious through ongoing self-reflection and active exploring, revealing a strong desire to improve professional competency. Yi had a positive attitude toward a pedagogy of multiliteracies and believed that it was applicable in China’s context, apart from some residual uncertainty about how the students’ lack of English proficiency prevented them from communicating with fluency and accuracy.

When the study was completed, Yi said that both her and the students had undergone tremendous change. She observed that the learner difference was reduced in two classes;
the top students were still very good while the students who had lagged behind moved forward. The participant students demonstrated more awareness of speaking English in class and showed higher participation levels than ever before. With more participation and higher interest, the students spent more time learning English in and after class. Their test scores were as high as other classes, even though Yi did not spend much class time on mechanic drilling and memorizing vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammar. Even more, the students liked Yi’s new instructional approach and had a stronger desire to learn than before. She was glad to see that even those who had lagged behind their classmates told her that they wanted to revise the cartoon scripts, which would have not occurred before the study. She found that the students were very eager to do assignments with creativity, with space and with choices.

6.3 Hu’s Narratives: Celebrating Students’ Voices

6.3.1 Hu and Her Students

Hu participated in this research with the expectation that she could improve herself faster under the guidance of an expert, a general belief held by many of the Chinese teachers I have met before. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Business English and had no pedagogical knowledge or skills in teaching English, let alone experience in teaching elementary school students. When the study started, she had only one term (four months) of teaching experience. Xinxin Elementary School appointed the chief head teacher of the English department to mentor Hu and supervise her teaching.

Hu was in the branch school where students in grade 1 and 2 study. It was a 15-minute walk between the main school and the branch school. She chose two classes as the sites for observation. One was the best class among the four classes she taught. Students in this class were more competent than her other classes in terms of comprehension, learning attitudes, and cooperation. They cooperated with Hu very well. The other class was the opposite. At first, Hu had no intention of choosing this class because she thought the students were slow-minded and two or three students were not attentive in class for various reasons. Therefore, she worried that she could not complete the tasks or the
study. Hu, however, decided to take a risk and selected her more problematic class as the second site, and we moved ahead with coordinating the observation schedule.

When the study was completed, Hu believed that she had made the right decision, as she saw great changes in this class throughout the three months. The students surprised her greatly in that they actively participated in class activities and consistently followed the classroom rules. In general, they performed better than the other classes.

6.3.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: The Varied Forms of Representation Activated Their Interest

As she was a young teacher with little teaching experience, Xinxin Elementary School appointed a master teacher, “Shi Fu” (师傅), to mentor Hu and supervise her teaching. The master teacher was the head of the school’s English department. Usually Hu faithfully followed the pre-developed lesson plan, as a novice teacher was expected to do. By participating in this research, though, Hu started to break through the rigid teaching procedures by revising the teaching methods or classroom activities in the original lesson plans. She tried new things she had never considered before and took this opportunity to improve her pedagogical knowledge of teaching English with an expert’s assistance.

In the first class, Hu began to add some multimodal resources to change the ways of introducing the new topic and the new words that the students were going to learn. She used a clip of cartoon that related to the topic of farm animals, although it was an extensive reading lesson. Unlike how she had previously shown the words one by one, this time she displayed a picture of farm on the screen to provide context for the animal names the students were about to learn. Hu replaced the original flash cards with animated images of animals because she found that the students were not very engaged. As she expected, the students called out the name of the animal and were full of excitement when she displayed the animated images one by one. When Hu asked the students to describe the animals in the pictures, she allowed them to use gestures to help. For example, a girl wanted to say “butterfly” but did not know the word. Therefore, Hu
encouraged her to show her answer with actions. Then, she said the word “butterfly.” Hu was excited to see that the girl used it immediately. Hu explained,

I told her that she could do actions if she didn’t know what to say. Just as you thought, she could use different modes of representation, the way that she could present the meaning…. She took it instantly. It was magic. (laughed) (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

Many students in Hu’s grade 1 class had behavioural issues in her words. For example, they were easily distracted because they had short attention spans. When they noticed something interesting, they chatted and laughed continuously until Hu loudly stopped them. Therefore, Hu decided to try group performance assessment in class to deal with the disciplinary problems. Changes in the students’ classroom behaviours emerged. Whenever someone did anything inappropriate and did not follow the class rules, such as chatting or making noises, the other group members reminded him or her to behave because they did not want to lose points. Such small changes in classroom management made the whole class very active and attentive, which as a result caused Hu to reexamine her previous instruction approach that she had been committed to from the first class. Hu said,

Today I changed my approach and assessed their performance as a group. It worked effectively…. Compared with the last lesson, I felt they had much higher interest in this lesson. This was probably because the varied forms of presentation and the change of assessment activated their interest. (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

Hu reflected on the design of activities and recognized that she had asked too many questions about the details. As a result, she did not finish the task of reading two books. She was aware that the instructional approach used to teach an intensive reading story should be different from teaching an extensive reading story. Hu also saw the need for improving classroom management skills because sometimes the class became messy, occasionally interrupting her teaching. With the desire to solve these problems, Hu started her exploratory journey.
6.3.3 Transformation Through Breaking the Rigidity: I Started to Design Activities More Frequently From Students’ Perspectives

6.3.3.1 Creating the “Gaps” to Motivate Students

This was an audio-visual-oral class in which the students were going to watch one episode of the cartoon series GoGo’s Adventures. GoGo was one of the main characters in the cartoon. Each episode of cartoon had two parts and took two classes to view and learn. Students usually liked to watch the first part because it told a very interesting story, while the second part focused on the patterned practicing of functional sentences. It was the time that this class viewed and learned the second part. Hu had concerns that the students were not interested, but she did not know how to solve this problem. However, she decided to continue with the multimodal approach to teach the key words because they were the names of animals.

Hu entered into classroom carrying a toy GoGo. She wanted to bring the cartoon character closer to the students. Never having seen a toy GoGo before, the students cried out with joy. She introduced GoGo to them and asked them to say “Hello” to GoGo. Then Hu presented the image of an animal, described its features, mimed its featured actions, and then showed the written word. After that, she showed more images of animals, asked students to say the name of the animal, and encouraged them to mime the animal when they did not know how to say the word. The students were highly engaged in learning the names of the animals during the whole process.

Hu mainly followed the original developed lesson plan in class: watch and listen, listen and repeat the dialogue, and role-play the dialogue. As she expected, after the first period of learning when the students eagerly learned the animal names, some students started to chat or look around for the rest of the lesson.

When we discussed how the lesson could be revised to engage all of the students in the class, Hu suggested a revision. She could let them listen to the audio first before watching the video. Then the students could talk about what they heard. Another way was that she
could turn off the sound and students could watch the silent video. Hu could then ask them to infer what they might be talking about. The students would not need to recall exactly what they said but instead what they thought they would say. Hu told me,

> I believed that they would be more attentive and curious about what they saw and what they heard. Such changes focused more on the students’ interest or their ability to use strategies to learn. They had more chances to express their authentic ideas rather than having me lead them from the beginning to the end. (Interview 2, March 20, 2017)

Hu tried this new approach in another lesson when she used a cartoon as teaching material. She turned off the sound while playing the cartoon. Without the audio support, the students tried to infer what the characters were saying. They made their inferences based on what they saw. Hu said,

> I thought this activity was good for developing their creativity. Based on the video images and their imagination, students inferred what the characters might talk about…. They used what they learned in the first lesson of this unit to make the inference. (Interview 17, June 5, 2017)

Hu observed that the students were more attentive than merely listening to the audio. Different reactions of the students encouraged her to continue trying new activities to engage the students in the following days.

### 6.3.3.2 Shifting Attention from Vocabulary to Conceptualizing

As a novice teacher, Hu was still in the process of developing teaching strategies. She became bolder and tried new methods. Encouraged by the students’ obviously changed performance in the first two lessons, she continued to employ multimodal resources which she assumed would make it easier for the students to make meaning of new vocabulary or concepts. Hu became more skillful at teaching vocabulary from a multimodal perspective. A multiliteracies pedagogy in her preliminary understanding was to vary the forms to present the meaning of an individual new word, for example, replacing static pictures with flash pictures or gestures. Hu recalled,

> Previously, I was always obsessed with planning different activities for a lesson. Now I actively searched for different types of materials to teach, such as audiotapes, videos, and different games. (Interview 3, March 22, 2017)
In this class, Hu used an audio recording of animal sounds to teach the vocabulary of animals. During the interview, she explained that on the one hand, the students judged which animal it was by the sound, but on the other hand, the students attended to the difference between the pronunciation of the onomatopoetic word and what they exactly heard. However, Hu realized that vocabulary learning was not simply about understanding the meaning of a word. Instead, it was more important to help students organize meaning and build relationships to form a concept. Hu stated,

I thought I could include a few other animals. I didn’t introduce the concept of “farm animal” by distinguishing zoo animals from farm animals… I also should classify the actions of animals…. I could decrease the time for learning about single words and situate the cluster of words into a language context such as the song Old MacDonald Has a Farm. (Interview 3, March 22, 2017)

Hu implemented conceptualizing in practice. To help the students understand the meaning of big and small, she prepared two sets of pictures of animals: a set of big animals and their baby animals. She played a song about baby animals and asked the students to identify which animals they heard. The students recognized the animal from the sound in the audio recording. Then the students shared in pairs. Hu prepared a ball and threw the ball randomly to a student. She asked the student who caught the ball what animal he or she had heard. The student said the name of the animal, imitated its action, and described the features of the animal. When the students identified all of the animals, Hu presented the flash card with the name and picture of the animal on it. At the same time, she presented the card with the words describing the animal sound. Finally, she showed a word map of farm animals on the screen.

Hu was very excited because the students were highly engaged in the activities and responded to her actively, which she did not expect from this class. She found that they were doing good and only getting better during the semester. Hu told me how this change made her feel:

I thought I felt happy and open-minded now. Previously I felt very tired and the class was messy. Now they became more active and I did less than before and relaxed. Although I still talked a lot, they were inspired and activated more. I felt more passionate too (laughed). (Interview 3, March 22, 2017)
To help students better understand the meaning of a supermarket, Hu invited the students to say what the word *supermarket* reminded them of. She listed their ideas on the board to map the meaning of *supermarket*. Apart from that, Hu presented the supermarkets in China and other countries for students to describe, compare, and contrast supermarkets in different contexts. Then they imagined what they would like to buy from two different supermarkets, drawing upon their life experience. All of these cognitive activities aimed to help students understand the meaning of *supermarket*. In a way, Hu’s understanding of conceptualizing likely included constructing a web of meaning for a concept.

6.3.3.3 Changing Classroom Arrangement to Develop Collaborative Awareness

Hu changed the seating arrangement in the classroom. Usually, the desks and chairs were lined up separately, which made it easy for her to manage the class because the students were less likely to be distracted. From the second week, Hu put every two desks side by side, although she felt uncertain what would happen in the class. Hu did not expect it, but this small change brought about new student behaviours:

> When they were seated side by side, they clearly knew whom they should work with. Previously, they had no awareness of pair work or group work unless I explicitly pointed out the groupings. Now it was unnecessary. When they heard the instruction, they understood and reacted immediately. I thought it was a very big change. (Interview 3, March 22, 2017)

The students had a better understanding of pair or group work. The change in classroom management did not make the class messy. Instead, it increased the efficiency of collaborative work.

6.3.3.4 Transferring Rights of Decision-Making to Students

Hu started to consider and design activities from the students’ perspectives. Since the second observed class, she experimented with how to transfer the rights from the teacher to the students. Questioning skills was what she attended to in the first two interviews because she did not feel good with the questions she asked in class. Hu admitted that she asked too many questions and the questions she asked were not incoherent and well-
organized. Her questions often addressed the literal meaning of the text. Meanwhile, Hu realized that she should transfer the right of asking questions to the students:

It was me who asked questions not the students. I thought one student could ask questions and the other picked one and stuck the picture on the worksheet, such as *What can GoGo do? Or Can he ... ?* The difference between the design of this activity and my approach was that they had more chances to practice asking questions in English. They would be willing to ask and express in their own way. (Interview 2, March 20, 2017)

Usually, Hu decided the sequence of learning a new word. Now, she allowed the students to choose the word that they wanted to learn and discuss (See Figure 10). When the class finished, she commented,

I try to activate their learning autonomy. It came from providing them with the right of choice rather than guiding them to make a choice. I felt they were more active. (Interview 4, March 27, 2017)

![Figure 10: A Slide From the Lesson on Farm Animals](image)

**Figure 10: A Slide From the Lesson on Farm Animals**

Considering the characteristics of their age and their interest in doing hands-on activities, Hu let the students practice by themselves. She allowed them to say what they wanted to say and what they wanted to do instead of telling them directly. For example,

After I played the video, I asked them what they knew about carnival and what they wanted to know. Actually, I seldom asked them such questions and I explained the concept to them. I found they had a broad scope of thinking. They wanted to know about different types of carnivals. I collected their questions and wrote them on the board. At the end of the class, I asked them what they still didn’t know about carnivals and they could research further information about it after class…. The purpose was starting from their needs. (Interview 6, April 7, 2017)
Hu wanted to leave the rights of making decisions to the students instead of following her. She wanted to make the students feel learning was about finding out the answers to their questions with her assistance.

6.3.3.5 Constructing Meaning Through Making Connections

Hu thought that what about a pedagogy of multiliteracies enlightened her most was the “need to integrate the textbook knowledge into authentic context” (Interview 6, April 7, 2017). Previously, she only focused on textbook knowledge. However, Hu found that the students were not interested in the content of textbook, as it was disconnected from their familiar lifeworld. She started to consider how to expand the limited scope of knowledge to enable students to learn what they needed in real life.

Hu first considered how to expand the knowledge scope of the textbook in addition to how to construct meaning based on the students’ life experience. She taught the story *The Birthday Cake*, composed of simple, repetitive sentence patterns: *I put the flour in. I put the sugar in. I put the milk in. I put the eggs in. I put the chocolate in. I put the cake in the over. I put the cake in me!* She first presented the ingredients for making a cake on the slides and invited students to describe what they knew about the ingredients. When she taught the new words *flour* and *sugar*, she presented a set of pictures to introduce where flour and sugar came from and how they could be used to make different food. After that, she took out the main ingredients, letting them touch and taste them (See Figure 11).

*Figure 11: A Snapshot of Class on Birthday Cake*

These real, multisensory experiences helped the students construct the multilayered meaning of *flour* and *sugar*: 
I asked them to list the materials for making a cake before I showed them the pictures to activate their previous experience. I tried to help the students construct knowledge of flour as a concept. Students’ responses enriched their knowledge of making a cake. Going through the pictures one by one was rigid and mechanical. But this kind of design interested them more. (Interview 7, April 12, 2017)

In a lesson about celebration, she found that the students had limited experience with carnival. She thought it was not enough to simply show them pictures of a carnival because they were detached from the students’ worlds. Knowing that many students had been to Disneyland or heard about it, she prepared a video clip of a Disneyland carnival. After playing the video, she asked students where they would like to go if they had the chance to go to Disneyland. Immediately, they came up with many ideas based on their prior travelling experience. They easily understood the meaning of carnival. She found that the students were more motivated by authentic content and tasks than textbook-based knowledge and activities.

Practice with a pedagogy of multiliteracies enlightened Hu to situate teaching and learning in the real-life context:

When I prepared for a new lesson, I would think what the students wanted to learn, what they needed, and how I could “drag” their real-life world into the study. This was a change in myself. (Interview 6, April 7, 2017)

Hu attended to the world around the students as well as their own world. She brought in the students’ life experience before teaching the new knowledge. For example, to help the students understand what a toy store was, she videotaped a real visit in the Disneyland toy store with a friend’s help. Students saw the video and felt as if they were walking around the toy store with the transitions of areas in the video recording. They were very excited because it was about their lives. This video activated them, and they were highly engaged in describing the toys in the store. Hu said,

I created a context and led them into it. They found this context was real…. I brought real-life context into the classroom because they were not just learning about the language itself. (Interview 12, May 4, 2017)

This was my first try at designing an authentic communicative task…I prepared different kinds of media and teaching aids for the students when they practiced the role play. I designed the activity from the perspectives of authentic contexts.
When their life experience was brought into the task, they felt at ease and relaxed in class and they found that they could speak a lot. I allowed them to express and communicate with authentic feelings and ideas. (Interview 12, May 4, 2017)

Hu adjusted the role play activity in the textbook, which only contained several turn-takings of questions and answers, into a real conversation although it was a simulated communicative context: a real greeting at the beginning, an interaction through mutual questioning and responding, and a farewell before departure. The purpose was to stop the mechanical drilling that she had been employing to help the students memorize new words, sentence patterns, or texts.

6.3.3.6 Constructing Meaning Through Interdisciplinary Perspectives

When Hu taught the story *The Boat*, she found that it was a good chance for her to address the importance of safety. In addition to regular questions for a literal understanding of the story, Hu asked the students to observe what the two characters wore when they got into the boat. She led the discussion on why lifejackets were very important when taking a boat. Another question for discussion was why the boat sank. Hu said,

> From this discussion, they learned about life skills. I thought it was necessary for them to think of the reasons why the boat sank because they needed to know certain things when they had to row a boat. They should count the number of people and control it. There was a clue indicating that the boat was sinking because half of the boat was full of water. I should let them observe the curved line on the boat. But I was sorry that I forgot about it (laughed). (Interview 9, April 19, 2017)

When Hu held another lesson to teach a story, she played a video of a song to activate the students’ previous knowledge of zoo animals. After that, students named the animals they heard in the video. Based on the students’ responses, she introduced the concepts of zoo animal and zoo keeper. She furthered their understanding by asking what these animals liked to eat and classified the animals into animals that ate plants and animals that ate meat. Finally, she invited students to name more animals that belonged to either type. Hu explained,
The purpose was to expand their extracurricular knowledge by classifying the animals. This knowledge was from their real life. Previously I summarized only the words in the book, rarely including extracurricular knowledge. (Interview 13, May 8, 2017)

When learning about number words, Hu related the content to math study. She played a video about counting the number of monkeys playing in the tree. Then she designed some math exercises. Later, she asked them to think of real-life numbers, such as the telephone number to report a fire or the ambulance number to report a serious accident (See Figure 12).

![Figure 12: A Slide of Telephone Numbers](image)

When Hu taught the unit on the topic of “picnic,” to enrich the students’ life knowledge, she discussed how to have a good experience, how to select the place, food, and weather, etc. When she introduced a tree house, she included information such as the style of architecture and the construction materials to help them better construct the meaning of a tree house. All of the supplementary interdisciplinary knowledge enriched the students’ life knowledge and life skills.

6.3.3.7 Seeking Measures to Tackle the Discipline Problem

As mentioned, class discipline had been a problem in Hu’s classes. She used to think that if she yelled at the students they would behave, but gradually she discovered this did not work. She decided to change her class management. She tried group assessment in the first class, and the problem was solved. She employed prizes to reinforce positive behaviours, a strategy based on Behaviorism. For example, she told the students that she
would assess their group performance in class and the winner would get two stars. It worked:

Today the class was quiet because I used peer group assessment on their behaviours. They had never been so quiet. They did so just because they wanted to win the two stars in the group assessment. If I used peer group assessment from now on, they could gradually develop good learning habits and follow the classroom rules. Today, they became aware that they should actively listen to others and this required them to be quiet, which achieved my goal. (Interview 17, June 5, 2017)

However, Hu did not use classroom assessment continuously, although she acknowledged that it was necessary for students to develop self-monitoring habits. She reused peer assessment in class when needed.

6.3.3.8 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: The Relationship Between the Teacher and Students Was Co-Constructors in Class

Hu experienced some pressure for a short period of time because she believed that she should make each lesson different. She had a strong desire to make some changes. Hu gradually recognized that there was a period in which the change was slow and sluggish, however, it continued to increase.

In most cases, Hu’s reflections addressed instructional strategies and activities design. She found that with a little change in her instructional methods, students started to think and participate actively. Before participating in the research, Hu did not see the connections among the three types of courses: the Integrated English lesson, the Reading lesson, and the Audio-Visual-Oral lesson. Now Hu understood that these courses adopted different modes to represent meanings in English. This was a new knowledge that she generated from the study. The connectivity between courses broadened Hu’s perspectives and allowed her to be more flexible in lesson planning during the study.

Hu engaged in on-going reflection on her lesson design, drawing upon what she observed in the students’ responses and performance in class. Previously, the students appeared to
be indifferent to her teaching. She talked alone most times. She asked questions but received very limited responses from the students. The students followed her passively. She had been too occupied with what to teach. On the contrary, she found that a class designed using a pedagogy of multiliteracies was more dynamic and engaged the students more in activities. She witnessed that when they co-created classes they worked together rather than individually and the students were the leading knowledge constructors while she provided support for their learning.

Hu constructed her knowledge of a pedagogy of multiliteracies with a focus on multimodality. When she selected the mode of representation, she first considered whether it could motivate students or not. For example, she used a video to introduce a toy store because it not only provided a three-dimensional, rich picture of a toy store but also because it resonated with the students’ life experience. She believed that this made the students feel that classroom learning was not dull and detached but closely connected to their own life. She preferred a multimodal approach because it had multifaceted functions:

I wanted to motivate them and activate their curiosity in learning with integrated multiple modes, such as visual and audio. When I played a song or showed them a video at the beginning, they became curious about what the teacher would do and were motivated. I used different modes of representation to provide the context of language and the topic. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

After she had practiced the new pedagogy for five weeks, she recalled:

When I first got to know a pedagogy of multiliteracies, my fragmented and superficial understanding of the approach was using a variety of teaching devices to present teaching tasks. After trying it for some time and with the guidance from the other teachers and you, I thought a pedagogy of multiliteracies didn’t merely refer to multiple devices, but rather is based on the students’ different backgrounds, their understandings, and their learning experiences. They acquired knowledge at different levels…Their ways of expressing themselves and communicating with other students should be multiple, too. (Interview 6, April 7, 2017)

Hu expanded her understanding of multimodality: from employing teaching devices to addressing students’ differences. She understood that either a teacher or a student had the right to make a multimodal choice for teaching and learning.
Multiliteracies drew Hu’s attention to the importance of context in language learning and the connections between textbook knowledge and the real-life world. Previously, she only focused on textbook knowledge. However, she found that students felt textbook knowledge was dull and they did not think it was connected with their life. She started to consider how to expand the limited scope of knowledge to enable the students to learn what they needed in real life. Hu said,

What multiliteracies taught me most was how we need to integrate textbook knowledge into authentic context. I didn’t like focusing on the textbook first and then giving a few more language contexts. Teaching should start from a larger context. Previously I only focused on textbook knowledge, thinking that after I showed the theme picture, they could start to discuss it. In fact, this way of teaching didn’t help the students learn what they needed in real life. What I learned most from multiliteracies was to teach from real-life context. The difference is that students are more motivated by real-life tasks than by textbook-based tasks. They just thought that the teacher was teaching me something. If you gave them a context, they thought they could use the knowledge next time. It was not the knowledge given by the teacher. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

Hu’s continuous self-reflexivity brought about changes in her ideology of education and pedagogy of teaching English learners. Based on the three-month experience, Hu found that learners’ needs were crucial to active learning:

I thought active learning meant to learn what they wanted to learn and to learn based on their needs. They would tell the teacher what they thought when they wanted to learn and gradually constructed knowledge and concepts… For example, when I taught the story Birthday Cake, unlike my previous lessons, I brought the real materials for making a cake into the class. I saw that students were very excited when they saw those materials. They actively thought about what words could be used to name the materials, what the word means, and how to express what I wanted them to say in English. They expected that the teacher would teach them and therefore they paid close attention to me. That was an example of active learning in my view. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

Simultaneously, Hu reexamined the relationship between teaching and learning:

When I tried multiliteracies I started to learn about the relationship between “teaching” and “learning” because I only had four months of teaching experience before. I thought this was a big change for me. I had been thinking that it was the teacher who spoke while students listened in class, just like when I was a student. I had been thinking that either “teaching” or “learning” was the teacher’s responsibility. Now I realized that I should balance the “teaching” with the
“learning.” Students contributed their knowledge and I, as a teacher, was also a learner. Students could teach me something as well. Now I understood that teaching and learning complemented each other. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

Hu identified that the role of a teacher was a supporter and a scaffolder rather than a controller. She metaphorically described students as drivers. For example, she let them decide what they wanted to learn and lead the learning process while she facilitated their learning. In this way, the relationship between the teacher and students changed:

The relationship now between the teacher and the students was as co-constructors of the class. They shared and communicated with each other. Their relationship was equal and relatively democratic. The teacher was not in a superior position and they learned together. I thought a class based on the co-constructing relationship was more harmonious and balanced, unlike my previous classes in which the teacher taught and the students learned, following the teacher’s instructions. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

She also considered the use of Chinese in the classroom. There was a period that she frequently translated her instructions in English into Chinese out of the concern that students at a grade-one level could not understand instructions in English. She attempted to only use English as the medium to give instructions, supplemented with gestures and models. She was surprised that the students responded instantly to her English instructions and followed her instructions correctly after a few weeks. She allowed the students to use single words in Chinese when they could not find the exact English words to express themselves. After a short period of code-mixing time, they became more confident in communicating and more willing to share their ideas in English. The improvement in their awareness and competency of communication in English made Hu realize that she should trust the students’ potentiality and adaptable abilities in learning new knowledge. She felt relaxed and liked to communicate with them, and the students cooperated with her more than ever before.

To Hu’s surprise, she experienced some pressure as a result of the students’ changes because she could not predict what the students would say or how they would respond. The unpredictability made her feel anxious because on the one hand, she was not in control and she worried that the students might not be interested or could not reach her expectation of learning results; on the other hand, it challenged her English competency
and scope of subject knowledge. This unpredictability drove Hu to recognize the
importance of improving her instructional approaches and language competency.

Hu’s self-reflection began to happen autonomously after she tried the lesson plan in one
class.

I would like to revise and practice again whether that change improved the effect
of my teaching or not. Although I felt somewhat pressured, I still wanted to give it
a try even if I had to prepare a new lesson. It gradually became a habit.
Sometimes I would ask the students to reflect on their own performance in class
individually or through a group assessment. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

Although Hu thought her understanding was superficial, she wanted to continue
implementing the approach in class. For example, when there were seminars, demo
activities, or competitions related to teaching and learning in the educational district, she
designed her lessons based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies. The more she practiced, the
deeper understanding she generated. She summarized her understanding of a pedagogy of
multiliteracies as follows:

…a pedagogy of multiliteracies means not only multiple modes of representation
but also multiple modes of expressions or student communication, and their
critical thinking; what they think matters. It means the multiple abilities of the
students and how they could apply them in their own life…. I think a pedagogy of
multiliteracies is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It generates theoretical
principles but also depends on personal understanding and interpretation. It was
dynamic. (Interview 19, June 8, 2017)

Additionally, Hu took a critical lens on a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the Chinese
context:

To me, a pedagogy of multiliteracies is applicable in China’s context. Based on
my own learning experience, Chinese students have been supposed to learn more
academic knowledge regardless of its practicability and applicability in the
authentic lifeworld. The inapplicability of a pedagogy of multiliteracies resides in
the differences in cultural and educational contexts such as curriculum, class size,
and learning environment. For example, some activities are hard to organize and
actualize due to class size and the space in the classroom. (Interview 19, June 8,
2017)

Despite its limits, Hu would continue implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the
future. Once she designed a lesson using the traditional approach because she did not
have time to properly prepare the lesson. Then she found it extremely boring. The next day she adjusted the lesson plan and she felt much better. “It was hard to go back to previous approach” (Interview 19, June 8, 2017), she admitted.

6.3.4 Summary

Hu’s journey exploring a pedagogy of multiliteracies was more challenging than the experienced teachers because she was in a more complex situation. As a novice teacher, she had to confront the problems caused by her limited professional knowledge of general education and the pedagogy of teaching as well as her unfamiliarity with the school English curriculum, the teaching materials, the students, the school routines, and so forth. Despite these many barriers, Hu persistently experimented with a pedagogy of multiliteracies and brought about significant changes in her classroom. She accumulated instructional strategies and at the same time built her own philosophy of teaching and learning. Her understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies started from simply employing different modes to present knowledge in class using multiple devices. Gradually, she moved to understand that multimodality was not only from the perspective of the teacher but also could be from the perspectives of the students, activities, expressions, or assignments. Hu admitted that among the four pedagogical moves, conceptualizing and applying was the area she neglected. She was excited to see that students produced more instant responses to her and participated more actively in classroom activities than before. Hu noted that “Their excited facial expressions shows that they love it and enjoy it” (Interview 19, June 8, 2017). Now she cared more about whether they could apply what they learned in class in their life, and was not confined to teaching linguistic knowledge. Hu developed a more critical lens to examine her own teaching and knew where to go with confidence by using the strategies she had developed and honed.
6.4 Liu’s Narratives: The Bumpy Road to Breaking Through the Bottleneck of Professional Development

6.4.1 Liu and Her Students

Liu has nearly 14 years of teaching experience since she graduated with a diploma in education. She was assigned to teach English even though she did not have any professional knowledge about teaching English. She registered in a continuous education program and earned a bachelor’s degree in English a few years later. Despite her initial gap in education and training, Liu won a number of prizes in various competitions, particularly in teaching students how to write English essays.

Liu was employed by Minyue Elementary School seven months before the study began and she took over the participant class when the study initiated. In a sense, Liu was a new teacher because she had never used the textbook before, as it was different from the one used in the district that she previously worked in. She was new to the school, and the students and their parents as well. She selected a particular class for the study because the average English proficiency of the students was highest among the classes she taught.

Liu looked for a breakthrough by participating in this study. She has been used to didactic instructional approach in her previous teaching career. She felt bored but did not know how to escape this dilemma. She heard about me from her school leaders and colleagues. Therefore, she took this study as an opportunity to change her instructional approaches and her traditional teaching philosophy. Liu stated,

I wanted to participate in the study because of you. I expected that you could give me guidance on teaching. This was a new ideology for me, and I wanted to learn a new ideology and change my ten-year didactic instructional model. I hoped that I could make progress and innovate. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

6.4.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: There Was Little Generated Knowledge

The first class that I observed started with a set of questions about the students’ weekend plans, as the topic of the unit was “weekend plans.” Following this, Liu presented a
picture in the textbook, asking students what they wanted to know about the picture. Students asked questions actively such as: Where are they? Who are they? What do they want to do? This design started from the students’ interests and needs, highly motivating the students. Later, Liu played the recording of the text. She raised questions based on a chart to check comprehension. She deliberately designed an activity discussing the differences between the city and the countryside that was not the activity in the textbook. She intentionally replaced the sketches of the city and the countryside with photos and invited the students to describe the features. Liu explained her approach,

I used a new way to teach the word “countryside.” I asked the students to talk about what the countryside looked like in their mind and how it was different from the city in order to help them have a deeper understanding of the word. I gave them two pictures and let them select which one was the countryside. After they picked, I presented more pictures for comparison. I particularly wanted to try the multiliteracies pedagogy. I wondered if it could be counted as implementing a multiliteracies approach to teaching. (laughed) (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

Based on the students’ answers, Liu summarized the key features of the city and the countryside. When the students had a clear understanding, she asked questions about the details in the dialogue and filled the chart with the students’ answers. She had then completed the listening comprehension tasks.

Liu showed all of the questions she would ask and the sentence structure on slides to provide language support for the students. She did the same for the task. She presented a passage about weekend plans with some blanks in the sentence structure, using the example she provided (See Figure 13). She asked the students to think of their own weekend plans. Individual students shared their plans in pairs after a few minutes of discussion. They used the framework on the slide, filling in the blanks with information about their specific weekend plans.
Liu planned the lesson carefully using multimodal resources. However, she said,

In my class, I taught what I planned to. But I didn’t know what they learned. There was little generated knowledge. There was a discussion about differences between the city and the country, but still only a few of the students participated and thought. The majority of the students did not participate and just sat there. It was rather traditional with little innovation. (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

Liu felt bored with this kind of class. However, she could not figure out how to break through this barrier and did not know where to start. She tried using a pedagogy of multiliteracies, but the result was not satisfactory. The first try was puzzling for Liu, pushing her to explore further.

6.4.3 Approaching Multiliteracies Through a Push-and-Pull Process: *I Realized Only When Teachers Changed Could They Bring About Changes in Students*

6.4.3.1 Activating Students Through Modelling

The second observed lesson revealed Liu’s exploratory spirit. She considered how to guide the students’ learning through modelling the way of learning. She let the students predict, ask questions, and check the answers with the text before she taught. She drew a web on the board to list the questions that the students asked. She used this question web as a structured guideline for the students to understand the text. Then she wrote down the key information when the students answered the questions. In this way, Liu and the
students co-constructed the meaning web. The whole process modeled a way of summarizing the details and the main topic for the students. She commented,

It wasn’t the teacher who told them the answers; instead, students discovered them through self-exploration. It was more acceptable than being instructed by the teacher. If you wanted the students to complete a task, the teacher should show them a model…. They learned a method. These questions were about prediction as well as summary. They stimulated for the students how to continue reading the whole text. I saw changes in their attention in class. Students knew what to do when they read the text. They checked whether what the text said was in correspondence with what they predicted. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

Liu first discussed her own plan as a model and then she asked the students to talk about their plans. She shifted from teaching to exploring how the students can learn strategically. In addition, Liu modeled how to use the Internet to search for the meaning of a new word. She said,

I also tried searching on the Internet for information when students asked questions about words. I explained and demonstrated to them how to research the right information they wanted to find, such as key words, and taught it as a learning strategy. I showed them when they had a problem, what they could do to solve the problem. If you teach problem-solving skills in daily teaching and learning, they will learn the strategy. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

Liu was very excited to see that the students changed as a result of the alterations to her instructional methods. She had an in-depth reflection:

I taught English for many years and I felt my view lesson planning was getting narrower. Now I realized that I could change and that and I wanted to try. I saw the effects were really good. In my journal I noted how the students had low interest in the traditional classes. I changed and at least I activated their interests. They were willing to learn and explore. It was better than having them merely filling the seats but learning nothing. Such a change made them more interested. I was really gratified when I saw them listening to me carefully in class (laughed). When they were willing to participate, they had no time to think of other things such as being absent-minded. They were too busy with studying and thinking actively. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

After the second lesson, Liu consistently started from the students’ questions about the units. She believed that this new design changed the students’ attitudes towards learning. It did not follow the conventional model of teacher-talks-students-listen; instead, it foregrounded the students’ motivation for learning. It addressed the “I want to know. I
want to learn” (Interview 5, April 7, 2017). The students raised the questions and explored the answers by themselves. Liu acted as their helper:

Students thought more actively. They were willing to think, unlike the previous question-and-answer session in which they did not need to think because they could easily find the answers to the teacher’s questions about the content in the textbook. As a teacher’s thinking changes, the questions they design change simultaneously. Students then change their thinking too. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

In short, Liu believed that a teacher and the students impact each other. To be more specific, her changes brought about the students’ changes, and vice versa.

6.4.3.2 Navigating the Constraints of the Textbook

Elementary schools in different districts of Beijing use different English textbooks. Given that Liu used to teach in another district, she was very familiar with the textbook used in that region, so much so that she could recite all of the units. Minyue Elementary School, however, used a different English textbook, and this made her feel uncertain. When she started to use the new textbook, she only considered how to teach the knowledge and finish the tasks in the textbook step by step. She did not expand the lessons to include other knowledge. At the time, she did not see the necessity of directing the students to think deeply about the content. She rarely paid attention to whether the task was authentic. Instead, she focused on providing the students with opportunities to practice language patterns and grammar rules. She thought it was enough if the students could make a new dialogue by substituting the key words after repeated drilling. Liu reflected,

When I read this textbook, I really didn’t know what and how to teach. I had only taught students in grade 3 since last semester. I did not know about this textbook and I felt “lost” because I had nobody to consult with. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

Liu strongly felt about the constraints created by the English textbook. The textbook that they used focused on linguistic knowledge and language skills and spent little time on authentic communication. Every module had two units, centering on one functional sentence. The rigidity of the textbook left little space for creative instructional practices.
At the initial stage, Liu was still confined to the textbook for knowledge and skills, although she started to adapt the activities in the textbook.

Liu’s first attempt at the new pedagogy in the third observed class was not successful. She intentionally added some vegetables for the students to use when they discussed visiting a farm and some math problems to practice numbers. However, the tasks were too easy because they were still mechanistic learning activities. Liu had to work through how to better engage the students:

Sometimes I wondered why students in grade three gradually lost their interest in learning English. From this lesson, I understood I could not rely on mechanic drilling. I needed to think about how to activate the students’ interest and create more opportunities for them to participate equally. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

She paused and reflected:

When teachers design tasks, they must know that the task should be authentic. I cared a lot about application and in what context they could use the language. I wanted them to explore, and then they would have the desire to participate in activities. I didn’t want to lead the students step by step, as I had done in previous teaching. Teachers should know how to connect textbook knowledge with daily life. Tasks must be authentic. Activities must motivate the students with real tasks. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

In a lesson on the topic “picnic planning,” Liu recognized the importance of adapting the activities in textbook again. She first asked the students “What is a picnic?” The students provided many ideas and she wrote them on the board. Liu felt good about the students’ variable responses. Then, based on these ideas, the students commented on the picnic plan in the textbook. The students said that the plan outlined in the textbook was not a good plan. When Liu taught another class that did not participate the study, following the sequence of these two activities in the textbook, she got the opposite comment. She asked the students what they thought about the picnic plan in the textbook first. She wanted them to say that it was not a good plan and needed improvement. Then, she could introduce the task of making a good plan. However, to Liu’s surprise, the students all agreed that it was a good picnic plan.
After class, Liu reflected on why the students in the two classes gave such different feedback in response to the same picnic plan. The different results demonstrated that the participant students felt more comfortable expressing different ideas, and as a result Liu recognized the necessity of adapting the content in the textbook:

I understood that teachers needed to reflect on how to adapt the textbook. I didn’t realize that the sequence of activities impacted the students’ thinking. Students in the second class thought in a singular way when I followed the sequence of the activities in the textbook. The textbook regulated the content and activities, but the sequence of activities in the textbook could be changed. I needed to think what was more appropriate and better for the students to learn. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

Multiliteracies does not only mean teaching and learning but also adopting different means of teaching and learning. Teachers do not directly teach what new knowledge is but rather employ a variety of instructional approaches. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

In short, Liu acknowledged the value of a hybridity of instructional approaches and teaching beyond the textbook. She had found a way to move away from the routine teaching procedures regulated in the textbook on her own.

6.4.3.3 Shifting From Teacher Assessment to Peer Assessment

The changes in the students’ performance and the responses in class reinforced Liu’s determination to move forward, although she thought she did not yet have a full understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

Typically, Liu explained every answer to unit tests after they were completed and the students listened and took notes. She realized that the students did not listen to her and felt really bored during these lessons. Therefore, she changed her method of instruction. Liu let the students discuss the answers to the questions on the unit test. She only addressed the questions when disputes arose. This was not a process in which the teacher told the students what was right or wrong; instead, it was a process of exploring. Liu discovered,

The disputes made the students understand that they could disagree with each other and they did not need to take other people’s opinion for granted. They
developed an awareness of active learning because they were not learning passively. I thought it was more important for the students to know how to learn, instead of just knowing the answers. (Interview 4, March 28, 2017)

She positively commented that in this class, “Students were highly active, and I would say that all the students participated in the activities” (Interview 4, March 28, 2017). In this class, she used English as a medium to give instructions and to communicate with the students for the first time. She had previously thought that the students were poor at listening and speaking in English and would not respond to her. She summarized the changes in this class:

The changes in this class included changing my role in the lesson. Previously, I explained the exercises one item after another while the students listened. They were not interested or engaged. The students could now participate in the activities. Previously, I named the students one by one to answer the questions or to explain their answers. Now, students worked in pairs and they discussed and negotiated. Students now listened with great attention during this lesson. If I collected and checked by myself and returned the worksheets with grades to the students, they would already have forgotten the content of the test and they wouldn’t listen to me. Today’s process was continuous and fluid. (Interview 4, March 28, 2017)

Liu now felt more comfortable stepping back from teaching and allowing the students to step forward and take up the responsibility of learning.

Presentation was one type of assessment activity in Liu’s class (See Figure 13). Previously, she had only selected from several students to present in front of the class. She felt they did very well but did not consider if the other students would have appreciated the opportunity to share what they had learned. Moreover, Liu now thought that all the students should present, otherwise she was worried she might not know if they had learned the knowledge.

Figure 13: Two Snapshots of Students’ Presentation
During the research period, Liu changed the type of organization. Students presented either in groups or between groups to demonstrate how they understood and applied the new knowledge. They received feedback from their peers and learned from observing their peers’ presentation, not merely from the teacher. She reflected:

> Presenting in front of the whole class only gave opportunities to a single student, while presenting in groups or between groups gave an opportunity to every student. This achieved the objective that every student participated in classroom activities. Otherwise, only one or a few of them participated while the rest just listened to them. Students who might not like to present in public had the choice to present for peers. Everyone had the opportunity to present in groups or between groups, and therefore they gained individual learning experience with presentation skills. (Interview 12, June 12, 2017)

Through the experience of employing peer assessment, Liu realized that it was crucial to create the space needed to engage every student rather than just a small group. In this sense, peer assessment was not only an assessment activity but also a chance to include all of the students.

6.4.3.4 Experimenting With Multimodal Activities

Liu started to explore how to design multimodal activities to address learner diversity in learning. Previously, the students had only made posters. She designed two presentation activities. In the first activity, students created slides to present their work on monsters, and in the second task the students selected a module and demonstrated their learning outcomes. She believed that this approach was good for developing comprehensive abilities, particularly digital skills. However, Liu found the lesson was not an easy to teach when she tried it for the first time.

During the module that covered the topic “the body,” the task was to design a clown and described its body parts using “Here is/are...”. When I interviewed Liu about this, she immediately said,

> Let me first self-examine and reflect on my teaching. I had no idea of how to design this kind of lesson or where to start. I didn’t think the class went smoothly and the materials used were relevant. The pace of teaching was not good enough. (Interview 6, April 11, 2017)
Liu played a clip from the movie *Monsters University* that showcased a variety of monsters with different features. However, she did not ask the students to observe and describe the monsters with the new vocabulary and expressions. Instead, she only used them as examples of monsters to inspire the students’ imagination when they designed their own monsters. Liu explained,

> I used the video just for showing more monsters and to help them know how to design a monster. I used it but I didn’t use it well. I wanted them to design monsters differently from the monsters in the textbook. This video could be used not only for inspiring their ideas but also for other purposes. I didn’t make good use of the video. (Interview 6, April 11, 2017)

Next, Liu presented the class with another six images of monsters. She expected that the students would like to describe one of these monsters, but they did not understand her instructions clearly and started to draw a monster. She had to stop them. Upon reflection, Liu realized,

> I wanted them to describe the monsters, but I felt I didn’t explain that clearly. I thought they would understand what to do but it seemed like they didn’t know. I wanted them to choose one picture to describe but they started to draw. My instruction was not clear. (Interview 6, April 11, 2017)

Liu assigned drawing a monster as homework. The next class, the students’ demonstrated their creative monster designs. When the students presented their monsters, everyone was very excited (See Figure 14). To her surprise, they not only drew on the vocabulary and sentences learned in the module but also those learned before when they introduced a monster. The students had successfully integrated old knowledge with new knowledge. Everyone’s introduction was different.

![Figure 14: A Student’s Presentation on “A Monster”](image-url)
Liu also attempted to use mind maps in class. In one class, she gave the students a blank mind map and asked them to list the changes that happened to their family members. She had been using a mind map to summarize the main information from a text covered in class. She assumed using a mind map would therefore be an easy task for every student. However, she was surprised to see that some students did not know how to do it. This made Liu realize that it was a question of quantity and time and that she needed to create adequate opportunities for them to practice with multimodal ways of learning independently. Then she designed another mind map activity, asking the students to mind map their picnic plan. This time she drew a mind map of her own picnic plan first as a model and then the students worked on their own. She was happy to see that the students did a very good job (See Figure 15).

![Figure 15: A Student’s Mind Map of “A Picnic Plan”](image)

Liu not only applied multimodality in tasks but also used it as a mode to present new knowledge. When teaching the module about changes, she presented a set of images for the students to observe how animals and people changed as they grew up. These images were used effectively to help the students construct the meaning of change as well as differentiate the present tense and the past tense. She deliberately used photos of her daughter and some students in the class, asking students to guess who he or she was. Finally, the students took out their own photos and described the changes they saw happening to themselves. These authentic materials highly motivated the students and engaged them in active meaning-making.
With practice, Liu had gained a new understanding of a multimodal approach in teaching. She should not only think about what pictures or gestures could help students understand the meaning of new words but also consider the purpose and effectiveness of using them:

Now I would think about why I used them and how to use them better. I would consider more. I used mind maps before and merely drew one branch. But now I drew more branches. Previously it was I who drew the mind map and I was quite clear from which perspectives I would teach the students, but I only used them when I gave an open class. Now I let the students draw mind maps for each unit. Students are involved in a process of thinking and then proceed to the next step. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Multimodality, in Liu’s practice, was often interpreted to be devices employed by the students and herself to enrich teaching materials and demonstrated learning outcomes. She shared the rights of decision making with the students through modal choices and representations.

6.4.3.5 Setbacks to Didactic Instructional Approaches

Liu was re-assigned to be the home teacher of one class in April, one month after the study. Generally, a home teacher is responsible for managing the class and dealing with all of the issues, as well as teaching one class every day. Usually, the role of home teacher is assigned to either a Chinese teacher or a Math teacher. The home teacher of one of the classes that she taught became sick and had to be off work for a long period of time. The school then assigned her to take over the duties of home teacher. Therefore, Liu had to stay in the classroom between recesses and during the lunch hour and dismissed the students from class. She had to communicate with any parents who texted her messages or called her at any time. Also, she must accomplish all of the other tasks a home teacher was assigned. In addition, she must submit class reports to the administrators and participate in meetings with the other home teachers.

The classroom observations and interviews were interrupted frequently in April and May due to constant changes in Liu’s class schedule. The annual school sports meeting was held in the last week of April, and it was one of the most important school events. The school invited a few important local leaders and local news reporters to be present. It is a
tradition that each class in the same grade prepare a performance for the opening

ceremony. Some classes had to be cancelled because the classes in the same grade must
practice the performance together and then the whole school must rehearse before the
sports meeting to ensure a perfect performance. There was also a singing contest at the
school in the last week of May, and Liu had to organize the rehearsal and the final class
performance. She adjusted the class time frequently because there was only one
auditorium for rehearsal at the school and each class used it in turn. She felt stressed with
the heavy workload but had no choice. Liu had no time to think about lesson planning
carefully and no time to collaborate with colleagues. As a result, Liu retreated to the
traditional didactic approach of instruction and found the students were not as attentive
and interested as before.

The mid-term examination was held in April, and Liu spent two weeks (nearly 8 lessons)
on quizzes and the mid-term examination. When the lessons returned to the usual
teaching schedule in May, Liu had almost forgotten all that she had learned about a
pedagogy of multiliteracies:

I felt I was assigned the work of two staff. When I went home, I couldn’t
concentrate on my lesson planning. I had to do housework for my family and look
after my child. I felt lost about how to prepare my lessons, where to start and what
to plan. I had no idea what to do. (Interview 8, May 2, 2017)

The stressful workload impacted the quality of lesson planning as well as her attitude
toward the students. She felt frustrated when the students did not behave well in class or
when their performance did not reach the teaching goal. She stated,

I expected that students could describe the difference between the schools in the
UK and in China, but it seemed that they “jumped” here and there. I think they
lacked logic and order as most students in grade 3. They talked merely about what
they thought. (Interview 8, May 2, 2017)

Later, Liu admitted that this was not the students’ fault during a deep self-reflection:

I had been bothered by the messy work the last few weeks. I was tired of the
students when I saw them. I didn’t understand why the discipline problems could
not be solved. They kept chatting in class. It became a big headache for me. Later,
I reflected and decided to change myself. If I smiled at them, they would
understand me and get closer to me. I didn’t complain to them. Instead, I told
them that I needed their help. I thought changing myself could change the awkward situation. I relied on changing my attitudes and views. (Interview 9, May 12, 2017)

A small change of attitude and perspective toward the students could reduce the state of anxiety and ensure a harmonious teacher-student relationship. This was what Liu learned from her interactions with the students.

6.4.3.6 Promoting Students’ Autonomy Through Authentic Tasks

Liu decided to pull herself from her stressed and depressed state. She continued her innovative practice of a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the next class. She was uncertain whether the students could learn or complete a task without her step-by-step instruction but attempted this new approach in the module on the topic of school reports. Liu carefully designed a task, letting the students assess each other’s performance on different subjects and give suggestions on improvement. Liu recalled,

I remember that you said if you didn’t teach students how to do, they wouldn’t complete the task very well. Inspired by this idea, I considered how to teach them to assess others’ performance at school from different perspectives. I designed this task because I thought as classmates, they knew each other well. With such background, they had ideas and they could write something…. But I thought mere assessment was not enough and they didn’t know why assessment was needed. So, I added one statement that I felt uncertain about, which was what suggestion you would like to give for a particular student because some students liked one subject more than others. (Interview 9, May 12, 2017)

Liu first drew a mind map on the board and then presented the school report in the textbook on the screen. She filled the names of subjects in the mind map when students told her what they saw in the school report. She used images to tell the differences between good, quite good, and very good. Then Liu used English as an example. The students and Liu read and interpreted the school report together. Subsequently, she asked the students to give suggestions for the main character in the dialogue on how to improve her performance at school. The students practiced how to give constructive feedback in this activity.
Before the students worked on their tasks, Liu showed them a real school report she used at school and asked students to list the subjects they had, and the comments that could be used for giving suggestions. This school report was different from the one in the textbook, which was not used in China. She drew a mind map of a school report based on her supposition of what the students might say. Liu predicted the possible items they might say about the performance of each subject and categorized the ones they mentioned in class. They co-constructed a chart of the school report (see Figure 16). Then the students acted as teachers and wrote school reports for each other in pairs. Liu told them they could ask her for help if they had a problem with spelling.

![Figure 16: A Mind Map of the “School Report”](image)

This activity interested all of the students. In the end, the students’ performance exceeded Liu’s expectations:

The students surprised me because I didn’t expect that they would have so much to say. They knew how to assess other students’ performance on each subject at school…. I felt they found the way to do things. (Interview 9, May 12, 2017)

She saw the students were very happy in this class. The class was well-organized, and the students were well-disciplined. Liu said,

I thought the content attracted them and so they were more attentive in the class. The last lesson in my opinion was messy, which made me reflect on my own teaching. I thought I needed to learn about educational theory because I saw that I was weak in this aspect. To understand a theory, I need to use it and practice it. It was a process of approaching and grasping it. (Interview 9, May 12, 2017)

Liu drew findings from this task as well:

This made me understand that I should design tasks close to their real life. They would have more to say and write about an authentic school report. They already
had life experience. I added real school report because I wanted to show them the different purposes and content of school reports used in schools in China and in other countries. They could be school reports with marks or grades. I also wanted to help them know the meaning of school reports. (Interview 9, May 12, 2017)

Liu acknowledged that an authentic task was more likely to resonate with the students’ own experience and trigger genuine communication. Therefore, she used it to expand their understanding of the familiar things around them.

6.4.3.7 Catering for Creative and Critical Thinking

During the study, Liu attended more to the students’ critical thinking in learning than ever before, although she still needed more practice. She was concerned about the students, particularly how to design the activities appropriately to motivate them and how she could direct them to think deeply.

Liu slowly began to regularly start new modules by asking the students questions. When the students asked questions, they explored their desire to find out what they wanted to know. Gradually, the students had more awareness of questioning than before. Meanwhile, Liu allowed them to articulate their own ideas.

However, Liu wanted to teach beyond the textbook knowledge. There was a dialogue in which the main character went shopping with his mom in a mall. He wanted to give his mom a surprise on her birthday. Therefore, he left secretly to buy it. His mom was very anxious, looking for him on each floor. After discussing the main story, Liu asked the students some questions: How did Daming’s mum find Daming? Do you have some other ways to find Daming? What do you think of Daming? If you were lost, what would you do? All of these questions were open-ended questions and related to the students’ life experience, initiating the students in heated discussion as they shared their responses. Liu realized,

I thought this story was impossible to happen in real life. I just used the ideas of the text. I should not be restricted by the textbook…. Previously, I didn’t care about that. I just followed the activities one by one. Now I thought I shouldn’t do that. The students had a lot of ideas…. I divided the meaning coding into: literal
text, beyond the literal text to real life, the solution to the problem you may encounter, and the comment on Daming’s behaviour. (Interview 11, June 2, 2017)

Liu wanted the students to consider what they would do if they were in a similar circumstance. She found that some students commented that even though Daming did not tell his mother when he left, his purpose was good because he wanted to buy her a gift. However, they thought the way he did was wrong. Some students grasped the key points of the story and analyzed his behaviours from positive and negative aspects. At the beginning of the research, Liu wondered what “authenticity” meant. Now she saw more authentic communication had emerged in this class:

It achieved authentic communication and interactions between the students and myself, which made me have mixed feelings. The previous tasks were not authentic, and the students were not highly motivated. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Although Liu did not explicitly define “authenticity,” she had heard the students voice their own ideas, which improved class participation. The language that the students used to express personal comments varied in vocabulary and sentences and was not confined to the formatted conversation in the textbook.

6.4.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: A Multiliteracies Class Was a Process in Which Students Self-Constructed Their Knowledge

When the data collection ended, Liu saw great changes occur in the students. Three weeks later, she observed that as a new teacher to the students, she had built a rapport with them, and there was more emotional communication between them. Liu reflected on the new student-teacher relationship:

Now they liked me very much. Although some students didn’t fully understand what I said, they could follow me in most cases. They loved this way of learning because they could express their own ideas. They changed a lot too. Some students didn’t want to speak English in class before, but now they enjoyed it. Previously, the students and I were merely teacher and students, not friends, as there was no chance to discuss open questions, and the students and I didn’t know each other. With these authentic topics, the students become closer to one another
and to me. They asked each other questions and generated knowledge. Previously, I just completed the activities in the textbook. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

She had the desire to change because the students had changed:

What made me realize that I must change my teaching style to improve the effect of my teaching in class. The previous classes were dull and boring. Now the students were highly motivated and willing to participate. Previously, they received passively. They didn’t care, listened or not, and they thought that the teacher couldn’t do anything to them. Now they realized that if they didn’t, other students were learning. Therefore, they started to learn. They behaved better in terms of attention, activity, and participation. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Despite that Liu’s exploration was interrupted occasionally and she only completed 11 observed classes, she had constructed a deep understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, which greatly impressed me as a researcher. The four weeks of practice inspired her greatly, and she drew a number of findings that helped her tackle the previous fixed, didactic instructional approaches throughout in-depth reflections. She understood that a pedagogy of multiliteracies advocated a hybrid of instructional approaches:

Multiliteracies means not singularly teaching and learning but adopting different means of teaching and learning. Teachers didn’t teach topics directly but instead used variable instructional approaches. There were more channels of teaching and learning. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

Liu fully recognized how a teacher’s perspective of thinking impacted student participation in class. It was important to give students a space to think independently rather than following mechanically formulated teaching instructions. Therefore, she argued for opportunities for the students to ask questions before learning new knowledge. In this way, Liu had a new understanding of the teacher-student relationship in a multiliteracies class: a teacher can be a director, co-learner, co-explorer, and co-constructor. Liu reported,

Previously, the teacher dominated the classroom and scheduled the activities step by step. But now the teacher was a director, not following the teaching procedure step by step with a full understanding of what would happen next. The teacher’s role was leading, not dominating, because you couldn’t predict what students would generate in class. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)
The traditional role of teacher was authority. Now I thought the teacher and the students were co-learners, co-explorers, and co-constructors of the knowledge. Sometimes I provided students language support. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

A pedagogy of multiliteracies broadened Liu’s views and perspectives of teaching and learning, leading her to think, design, and teach beyond the textbook. This required her to shift from how to teach to how to learn:

Previously, I only considered how to teach knowledge. Now I consider more elements. I consider how to make it easy for the students to understand and absorb, and how to make the information more appropriate for the students to learn. I didn’t merely consider how to finish the teaching task or only consider myself but instead thought more about the students. I considered not only the knowledge in the textbook but also relevant knowledge: knowledge they could use in the real world that would direct them to think deeply…. I used to teach the four classes with one lesson plan. Now I thought I must adjust because not all the students in the four classes thought in the same way. (Interview 5, April 7, 2017)

Liu deciphered learner-centeredness based on her teaching experience with a highlight on autonomy. She said, “My understanding of the student-centeredness was that they learned autonomously” (Interview 12, June 14, 2017). Liu no longer thought the students were passive receivers of knowledge, taking in anything that their teacher transmitted to them. Instead, they were knowledge constructors with autonomy and agency. She explained,

Now I thought a multiliteracies class was a process in which students self-constructed their knowledge. It wasn’t that the teacher told the students what to learn. Students instead made use of their prior knowledge and what they learned in the class and constructed their own knowledge. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

As for the students, they were no longer accepting the transmitted knowledge passively. Now they shifted from learning passively to learning and participating actively. They tried to build their own knowledge system rather than sitting there and listening, or through mechanic drilling. Now it was student-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Catering to the students’ differences and ensuring every student’s success were other concepts Liu wanted to continue to explore:

Now what I could do was to ensure every student gets involved in classroom activities. I couldn’t make this happen before. Every student developed their abilities at different degrees. Those who didn’t understand could learn from the students sitting beside them. They were more motivated. They thought more
actively and liked to make comments, question things, and so on. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Liu challenged her fixed thinking of success. She had thought the students did not know much. But in fact, she found that they accumulated significant knowledge and the important thing was whether she gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. She understood “mastery” as follows: when students could read the word, she thought they had mastered it; when they wrote down the sentence and spelled the words correctly, she thought they had mastered it. With more practice, Liu understood that it was far beyond that:

Now I understood what they had learned wasn’t proved merely by spelling the words or writing the sentences but rather could be demonstrated from other perspectives, for example, their application, perspectives, opinions, critiques, agreement or disagreement. They were engaged in a process of deep thinking. My previous classes involved little thinking and I didn’t ask such kind of questions. (laughed) (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

Liu experienced some challenges from the students as the study went on:

Now I started to worry about my language competence because I might not be able to monitor them in the future. Now they had more opportunity to practice English at school or out of school. If I could not respond to the students’ questions, I would feel embarrassed. (laughed) I felt good up to today because I benefited from it. (laughed) My concerns occurred occasionally when I prepared for some units. I worried I couldn’t monitor the students’ generated knowledge because the classes were more dynamic and flexible. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

As well as being “dynamic, flexible,” Liu defined multiliteracies pedagogy as generative and not predictive, and having active learning with knowledge-construction at the core:

What about multiliteracies pedagogy impressed me most was the concept of knowledge construction. I thought it was one representation of active learning. It meant constructing the knowledge system based on the activation of prior knowledge and the new learned knowledge. This kind of knowledge construction involved a variety of knowledge and understanding, unlike the previous learning that only involved language. Now it involved many aspects and the integration of multiple disciplines. The students significantly improved their learning ability and learning methods. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)
Apart from this, Liu highlighted multimodality, multiple activities, and multiple perspectives:

Multiliteracies impressed me with its multiple modes: language, aural, oral, visual, spatial, gestural. This is multimodality. Another aspect I appreciated was the type of activities, such as cooperative group work. I thought that multiliteracies set out to broaden students’ views and thinking rather than restricting them to one mode of learning. We should allow them to learn in various ways. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

It was not teacher-centered but student-centered. It was a process of exploring and learning autonomously and a process of group cooperative work. The teacher was not merely teaching. It was also a process that was helpful for the students’ future work and study. It taught the students how to learn. It didn’t merely teach them the knowledge but also taught them ways to learn the knowledge. The students’ thinking was not fixed and confined in one mode, or lacking critical thinking and personal ideas. Multiliteracies suggested that there were no absolutes. You could either agree or disagree. You could also have your own opinions. (Interview 12, June 14, 2017)

A pedagogy of multiliteracies, in Liu’s perspective, was embedded with autonomy, collaboration, learning strategies, critical thinking, and connections to future work and study. It also created the space for students to voice what they thought, free of the rigid criteria of right or wrong.

6.4.5 Summary

At the beginning of this study, Liu was puzzled and confused by the tenets of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. She felt this theory was far detached from her and had little idea of what to do and how to do. She was a little frustrated but still eager to try it in her classes. Through practicing and exploring, Liu saw changes gradually happened to her perspectives of teaching and learning as well as instructional strategies. She realized that multiliteracies pedagogy could be a down-to-earth theory that suited her classroom. Liu stated, “This is an internalized process” (Interview 12, June 14, 2017). This new, innovative pedagogy posed challenges for Liu, as she found she needed to complete the shift to student-centeredness, know more instructional approaches, and expand the scope of knowledge, not confine it to English knowledge itself. Encouraged by the impressive progress and satisfactory changes that happened to the students and herself, Liu believed that she would continue practicing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the future.
6.5 Ma’s Narratives: A Struggle With the Didactic Instruction

6.5.1 Ma and Her Students

Ma taught four grade 3 classes. She was young, but still had nearly three years of teaching experience. She had a bachelor’s degree in Translation and Interpretation (English) with no professional knowledge of teaching English. Appointed as the lead teacher of the grade 3 teacher group, Ma was in charge of the routine administrative work. She was not much of a conversationalist, with a somewhat shyness and calm countenance. Her responses in the interviews were usually short, plain, and straightforward.

Ma’s class for the study was a grade two class. She selected this class because she thought that the students’ performance was rather stable, and they were well-disciplined. The first time I entered the class before the study began, I noted that students behaved well, just as Ma had said, likely because I was new to them and so they were on their best behaviour. Interestingly, it was an entirely different environment when I started the classroom observation, perhaps because they had become accustomed to my presence.

Unlike Hu, Ma was very familiar with the textbook and the assessment system, although it was the first time that she was teaching a grade 3 class. Having participated in a series of workshops held by the district educational bureau on how to use the textbook and having observed a number of open classes, Ma strictly adhered to the syllabus, the textbook, and the standardized tests. In other words, she followed a fixed procedure of teaching: introduce the title of the module and unit; discuss the dialogue, vocabulary, and grammar; have the students participate in choral reading; and then engage the students in role play. Ma was so familiar with this rigid model that she did not need to spend a lot of time preparing new lessons except for creating slides. Usually in her class, Ma talked and asked while the students acted and answered.

It took Ma a longer time to change, as compared with other participant teachers. In her mind, she did not want to reject mechanic drilling because she recognized its value for ensuring the students mastered new sentence structures. She admitted,
I couldn’t identify my own problems. Sometimes I thought if the discipline in the class was good, then I felt good. If the students could memorize well, I felt satisfied. I didn’t think a lot about lesson planning. I adopted a very traditional instructional approach. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

Ma had the desire to change, but she found,

The research atmosphere of teaching and learning in this branch school was not good. The teachers did their own work and research. I wanted to improve myself during this golden age of professional development by participating this study. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

6.5.2 Stepping Into the Field of multiliteracies: I Didn’t Know How Much They Could Produce if Situated in a Real-Life Context

The first class I observed was about making a weekend plan. To help the students distinguish the meaning of weekends and weekdays, she presented a real calendar on the screen. The students easily made sense of the meaning. She further asked what they would do during the following weekends, giving them the expressions on the screen with a few blanks. Students filled in the blanks with the things they planned to do on the weekends. Then Ma moved to studying the dialogue. She asked a number of questions to check their understanding and identified the sentences that used the word “will.” She also taught the words “countryside”, “farmer,” and “there,” as well as the phrase “lots of” and asked the students to circle them in the dialogue. The class ended with making a dialogue with the sentence patterns on the slide (See Figure 17), asking about weekend plan. All the activities were about practicing “I will…”.

![Figure 17: A Slide of the Framework Discussing Weekend Plans](image)
Other than adding some emotion words, such as “happy” and “sad,” Ma carefully followed the activities and the sequence laid out in the textbook. All of the students’ output was quite similar except than they used different words for places, things, people, and emotions. During the group interview, Ma said that she expected that the students would pay more attention to the sentence structures. However, at the beginning, it was only the students who were already good at English who raised hands to respond, while the rest of the students did not participate in the activity. Along with that, some other issues bothered her:

I felt I “led” (dominated) more while the students participated less. In the last step, the good students completed their task better. Other students didn’t finish and only wrote one or two sentences because I didn’t pay much attention to them. I limited their output by asking them to follow the given sentence patterns. I didn’t know how much they could produce if situated in real-life contexts. (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

Drawing on what Ma observed, she thought that motivation, discipline, control, mechanical drilling, participation were the problems that she should deal with in the following practices. Ma began her own exploratory journey with particular goals in mind.

6.5.3 Approaching a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies Through Wrestling: Now That I Found the Problems and Knew How to Change, I Wanted to Change

6.5.3.1 Motivating Students Through Multimodal Activities

With the purpose of engaging more students to speak, MA employed multiple modes in the second observed class. She used graphic organizers to classify the words and structure the ideas. At the beginning of the third observed class, Ma and the students co-composed a word map on the board. She presented another word map of fruit attached with real pictures on the screen. She further let students share in pairs what fruit they liked using: “I like...,” “I love...,” or “I also like...” When this activity finished, Ma presented a mind map with the key words on it and asked the students to listen to a audio recording and added the details to each key word (See Figure 18).
To engage the students in the mechanical drilling, Ma designed a running wheel game (See Figure 19). When the wheel spun, it would reveal a word that represented a fruit every time. Then students used that word to complete the question, “Will we pick…?” Another game involved passing a candy. She played music and the students passed around the candy. Anyone who had the candy when the music stopped would have to ask a question using “Will we pick…?” The rest of the class answered “Yes” or “No” according to the sign “√” or “×” on the screen.

Ma used the trip plan as a model to show how to structure a trip plan. Then she distributed a paper to each group of four and asked them to plan a trip together for the weekend. The students spoke Chinese to communicate and negotiate. When she walked around the classroom and took a look at the mind maps that they drew, she found that some students could not make connections with their life experiences and realized that their thinking was restricted and narrow:

I felt it was a little far from the students’ life. Some students said they didn’t want to go there with the other three students in the group and they didn’t know what to
do during the trip. They drew the mind map just because it was task. I took a look at several of the mind maps. They looked good but they were imitating what I drew on the board and only replaced a few words. I thought they didn’t understand what the mind maps meant to them. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

Ma realized that more students wanted to participate in the activities, a small success as a result of pair and group work. Although the discipline problems still occurred, she believed that the mechanic drilling helped students “master” the new knowledge. Ma explained,

I found that students were too excited when they participated in one or two of the activities and they were beyond my control. What I could ensure was that they mastered the key sentence structure and every one of them talked, being activated. I thought they mastered the sentence structures well enough through mechanic drilling activities. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

In the second observed classes, Ma made a small step forward. She added some multimodal activities to engage the students, although they were variants of mechanical drilling. Although she was still confined to the knowledge and content in the textbook, Ma started to make connections with the students’ life experience and left the space for them to think, negotiate, and create their own trip plan.

**6.5.3.2 Interrogating Mechanical Drilling**

Ma’s acceptance of mechanical drilling, however, easily “dragged” her back to her previous teacher-led, didactic approach. In the third observed class, the context of the dialogue was still a fruit activity. Ma deliberately added one video of numbers to introduce the topic of “numbers.” She showed a set of numbers in English and students counted. To practice the functional sentences, “How many…?” and “There are…,” she designed a drilling activity: use the words for the number, fruit or stationery to make a new question and answer. It took most of the class time to finish these mechanical patterned practices. When the activity finished, she asked students to add the number of fruits into the week plan that students had created during the last lesson.

For the first time, Ma interrogated the appropriateness of mechanic drilling:
I felt too much mechanic drilling in this lesson. But the purpose of this unit was practicing the numbers. I couldn't think of any other ways better than drilling and following the activities in the textbook. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

I thought the students were interested in the activity of counting numbers and they participated actively. However, I merely confined my teaching to the language in the unit. My drilling was monotonous. I felt I had nothing to teach except counting numbers. I was caught up with the problem of how to help the students count numbers quickly in English. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

6.5.3.3 Trying Out Conceptualizing Rules in Context

The content of next lesson was phonics. Ma designed a number of activities from easy to difficult for the students to learn and practice the phonics rule. She designed the procedure carefully and moved along step by step.

She first presented a few words and asked students How do you read these words? Do you see something in common? She attempted to design an activity to engage the students in conceptualizing. Ma explained,

When I taught the first rhyme “–igh” and “–i_e,” I presented the words first and then asked them to generate the rule. I thought it was better to let them find out than teaching them. (Interview 4, April 7, 2017)

Even though she had the awareness to give the opportunity to the students to generalize the phonological rule, Ma still took it over. However, after students replied with “rhymed words,” she used graphs to summarize the phonics rules. Then she presented more words for the students to practice. Ma also played an audio file and students wrote down the word they heard. She gave them a picture as a clue to identify the word they had heard. After one student wrote the word on the board, she checked it with the whole class. Ma also prepared tongue twisters and a story which included words with the sound /ai/.

During the reading section, she simply asked the students to read the pictures, guess the meaning of the sentences, and read for answers to questions. However, only a small number of students followed Ma instruction and participated in the reading activities.

The rich materials and activities should interest the students, however, Ma found that the effects were not as good as she had expected:
I taught the phonics rule, not constructed by the students themselves. Students were not attentive during the lesson because I talked too much…. I arranged the activities from easy to difficult. I thought the students were interested and wanted to challenge themselves when they saw the tongue twisters. But it seemed that they were not interested. (Interview 4, April 7, 2017)

In a lesson about the past tense of be- verbs, Ma asked students to bring photos of themselves and talked about the changes between their childhood to the present with different tense forms of am, is, are. They observed the changes of tenses and generalized the grammatical rule by themselves.

6.5.3.4 Changing Relationships by Changing Teaching Habits and Styles

Ma desired to release her dominance during the learning process and move beyond the didactic instructional approach, but she still felt it was hard for her to break through the bottleneck. She made more attempts the next class. She added more pair and group work to increase learner-learner interactions. She observed that half of the students participated, and the rest still felt uncomfortable with speaking English in class.

However, Ma made significant progress in this class. The most impressive change was that she did not always stand by the computer table, using a remote control to change the slides when she walked around in the classroom. Her eyes usually rested or wandered with no special targets, but now she made eye contact with students.

I think I improved some in this lesson. I stood among the students sometimes and made eye contact with them. I started the class with a chat-style beginning. I didn’t present all the questions on the PowerPoint slides but talked to the students instead. Some were prompted responses or feedback because I didn’t know that they would say those things. I had free talk with them and asked them to name other things they needed to consider in such a plan. This communication was authentic, not confined to the key language structures of this unit. (Interview 5, April 11, 2017)

The ways Ma communicated with the students changed as well. Previously, she had just made positive or negative comments such as “Good,” or “I agree.” Now she went further into the conversation and shared authentic ideas with the students. She felt excited at the changes and the new experiences, which she had never thought of trying before.
When she recalled this experience at the end of the study, Ma still felt proud of such a “dramatic” change:

What impressed me most was that I liked to stand by the computer desk in class before. There was a distance between the students and me. I thought, “I ask, and you just answer. You raise your hand and just answer the question.” Now, I used a laser pointer and stood among them. Their eyes were on me full of surprise. When I stood by the computer desk, their eyes glazed over and they offered no response. When I stood among them, they had the desire to communicate with me and felt closer to me. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

This changed relationship impacted the students as well. Previously, they memorized when Ma frowned at them. When they went back home, they did not review and forgot what they had learned after two days. She had to repeat things again and again. Now, some students told Ma that they would retell what they had learned in class to their parents, even if she did not assign them homework like that. She was realizing that when they were not forced to learn, they had the desire to share the new knowledge. Ma said,

The conversation between you and me and the feedback from the students made me reflect on the relationship I have with the students. I wasn’t aware of it and thought my instructional approach was really good. My students also saw my changes when I talked with them. I found those girls always follow me closely, a feeling that is totally different from that I had before…. Usually I was strict with them and they watched me in awe. Now they memorized in a happy and light mood. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

6.5.3.5 Adapting the Textbook Through Making Connections

When she read the activities in a module about travelling, she found that the students could not make connections with the task because they said their parents made the decisions instead of them. Even if the students could have finished the discussion in groups, Ma decided to change the task. The annual school field trip would happen during the next week, so Ma changed the task from making a travel plan to developing a plan for the school field trip; thus, it became an authentic task. Ma explained,

They could consider, for example, who they would go with and what they would do. Although they didn’t have time to talk about it in class today, I thought this activity was closer to their lives because they would pack their food, toys, and
other stuff before they departed. They could express their own ideas in this plan. (Interview 5, April 11, 2017)

Ma was more aware that teaching to the texts in the textbook was not enough. She started to add authentic materials when designing activities. To consolidate the grammar of the past tense, she presented two photos of their school and the neighboring buildings: one in the past and the other in the present. She used them for the students to apply the past tense to describe their changes. These photos represented the real world around them. The students were very attentive and actively used the present and the past tenses to discuss the differences. Ma reflected,

What I catered to was how to get closer to their life when I planned the lessons of this unit. I showed them pictures that resonated with their childhood and their present life. They talked about their own changes and the changes happening around them. I wanted to see whether the students could master the knowledge without mechanical drilling. (Interview 11, June 13, 2017)

I wanted to add more information to the textbook knowledge, some extracurricular knowledge, and sentence structures that could be used in real life or based on their life experience. They felt bored with the textbook and thought it did not matter to them because it talked about other people’s lives. They liked to bring in their own lives and share with other students. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

By the end of the study, Ma created more successful stories. The satisfactory result reinforced her desire to move past the didactic approaches. She was no longer tied to the rigid, patterned textbook and the power of mechanic drilling, which she had been committed to in her previous teaching experiences, indicating an obvious shift in Ma’s innovative practice with a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

6.5.3.6 Shifting the Teacher’s Agency to Students

Ma began to transfer the right of asking questions to the students. She invited students to ask questions about the text and mapped these questions on the board, no matter how many questions they raised. Then she gave them time to discover the answers in the textbook instead of asking and answering the questions by herself:
Usually it is me who asked the questions. Now I found that they preferred to find the answers to their questions. If I raised the questions, they felt they were completing a required task for me. (Interview 5, April 11, 2017)

In a lesson on the topic of “Parents’ Day,” Ma adopted the KWL format to design the lesson. Considering the relationship between the textbook knowledge and the students’ real life, she started by having the students talk about what they and their parents did on that day. She also presented pictures of Parents’ Day in western countries for them to find out the cultural differences and similarities. She allowed the students to observe the pictures and described what they saw as clues to understand the content of the text. She let them imagine what they would do if they were the characters and they shared in groups. To apply what they learned about the adjectives to describe a person’s personality, she created new characters for the students to practice. This was not simply substituting one or two words but an authentic information-gap communication.

Even though Ma tried to address the students’ agency, sometimes her innovative practices were hindered because the students did not have much to ask or say. She reflected, “It was me who asked the questions in most cases and they just answered. They lacked time for independent thinking” (Interview 9, May 12, 2017).

Since Module 8, Ma started to provide time for the students to think about what they wanted to know about the text before she taught. In a lesson on the topic of “Changes,” she showed students the pictures of the characters’ grandparents in the textbook and let them describe the changes that happened to grandparents, using the language learned before. She invited the students to summarize the main ideas instead of doing it by herself. She tried to create the space for the students to learn autonomously. Comparing students’ previous responses with what she observed in this class, she found that:

With questions in mind, they were more attentive when watching the video. Previously, it was me who asked questions and they were not interested. They watched for the purpose of finishing my task. Now they had a real purpose to watch the video; they wanted to test their predictions to see if they were right or wrong. They watched with interest. (Interview 10, May 12, 2017)
Ma continued with designing lessons from the perspective of catering to the students’ agency in learning. She observed that the students were more actively participating in activities since she changed the instructional approach.

### 6.5.3.7 Dealing With Classroom Discipline

Discipline was a big problem for Ma and she needed to develop strategies to deal with it. There were a few students who liked to interrupt her and respond in Chinese even if she asked an easy question in English. Some chatting happened often, particularly among the students sitting at the back of the classroom. Classroom discipline problems really bothered Ma.

She admitted that:

> I think I am responsible for the disciplinary problems. My instruction was not clear enough, so they didn’t know what to do. My demo was not clear as well. (Interview 6, April 14, 2017)

Setting up class rules was another attempt Ma made in her class. She divided the class into groups and each group selected one student as the group leader. The students needed to ask for permission to speak Chinese when they answered the questions. Unlike before, she started to intervene and monitor the students’ inappropriate behaviours in class during the seventh lesson. She did not try peer assessment because of her past failed experience:

> I thought most of the students cared about the assessment results. I tried group assessment before, but I quit it because the students argued when I distributed the assessments to each group and changed up the assessments. I didn’t use one type of assessment continuously. (Interview 10, June 2, 2017)

To strategically solve the problem, Ma organized more pair and group work in class to engage more students in activities:

> I designed more group work to increase the time the students had to speak and relate ideas to their life and express their own ideas in this class… Group work could draw the students’ attention and they could help each other during the discussion. (Interview 7, May 2, 2017)
Ma deliberately gave the students more time to practice, discuss, share, and role play in pairs or as a group to increase the interactions between the students. In a lesson about school life, she asked the students to share in pairs about the numbers related to the school, for example, the numbers of teachers and students. She expected that the students would notice the relationship between the numbers and their lifeworld. The students worked as a group and compared the classes in China to the UK classes in the textbook. She added one prestigious middle school in Beijing and one famous university in the US. Ma let the students make comments on which one they liked better and why, trying to bring in the students’ personal voices through critical thinking about different school cultures. Although they did not talk much because of their limited English language proficiency, Ma was happy to see that the students were more engaged in class.

6.5.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: A Multiliteracies Class Meant Giving More Space and Time to Students

Although she wanted to change herself, Ma had been struggling with a dilemma since the research started. From the interviews, I saw that the dilemma existed between the didactic textbook-based instruction, which she felt more comfortable using because it would lead to high scores on standardized testing, and a classroom based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies that featured openness, uncertainty, fluidity, and unpredictability, unraveling from the told stories.

The first time Ma heard of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, she was confused. However, she experimented little by little based on her own understanding. She spent more time thinking and planning her lessons carefully than ever before. Previously, when she taught a conversation, she followed a fixed teaching procedure and model, only replacing a picture or a question. Now she considered how to integrate cross-curricular knowledge with the textbook knowledge. She added multimodal resources to help the students construct the meaning of the topic, for example, songs, videos, books, games, pictures, and photos. She perceived English learning as a multimodal learning.
Ma tried to design the activities involved a variety of knowledge processes, although she focused more on experiencing and analyzing than on conceptualizing and applying. She began to think about promoting creative and critical thinking abilities through language learning activities. For example, before Ma frequently used the pictures in the textbook to ask factual questions during the lessons, such as “What can you see?”, “What are they doing?”, and “Where are they?”. Now she asked the students, “What can you learn from this picture?”, “Can you guess?”, or “What do you think of…?” She wanted them to consider what these pictures reminded them of to activate their divergent thinking rather than merely describing what they saw exactly in the pictures.

Ma changed, although not enough. It was not easy for her move her attention away from the text, vocabulary, and sentence structure in the textbook. Looking back to what she had experienced, Ma finally recognized that the problems with her teaching were serious. She reflected, .

I found that when I taught reading, my instructional approach was rather traditional, following the same fixed procedure…. I had never thought that I had such a big problem with my teaching (laughed). There was little difference between how I taught reading and the textbook: listen to the recordings, circle the answer, read aloud, and act it out. I always planned the same activity. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

My previous understanding of teaching was the teacher taught and the students learned. Students couldn’t learn without the teacher teaching. The relationship between teacher and student was simply instructor and learner. You memorized what I taught. That’s it. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

Ma now had a deeper understanding of the teacher-student relationship. She interpreted teaching as a kind of conversation between the teacher and the students in class, not merely the transmitting of knowledge to students. The students told her that they could see that she had changed. They felt that they were getting closer to each other. The mean test scores for this class on the final test last semester ranked the class in second place. Now they were at the top of the four classes she taught this semester in all of the quizzes. She did not expect this kind of result. The results were likely because after Ma selected this class as the participant class, she cared more about this class. Whenever available, she stayed with the students and focused on them. Ma explained,
We always talked about respecting the students, but actually we didn’t give students more respect in class. We didn’t give them more time to speak, not in a dialogical way of discussing questions. I made little eye contact with them. I just kept talking by myself. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

When she gave the students the chance to voice their ideas, Ma was concerned with how to monitor the students’ conversation and how to respond to the students’ active thoughts:

When I gave the students too much space to think and speak, some of the students became over active or went off topic, and I didn’t know how to control or manage it. What’s more, they didn’t find the focus of the lesson. They might not attend to the words or sentence structures that I highlighted. Rather, they attended to other aspects irrelevant to the content. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

I strongly felt pressured by the students because they had lot of ideas, which I hadn’t thought of before. I was challenged in that I felt I should enrich my knowledge because I needed to know what students talked about in class and have things to say. I had to change my behaviour. At the very least I must respond to them and have something to communicate with them about. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

For the first month Ma felt very lost and even doubted herself. When she found out there were so many problems she needed to solve, she did not know where to start. But gradually, Ma found the direction after she had experimented for over one month:

Over one month later, I had the feeling that I was starting to understand some points of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. I started to know what to do. I knew what to write in the journal and started to change my ideas. I changed step by step… I thought about how to reflect and how to revise my approach to achieve better outcomes. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

Ma’s preliminary understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies was rather limited after one month’s practice. In her view, it simply meant allowing students to learn new knowledge through different ways, visual, audio, or tactile, with the implication of providing different sensual stimulus that would activate the students’ interest in learning. When the research ended, Ma had constructed a richer knowledge of multiliteracies pedagogy based on in-depth reflection on the previous traditional practices and on-going innovative practices. She summarized:

In my view, a multiliteracies lesson meant giving more space and time to the students, the time for discussion and communication. The teacher listened more
and spoke less in class. Additionally, learning needed to be closely connected to their life, motivate their interest, and activate their prior life experience. Students learn by themselves rather than being taught passively…. What a pedagogy of multiliteracies teaches me most is that it is crucial to connect learning with students’ experience. (Interview 12, June 16, 2017)

6.5.5 Summary

Wrestling with the didactic instructional approaches wove throughout Ma’s stories. The desire to change pushed her forward while the limits of her professional strategies and skills pulled her back when problems emerged. Her strong belief in the force of mechanical drilling on memorization and the authority of teacher over students made it harder for her to shift from a teacher-centered instructional approach when she designed a lesson. Through continuous practices, Ma gradually found the breakthrough she needed, and from there, she constructed a new understanding of teaching English, one that focused on students’ agency and subjectivities. She started to teach beyond the texts in the textbook. From her previous work experience, Ma knew that she had problems to solve, but she did not know what they were and or how to solve them. She lacked the inner drive to move on as well. She generated a stronger desire to change than ever before through participating this study. She said, “Now I found the problems and I know how to change, and I want to change” (Interview 12, June 16, 2017). Although the study ended, Ma’s innovative practice with a pedagogy of multiliteracies has just started.

6.6 Gao’s Narratives: Exploring the Space for Enacting Students’ Agency

6.6.1 Gao and Her Students

Gao newly graduated from a Normal university with a bachelor’s degree in Business English. She had no teaching experience or professional pedagogical knowledge before she worked in Minyue Elementary School. When Gao participated in this study, she had only taught English to students at the grade 3 level for 4 months.

Her purpose of participating in this research was very simple:
I decided to participate in this study because as a newly enrolled teacher at this school, I lack teaching experience in every aspect. Such an opportunity to improve my professional competence, either theoretically or practically, was really good for me. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Gao selected this class from the four grade 3 classes that she taught because the students in this class were creative thinkers in her opinion, although she had only taught them for one term. She ranked their average level of English language as upper middle among the four classes she taught for one semester. However, the students in this class particularly liked to communicate with her. She felt that she knew them well, and vice versa.

When Gao taught English last semester, she only attended to vocabulary and sentence structures, for example, whether the students understood the meaning of one word, whether the students knew how to read the word and how to spell and write the word correctly, and whether they could make a new dialogue by substituting the key words following the examples. She never thought about bringing their prior experience and knowledge into learning. Now, she wanted move past the rigid model and broaden her perspectives of teaching.

6.6.2 Stepping Into the Field of Multiliteracies: I Was Thinking How to Break Through the Textbook

The topic of the first observed class was “weekend plan,” for which Gao assigned the task of making a weekend plan. The class started with a video of animals. The students named the animals with a single word instead of a sentence, which did not meet her expectations. She asked the students about the difference between weekend days and weekdays and they responded to her immediately. Then she repeated it in Chinese. She continued to ask three questions about the content of the dialogue. She presented the questions on the screen and the sentence structure so they could use it to answer the questions. All the questions were about who, what, and where, and the students could easily find the answers in the text. Following this, she presented pictures one by one to help the students understand the meaning of countryside. When student knew how to pronounce the word “countryside,” she introduced the word “city” to them and invited one student to tell the difference between a city and the countryside.
Throughout the whole class time, Gao simply repeated the instructions, the questions, and the activities presented on the screen, and translated into Chinese frequently even if the sentence was very easy to understand. She clicked the button on the keyboard along with the pace of activities, standing almost in the same place the whole class. When Gao heard one student respond to her, she moved to the next step. She usually named one student to respond to her questions, and rarely organized pair or group work or gave more than a few seconds for thinking in class. Whatever the other students did, she ignored them, and continued her teaching. The second half of the class was getting noisy because some students kept chatting in Chinese, but she did not stop them or take any measures.

Gao was not satisfied with the limited responses in class and wanted to engage more students in participating the classroom activities. She expected that the students were interested in what she taught in class and would like to apply the new knowledge. However,

I found that if I only asked questions that involved lower order thinking, only the “good,” namely the docile, cooperative students responded to me. Students at the middle level didn’t want to respond although they had reviewed the lessons and knew the answers. When I asked questions not about the text in the textbook but related to the topic, they were highly motivated because they could use imagination. (Interview 1, March 14, 2017)

The students’ low interest in participating in the activities compelled Gao to reflect on her teaching deeply. She decided that the starting point of her new practices was how to break through the constraints of the textbook, particularly how to connect textbook knowledge with the real life.

6.6.3 **Approaching a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: I Never Thought That I Needed to Attend to Their Experience**

6.6.3.1 **Adapting Textbook Activities to Authentic Tasks**

With this expectation, Gao started to design her lesson from a multiliteracies perspective. There was a module on the topic of picking fruit in a garden. She designed a group multimodal task expected to address the students’ authentic ideas. She expanded the topic
to go picking at any weekend in different seasons in order to give students more options and flexibility. Through such an activity, the students integrated their previous knowledge of seasons, activities, food, and vegetables in an authentic context. She stated,

The topic of this module was picking up fruit, but I didn’t want to confine the task to this weekend plan. Students could go picking any weekend. So I talked about the differences in the seasons. The topic is picking, but they did not need to pick fruit only. They could pick other things such as wild vegetables. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

In my previous lesson planning, I wouldn’t think of the relation of the four seasons to picking activities, and I wouldn’t notice the ladder in the picture and think about the ways of picking. I drew a mind map of a picking plan. While I was drawing, I thought I could expand the scope of things for picking. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

Gao also invited students to think about the tools used for picking fruit or vegetables. She added these questions because they were what people considered when they made a fruit pick plan. When this activity finished, the rest time was assigned to a task: make a picking plan. Gao presented a mind map of a “Picking Plan” (See Figure 20) and introduced how they could make use of this mind map and to make a picking plan. Students worked in groups or in pairs and discussed their picking plan. According to Gao,

My basic idea of design was to relate what they learned in class to the real-life world. My design was different from my previous lessons. The result was as good as I had planned. Students followed my instruction and thought deeply when I talked about how to pick fruit. When I talked about picking different products in different seasons, they were involved in thinking about what they would pick in winter, spring, summer and autumn. I thought it was very good. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

![Figure 20: A Slide of a Mind Map of a “Picking Plan”](image-url)
The “good” results inspired Gao to reflect on her previous teaching:

Today I learned some implications of my teaching. I have only taught English for one semester. Previously, I only attended to the knowledge, for example, students might not know how to say one word. I never thought I needed to attend to their experience. (Interview 2, March 17, 2017)

The next unit continued with the topic and task of making a picking plan. The new knowledge was number. Having discussed the content of the dialogue, she designed a role play activity. Usually students read the dialogue with the textbook in hand. That was not what Gao meant by “acting out.” She did not want them to recite but to speak out or present the dialogue naturally with emotions and gestures. Some groups drew a picture of the scene on the board and then acted out the dialogue (See Figure 21). She prepared some props for them to use when they acted out the dialogue. Sometimes the students brought in props from home they wanted to use as well. Gao said,

I didn’t know why I allowed them to draw. My purpose was to make them know what it meant acting out the dialogue. Once they knew how to do it, they liked to do it by themselves. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

Figure 21: A Snapshot of Two Students’ Role Play

With the concern being that the students had limited life experience, she thought it would be better if she listed some picking spots that they could go for picking fruits. The students could select one place they would like to go in the future. To make the task more authentic, she searched the local pick-your-own spots in Beijing. She presented the pictures of these picking spots and introduced their products for picking as well as the entertainment activities the locations offered. Students were very interested and asked her questions about those places.
Gao explained to the students in English the task of making a weekend plan to go picking. She presented a mind map of a picking plan as an example. Then she divided the whole class into groups of four. Each group had a leader who asked questions about the plan and the group members shared their ideas. They wrote their answers on small stickers and then stuck them on the paper with a graphic organizer of mind map on it. The changed way of presentation was a result of the students’ low interest in drawing a mind map by themselves, as they were frequently asked to use mind maps in other classes. When Gao walked around, she explained the instructions for the task to those who did not fully understand to ensure that they completed the task successfully. Students were highly engaged in the task, although the class was still a little out of order and they still used Chinese to communicate with each other in this class.

After the first try, Gao reflected:

I was puzzled at the instructions. I wanted to use simple English because their vocabulary was limited. But simple English might not express my ideas clearly. I think I should give the instructions step by step and let the students complete the task step by step. (Interview 3, March 21, 2017)

Gao was satisfied to see that the changes happened gradually and naturally. She stepped up her efforts to achieve the purpose of activating the students’ interest in participating in the activities and relating the classroom learning to their real-life experience.

6.6.3.2 Catering to Critical Thinking

The first three weeks of practice enabled Gao to realize that literacy education was not merely about linguistic knowledge itself. She thought that multiliteracies addressed two key concepts: experience and critical thinking. Gao reflected,

I thought that experience has three levels: students’ experience, the experience I provided them, and the experience from the outside world. Critical thinking, to me, was open questions that activated the students’ diverse thinking, that drove them into real thinking, and that aroused their critical thinking. The question might not have a right or wrong answer. But it was crucial whether the answer was reasonable or not. (Interview 4, April 7, 2017)
Gao paid close attention to experience and critical thinking in the unit about school life. She presented pictures of schools and invited the students to discuss the similarities and differences between schools in the UK and in China (See Figure 22).

![Figure 22: A Snapshot: Similarities and Differences Between Schools in China and the UK](image)

Gao organized a complex task in which the students presented the results as groups and then they assessed each other’s performance. She designed this task because on the one hand, the students had direct learning experience in China and indirect experience from different media and therefore they had authentic ideas to share; on the other hand, she expected that they could take a critical perspective of the schools in China and in the UK through comparing and contrasting western and Chinese school cultures. She expected that the students would find that schools in China had both strengths and weaknesses, just like schools in other countries.

6.6.3.3 Contextualizing the Textbook Knowledge

Grammar has been difficult for the elementary school students. To help the students understanding the meaning and use of a new grammar rule, Gao situated it in the life context that students were familiar with. The first context was changes between the past and the present involving the past tense. She extended the discussion about people’s changes in terms of personality and appearance from childhood to adulthood in the textbook to students themselves.
The second context was ordinal numbers used in life. Firstly, she taught the ordinal number, first and second, in the textbook. Secondly, she extended to the real-life context of an apartment building, focusing on the first, the second, and the third. Then, she introduced different descriptions of floors in the UK and the USA. Finally, she asked students to read the text again and discussed the concept of cardinal numbers.

After the grammar learning activities, Gao asked the students to think about the main character’s behaviours in the textbook and whether they would agree or disagree with him. For Gao,

If they disagreed with Daming, they needed to make comments on how to improve his behaviours. These discussions were used to remind the students that although sometimes they did something with good intent, they might cause trouble for others due to a lack of consideration. I hoped they would learn from the discussion and understand they should consider other people rather than merely see the world from their own perspectives when they made decisions. (Interview 13, June 9, 2017)

When Gao taught the unit on school reports, she started from two questions: “Why is she good at Math and Chinese?” and “Can you give Mary some suggestions for her Art study?” Gao said, “I thought the biggest change for me was asking those questions. I created the type of questions inspired by the theory of multiliteracies” (Interview 11, May 16, 2017). Centering on these two questions, Gao designed a mind map activity to structure the information. She used the mind map as a tool and guideline for the students to reexamine their own learning experience:

When I designed the task, I thought if I asked them to assess their learning at school, the assessment would be specific. If I confined the subject to English, they could analyze every aspect with details. I did so because I thought it should be of real significance for their learning experience. I thought it was important that they found commonalities that made them learn a subject well. There must be some points they did well. (Interview 11, May 16, 2017)

Gao believed that “if they saw their strengths in learning English, they would persist. If they found out their weaknesses, they could improve them with the feedback from their peers” (Interview 11, May 16, 2017). In short, she took it as an opportunity to develop students’ self-monitoring strategies as well as self-reflexivity in learning English.
6.6.3.4 Catering to Students’ Agency

With catering to the students’ agency in mind, Gao changed her perspective when designing the new lesson about the weekend plan. There were no new words in this lesson. The students had already learned about weekdays and weekends. Previously, she followed the activities in the textbook one by one based on the traditional didactic approach. Gao never stopped and thought about the why. She explained,

Now I would think why when I designed each activity. I would think in what way would this activity inspire the students. The biggest change after I tried a pedagogy of multiliteracies was that I started to think about these things. I didn’t follow the previous mechanical model to teach the lesson. (Interview 4, April 7, 2017)

Gao started to develop the students’ ability to ask questions based on this action plan:

At first, the students didn’t know how to question. I thought if I kept asking questions, gradually they could imitate and follow. For example, when a student asked a question using Chinese word order, his ideas were clear, I corrected him. I thought after I corrected him a few times, he would know how to ask this type of questions. When I taught reading, I wanted them to ask questions. So I thought I could start from this class to teach them. (Interview 7, May 2, 2017)

Gao did not ask the students to read the text and then answer questions, following the usual routine of teaching. Rather, she asked them to read the text by themselves and present the information with a mind map. She used to ask questions but now she allowed them to ask. Students wrote their own questions. Some of the questions they could find the answers for in the textbook and some they could not. They read the text for the information and wrote down the answers. The students did not feel that the textbook was boring anymore and that there was nothing to think about. Gao helped them with the questions that they could not find the answers for. This kind of learning process situated the students in the position of agency.

When Gao taught unit 5 “The Picnic,” she started to change her approach to teaching. She did not teach the dialogue at the beginning. Instead, she gave the students a mind map and let the students summarize the key information by themselves. Guo stated,
I tried to use different modes of presenting new text and allowed the students to do self-study in different ways. I decided to change my approach because I thought whatever type of questions I asked, I was still confined by the students’ thinking. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Since then, Gao has realized that there were many ways to deal with the text and that the students were capable of learning by themselves. This experience made her understand that students had unlimited potential. She told me, “If you positioned the students as designers, they would bring offer you a lot of enlightenment” (Interview 7, May 2, 2017). Gao felt more comfortable transferring the authority to students.

6.6.3.5 Developing Collaborative Work Skills

Gao had problems organizing group work, as this was a relatively new concept for her. The first group work in this semester was successful. She found that those who were silent in class started to talk and express their ideas in the group work. Those who had no chance to speak were disappointed and she had to assure them that they would have chances in other classes. She believed that they did not have this kind of feeling before. She was happy to see that now they were more attentive and followed her instruction. Gao tried group assessment in which every student in the same group got the same grade.

The second time she organized a group work activity, Gao deliberately changed the activity of drawing a mind map into finishing a checklist of a picnic plan. Gao said,

I planned to ask them to finish a checklist of a picnic plan. I used to let them draw a mind map of a picnic plan, but I changed my mind because I thought if I did so, it would be a repetition of the checklist. They probably just copied the items from the mind map onto a checklist. Therefore, I drew the mind map to help the students organize their thinking. The task of checklist was also designed for the purpose of learning how to cooperate with other students. I asked them to write down who would be responsible for which work and how. (Interview 5, April 11, 2017)

The starting point of Gao’s design came out of the students’ real life and it made them think they were doing a real task. They did a task that would happen outside of the classroom. She gave them some hints on what they might need to take with them when
they went for a picnic. Some students even asked Gao if they would have a picnic later. They did not think they were doing a task that had nothing to do with themselves.

However, problems arose with the group work. Some students wanted to group voluntarily. Other students complained of inequity in task distribution. Some students were not satisfied with the roles distributed to them. Therefore, Gao paused and negotiated with the students. She admitted that

I have rarely design this kind of task. My aims were not clear enough and the students were not familiar with the requirements of group work, such as role distribution. Therefore, many problems occurred unexpectedly. They were at the stage of getting used to this kind of task. (Interview 5, April 11, 2017)

Gao wanted all of the students to participate in the class, so she tried to involve more students in either group discussion or class participation. She usually used one lesson for group task presentation because the students wanted to share their finished work and communicate with each other. They wrote down their ideas on paper, but they also needed to express with various modes of representation. During the process of communication, the students expressed their agreement or disagreement, or gave feedback on each other’s work. Gao designed feedback charts for peer assessment with a focus on pronunciation, sound, accuracy of expressions, cooperative awareness, and creativity in group work. Gao listed logicality and clarity as “bonus” items. For example, if the group used transitive words such as “first” and “second” they would win a bonus for their group work.

6.6.3.6 Coping With Classroom Discipline Problems

Gao was faced with another challenge. She usually gave bilingual instructions; she talked in English and then translated in Chinese. She always worried that the students did not understand what she asked them to do. This approach occupied more class time. Some students were not attentive when she gave instructions in English because they knew she would translate shortly, and they did not feel it was inappropriate to speak Chinese during the whole class. This caused some disciplinary problems.
She decided to set up class rules and teach in English from the second week. At the beginning of the third observed class, she told the students that they needed to follow the rule “No Chinese.” However, she did not explain what she would do if they broke the rules. When the students spoke Chinese after she reminded them not to, she typically did not stop them because she felt it was hard for them. Gao believed that most of the students listened to her and decided to ignore the disruptive voices and maintain the teaching flow.

They wanted to say but they didn’t know how to say it. The leader used English to ask their group members questions because their English was better. When the group members didn’t know how to write, they asked their leader for help. If the leader didn’t know, they would ask me. Therefore, it was not possible for all the group members to use English in group work. I didn’t require them to use English all of the time except for presentation. So they used Chinese to ask the leader how to say words in English when preparing for presentation. I reminded them not to speak Chinese now and then. But I felt it was hard for them. (Interview 3, April 4, 2017)

Gao finally decided to be strict with this rule because she wanted to try to get the students to speak more English in class. She required the students to speak English whenever they could. If they had to speak Chinese, they had to ask, “Can I speak Chinese?” She connected their unnecessary use of Chinese to group assessment. Over one month, Gao saw changes:

The obvious change in the students was that they had the sense of speaking English in class. Even when I talked about the testing paper, they had the sense of speaking English too. If they didn’t know how to use English to express, they would ask me “Can I speak Chinese?” They would try to use the English words they had learned to express and communicate. It was a gradually accumulated change. I thought it was very good. (Interview 7, May 2, 2017)

Previously, only when Gao gave demo lessons would she ask students to speak English in class. Now, she wanted to help students develop speaking English as a habit in daily teaching and learning. She realized, “I grasped its real meaning in this semester” (Interview 7, May 2, 2017).
6.6.4 Constructing a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: My Understanding of Multiliteracies Was to Think and Understand From Multiple Perspectives

Gao used a metaphor of “a white paper” to describe herself when she started her teaching career. Three months later, Gao clearly saw that she grew along with the study:

I was like a white paper. I taught students at higher grades in the practicum and I had no worry about teaching the textbook knowledge. When I started to teach students in grade 3, I was confused because I did know how to teach them. When I observed other teachers’ classes, I didn’t know what I must attend to. I picked up methods from here and there. I started to understand by the end of the last semester, following the traditional procedure of teaching. I merely stepped into the gate of teaching. I lacked both theoretical knowledge and the approaches needed for successful teaching and learning. It was the mimicking stage. Therefore, this period was a period of growing. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Gao grew gradually as she practiced more and acquired additional experience. She not only constructed basic knowledge of a pedagogy of multiliteracies but also developed strategies and skills to contextualize the knowledge in lesson planning. She built a teaching philosophy from her interactions with the students and the daily teaching practices.

When she designed the lesson plan for the module “Parents’ Day”, Gao clearly stated,

As for experiencing, I attended to the students’ previous experience of Parents’ Day. I combined images, oral interpretation, and reading to help them learn about the western-style Parents’ Day. For example, what events happened on Parents’ Day. The conceptualizing process was built on the comparison between Parents’ Day in China and in Western countries. I wanted them to analyze critically about the context. I designed an activity that analyzed the cause and effect in terms of the differences and asked the students to design a school report card based on their previous knowledge. I asked them to imagine what they would say to the teacher if they were Daming’s parents and what they would say to Daming when they read his school report. (Interview 9, May 9, 2017)

Gao drew practical implications from experiences, which she could use as guidelines for lesson planning: the knowledge processes, multimodal representations, and multilayered meaning making:
I followed the four knowledge processes and the small pedagogical moves of a pedagogy of multiliteracies when I designed my lessons. This was the first thing I learned. The second was multiple modes of meaning representation, which helped me avoid speaking Chinese while teaching. Also, it helped the students to understand one thing from multiple perspectives. The third was multiple layers of meaning-making which enlightened me a lot. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

As to multimodality, from a teacher’s perspectives, Gao identified it as a multifunctional approach and employed it flexibly. Previously she often used pictures as a mode of representation. For example, Gao showed the students pictures, explained the meaning of the text in Chinese, followed by chorus reading of the text. Now she used videos and gestures to help form understanding. When pictures or videos did not work, she tried other modes to help them understand rather than translating it into Chinese directly. From the students’ perspectives, Gao understood that multiple modes could express the same meaning. She asked them to write and draw what they wanted to express, not merely acting it out. It meant that the students integrated written, visual, and gestural modes. Her previous homework was copying the words, reciting the texts, but now she allowed them to choose what they wanted to represent and how they responded. Gao further addressed whether the students could apply the language in their life and related textbook knowledge back to their life.

Gao gradually deepened her understanding of the multiliteracies pedagogy. She summarized the key features of a class that adopted a pedagogy of multiliteracies: autonomous learning and authentic communication:

Firstly, I gave class time to the students. I allowed them to learn the text by themselves in class. I just highlighted the basic knowledge in a lesson and adjusted the activities according to the differences in terms of English levels. Secondly, it was a communicative class. The communication included communication between the students. At beginning, I liked to call the student’s name to answer the question. Later I tried different methods to involve more students and to increase the communication between the students. The communication between the teacher and the students was authentic because there was no single, standard answer to the question. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Gao highlighted multiple perspectives as the most important element of a pedagogy of multiliteracies and interpreted from meaning-making and thinking capacity:
My understanding of multiliteracies was to think and understand from multiple perspectives. Multiple perspectives to understand meant there were multiple ways to make meaning such as from language, words, or actions. Multiple perspectives of thinking implied critical thinking. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Moreover, Gao believed that active learning should celebrate the learner’s interest, real-life connections, and co-designing in learning process:

My understanding of active learning was at first based on learning interest. With such interest, the students raised their questions and expressed their ideas. Students realized that the learned knowledge was useful because they could use it in real life. As a teacher, when I dealt with the texts, it was a kind of designing; when students asked and answered questions, it was another type of designing. The process of application was wholly co-designing. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

Gao had a new understanding of the teacher-student relationship. She decided to perceive students through a new lens. At the beginning, Gao was worried about various things. She thought, for example, that the students’ speaking and writing competencies were weak and that they would make a lot of mistakes. Therefore, she was afraid to let them try new activities:

Now I believe the more they practice, the better they will be. I should trust them and believe that they can do well. I should consider how to lead and direct them. (Interview 14, June 13, 2017)

The focus of her lesson plan changed. She was no longer restricted to what vocabulary and functional sentences must be taught; on the contrary, she considered more the overall objectives and what students could obtain from the lesson. Acknowledging that the students had great potential, Gao gave them the chance to design, discuss, and create knowledge individually or as groups. In other words, she made more time for the students to construct the meaning of the text by themselves. She slowed down to listen to what the students said and the students paused and had time to think. To Gao’s surprise, although she did not spend much time on teaching the language points, she found that the students’ average achievement in testing was higher than the students in her other classes after participating this study. Gao reflected,

I thought it was possibly because I used these activities to attract their attention more to my teaching. They had developed good learning habits and were very
attentive in class no matter if they were learning texts or studying the examination paper. They moved at a steady pace and learned efficiently. As for oral competence, they had more time to speak in class. They have developed their own habitual expressions. (Interview 9, May 9, 2017)

Gao highlighted the relationship between the students and teacher as friends and co-designers with a focus on the students’ agency of learning:

I thought the students were agents of learning while the teacher was the director in the classroom. The teacher was an instructor who taught the students the learning methods and shared ideas with the students. The teacher was a friend of the students. When the students needed my help, we were teacher and student; when they needed to share ideas on one question, students shared what they saw and what they thought with me; we were friends. For example, when we learned the unit “Travel,” they shared where they visited, what they did, and what specialty that place had. Some of the countries I had never visited, and then it was a process of mutual sharing and learning. I thought our relationship was democratic in that everyone could tell their opinions and listen to each other. (Interview 11, May 16, 2017)

I felt the students and I were in the same situations. We were all involved in the co-designing process. The only difference was that I designed out of class while they designed in class. But we created the co-designing process together. (Interview 11, May 16, 2017)

She invited the students to assess her performance in class. For example, if she spoke Chinese, they could reduce her scores on class performance. She commented, “I took it as an incentive for improving my teaching. I thought we were equal and then they could also assess my work in class” (Interview 11, May 16, 2017). This statement reflects her new view of the teacher-student relationship: co-monitoring their behaviours of teaching and learning.

6.6.5 Summary

When the study finished, Gao observed significant changes in the students. Students were highly participative in asking and answering questions. They thought more broadly, were brave during role play and presentations, and listened carefully and expressed their ideas better. Gao had never thought they could do such a good job. They had gotten used to the new teaching modes and gradually developed better habits. She felt this way of teaching was more relaxed and light-hearted. Gao was not concerned with how to control the
students and the need to monitor the tasks because the students had more interest in learning; therefore, she no longer needed to manage classroom behaviour. There were always a few students who gave answers that surprised her, including the students who lagged behind other students. All of these made Gao extremely excited.

Throughout the study, Gao was full of vigor and acted as an active learner. Although she had to prepare and think more carefully about lesson planning, she did not consider it a burden. Rather, she thought it was an opportunity and a part of the thinking process. She was happy to see that now she knew how to design a lesson that was not constrained by the rigid, didactic instructional approach and could teach beyond the texts, following a pedagogy of multiliteracies and its small pedagogical moves as the guideline.
Chapter 7

Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I address three primary findings generated from the faithful representation of the participant teachers’ experiences outlined in Chapter 6: (1) the stages of constructing the ideological and pedagogical knowledge of a pedagogy of multiliteracies; (2) the intersected tensions experienced throughout the practices; and (3) the change dimensions as a result of innovative teaching practices. I describe that the trajectory of the teachers’ deconstruction-construction-reconstruction is a recursive and spiral process driven by a pull and push force generated from the interactions and struggles between metanarratives and counternarratives. I highlight the changes in terms of practices, perceptions, and affects. I unravel variable tensions within teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers and institutes at national and local levels. I stress the materiality that drives, suspends, or interrupts the process of transforming the participant teachers into a “new teacher” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010, p. 205).

7.1 Stages in the Process of Constructing Personal Knowledge of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Although the participant teachers were exposed to a pedagogy of multiliteracies as a whole, it took time for them to slowly digest the theory and integrate it into their existential theoretical and practical knowledge. The new experience generated from their innovative practices was “plagued by incremental fluctuations of irregular progress, often, marked by two steps forward and one step backward” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 294), depicting a rising curve of development despite numerous twists and turns one after another.

The participant teachers did not approach the central tenets of knowledge processes all at one time. At the initial stage, named “unbecoming moments” in this study, they took the most familiar concept as the entry point for the new practices and its “water ripple effect” (Memo 20, June 14, 2017) extended to the relevant cluster of concepts. The practice of making the known unknown brought about a sense of uncertainty or even a fear of their old, familiar, routine ways of instruction. At the same time, it aroused the teachers’
deepest reflection on how and why they needed to reexamine their educational philosophy and the perceptions and pedagogies of teaching and learning inherited from their past and present and caused them to consider how to negotiate with “the prevailing discourse in education and in a larger society” (Britzman, 2003, p 17) where their teaching life space was situated. At the second stage, they weaved between unbecoming and becoming moments. They were occupied with the intense inner and outer struggles underlying possibilities and desires for positive changes. They experienced entertaining times as well as standstill moments, composing a beautiful affective and cognitive rhythm throughout a recursive, spiral trajectory of deconstruction-construction-reconstruction. They affirmed and reaffirmed, filtered and re-filtered the assumptions of core concepts until they reconstructed idiosyncratic theoretical and practical knowledge of a pedagogy of multiliteracies at the final stage.

7.1.1 The Moments of Unbecoming: The Water Ripple Effect

Multimodality created the first, natural ripple. Along with the wide use of multimedia technology in the Chinese field of education, textbook publishers created variable supplementary teaching aids for the teachers to use, such as an animated video of the text, flashcards, and a reading pen. Computer software, such as PowerPoint and Mind Map enabled teachers to use digital tools to represent the new knowledge with multiple modes. Therefore, multimodality had been integrated into teaching before the participant teachers started their new practice, albeit they did not know the theory of multimodality (Memo 5, March 25, 2017).

Since they had been practicing a pedagogy of multiliteracies, they had realized that their understanding of multimodality was partial because they considered its implementation mainly from their own perspective. They only recognized that they should use multiple devices to help the students understand the new knowledge or practice language skills. They treated it as one crucial technique or skill to visualize the content and instructions for tasks. The participant teachers addressed the modes of presenting best for communication meanings and the technical features and conventions to engage and sustain students’ attention when designing multimodal slides.
They began to associate multimodality with the motivation for learning and learner differences when designing a new lesson. They made use of the Internet as a boundless portal to research relevant multimodal resources on the topic to motivate students and meet students’ different needs of learning and individual learning styles. To ensure that every student had a successful learning experience, they allowed the students to work in groups and to demonstrate their learning outcomes via variable modes of representation such as posters, oral or print stories, video presentations, and drama performances.

The changed perspective and practice of multimodality was radical but fundamental, and for the first time the participant teachers understood that foregrounding learning was the core of lesson planning. They then integrated this knowledge into their classrooms. They structured their own practice, understood the ways it was used, and realized this new practice required second thoughts (Britzman, 2003), creating a water ripple effect on every aspect of the innovative practice with a pedagogy of multiliteracies during the next few months (See Figure 23). Step by step, little by little, the water ripple effect spread out and diffused across space and time, guiding them on how to adapt the teaching materials to expand the scope of knowledge in multimodal materials; how to address students’ interests, intentions, and the purpose of learning; how to engage the students in assessing peer class performance to make them more attentive and improve self-governance; how to redesign activities to make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections; and how to cultivate a democratic, dialogic intimate relationship with the students.

Figure 23: A Water Ripple Effect Chart of Unbecoming Moments
7.1.2 Intertwined Moments of Unbecoming and Becoming: The Recursive, Spiral Trajectory of Deconstruction-Construction-Reconstruction

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) argue that “the narrative inquirer takes the sphere of immediate human experience as the first and most fundamental reality we have” (p. 44). As a researcher, I situated myself in the sites of data-collection which unravelled a grand educational field for me to observe regarding how stories of teachers and stories of institutions at different levels, acting as either metanarratives or counternarratives, created an ecosystem of English education and a rhythm of harmony and wrestling in the teacher and school landscapes. This compelled me to dive into the narratives as a representation of experience and of the material, sociocultural world. Nevertheless, the value of experience did not exist only from my perspective but also from the participant teachers’ perspectives. This particular research experience offered me an opportunity to gain a better understanding of elementary English teachers’ life spaces. As for the participant teachers, they had an opportunity to deconstruct, construct, and reconstruct their ideology and pedagogy of English education along with successively reflexive, transformative practices with a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

Despite that different participant teachers read and deciphered a pedagogy of multiliteracies at a different pace, their trajectories through the developmental stages shared common features. Stories of the six participant teachers shaped a recursive, spiral trajectory of how they stepped into the journey with a hope for change, gained the ability to negotiate tensions, and finally achieved ideological and pedagogical changes.

The participant teachers participated two workshops on a pedagogy of multiliteracies and one group workshop on Learning by Design before the data collection started. Multiliteracies and a pedagogy of multiliteracies, generated from literacy education in the western context, were brand new to them. They felt a bit of overwhelmed at the initial stage; however, they took a pedagogy of multiliteracies as the guideline for lesson planning and chose to practice the concepts that they found an entry into based on their limited understanding. After practicing, they reviewed and reflected on what happened in
Meanwhile, questions on what they had believed to be right or effective in their previous experience arose along with the new teaching practices in school landscape. They had been accustomed to teacher-dominated classes and were uncertain about the feasibility of student-learnedness, particularly in the tension-filled school landscapes in China. They felt uncertain about the students’ learning capacity and willingness to participate, especially in regard to the standard tests. The new teaching experience lifted their doubts and enabled them to move beyond their limited beliefs and awakened them to the truth that the less control that was exerted on the class, the more actively the students learned. The more success stories they had, the more they recognized the ideological stances of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, among which they highlighted the learner-centeredness.

Figure 24: A Recursive Trajectory of Unbecoming and Becoming Moments

The new ideological and pedagogical knowledge of multiliteracies initiated a recursive trajectory in which the key concepts acted and reacted on each other (See Figure 24). The
new philosophy and knowledge that the participant teachers constructed acted on and remolded the teacher themselves (direction 2). The process of experimenting the new knowledge and perspectives enabled them to see that they could switch their roles automatically and naturally with the changing of tasks to facilitate the students to complete them. They redefined a teacher’s multiple identities in classroom, updated their understanding of the teacher-student relationship to a more democratic, dialogical one, and generated a sticky affect for the students. The teachers’ professional development reacted with their own ideology and practical knowledge of multiliteracies (direction 3), which definitely reinforced their innovative practices and passion as a new teacher. The renewal of the philosophy of education and the honed pedagogy in turn facilitated their new practices with the learner-centered pedagogy of multiliteracies (direction 4).

The participant teachers from the same school supported each other and went through the deconstruction-construction-reconstruction trajectory along with theoretical and pedagogical support from me, the researcher. The narrative interviews between the teacher and me were not moments in which the participant teachers told and critiqued what they did, but rather the moments that they awakened and “got” the new concept and made sense of it. They told stories of success as well as stories of failure. They exposed their affects, like uncertainty, their fear, their worries, and anxiety throughout the storytelling and retelling. I retold their stories based on what I observed. We both raised questions and responded to each other with full respect and trust, exposing our innermost thoughts with the purpose of achieving a better understanding of a pedagogy of multiliteracies and how it could be utilized in the classroom. In other words, we co-decoded and co-contextualized a western-centric pedagogy of multiliteracies in the particular Chinese context.

The trajectory was recursive and at the same time spiral (see Figure 25). On the one hand, each step forward was the result of the debates and struggles between the traditional didactic pedagogy and the innovative multiliteracies pedagogy ran through the whole process of experiment; on the other hand, the reconstructed teaching philosophy and pedagogy were built upon previous partial understanding of English teaching and learning and the meaning of new concepts generated out of consistent situated practices.
The participant teachers started with a set of assumptions about one concept. They designed relevant learning activities to contextualize it in specific context and testified their assumptions. They either affirmed relevant and right assumptions or filtered irrelevant and false assumptions by recursive practices and reflexive dialogues with themselves or me as the outside observer. They recursively designed activities until they filtered out all the false assumptions. It was through this recursive, spiral continuum of hypothesizing—practicing—affirming/filtering— modifying—re-practicing that they modified their horizons and gradually constructed the meaning of the concept. For them practice was the most effective way of knowing to “screen out” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 209) the vagueness while letting the relevant through to form a solid concept. Concepts were disconnected at the beginning because the participate teacher focused on one concept each time. Nevertheless, the relational concepts gradually flowed into a core concept because they were relational under the umbrella of multiliteracies pedagogy and one instructional practice usually engaged in more than one relational concept.

7.1.3 The Moments of Becoming: Reconstructing Teaching Philosophy and a Pedagogy of Teaching English

In short, the moments of becoming were the effect of internal and external causes. Along with successive experimentation and a sticky affect to a pedagogy of multiliteracies, the
decisive inner cause included ongoing self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity engaged the participant teachers in “an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment” (Hertz, 1997, p. viii).

The participant teachers individually sensed the moments of becoming at particular points in time, different from each other. They differ as well in the width and depth of their newly constructed teaching philosophy and pedagogy of English teaching and learning. In general, the participant teachers at Xin Elementary School had more favourable conditions than the teachers at Minyue Elementary School. The school had developed a systematic, comprehensive school-based curriculum based on a hybrid of western-centric ideology and pedagogies of literacy teaching. On the contrary, Minyue Elementary School strictly followed the regulated curriculum, which was developed completely in the Chinese context and targeted for regular elementary schools in China. As a result, the tenets of a pedagogy of multiliteracies were more approachable for the participant teachers at Xinxin Elementary School.

All of the participant teachers firstly addressed multimodality and then diverged to different concepts. They had a congruent focus, namely, learner-centeredness, positioning learners at the center of class and highlighting their agency and subjectivities of learning. A number of common notions emerged recurrently in the interviews: shift to students’ perspectives, celebrate multiplicity, connect to real life, develop self-reflection, stimulate the students, transformative learning, meet cognitive features, meet student’s needs and interests, allow students’ voices, trust students’ learning ability, attend to learner differences, value self-constructing knowledge, create space for creativity, attend to learner autonomy, make authentic communication, bring into students’ experience, connect to personal life, allow students to ask questions, give students the rights to choose, use strategies to learn, use multiple ways of demonstration, and create authentic tasks.

They addressed rebuilding a dialogical teacher-student relationship. Being used to a hierarchical relationship with students, they felt excited but uneasy at the shift to a flat, democratic relationship which they described as co-designers, co-constructors, and co-
assessors. In the former relationship, they always acted as an authority who owned the knowledge and the rights of making decisions; in the latter, they acted not just as an instructor, but also as a model, an assistant, a helper, a director, a guide, a supporter, and a resource. They made endeavors to create pedagogical contact zone where different perspectives, ideas, comments, or cultures met, clashed, or accommodated, allowing students to voice for themselves, to expose their deep understanding and stances, and to demonstrate their creative and critical thinking in a multimodal way.

The participant teachers agreed that a multiliteracies class featured the fluidity of teaching, the flexibility of instructions, the mobility of knowledge, and the predictability of students’ responses and outcomes. All of these imposed a strong pressure on them, driving them to constantly reflect on teaching or to modify the activities and adjust instructional approaches before, during, and after class. To relieve the pressure, they had the desire to renew their ideology of English education and update their pedagogies of teaching and learning.

At the pedagogical level, they followed the knowledge processes as guidelines when designing a lesson plan. They mixed the pedagogical moves flexibly according to the content and the types of activities. The classroom observation records demonstrated that they developed a variety of cognitive activities to engage students in different processes of constructing knowledge. They recognized the importance of balancing four knowledge processes with their pedagogical moves, and they showed a similar preference for pedagogical activities that involved experiencing and applying the learning activities they designed and organized in each lesson.

The observed classes obviously highlighted experiencing, particularly experiencing the new knowledge and skills through a variety of activities such as: ask questions, predict and test, choral reading, role play, vocabulary games, picture walk, phonics, talk about prior experience, review, recall and retell, and summarize. Applying came next because they expected the students could use what they learned to communicate. The difference was that they did not confine themselves to one mode. The participant teachers tried multimodal ways of communication in which they allowed the students to voice their
ideas, demonstrate their interests, and release their creative thinking. It could be an activity like: create a dialogue, a story or a song; make a poster or slides for a presentation; describe one’s own works; and reproduce a text. Additionally, they designed a number of analyzing activities such as: read or listen for detail, compare and contrast, identify the features, and analyze the writer’s intentions. However, these activities were less focused on analyzing critically, particularly in the classes at Minyue Elementary School. Throughout the study period, there were very limited activities that engaged the students in the knowledge process of conceptualizing apart from generating a phonological rule or a grammar rule and drawing a word map or a mind map of a concept.

7.2 Tensions That Conditioned Teachers’ Transformation

Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2010) suggest that

As we turned our attention to the powerful ways that attending to tensions could help us think about narrative inquiry as relational inquiry, we began to see the interconnected ways that tensions opened up possibilities (p. 84).

In this study, it was obvious that every participant teacher was willing to shift their prior didactic pedagogy to a pedagogy of multiliteracies; however, tensions were constantly emerging generated from the complex learning community as a result of interactions between the teacher and students and between the teacher and the institutions. Tensions were embedded in the competing stories coherent with the stories of students and the dominant stories of the institutions, as well as in the conflicting stories that collided with them. “Positive tension” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999), such as the tension related to professional strategies and English competence, was translated into a driving force that pushed the teacher’s professional development while negative tension, such as the tension generated from the textbooks and workload, was a barrier constraining and interrupting the flow of implementing the new pedagogy. A full illumination of the multilayered tensions unveiled clearly the teachers’ decision-making process in which they negotiated with the metanarratives and counternarratives to achieve the goals and objectives.
7.2.1  Tensions Generated as a Result of Interaction Between the Teacher and Students

**Limited English exposure.** English is regarded as a foreign language in the Chinese context, which means students are mainly exposed to and use English primarily in the classroom. This limited exposure limits the input of English, which slows down the speed that the students acquire English either naturally or away from the classroom. Moreover, given the short class time, they do not have enough time to learn and practice phonological skills, which hinders them from reading complex texts aloud independently, instead counting more on imitating the audio recording of the text. Students in this study were in the same situation. It was clear that the top students who took after-school English training courses dominated the class activities, whereas the students with inadequate English competence switched to Chinese when responding to the teacher. It also made the weak students feel marginalized as lower performers or outsiders (Cummins, 2011). As a result, limited English competence constrained the students from fully expressing what they thought, describing what they had observed, and retelling what they had experienced in class. When the teachers raised open questions or when the task involved analyzing, evaluating, and creating, they felt more restricted by inadequate vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammar knowledge. It was out of this concern that the participant teachers had been used to scaffolding and monitoring every step before and during the task to ensure the successful completion of tasks. It was out of this concern that they had not been confident in the students’ capacity to learn autonomously.

**Limited life experience and subject knowledge.** The participant teachers tried to activate the students’ prior experience and connect it with new knowledge. However, they found that students did not have a lot to share. For example, when they assigned a task to make a travel plan based on what happened in real life, the students had little to offer. They had no conception of what a travel plan was, what content should be included, what problems should be considered, and what things should be prepared. This was because their parents made all of the travel decisions for the family. When the teachers wanted to conduct a cross-curricular task, they faced the challenge that what the students
had learned in relevant subjects such as Math or Science failed to provide adequate academic knowledge and skills for the students. To close the gaps in life experience and subject knowledge, the participant teachers added either pre-lesson assignments or multimodal supplementary materials to help students build the needed background. Such changes increased the students’ and teachers’ workload, but at the same time compelled the teachers to adjust their lesson plans to accommodate the additions. The teachers had to be cautious with balancing the textbook knowledge with the supplemented knowledge.

**Limited questioning skills.** Recently, advocates in the Chinese field of education are relating English education to developing students’ thinking abilities with the belief that language is interrelated with thinking. Questioning has been a regular activity in English classes; however, the common problem is that it is always the teacher who asks the questions while the students answer. Students have lacked the opportunity to learn about the types and purposes of questions and have not been able to practice questioning skills. To increase the students’ subjectivities in learning in this study, the participant teachers allowed the students to voice what they wanted to know about a text or ask each other questions; most questions raised by the students were directed to textual information about what, who, where, and when, with less attention paid to how and why. They asked questions more about facts than questions that required thinking creatively and critically about the text. Teachers felt uncertain about the depth of the student-initiated questions. Therefore, they raised inferential and critical questions to deepen the students’ understanding during group or whole-class discussions.

**Limited information and technology skills.** As multiliteracies advocates for multiple modes of representation, the students are encouraged to use digital devices to learn new knowledge and to demonstrate their learning outcomes. In this study, the students were expected to research for the relevant information on the Internet in order to join in the discussion, complete a poster, or give a presentation with in-depth ideas, opinions or comments. However, they had three main problems to deal with. Firstly, there were very limited appropriate references in English available for them to read and download. This was because the majority of resources on the most popular search engine, Baidu, are in Chinese and search engines linked to English resources such as Google and YouTube are
blocked in China. Secondly, due to their limited English competence, the students had to translate the Chinese information into English via online translator software when they could not find the information in English. However, they could not tell whether the translation was right or appropriate. They simply downloaded what they found on the Internet via key words, with no editing, revising, or summarizing. Sometimes, they brought pages of information to class for sharing in groups. Finally, the students received little training on information and technology skills. For example, no course at school taught them how to use basic digital software such as PowerPoint, Animation, or Mind Map to present or organize their information. Some students did not know how to research information on the Internet and brought nothing to share. Information and technology skills should be taught in Computer classes; however, the curricula of different subjects are not interrelated and coordinated, which makes it difficult for them to support each other. Therefore, the participant teachers had to give instruction on information and technology skills in English classes. With limited digital skills, “multiliteracies and digitality are relegated to ‘semi-play’ status in the everyday business of being a teacher and a student” (Tan & McWilliam, 2009, p. 223). Multiliteracies foregrounds the digital literacy in pedagogical practices; however, it is not very applicable in the context where only teachers have the access to digital devices and the Internet and where the time students spend on digital devices is strictly controlled. In this sense, the participant teachers’ implementation of a pedagogy multiliteracies in this study was conditioned by the students’ limited access to technology.

**Limited team work skills.** To increase the opportunity for every student to participate rather than having just the top students dominate the activities, the participant teachers used pair or group work as the major types of organization in class. It created the conditions for the students at different English levels to help each other through collaborative learning and indeed increased the individual student’s time on task. However, team work was not as efficient and effective as they had expected. This change first brought about the issue of time control. Some groups could not finish the same task within the required period because they did not monitor the time during the task. The second problem was that some students did not know how to work cooperatively within a team and negotiate the disputes between team members because there were no training
classes on leadership or group work skills at the school. For example, there occurred a dispute about equal opportunity, particularly who performed which role in the group, particularly from the marginalized students who were labelled as incompetent. The third problem involved group presentation skills. It was common to see that only one or two good students presented orally while the rest of the group members stood quietly at the front of the class. Although the teacher encouraged the presenters to “tell” or “narrate” naturally, many students still read the written notes word by word, except for a few top students. The final problem was that the students did not know how to schedule the time and place to meet, discuss, and work together on group assignments after class. To remove these barriers, the participant teachers needed to instruct the students on group work skills when necessary and when time was permitted. Even though team work and presentation skills are two essential competencies for 21st century learners to meet the requirements of society and the workplace, this study uncovered disconnections between what happens inside school and outside of school. Similarly, to what Tan and McWilliam (2009) highlight, this study “remind[ed] us of the extent to which schooling, though still important, may be increasingly irrelevant to the future lives of all young people” (p. 222).

7.2.2 Tensions That Lived Within the Teachers’ Landscape

The participant teachers concurred that classes designed based on a pedagogy of multiliteracies was open and fluid, imposing higher demand on teachers than closed, didactic classes. Tensions generated and existed within the teacher’s own professional landscape alongside the changing classroom.

To improve English language competence. Except for one participant teacher who could speak fluent English, the rest felt pressured to improve their English proficiency. On the one hand, the content of textbook was extended to a wider scope of information; while on the other hand, the teachers raised more open questions and increased authentic communication with the students. Previous language communication between the teacher and students was simply centered on instructions, vocabulary, functional sentences, and grammar in the textbook, which was simple for these teachers. They asked more closed questions about the text with fixed answers. A few of them sometimes taught English in
Chinese, particularly when they explained complex knowledge. They had never thought that they needed to improve their English before they participated in this study. Authentic communication meant that students would ask questions or respond in ways that were not predictable, demanding that the teachers listen carefully to what the students said and that they respond in English accurately and appropriately within in seconds.

**To improve interdisciplinary knowledge.** English, as a language, acts as a medium to communicate information from different discipline fields. English education in the Chinese context is not supposed to confine to learning the language itself but extended to learn about different cultures and cross-curricular knowledge, which has been regulated in the national curriculum standard, the DCCCS and CCES. Similarly, a pedagogy of multiliteracies takes an interdisciplinary perspective on literacy education, advocating for the interrelation and integration of subject knowledge from different disciplines to develop a multiliterate person with a repertoire of knowledge and skills to meet the complex requirements of society. The participant teachers, who had been cultivated with specialist knowledge in English, faced a lack of academic knowledge, resources, and digital skills. Their limited subject knowledge restricted their ability to design complex, cross-curricular learning activities and perform textual analysis. This discrepancy reveals the conflicts between the compartmentalization of disciplines in the higher education system, which cultivates teacher candidates with specialist knowledge in one subject such as Math, English, Chinese, or Science. Rather, the elementary literacy education requires teachers equip with comprehensive and integrated subject knowledges. The DCCCS and CCES echo a pedagogy of multiliteracies, requiring teachers perform “extraordinarily interdisciplinary endeavors” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012b, p. 6).

**To improve professional knowledge and strategies.** The major channels through which the teachers acquire professional knowledge of instruction include two types: a pre-service full-time degree or diploma program at a Normal University and in-service training under the charge of a local educational bureau. Only one participant teacher had a degree in English Language and Literature, whereas the rest did not graduate with either a diploma or degree major in English education. This means that they were not equipped with the basic but necessary professional knowledge and skills relevant to
English education, particularly the pedagogy of teaching English to primary school students. They taught while learning either from reading by themselves or observing other experienced teachers. Naturally, their knowledge and understanding of English education was partial, which influenced their professional level indirectly. In addition, the fluidity, flexibility, and unpredictability of a multiliteracies class challenged their classroom management skills and adaptability capacity as well. They should act and react promptly to students’ performance and responses, adapting and modifying the prepared lesson plan according to the students’ onsite learning performances. Collaborative learning activities required careful design, demanding effective organization and management skills to keep the students on tasks instead of chatting about irrelevant issues.

**To be motivated with a drive for professional development.** This study activated the participant teachers’ desire for changes, particularly because they had the chance to get one-to-one academic and professional support. However, two teachers from Minyue Elementary School said they did not have a strong inner drive to change because they had very few opportunities to participate in high-level professional training and received little support on classroom research. It was no wonder that they said they could not figure out alternative ways to replace the mechanic drilling before the study and that it took more efforts for them to shift to an innovative pedagogy of multiliteracies than the teachers from Xinxin Elementary School. As a matter of fact, the educational administration at different levels organize quite a number of English teacher training programs such as workshops or seminars for specific groups of teachers every year. However, not many English teachers are not able to participate because these programs are usually conducted during the weekdays when the teachers must fulfill their daily teaching. In general, elementary English teachers’ professional development is conditioned and constrained by limited academic and professional support and academic resources.

### 7.2.3 Tensions Generated from Bumping With Institutions

“The Framework of Developing Core Competencies of Chinese Students” (DCCCS) identifies six core competencies: learning to learn and healthy life under the category autonomous development; humanities heritage and scientific spirit under the category
cultural foundation; and responsibility and accountability and practice and innovation under the category social participation. Each core competency has three sub-competencies. Subsequently, each subject issues its own framework of core competencies. “The Core Competencies of the English Subject” (CCES) classifies four core competencies and their respective roles: language competence as the subject foundation, learning abilities as the developmental conditions, thinking characters as the mental characteristics, and cultural awareness as value orientation.

The DCCCS and CCES redefined the goals, aims, and objectives of English education, demanding prompt and corresponding changes from every aspect of education. Nevertheless, the key policies regarding course hours, homework, textbooks, and assessment have remained intact. Narratives of institutions collided now and then with those of the teachers at national, local, and school levels, situating teachers in a conflict between “two kinds of ‘ideological practice’: concrete practice, or the practical activities of personals, and symbolic practice, or the socially normative categories persons appropriate to define and organize their experience” (Britzman, 2003, p. 41).

**To be released from rigid institutional regulations.** The MOE regulates that schools must set two lessons for grade 1 to 2 and three lessons for grade 3 to 6 in regard to elementary education. Each lesson lasts 40 minutes. Time is too limited for the students to acquire a new foreign language and achieve the high demands of the DCCCS and CCES, which positions English education as not merely learning about linguistic knowledge but also as a sociocultural practice. It should integrate with the other disciplines and contribute to students’ overall development as human beings. There has been a dispute over elementary student workload for many years, which urged the local educational bureau and finally the MOE to issue a policy that regulated homework and a policy that restricted the time that students spend on digital devices at school. Nevertheless, class time is far from enough for the students to complete a complex task. In Minyue elementary school, teachers rarely assigned complex tasks such as presentations, posters, and creating a new story even if they wanted to (Focus group seminar 2, March 3, 2017). They used the English textbook designated by the local district educational bureau selected from the approved list of English textbooks. Although
they were encouraged to adapt the textbook and addressed the cultural and linguistic diversity in English literacy, limited resources appropriate for the Chinese students and limited class time made this very hard to actualize. In addition, the standard summative assessment they used to evaluate students’ learning outcomes during and at the end of each semester was developed based on the content and syllabus of the regulated textbook. The primary criteria for enrollment in top secondary schools was ranked by total scores of the final examinations at grade 5 semester 2 and grade 6 semester 1 (Focus group seminar 2, March 31, 2017), although formative assessment had been introduced as an equally important type of assessment. The required module tests rested on vocabulary and grammar throughout the listening, reading and writing activities. To ensure that the students could attain high total scores and due to a belief in the function of memorizing and drilling, the teachers followed the textbook rigidly and spent half of the class hours for each unit on the module tests. The local educational bureau organizes a number of seminars or competitions every year, and the supervisor comes to observe one class of each teacher every semester (Focus group seminar 2, March 31, 2017). In this semester, they had to prepare for an open class that all the English teachers at the school would come and observe. Every teacher was required to participate. To make a perfect lesson and get the opportunity to win the prize for the school, every teacher would put significant time and energy into preparing for the demo lesson, which influenced the quality of their other lessons. Finally, although there was WiFi on the campus, it was only for the teacher to log in to the Internet with their individual account and password. Usually there was one computer classroom at school. This was far from enough for the students to use, which hindered the participant teacher from designing digitalized learning activities. To sum up, limited class hours, regulated textbooks and homework time, and summative-oriented assessment constrained the teachers’ innovative practices.

To improve textbooks. Textbooks are the prominent resource and platform that the teachers use to develop a lesson plan to achieve learning objectives. There has been a big gap between the published English textbooks and the high standards in the DCCCS and CCES, as well as the advocacy of a pedagogy of multiliteracies. The participant teachers from Xinxin Elementary School used a set of approved teaching materials published in English-speaking countries, including English textbooks, picture books and cartoons. The
combination created positive conditions for them to practice a pedagogy of multiliteracies. The participant teachers from Minyue Elementary School had to deal with the limitations of the English textbook developed in the Chinese context. The content of textbook mainly focused on basic vocabulary, grammar, functional sentences, and language skills out of the concern over district differences in the country. Their English textbook failed to provide a balanced distribution of activities involved different knowledge processes. Firstly, the knowledge process of experiencing was privileged over other types in general. Secondly, the knowledge process of conceptualizing was far undervalued because plenty of activities engaged the students in decoding and memorizing the meaning of a single word, but rarely categorizing or naming a cluster of words with a concept, a topic or an item. Thirdly, very few pedagogical activities involved the knowledge process of analyzing functionally and critically. Although nearly half of the units are embedded with cultural knowledge or hidden social values, either about China or about other countries, no activities engaged the students in cultural evaluation, situating the text in a larger context and highlighting similarities and differences in cultures or social values. Finally, although a number of activities provided the opportunity for the students to apply what they had learned, most were not situated in authentic communicative contexts except when following the given examples. Even fewer activities created the space for the students to bring in their own interests, experiences and aspirations, integrate known and new knowledge, and apply the new knowledge creatively in a new, authentic context (Focus group seminar 2, March 31, 2017). From the participant teachers’ perspectives, they must revise and modify the content of the English textbook for three main purposes: (1) to engage in the cognitive processes of conceptualizing and analyzing, such as defining the concept, mapping a conceptual map of the unit, generalizing the rules of grammar or phonics, analyzing the main idea and the supporting details, determining cause and effect, considering problems and solutions, or making comments; (2) to expand the students’ scope of knowledge and skills and to develop the students’ analytical, critical thinking competency; (3) to enable the students to apply and transform their knowledge between school learning and the practical out-of-school experiences and to cope with complex communications in the real-life world.
To balance workload. Teaching was the major work that the participant teachers obligated to do. 15 lessons were the minimum quantity of weekly workload for each teacher. However, they were usually assigned other administrative work. The centralized school management system required that individual needs be subordinate to collective needs. There was a sports meeting and a singing competition held at Minyue Elementary School while the branch school of Xinin Elementary School was moving to a new site, except for the sports meeting. All of the teachers needed to work with the home teachers to prepare for the ceremony, rehearsals and organize the school activities. Sometimes, they had to use regular class time to practice the performance in order to make the perfect show. The workload also included the on-going assessment and feedback on students’ assignments. Every teacher taught four classes and each class had 38-40 students. This meant every one of the participant teachers had nearly 152-160 students and they have to spend no less than three hours to check one simple assignment and gave them feedback individually. Teachers were at Minyue Elementary School were asked to teach or monitor one after-school course when the new after-school program was introduced as a regulatory supplementary school program. Apart from regular work relevant to teaching, they were responsible for communicating with the parents about the students. This massive workload deprived the teachers of adequate time to prepare school lessons. They usually had to write their lesson plans at home. However, all of them were mothers and they had to look after their children and do housework. As a result, they often felt short of time to fully prepare the teaching of a unit and outline the activities with details and teaching aids. If time permitted the next morning, they would make it into a more carefully designed lesson plan.

7.3 Change Dimensions of Practices, Perceptions, and Affects

Tensions permeated in the school landscape when the participant teachers experimented with a pedagogy of multiliteracies. However, the recursive, spiral trajectory of wrestling with the tensions activated the participant teachers’ desire for professional development, leading to changes at different levels: practical, perceptual, and emotional. These changes created a poignant combination of personal, social, and institutional narratives,
reverberating and narrating the participant teachers’ lived experiences and construction of ideological and practical knowledge of multiliteracies.

**Adapt the textbook to expand the scope of English learning.** They broke through the limits of single subject education, establishing the connection between language education and thinking abilities development as well as integrating the knowledge of other subjects with language learning. Summarizing and retelling were common activities that all of the participant teachers used to help students restate or recall the key points of a text, assisted with a mind map of the text. However, these activities were engaged in lower order thinking skills such as remembering and understanding. In search of a deeper understanding, they designed conceptualizing activities to engage the students with higher order thinking such as classifying the words, defining a concept, or generating a grammatical rule. They also provided students with activities in which they used a variety of analytical skills to dive into the referential meanings of texts and they made comments from a critical perspective on the messages, intentions and voices embedded into the text. For example, they asked the students to figure out the main idea and its supporting details, make comments on the characters or events, compare and contrast similarities and differences between Chinese and western culture, identify the writer’s purpose, illustrate the key features, provide alternatives to one problem, and analyze positives and negatives. They adapted the materials and activities in the textbook to include more information in different subjects such as science, math and social studies and designed complex tasks such as making a new song, a picture story, a poster, PowerPoint slides, or a play which involved a combination of different skills such as singing and dancing skills, oral presentation skills, and stage performance skills.

**Make connections between textbook knowledge and students as well as the real-life world.** A regular approach was that they designed warm-up activities for experiencing the new to activate the students’ prior knowledge. The students’ experience was usually excluded and not considered crucial for reaching a better understanding and acquiring new knowledge. Teachers experimented with a variety of new pedagogical activities. For example, to make meaning out of the new texts, they asked the students to talk about their previous experience relevant to the theme, topic or events before and during the process
of learning new texts. They encouraged students to bring the real objects they found outside of school, such as the books they read at home, and share their life stories. In text discussion, they raised questions for students to compare and contrast with what they had seen or experienced in their real-life world in addition to eliciting students’ critical responses to the text and making connections between their experience with the content and the characters.

**Introduce peer assessment as part of the assessment of students’ class performance.**
An assessment system has been set up to evaluate the students’ learning outcomes since English was regulated as an obligatory subject in the elementary school educational system in 2001. It has been teacher-dominated in terms of classroom assessment because it has been the teacher who decides what, when, and how to assess the students’ class performance. In other words, the teacher controls the right of discourse as the only party of assessment. In the first few lessons after the research commenced, it was common to see that the class assessment was conducted simply by the participant teachers in the form of oral feedback like “Good,” “Great,” or “Excellent” after the students performed a task. This kind of feedback was vague and meaningless, not constructive for the students because it was hard to see what rubrics the teachers followed or referred to. The teachers did not explain how the students had done a good job or what they needed to improve. They tried to shift from an assessment of learning to an assessment for or as learning. The assessments between and within groups were their first attempt, although they had not been very skillful at designing and organizing peer assessment. They invited students to make comments on other group’s performance according to the rubrics listed on the assessment sheet. Additionally, each group wrote down their suggestions for improvement, learning how to make constructive feedback to help each other improve.

**Address students’ subjectivity in learning new knowledge.** They provided more space and time for the students to develop stronger self-governance over their own learning process and outcomes. They privileged the students’ right to question, predict, test, and assess before they instructed students on a new text. To replace the mechanic drilling, they adopted pair work or group work as the main types of activity organization and created an interactive, supportive learning community for the students to work
collaboratively on problems with the new texts. They redesigned the content of one unit or assigned self-study periods to reduce the time spent on learning repetitive or oversimplified language points, leaving more time for the students to make sense of the new vocabulary and texts cooperatively or independently. The students demonstrated their understanding via variable modes of representation based on their own interests, intentions, choices, and strengths. As a result, they found that students used English more frequently to express creative and critical ideas, which promoted their language competence. Additionally, the students became more independent, efficient, and self-disciplined in the process of learning. In sum, the students were more capable of thinking actively and learning autonomously. The participant teachers eventually acknowledged that “learning processes need[ed] to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectivities – interests, intention, commitments, and purposes – students bring to learning” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 72, emphasis in original).

**Acknowledging transformative learning was at the core of lesson planning.**

Previously, the participant teachers’ classes featured the teacher asking questions and the students answering them, or teacher giving instructions and the students completing the tasks. However, the questions and tasks were meaningful merely from the teacher’s perspective, while the students simply followed and completed their tasks under the teacher’s requirements. It was hard to say if they intended to transform the knowledge because they hardly saw the connections between the new knowledge and the students’ learning needs in their lifeworlds. In addition, it was the top students who frequently responded actively to the teacher because they were more competent than most of the class. Moreover, the textbook activities engaged more in lower order thinking such as remembering, understanding, and applying. Therefore, the participant teachers modified the textbook activities to include higher order thinking, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating with a focus on links with students. While analyzing the text, the participant teachers were concerned more about the way in which meaning-making could be of great value to the students’ personal belief systems and how to increase their practical knowledge and life experience for their future life of study and working. To enable the students to transform what they learned in class into authentic communicative competencies, they considered how to help the students learn to learn. They were more
aware to give instruction and guidance on learning strategies and skills before, during, and after the task. When designing the context for the students to practice and apply the new knowledge, they tried to mimic the authentic context around the students so the new knowledge might be used naturally for authentic purposes. They no longer limited the practice and application of the new knowledge to the mechanic, repetitive substitutional exercises that they had believed ensured good scores on standardized tests.

Create the space for the students to make meaning of the text and voice their ideas. Rather than translating directly or presenting a picture of the word, they encouraged students to use body language to visualize its meaning first. They allowed students to ask questions, predict, or infer before and while reading or listening to a text, and figure out the meaning collaboratively or search on the Internet to deepen their basic understanding. Students could draw a mind map to present the details of a topic or a set of pictures to illustrate the meaning of the written text. They also recreated a new dialogue or story based on the original one or expressed their ideas of the characters, events, or problems in either oral or written form. Even if they were constantly facing the time problem, they preferred to slow down and adjust the lesson plan of next class. The students talked more than the teacher. As a result, this Third Space promoted students’ learning autonomy.

Use the pedagogical contact zone to cultivate a dialogical, sticky student-teacher relationship. The “contact zone” in this context follows Pratt’s (1991) definition, which refers to the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other and the models of community that teachers rely on in teaching. The instructor role had been their primary role for a long time, as the participant teachers’ classes had been dominated by the teacher rather than students. They started to switch their roles along with different contexts: model, assistant, helper, supporter, director, guide, or resourcer. They listened to what the students needed and responded promptly to support them with problem-solving skills and resources to achieve the learning objectives successfully. They had real interest in what students said and shared their real ideas or opinions as authentic conversations and dialogues. There were no requirements regarding right or wrong; instead, there was relaxed communication. They admitted that students could know more than them, and therefore they let the mind map open and welcomed students to add their
knowledge or findings from books related to the topic. They co-constructed the meaning and learned from each other as co-learners. Although sometimes they were not patient enough, they fully recognized that it took a rather long time to build strengths in learning. Meanwhile, all of the participant teachers agreed that the students changed their attitudes toward learning English, moving from being passive to active. They used a variety of synonyms to describe their positive attitudes such as interested, motivated, excited, involved, engaged, active, and participative. They saw that the students acted and reacted with greater curiosity and willingness, and with more desire to share, communicate, and ask questions. In short, the teachers’ changed their attitudes and this drew the students closer to them and influenced their perspectives of learning, which ultimately contributed to establishing an intimate relationship built on mutual understanding, trust, and tolerance.

**Develop sticky emotions for the students.** Emotions are “sticky” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 16). The participant teachers’ emotions “moved, stuck, and slid” (p. 14) with the students’ weaving, unstable performance. Their changed instructional approaches impacted the students’ class performance and vice versa. A common impression reflected in the interviews of all the participant teachers was that they cared more about the students and their emotions “moved, stuck, and slid” with the students, no longer fixed and still. The students demonstrated diverse thinking ability, challenging the teachers’ stable, set ways of thinking which presumed one standard answer, forcing them to take an open-minded attitude toward the students’ different responses. Their diverse, creative responses were beyond the teachers’ expectation, which made them feel surprised, happy, excited and satisfied. Occasionally they were anxious and frustrated when there were disciplinary problems and the tasks were not completed successfully as they had planned and expected before the class. When they saw that more students actively participated in class activities and devoted more time to reviewing and preparing, they were more willing to try new instructional strategies, and their passion for and persistence to follow innovative teaching grew. If the students’ performance did not achieve their pre-planned objectives, they reflected retrospectively on their lesson plan and onsite practices, trying to determine the causes and the measures to modify and adjust them at the same time. When this happened, the participant teachers felt less confidence in their capacity to implement a pedagogy of multiliteracies. However, when they observed the students’ excellent
performance on the complex tasks that integrated interdisciplinary knowledge and multi-skills into English learning, and when they heard the students’ critical and thoughtful comments on social and cultural issues as read between the lines in the texts, they were excited and gratified with their deliberate actions and reactions. As they were used to being the solo-authority in the classroom, where the students were docile and obedient to whatever they required them to do, the participant teachers experienced an intensive fluctuation of emotions that they had never had before in this study.

7.4 A Sociomaterial Understanding of the Teacher’s Landscape

Tensions and changes emerged as results of intersections and interactions between entities and their social and material world. The study on teacher’s innovative practices unfolded a complex, unstable, and tension-filled landscape. Despite that their practices were conditioned by their own limits and the students’ limits as well, I sensed the force and counterforce from the sociomaterial world. Therefore, I moved my attention to the nonhuman entities that conditioned the participant teachers’ practices (See Figure 26).

![Figure 26: The Entities That Conditioned the Participant Teachers’ Practices](image)

The participant teachers had been situating and enacting new practices entangled with various forces and counterforces. In retrospect, the materiality including the intended
curricula, policies, textbooks, assessment system, classroom environment, school-based curriculum, school management system, access to technology, school library, school supervision, annual competitions, and teacher training programs exerted force to condition the participant teachers’ practices. However, counterforce itself was embedded with force. The participant teachers acknowledged the negative force, filtered and transformed it into a positive force. In other words, their drive for professional development enabled them to accommodate the various forces and counterforces.

To be more specific, curricula, both the intended curriculum and the school curriculum, were embedded with force as well as counterforce. The coherence between a pedagogy of multiliteracies and the DCCCS and CCES created a positive environment for the participant teachers to experiment and perpetuate innovative instructional approaches in addition to providing the guidelines for designing lessons. The school curriculum in Xinxin Elementary School made it easy for the participant teachers to approach multiliteracies due to its openness and richness in literacies, content, and assessment. On the contrary, curriculum at Minyue Elementary School was closed and standardization-oriented, which constrained the participant teachers’ practices.

Policies at national and local levels constrained more than released the teachers’ practices, particularly the teachers at Minyue Elementary School. The regulations regarding textbooks deprived them of the right to select more appropriate materials for the students. The fixed weekly class periods left no space and time for teachers to expand the scope of knowledge and develop variable learning strategies and skills because they required more time to digest, practice, and apply. The homework policy released the students from a heavy study load, but it made it hard for the teachers. The “Nearby Enrollment Policy” released teachers from the pressure of school ranking in standardized final tests to a large extent, but they still spent significant time on standardized unit tests as it was considered the core component of formative assessment. The policy surrounding classroom environment overlooked the classroom’s potential to be an interactive, supportive learning environment. The classrooms looked quite similar in these two schools, containing only the national flag, equipment, furniture, and the board.
Another source of counterforce came from the school territory. Annual school activities continuously interrupted the participant teachers’ successive practices, particularly at Minyue Elementary School. It usually took at least one month to prepare for one large event, occupying some class time for rehearsal. The minimum workload for the teachers was 15 hours per week. As a result, every English teacher was required to teach at least 4 periods of classes and each had 35-40 students. Therefore, it was a big task for one teacher to give feedback on the students’ assignments. Both schools required teachers to check or write feedback on every student’s assignment and to keep touch with parents through cellphone calls or via the class WeChat group. Some English teachers at Minyue Elementary School were assigned to be a home teacher at the same time. Moreover, some teachers were assigned to organize after-school activities. They could not find adequate time to prepare for the lessons carefully, which indirectly forced them to revert to the familiar, didactic pedagogy. Regularly, the district education bureau holds an annual teaching competition or school supervision. On the one hand, this perpetuates the teachers’ innovation, but on the other hand it interrupts the regular teaching flow because teachers may use the other teachers’ classes in the same grade to “try” their lesson plan in order to present a “perfect” class when the competition comes about or the supervisor observes. These happened to the participant teachers at Minyue Elementary School and it interrupted their practice several times. The last counterforce could be attributed to the limited digital equipment available for students to research information on the Internet or to try digital learning in class. In addition, neither of the school libraries had rich digital resources or levelled books in English for the students to use or read apart from the books used in class. There were some resources for the English teachers to use as references, but not to use in class as supplementary readings for the students. As a result, it took the participant teachers extra time to search, select, and collect relevant, appropriate multimodal resources on the Internet as supplementary texts for students to read or watch.

The analysis of the sociomaterial world in this study enables me to view and understand better the general landscape where Chinese elementary English teachers enact innovative practices. Teacher’s professional incompetency can be translated into a large assemblage of counterforce on the teachers’ new practices. The new curriculum reform initiated in 2011 delivers an appeal to keep pace and tone with the worldwide trend of curriculum
reform, which imposes high demands on teachers’ professional competencies and students’ learning outcomes. However, the quality of elementary English teachers in China is not always satisfactory due to historical reasons and this exerts counterforce because it slows down the pace of transformation. Teachers greatly need to systematically improve or update their theoretical and practical knowledge of English teaching pedagogy and instructional strategies because a large number of the English teachers at the elementary schools graduated with a diploma or degree in another field other than English or English education. Teacher training programs are supposed to guide, support, and facilitate teachers’ transformative practices as a force with facilitation and enhancement. Nevertheless, their inappropriate schedule limited the teachers’ opportunities to participate in the programs, keeping teachers away from achieving a full understanding of the tenets of the new curricula and indirectly hindering them from successfully implementing new ideology, theory, and pedagogy in teaching practices. The effect is that even if teachers want to change, they do not know how to change or where to start.

The hierarchical policies at the national, local, and school levels create metanarratives but exert self-contradictory forces. On the one hand, the intended national curriculum, namely “The English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education” (2011 Version), uncovers the intention of de-centralization by setting up three-tiers of curriculum: national, local, and school-based (MOE, 2011b). The recently issued mandatory documents, the DCCCS and CCES, outline the key competencies that a new learner should possess in this new learning context. These policies assemble and produce a force of push on the teachers and stimulate the teachers’ incentive to explore and achieve high goals through fundamental changes in ideology and pedagogy. On the other hand, the local or district educational authorities have absolute authority in textbook selection and appoint one regulatory textbook to be used at schools. Assessment still puts weight to the standardized tests to meet the enrollment policy of secondary education. In this sense, they form a counterforce of pull to constrain the teachers’ new practices from meeting the goals of the intended national curriculum policies.
The contradictory forces cause a dilemma for the teachers, requiring them to frequently negotiate with different forces and counterforces. A school-based curriculum that follows the new curriculum policies facilitates the teachers’ new practices, such as what was seen at Xinxin Elementary School. If the school-based curriculum does not attempt to echo the new curriculum policies, it imposes big challenges for the teachers’ new practices, such as seen at Minyue Elementary School. The overarching goals of the new curriculum are there, but the pace of actualization has been slow. The belief that one-textbook-for-all enables students to develop English competency and that standardized tests account for students’ English proficiency are unrealistic and infeasible. The one-textbook-for-all policy extremely inhibits teachers’ autonomy by discouraging them to “compose curricula by drawing on materials available to them” (Dudley-Marling & Murphy, 2001, p. 547). The linguistic-knowledge-centered content, limited class time, and limited available resources in English join in this counterforce and form an assembly with a strong power. They leave very little space and time for teachers to teach beyond the texts and hone students’ core competencies of cultural awareness, thinking abilities, and learning capacities through accomplishing complex tasks such as discussion, debates, and projects. In this study, even though the teachers made small changes regarding instructional approaches, content, and activities, they brought about significant changes in the students’ attitudes and outcomes, which reinforced their new practices and pushed them forward. However, the textbook-centered quizzes and the standardized assessment system at the local or district levels enacted power as a counterforce, interrupting the teachers’ successive efforts to release their authority and enable student to be co-designers plus the concern about grades imposed by both the school and parents. They constantly pulled the participant teachers back to the old, didactic trail by “limiting their journey toward becoming discerners rather than disseminators of literacy programs” (Hibbert & Iannacci, 2005, p. 723). The struggling and wrestling between the force and counterforce impeded the participant teachers’ shift from knowledge-based to competency-based instructional approaches in correspondence with the new policies. These findings told us that teachers were not solely responsible for agency or the only source for causal effects in education innovation. The assemblage and translation within
or between forces required them to strategically negotiate with nonhuman actors emerged in their professional landscapes in order to achieve a paradigm shift.
Chapter 8

8 Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I highlight a few important conclusions corresponding to the research questions, picturing the participant teachers exploring practices and the actors that exert the most powerful forces to produce tensions. In addition, I present thoughtful insights and implications drawn from the participant teachers’ lived experiences of enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies in their particular contexts of teaching and learning.

8.1 Concluding Remarks

The participant teachers synthesized the didactic instructional approach and a pedagogy of multiliteracies. They celebrated the hybridity and pluralism of multiliteracies pedagogies. Cope and Kalantzis (2015) explain that “Learning by Design is by comparison ‘reflexive’, combining elements of each of these traditions into a new synthesis” (p. 1). The traditions they are referring to are ‘didactic’ and ‘authentic’ pedagogies. The participate teachers kept didactic pedagogies for specific purposes, particularly for when they were teaching basic linguistic knowledge of English such as vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammar. Unlike teaching literacy to native speakers, Chinese elementary students have very limited exposure to English inside and outside school and the majority of them have to start from “zero” when they enter school. The learning conditions at school are not adequate enough for them to develop English competency within a short period.

Therefore, the participant teachers digested the “feasible” and “applicable” elements of multiliteracies pedagogy for their particular context and creatively integrated them into their old schema, modifying or filtering those “infeasible” or “inapplicable” elements. They integrated new, core elements, such as particularly multimodality, multiplicity, differences, subjectivity, agency, transformation, space, active learning, autonomous learning, authenticity, real-life connections, critical thinking, into their educational philosophy and actualized them in activities based on personal recalibration. They transformed innovative instructional strategies into successful practices to enrich and
expand their personal professional knowledge. They situated with flexibility and mobility the western-generated pedagogy in the context of their own teaching and took its essence critically to reconstruct personal theoretical and pedagogical knowledge of English teaching and learning.

The participant teachers reconstructed their multiple identity as new teachers, although not intentionally. They switched identities flexibly and promptly along with the changes in the context of teaching and learning. They were willing to listen, to communicate, and to share agency and authority. Building a flat, democratic teacher-student relationship was the primary strategy they had used. Acknowledging students as equally important knowledge designers, constructors, creators, and assessors, they empowered the students by enabling them to choose the ways of demonstrating and to voice their different ideas and opinions. They also provided them with the time and space needed to explore and try new knowledge and skills to make meaning in a way they were interested in. They transformed the classroom into a space where the students interacted and negotiated with different lifeworlds—teacher, school, community, society—and made meaning (New London Group, 1994). They began to address students’ self-governance through collaborative work and peer assessment. Their openness to and embracing of differences surprised the students who were excited by the changes in the classroom.

8.2 Implications

The participant teachers are still on the way to becoming new teachers. Accomplishing a fundamental shift demands a healthy, supportive ecosystem for professional development rooted in social, cultural, and political context. New curriculum, namely, the DCCCS and CCES, increases the demand for quality elementary school English teachers. The sociomateriality world should respond correspondingly by creating adequately favourable conditions at different levels to motivate, perpetuate, and sustain teachers’ innovative practices rather than constraining, interrupting, and hindering their endeavours. It should also consider how to create conditions and a school environment to support every individual students’ active, transformative learning and enable them to transfer and transform knowledge and skills inside school to meet the needs of working lives, public lives, and private lives (New London Group, 1994). The one-size-for-all instructional
model and the Nearby Enrollment Policy ensure that individual students will equally enjoy the right to an education. It is time to think carefully about equity of education, in other words, how education can cater to each individual student’s differences and subjectivities.

The entities that conditioned the participant teachers’ practices of a pedagogy of multiliteracies with greater power included school curriculum and textbooks. The DCCCS and CCES set goals aligned with global educational reform. However, the national intended curriculum should be localized as a programmatic curriculum that suits the educational context of each school. School-based curriculum can either perpetuate teachers’ innovative practices, such as at Xinxin Elementary School, or constrain teachers’ innovation, such as at Minyue Elementary School. Therefore, it has become urgent for schools to develop a well-designed school-based curriculum that can provide down-to-earth guidelines for school teachers to judge where to start and where to go in order to achieve the goals of educational reform.

If a school simply takes the syllabus from a textbook as the curriculum, it places the school at-risk. The regulatory English textbooks are mainly developed for general English education that could be used by all the elementary schools in China, rarely taking into account local differences. For example, Minyue Elementary School is located in Beijing, a city with a higher demand for English and more opportunities and resources for learning English apart from schooling. Students felt bored because many of them were learning more difficult, original English outside the school. As a result, teachers must add new materials to increase the input and exposure of English in class (Focus group seminar 2, March 31, 2017). Additionally, the publication date of textbooks may cause problems for the changing curriculum. For example, the textbook used in Minyue Elementary School was published in 2013, even though the DCCCS and CCES were released in 2016. This means the textbook did not reflect the tenets of the new curriculum. As a result, the teachers must fill the gaps. Definitely, the teachers need direction on what the gaps are and how to address them. Without doubt, these discrepancies constrained the participant teachers when they applied a pedagogy of multiliteracies. For example, engaging a student in critical thinking or conceptualizing demands that the text be
embedded with the content or information that the teachers need to design cognitive activities such as discussions to interrogate or challenge the hidden voice, power, social justice, or the status quo. The availability of such texts is too limited. Given the discrepancies, teachers need to know how to recognize the gaps, where to find the available resources, and what cognitive activities should be added.

To a certain degree, the distinctive features of the educational field in China could be described as its instability and rigidity. An example of instability in China is how new English curriculum development is still occurring, with modifications happening yearly. Educational policies at the governmental, local, and district level are released every year, which can overwhelm and confuse teachers (Focus group seminar 2, March 31, 2017). An example of rigidity in China is how all of the decisions relevant to teaching at elementary school must be within the scope of approval. For example, the classrooms in Xinxin Elementary School and Minyue Elementary School were quite alike: white walls, lined closets, multimedia equipment, projector, a big screen TV, and the national flag. The classrooms’ multilayered symbolic meanings were indifference, distance, and authority. However, this uniformity is maintained at the expense of freedom and autonomy. At the same time, it becomes a barrier that prevents teachers from trying new instructional approaches because they do not want to take the risk. In this study, the participant teachers needed to accommodate new practices with normative practices when the school supervisors came to observe their classes to develop a “safe” lesson plan.

The last important implication is that a teacher’s professional development demands a multilayered mentorship system. The inexperienced teachers in this study were assigned a mentor called “Shi Fu” (师傅) who was supposed to instruct them on lesson planning and observe their classes. The reality was that their Shi Fu did not have enough time to stay with them and discuss their lessons, despite they could consult their Shi Fu about any questions. When they moved into their second year, they were considered independent and no longer were assigned a mentor. The problem was that what they solved during the first year was “survival” problems that enabled them to successfully complete regular teaching tasks. Another hidden risk was that those mentors also needed a superior mentor to help them renew ideology and update professional knowledge. However, the
experienced teachers mainly counted on themselves. What the mentors could have contributed was prior experiences regarding strategies and skills. Therefore, a multilayered mentorship system could be much more useful and functional than general teacher training workshops in that it addresses individual teacher’s particular needs and provides tailored, effective solutions to their problems.

8.3 Future Study

Recently, posthumanists argue for “a decentering of the human within understandings of literacy” (Hackett & Somerville, 2017, p. 376) in the current world where “humans, nonhumans, and more-than-humans are already always entangled in producing truths, realities, knowledges and relationships” (Kuby & Rowsell, 2017, p. 285). They foreground a codependency or interdependency relationship among humans, nonhumans, and the more-than-human world. The agents involved in the literacy meaning making process included teachers and students as human agents but also involved all of the materiality agents such as sound, vibration, movement, space, emotions, equipment, materials, images, tapes, videos, maps, community, language, policies, agency, subjectivity, ethics, power, and relationships (Ahmed, 2014; Barad, 2013; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012; Gallagher, 2016; Gershon, 2013; Hackett & Somerville, 2017; Kuby & Rowsell, 2017; Rossholt, 2012; Somerville, 2013; Tylor, 2016).

Inspired by the posthumanism approach, I can recruit more participants and conduct a follow-up study with a focus on the relations between teachers’ innovative practices and nonhumans and the more-than-human world such as technical devices, artefacts, teaching aids, school culture, and environment and trace the generated effects. Furthermore, this study found that emotion “as a form of affective value” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 11) exerted a strong force on the participant teachers’ practices. Therefore, a further study on the types of emotion and the movement of emotions into and out of the tension-filled professional landscape will deepen the understanding of how teachers reconstruct multiple self and identities as new teachers. It would also be of great value to further explore how the relations emerged as a result of the interactions between curriculum policy changes, curriculum reforms, the realities of the educational environment, school cultures, and the teachers’ reactions.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Western Ethics Approval Notice

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREEB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREEB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREEB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREEB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREEB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREEB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREEB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREEB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under IRB registration number IRB 00009414.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Mary Hixson, NMREEB Chair or delegated board member

EO: Erika Basta __ Nicole Kamki __ Grace Kelly __ Katey Harris __ Nicole Merphot __ Kaveh Gopald
Appendices

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions Inviting the Participant
Teachers’ Stories of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in Class

Part I: Description of the Participant

Participant ID: _______________ Date & Device of Interview: _______________
Place of Interview: _______________ Duration of Interview: _______________

Part II: Interview Questions

A narrative interview is more like a dialogic interaction in which both the interviewee and the researcher are narrators with stories to tell and voice by themselves. The dialogue will come out naturally from sharing of experiences. The interview starts from broad, general questions to invite participants to talk about their experiences. For example:

1. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your lesson. Tell me how the lesson unfolded from your perspective.

Then more questions come out of the process of telling teaching stories, like

2. What was it like to adopt a multiliteracies pedagogy in this lesson?

3. Was this the first time you used [video/audio/pictures] in the classroom in this way? What was that like?

3. What do you think of the activity that invited the students to use gestures to tell what they thought of this text?

4. In what ways did the students experience the story when they were creating a new story and act it out?

5. Tell me about the decisions you made in terms of providing the various modes for students to represent what they had learned in this text?

6. How has this pedagogy informed your previous understanding of teaching and learning?

7. What is it about Multiliteracies pedagogy that excites you? Scares you? Makes you feel constrained when you practice it in teaching?

8. Overall, how did this different approach to teaching make you feel while you were teaching?
Appendices

Appendix C: Research on a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies Blurb (for XXX District)

Faculty of Education
Western University
Ontario, Canada (Postal Code)

(Date)

XXX (Administrator)
Dean
Management Center of XXX School District,
XXX District, Beijing, China (Postal Code)

Dear XXX:

My name is Lin Sun and I am a second-year PhD student in curriculum studies in Faculty of Education, Western University in London, Canada. I am writing to tell you about a research project that I am in the process of planning for my doctoral studies. I am planning to conduct research on the topic of English teachers’ lived experiences of enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies in primary English classrooms in China. I am in the process of applying for institutional Research Ethics Board (REB) approval, and I am writing to learn whether your district can be confirmed as one of the sites where I can receive permission to conduct my research.

As we are becoming more and more aware, the English literacy world in the 21st century has changed dramatically as a result of the prevalence of new multimedia technologies and increasingly globalization. A pedagogy of multiliteracies embraces these changes and offers practical and applicable frameworks to address them in classrooms. There is a great deal of empirical evidence in global practice using this framework. Based on more than twenty-year of experience in curriculum studies and teacher education in primary English education in Beijing, China, I believe what a pedagogy of multiliteracies assumes and advocates will inspire Chinese English teachers with new ideas for English teaching and learning.

This study invites primary English teachers to enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies in class. It expects to: (1) increase teachers’ awareness that English literacy teaching and learning cannot be detached from the sociocultural contexts but closely connected with everyday lifeworld; (2) encourage teachers to reexamine their previous perspectives of English teaching and learning with a vision of success for all the learners and explore the ways of cultivating individual learner into a person with multiple literacy competences, particularly a person with a repertoire of knowledge and skills to read and write multimodal texts, critical thinking abilities, and effective collaborative skills and a person who can participate fully into the working, community, and private lifeworlds in 21st century; (3) assist teachers to construct a new ideology and practical knowledge of
English teaching and learning through implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in classroom and adjust their literacy teaching practices to suit the requirements of 21\textsuperscript{st} century on English literacy education.

The activities that participating districts would be involved in are outlined as follows:

1. With your permission, and following REB approval, provide you with a poster (attached) advertising two free workshops (3 hours each) that I will provide to interested teachers in your district, at a site identified by you, to introduce them to multiliteracies pedagogies.

2. On the last day of the workshop, I will introduce them to my study, and will have letters of information and consent forms on hand to distribute to participants, seeking an opportunity to follow them into their classroom over a period of three months.

3. Teachers who volunteer to participate in the study can expect to be involved in the following ways:
   - Keeping a reflective journal over a period of 12 weeks (estimated ½ hour per week)
   - Permitting the researcher to observe two 45 minute lessons per week;
   - Engaging in follow up interviews about those lessons of no more than 1 hour each;
   - Participating in four focus-group sessions over the three–month period lasting up to 2 hours each.

In addition, I would seek permission to collect artifacts (or copies) of teaching and student work that reflect products of multiliteracies pedagogies. I will seek permission from the parents in those classrooms of teachers who volunteer to participate. My focus will be on the teachers however, and I will not be interviewing or observing students directly.

I would be happy to provide further information and would welcome an opportunity to conduct a follow up workshop for your district’s teachers at the end of the study to share what I have learned through this research.

If you need any further information or explanation about this study, please feel free to ask me directly either through email XXX or Wechat ID XXX. I would appreciate your support and approval of conducting this study in your district.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Appendices

Appendix D: General Topics of Workshops

The first Workshop

1. Theoretical Perspectives of Literacy
   a. Behavioral perspective
   b. Semiotic and multiliteracies perspective
   c. Cognitive perspective
   d. Sociocultural perspective
   e. Critical and feminist perspective

   How Do Children Gain Essential Literacy Skills?
   f. Psycholinguistic perspectives
   g. Social practice perspectives

2. New Learning Environment
   h. Children in new millennium experience
   i. 21st century children’s literature

3. Multimodality of Meaning Making
   j. Shifts from a literacy world to a multiliteracies world
   k. Types of literacy (mind map activity)
   l. Multimodality in literacy teaching and learning (a fishbowl conversation)

4. Characteristics of Multiliteracies Curriculum

The Second Workshop

5. Being Literate in the 21st Century
   (video study, ref. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn0_H-kvxkU)

6. Multiliteracies and A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies
   m. The core ideas
      (video study, ref. http://newlearningonline.com/multiliteracies/videos)
   n. Models of multiliteracies pedagogy
   o. Learning By Design
      (video study, ref. http://newlearningonline.com/learning-by-design/pedagogy)
   p. Assessment from multiliteracies perspective

7. Implications for English teaching and learning
   q. Notions of a multiliterate person
   r. Students as Designers
      (video study, ref. http://newlearningonline.com/learning-by-design/pedagogy)
   s. Teachers as Designers
      (video study, ref. http://newlearningonline.com/learning-by-design/pedagogy)
Appendices

Appendix E: Poster of Workshops

WORKSHOPS ON THE TOPIC OF MULTILITERACIES PEDAGOGIES

I am looking for volunteers to attend workshops on a pedagogy of multiliteracies in primary English teaching who meet the following criteria:
- a primary English teacher;
- working in a public primary school

If you are interested, you would be invited to participate in two workshops (3 hours each) on the topic of multiliteracies pedagogies.

The aims of the workshops are to: (1) have a full understanding of the changing literacy world; (2) reconsider what literacy pedagogy is meaningful and significant in this increasingly diverse literacy world; (3) fully recognize the importance of a pedagogy of multiliteracies; and (4) understand the meaning of multiliteracies and the model of Learning by Design.

For more information about the workshops, please contact:

Lin Sun
Faculty of Education,
Western University
Cell phone: XXX (China)
Cell phone: XXX (Canada)
Email: XXX
WeChat ID: XXX
Appendices

Appendix F: Poster of Recruitment

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN “A CRITICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF ENGLISH TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF ENACTING A PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES IN CHINA”

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study of English teachers’ experiences of implementing a pedagogy of multiliteracies in primary English teaching who meet the following criteria:

- a primary English teacher;
- working in a public primary school

If you are interested and agree to participate you would be asked to:

- practice a pedagogy of multiliteracies in regular English classes for three months in regular English classes.
- Your participation would involve 2 workshops (3 hours each, completed), 4 focus-group sessions (2 hours each), 12 reflective journals (estimated ½ hour per week), 24 lessons (2 lessons per week), and a follow-up interview (up to 1 hour each) after these lessons.

This is voluntary research on the topic of a pedagogy of multiliteracies, free of charge.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,

please contact:

Lin Sun
Faculty of Education,
Western University
Cell phone: XXX (China)
Cell phone: XXX (Canada)
Email: XXX
WeChat ID: XXX
Appendices

Appendix G: Letter of Information and Consent (for Participant Teachers)

Project Title:
A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

Document Title:
Consent Letter – Teacher

Principal Investigator:
Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Additional Research Staff:
Lin Sun, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Letter of Information

My name is Lin Sun, and I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies at the Faculty of Education, Western University, London Canada. Working with my Supervisor, Dr. Hibbert, I have designed a research study to better understand the introduction and implementation of a new way of thinking about teaching and learning in our English as a Foreign Language classes.

1. Invitation to Participate
   You are invited to participate in this research study. The study is interested in learning from English teacher’s experiences with a new approach to teaching known as a “pedagogy of multiliteracies.” You have been invited to participate in this research because you have attended the workshops on multiliteracies pedagogy. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision about participation in this research.

2. Purpose of this Study
   The purpose of this study is to investigate in what ways primary English teachers in China come to understand and enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom and to document the things that influence teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices.
3. **Length of the Study**

I would like to engage participants over a three-month period. Participants will be involved in the following ways: (1) permitting the researcher to observe two 45 minute lessons per week; (2) engaging in interviews following those lessons of no more than 1 hour each; (3) participating in four focus-group sessions over the three months lasting up to 2 hours each, and (4) keeping a reflective journal over a period of 12 weeks (estimated ½ hour per week).

4. **Study Procedures**

During the three-month time frame, and following the workshops on Multiliteracies Pedagogies, you will be asked to try out your new learning in your regular English classes. Two 45 minutes’ lessons per week will be observed and videotaped followed by an audiotaped face-to-face interview or virtual web chat (at the request of the participants). The video/audio recording is mandatory for participation. You will keep track of your thoughts about your experiences by keeping a weekly journal. From time to time, I will bring participants together in audio-recorded focus group sessions where we will collectively share our experiences.

I will also be keeping a journal and documenting samples of teaching materials, strategies and samples of students’ work from those lessons. When I have conducted a preliminary analysis of what I am learning, I will share them with you. You can check the accuracy and wholeness of my description and interpretation, as well as contribute your own interpretations, ideas, comments, or reflections.

**Inclusion Criteria**

I will purposefully select a representative sample from all teachers who participate in the workshops in the selected Districts, who teach English. I will choose a representation from schools ranked as “good” better and best, and for those who are at different levels of experience (e.g., novice, mid career, experienced).

**Potential Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.
5. Potential Benefits

The possible benefits to you may be learning about multiliteracies and a pedagogy of multiliteracies which you may have never heard of or tried in classroom. The experiences may inspire you to view English literacy education from a sociocultural perspective and raise the awareness of 21st century literacy education. The possible benefits to society may be found in the ways that teachers cultivate students’ multiliteracies competence in EFL context, and inform curriculum specialists, policy makers, and school administrators about a new literacy pedagogy.

6. Voluntary Participation

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future employment.

If you decide to withdraw from the study and you wish to have your data removed, please let the researcher know; otherwise, the information that was collected prior to you leaving the study will still be used. No new information will be collected without your permission.

7. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. They will be stored in a password-protected university workstation behind institutional firewalls for a minimum of 5 years. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

While we will try our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your name, initials, email address, telephone number, WeChat ID or QQ ID, and school/department/rank/years of teaching English may allow someone to link the data and identify you. If data is collected during the project which may be required to report by law, we have a duty to report.

The investigators will keep any personal information (name, initials, email address, telephone number, WeChat ID, QQ ID, school/department/rank/years of teaching English) about you in a secure and confidential location. You will be given a unique
ID number. A list linking your study ID number with your name will be kept by the investigators in a secure place, separate from your study file.

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact the investigators.

Please be advised that although the investigators will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups (like group seminars) prevents the investigators from guaranteeing confidentiality. The investigators would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

8. **Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

9. **Rights of Participants**

You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your career. We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

10. **Contacts for Further Information**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Kathryn Hibbert at XXX or Lin Sun at XXX

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

11. **Consent**

Informed consent will be indicated by signing the consent form that accompanies this letter.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.
Consent Form

Project Title:

A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

Document Title:

Consent Letter – Teacher

Principal Investigator:

Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Additional Research Staff:

Lin Sun, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

CONTACT FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Please check the appropriate box below and initial:

___ I agree to be contacted for future research studies

___ I do NOT agree to be contacted for future research studies

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

____________________  ___________________  ___________________
Print Name of Person    Signature          Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)
Obtaining Consent

____________________  ___________________  ___________________
Print Name of Participant Signature          Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)
Personal Contact Information

Name of Participant: ______________________________

School: ______________________________

Department: ______________________________

Rank: ______________________________

Years of teaching English: ______________________________

Two preferred methods of personal contact:

☐ Telephone number: ______________________________

☐ WeChat ID: ______________________________

☐ QQ ID: ______________________________

☐ Email address: ______________________________
Appendices

Appendix H: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students’ Parents

(English Version)

Letter of Information and Consent

Project Title:
A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

Document Title:
Consent Letter – Parents

Principal Investigator:
Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Additional Research Staff:
Lin Sun, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Letter of Information

My name is Lin Sun, and I am a PhD Candidate in Curriculum Studies at the Faculty of Education, Western University, London Canada. Working with my Supervisor, Dr. Hibbert, I have designed a research study to better understand the introduction and implementation of a new way of thinking about teaching and learning in our English as a Foreign Language classes.

1. Invitation to Participate

   Your child is invited to participate in this study. The study is interested in learning from English teacher’s experiences with a new approach to teaching known as a “pedagogy of multiliteracies.” Your child is invited because your child is studying in the class of the teacher who volunteers to participate in this study.

   The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision about your child’s participation in this research.

2. Purpose of this Study

   The purpose of this study is to investigate in what ways primary English teachers in China come to understand and enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies in the classroom and to document the things that influence teachers’ pedagogical pedagogical beliefs and practices.

3. Length of the Study

   I would like to engage your child as participants over a three-month period. Participants will be involved in the following ways: (1) permitting to be
videotaped or taken photos in those situations where the teacher’s activity is
directly related to students; (2) permitting assignment to be used as research data.

4. **Study Procedures**

   During the three-month time frame, I will observe and videotape two 45 minutes’
   lessons per week and collect students’ assignments as research data.

   **Inclusion Criteria**

   Only those students who have consented will be videoed and only data for those
   students who have consented will be used.

   **Potential Risks and Harms**

   There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with
   participating in this study.

5. **Potential Benefits**

   The possible benefits to your child may be experiencing a pedagogy of
   multiliteracies which cultivates multiliterate competence in English learning.

6. **Voluntary Participation**

   Participation in the study is voluntary. However, I only study the teacher. There
   may be occasions when your child is captured in videos or images and the
   assignments your child produces from their lessons may be captured and
   documented. You may refuse to allow your child to participate, refuse to answer
   questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your child.

   If you decide that your child withdraw from the study and you wish to have your
   child’s data removed, please let the researcher know; otherwise, the information
   that was collected prior to your child’s leaving the study will still be used. No new
   information will be collected without your permission.

7. **Confidentiality**

   All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators
   of this study. They will be stored in a password-protected university workstation
   behind institutional firewalls for a minimum of 5 years.

   Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research
   Ethics Board may require access to your child’s study-related records to monitor
   the conduct of the research.

   While we will try our best to protect your child’s information there is no
   guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your child’s image or
   name may allow someone to link the data and identify you. If data is collected
during the project which may be required to report by law, we have a duty to
report.

   The investigators will keep any personal information about your child in a secure
   and confidential location. Please be advised that although the investigators will
   take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of data
(like videos or assignments) prevents the investigators from guaranteeing confidentiality.

8. **Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

9. **Rights of Participants**

You may decide your child not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your child. We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision for your child to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

10. **Contacts for Further Information**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Kathryn Hibbert at XXX or Lin Sun at XXX

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

11. **Consent**

Informed consent will be indicated by signing the consent form that accompanies this letter.

*This letter is yours to keep for future reference.*
Consent Form

Project Title:
A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

Document Title:
Consent Letter – Parents

Principal Investigator:
Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Additional Research Staff:
Lin Sun, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Please check the appropriate box below and initial:

___ I agree that my child can be video-recorded in this research

___ I agree that my child’s assignments can be used as data in this research

__________________________________
Print Name of Student

__________________________  _______________________  __________________
Name of Parents of Students  Signature  Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)

YYYYY)
Appendices

Appendix I: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students’ Parents

(Chinese Version)

知情同意书

项目名称:
中国背景下英语教师多元识读教学法实践的批判性叙事研究

文件名:
同意书—家长

主要研究者:
凯瑟琳·希伯特，博士，教育系，西安大略大学，邮箱:XXX

其他研究成员:
孙琳，博士生，教育系，西安大略大学，邮箱:XXX

知情信

我叫孙琳，现在加拿大伦敦市的西安大略大学教育系攻读博士学位，主修课程大纲研究。为了更好的理解在英语作为一门外国语的学习课堂内，一种关于教和学的新思路是如何产生和实践，我和导师希伯特博士一起合作设计了这个研究项目。

1. 邀请参加

您的孩子将受邀参加这个研究。这个研究专注于英语教师采用一种新的教学方法—“多元识读教学法”的实践体验。因为您孩子所在班级的英语老师自愿加入这个研究，所以也邀请您的孩子加入。

2. 研究目的

本研究旨在了解中国的小学英语教师是如何逐步了解多元识读教学法，以及如何在课堂上实施这个教学法，并且记录下影响教师教学法理念和实践的诸多因素。

3. 研究周期

我希望邀请您的孩子参与到此次为期三个月的研究中。
孩子可能面临以下两种情况：1）当教师的课堂活动与孩子有直接关联时，孩子需要同意被录像或被拍照。2）孩子需要同意自己的作业被用作研究数据。

4. 研究步骤

在这三个月的研究过程中，我会每周观察两堂 45 分钟的英语课并且进行录像，同时将收集孩子的作业用作研究数据。

采纳标准

只有针对那些同意加入研究的孩子我们才会录像和收集数据。

潜在风险和伤害

参与此研究迄今未有也将不会给孩子带来任何风险和不适。

5. 潜在收获

您的孩子将会体验到多元识读教学法，这将有利于培养他英语学习的多元识读能力。

6. 自愿参与

参与此研究完全基于自愿原则。但是我只研究教师。您的孩子有时候可能会出现在录像或图像中，他的作业可能被拍到或者被收集。您可以拒绝让孩子参与，拒绝回答问题或在研究中途的任何时间选择退出，这将对您的孩子没有任何影响。

如果您中途让孩子退出并希望删除孩子相关的数据，那么请告知研究者；否则在孩子退出前我们所收集的相关信息将会继续使用。未经您同意，在您退出之后我们不会采集任何与您孩子有关的素材。

7. 保密性

所有收集的素材我们都将严格保密，且只有该研究的调查者才可以使用。它们将会被保存在一个有机构防火墙以及密码进入保护的大学工作站内，时间至少为五年。

西安大略大学的“非医学研究道德委员会”可能会要求获取您孩子的相关研究记录，来监督研究的进展情况。

我们将尽全力来保护您孩子的信息，但无法承诺一定可以做到。某些人可能会通过研究中所用到的您孩子的形象和名字来找到您。如果法律要求该研究项目对搜集到的素材做相关陈述，我们有责任照做。
8. 研究报酬

您的孩子参与该项目将不会得到报酬。

9. 参与者权利

您可以决定让孩子不参与研究。即使您同意孩子参与，也有权利在研究期间的任何时候选择退出。以上两种决定都将不会对您的孩子有任何影响。我们会在研究期间及时给您提供掌握到的信息，由此帮助您来判断是否继续留在该研究中。您签署同意书并未放弃任何法律权利。

10. 联系我们

如果您对此研究有任何问题，敬请联系凯瑟琳·希伯特（邮箱：XXX）或孙琳（邮箱：XXX）。

如果您对参与者相关权利以及研究进程有任何疑问，可以联系西安大略大学的“人类研究道德办公室”，（591）661-3036, 邮箱：ethics@uwo.ca。

11. 同意

相关同意事项您将在签署此知情书附带的同意书表格时获知。

此知情书请本人保存，以备后用。
同意书

项目名称：
中国背景下英语教师多元识读教学法实践的批判性叙事研究

文件名：
同意书—家长

主要研究者：
凯瑟琳·希伯特，博士，教育系，西安大略大学，邮箱：XXX
其他研究成员：
孙琳，博士生，教育系，西安大略大学，邮箱：XXX

我已经阅读了该研究项目知情书，了解了此研究的性质特点，并同意参与此项目。我的所有问题都得到了满意的解答。

请选择以下适当说明并在前面划钩：

________ 我同意孩子在研究中被录像。

________ 我同意孩子的作业用作研究素材。

学生姓名：

学生家长姓名：

家长签字：

日期（年/月/日）
Appendices

Appendix J: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students (English Version)

Assent Letter

Project Title:
A Critical Narrative Inquiry of English Teachers’ Experiences of Enacting a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies in China

Document Title:
Assent Letter – Student

Principal Investigator:
Kathryn Hibbert, PhD, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

Additional Research Staff:
Lin Sun, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Western University. Email: XXX

1. Why are you here?
Dr. Hibbert wants to tell you about a study that will look at English teachers’ experiences of enacting a pedagogy of multiliteracies in English classes. She wants to see if you would like to be in this study when you are caught in the videotapes and your works are used as examples for the study. Ms. Sun will also work with Dr. Hibbert on this study.

2. Why are they doing this study?
Dr. Hibbert and Ms. Sun want to see in what ways English teachers come to understand a pedagogy of multiliteracies and how they implement a pedagogy of multiliteracies in classroom.

3. What will happen to you?
If you want to be in the study, you will appear in the videotapes and all your works will be collected and used as examples.

4. Will there be any tests?
There will not be any tests or marks presented when your works are used for this study.

5. Will the study help you?
This study will not help you directly, but in the future, it might help teachers who do not know about a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

6. Do you have to be in the study?
You do not have to be in the study. No one will be mad at you if you do not want to do this. If you do not want to be in the study, tell Ms. Sun or your parents. Even if you say yes, you can change your mind later. It is up to you.

7. **What if you have any questions?**

   You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to the teachers, your family or Ms. Sun.

8. **Assent**

   I want to participate in this study.

   Print Name of Child ______________________

   Date_______________________________

   Age __________________________________

   Name of Person Obtaining Assent____________________________________

   Signature of Person Obtaining Assent__________________________________

   This letter is yours to keep for future reference.
Appendices

Appendix K: Letter of Information and Consent for Participant Students (Chinese Version)

同意书

项目名称:
中国背景下英语教师多元识读教学法实践的批判性叙事研究

文件名:
同意书-学生

主要研究者:
凯瑟琳. 希伯特, 博士, 教育系, 西安大略大学. 邮箱: XXX

其他研究人员:
孙琳, 博士生, 教育系, 西安大略大学. 邮箱: XXX

1. 你为何加入这个研究？希伯特博士想告知你一个研究，该研究将调查英语教师在课堂上实施多元识读教学法的实际经验。她想知道如果你被录像，同时你的作业也被用作研究例子时，你是否愿意加入这个研究。孙女士将和希伯特博士共同开展这个研究活动。

2. 她们的研究目的是什么？希伯特博士和孙女士希望了解英语教师是如何逐渐了多元识读教学法，以及他们是如何在课堂上实施这个教学法的。

3. 你将会做什么？如果你愿意加入这个研究，你将被录像，你的作业也会被收集起来用作研究例子。

4. 你需要参加任何考试吗？当你的作业被用作研究例子时，将不会涉及到任何形式的考试，也不会有任何形式的成绩评定。

5. 这个研究对你有帮助吗？这个研究对你不会有什么直接的帮助，但是将来它可能会帮助到那些不了解多元识读教学法的教师。
6. 你必须加入这个研究吗？你不是必须加入，也没有人会因此而恼火。如果你愿意加入，可以告诉孙女士或者你的父母。即便你现在同意加入，以后也可以改变想法，这完全由你自己决定。

7. 如果你有任何问题怎么办？你可以随时提出问题，无论是现在还是以后。你可以和你的老师，父母或孙女士交谈。

我想参加这个研究。

孩子姓名：____________________

日期：________________________

年龄：________________________

同意人姓名：__________________

同意人签名：__________________

参加者姓名缩写________________

此同意书请本人保存，以备后需
Curriculum Vitae

Name: Lin Sun

Post-secondary Education and Degrees:
Hunan Normal University
Changsha, Hunan, China
1987-1991 B.A.

Beijing Normal University
Beijing, China
2000-2003 M.A.

Honours and Awards:
John Dearness Memorial Graduate Award (JDMGA)
October 2017

Related Work Experience
Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)/Research Assistant (RA)
The University of Western Ontario
2018-2019
2015-2018

Curriculum consultant and Teacher Trainer
2007-2019

Curriculum researcher
Beijing Frontier Curriculum Research Institute
2003-2007

Lecturer
Xiangtan Normal University
1994-2000

English teacher
Huaihua Normal University
1991-1994

Publications:


