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Understanding Chinese EFL Teachers’ Beliefs about English with a Yin-Yang Perspective

Juan Tian

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Language Teaching and Learning

The University of Auckland, 2014
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Abstract

Since the early 21st century, the Chinese government has been launching a new round of nation-wide curriculum reform, which promotes the replacement of the traditional test-oriented view of English with the communicative-based view. However, there is a serious research gap in the understanding of how local teachers perceive and react to the tensions arising from opposing views of English as subject matter (Widdowson, 2012; Zhang-Zhengdong, 2006; 2007).

Drawing on the distinction between the views of “language as an object” and “language as a tool” (Ellis, 2012), this study examines the impact of the tool-vs-object tension on Chinese secondary school EFL teachers’ beliefs about English and the extent to which tension-loaded beliefs are related to classroom practices. Guided by Yin-Yang theory, this study defines the research topic (beliefs about English) as a complex, self-conflicting system which comprises Yin-Yang interplay with regard to teachers’ perceptions of context (where), content (what) and pedagogy (how), and proposes an eight-trigram model for analyzing data.

A multiple-case study design is employed with Yin-Yang considerations, and case selection involves four participating teachers (Jing, Yun, Yao and Ping), who are from two schools (an urban school and a rural school), which are located in the same region (Beijing, the capital city of China). The research database includes field notes, interviews and audio/video recordings of teachers’ classes. Eventually, a total of 19 core beliefs emerge from the data through a coding scheme which recognizes four types of belief-practice congruence, respectively termed Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence, Subconscious Congruence and Embedded Congruence. A detailed description of each belief is followed by an analysis of its Yin-Yang nature, and each teacher’s English-related beliefs are graphically summarized in the eight-trigram model, which allows for cross-case comparisons and the emergence of general patterns.

Findings show that an individual teacher tends to hold beliefs that reflect opposing orientations of language at the same time and that there exist individual differences in the way teachers absorb and resolve tool-vs-object tensions, which has an impact on their idiosyncratic practices. It has also been found that their perception of tensions can be asynchronous along the three conceptual levels, as context-related tensions are found easier to be resolved than
pedagogy-related tensions, and that experientially and reflectively enhanced beliefs are more likely to achieve pedagogical consistency.

An analysis in light of Yin-Yang thinking lends support to the view that teachers’ beliefs are situated in an inherently conflicting and complex system, and that this is contextually defined and practically constrained. It is argued that an optimal balance of Yin and Yang is essential for the development and maintenance of a belief system, and this has important implications for EFL education, educational research, teacher education, curriculum development and assessment reform in China. Finally, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also suggested.
# Table of Contents

**List of Tables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Figures</th>
<th>viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Acronyms</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale of the study  
1.2 Significance of the study

## 2. Literature Review

2.1 Teacher belief  
2.1.1 Understanding of teacher belief in Western publications  
2.1.2 Understanding of teacher belief in Chinese publications  
2.1.3 Belief-practice mapping studies in Western publications  
2.1.4 Belief-practice mapping studies in Chinese publications  
2.1.5 The Chineseness of the notion of tension in teacher belief studies  
2.1.6 Summary

2.2 Views of English in the Chinese EFL Context  
2.2.1 The essence-utility tension in China’s EFL education  
2.2.2 The status of English in the Chinese EFL curriculum  
2.2.3 English as a school subject vs English as a communicative tool  
2.2.4 Summary

## 3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Basics of Yin-Yang theory  
3.1.1 The meaning of Yin and Yang  
3.1.2 The relationship between Yin and Yang  
3.1.3 The multi-level manifestation of Yin-Yang tension

3.2 An eight-trigram model for analysing beliefs about English  
3.2.1 Relevance of Yin-Yang theory to applied language studies  
3.2.2 Eight trigrams of the concept of English in EFL education  
3.2.2.1 Yin-Yang tension at context level  
3.2.2.2 Yin-Yang tension at content level  
3.2.2.3 Yin-Yang tension at pedagogy level  
3.2.2.4 The eight-trigram model for beliefs about English
3.3 Summary

4. Research Methodology
4.1 Methodological framework
4.2 Case selection
   4.2.1 One region
   4.2.2 Two schools
   4.2.3 Four teachers
4.3 Data collection
   4.3.1 Field visits (practice of wàng and wén)
   4.3.2 Interviews (practice of wèn)
   4.3.3 Classroom observation (practice of qiē)
4.4 Coding scheme

5. Jing’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context
5.1 Jing’s profile
5.2 Jing’s core beliefs about English
   5.2.1 English should be taught with a focus on accuracy
   5.2.2 EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.
   5.2.3 Vocabulary teaching is of the most importance.
   5.2.4 Classroom English should have relevance to real-life English
   5.2.5 EFL pedagogy should be appropriate to the EFL context
5.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Jing’s beliefs about English

6. Yun’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context
6.1 Yun’s profile
6.2 Yun’s core beliefs about English
   6.2.1 English is a rule-based linguistic system.
   6.2.2 EFL teaching is about teacher-student interaction.
   6.2.3 EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.
   6.2.4 School English should be relevant to students’ real life.
   6.2.5 EFL teaching should be contextually appropriate.
6.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Yun’s beliefs about English

7. Yao’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context
7.1 Yao’s profile
7.2 Yao’s core beliefs about English
7.2.1 English should be learned by use and for use.
7.2.2 English should be used with relevance to students’ real life.
7.2.3 English should be made a source of enjoyment.
7.2.4 EFL pedagogy should be cognitively challenging.
7.2.5 EFL pedagogy should focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’.
7.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Yao’s beliefs about English

8. Ping’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

8.1 Ping’s profile
8.2 Ping’s core beliefs about English
  8.2.1 English is a linguistic system.
  8.2.2 EFL teaching should make use of L1.
  8.2.3 EFL teaching is test-oriented.
  8.2.4 EFL teaching should cater for the interest of the majority.
8.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Ping’s beliefs about English

9. Discussion

9.1 A cross-case glance
9.2 A re-examination of research questions
  9.2.1 Beliefs about English held by Chinese EFL teachers
  9.2.2 Relationship between teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices
  9.2.3 The Yin-Yang nature of teachers’ beliefs about English

10. Conclusion

10.1 Contributions of the study
10.2 Implications
10.3 Limitations of the study
10.4 Suggestions for future research

References

Appendices

Appendix I: A sample content page of the textbook used by participating teachers
Appendix II: Participant information sheets and consent forms
Appendix III: Interview guide of the initial interview
Appendix IV: Interview guide of the final interview
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Some definitions of ‘belief’ 7
Table 2.2 Features of teacher beliefs 11
Table 2.3 Seven characteristics of the Chinese context 31
Table 2.4 Ten reasons for an EFL curriculum in the Chinese context 31
Table 3.1 Opposing qualities assigned to Yin and Yang 38
Table 3.2 A summary of the codes and meanings of the eight trigrams 51
Table 4.1 Design of case selection 57
Table 4.2 Timetable of School A and School B 62
Table 4.3 Profiles of the participating teachers 64
Table 4.4 A summary of the interview procedure 70
Table 4.5 The summary of observation procedure 72
Table 4.6 Four categories of action-speech congruence in data coding 74
Table 4.7 Summary of four teachers’ beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context 76
Table 5.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Jing’s beliefs about English 96
Table 6.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Yun’s beliefs about English 120
Table 7.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Yao’s beliefs about English 145
Table 8.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Ping’s beliefs about English 165
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>A 3-D model of teachers' belief system</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>A structural model of teachers' belief system</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Yin-Yang symbol</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The graphic representation of Yin-Yang interplay at three levels</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Eight trigrams of Yin-Yang</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The eight-trigram model for analysing beliefs about English</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>A map of administrative divisions of Beijing</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>An image of the EFL textbook adopted by both School A and School B</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>An example of Jing's vocabulary teaching activity</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Jing’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Yun’s “Vocabulary Bank”</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Yun’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Yao’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Ping’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>A cross-case glance of four teachers’ belief models</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>A four-emblem model of the tool-vs-object tension</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Embedded Congruence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English language teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>English as a native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for speakers of other languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Latent Congruence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Manifest Congruence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education (of China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMT</td>
<td>the National Matriculation Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Subconscious Congruence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Traditional Chinese Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEFL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to speakers of other languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale of the study

The role of English as a bridge connecting China and the rest of the world, especially the developed West, has been emphasized by the Chinese government since the implementation of market-oriented reform in the late 1970s, and English is well established as a key subject in China’s national curriculum for the basic education system. English proficiency has become a prerequisite for those seeking higher education or better career opportunities. For instance, the proportion of English test scores in the high-stake national college entrance examination increased from 10% in 1979 to 30% in 1980, 50% in 1981, 70% in 1982, and finally 100% in 1983 (Li-Liangyou & Liu-Li, 1988). English as a foreign language (EFL) has been made mandatory for junior secondary students since 1988 and for primary students since 2001. According to the 2008 statistics, over 102 million students are studying at secondary schools and more than 105 million pupils are enrolled in primary education. The sheer size of its English-learning population makes China the biggest context for the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL), which is by no means an easy task (Wu, 2001).

For quite a long time (1980-2000), English being taught in the Chinese classroom had little relevance to English being used in authentic communication in the outside world. Grounded on the assumption that mastery of linguistic form is the prerequisite for communicative competence (Littlewood, 1981), structural pedagogy was stressed for the purpose of developing “two basics” (basic linguistic knowledge and basic language skills) by means of “three centredness” (teacher-centredness, textbook-centredness and grammar-centredness) (Liu-Daoyi, 2008; Ross, 1992). This traditional approach made it legitimate for Chinese EFL

---

1 China’s basic education system includes primary education, junior secondary education and senior secondary education. The most common scheme of the duration of each phase is 6-3-3 (years). Primary education and junior secondary education are compulsory.

2 Many of the references for this study comes from publications of Chinese scholars who write either through the medium of Chinese for Chinese readers or through the medium of English for international readers. To distinguish references published in Chinese from those published in English, the full name of the author is given in the format <Family name>-<Given name> in compliance with referencing conventions in the Chinese literature (as in this case), whereas only Family name is given for the latter in line with referencing conventions in the English literature (e.g. Wu, 2001).

3 Source: http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s4966/index.html
teachers to build up knowledge-based expertise and conduct teaching in the transmission model. It proved effective in preparing students for knowledge-oriented tests.

However, as China’s involvement with the global world continued to grow, it was no longer sufficient for students just to score well on paper. The traditional approach was criticized for not being able to produce fluent speakers of English and for being dehumanizing (Liao, 2003). At the beginning of the 21st century, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched a new round of curriculum reform nationwide to meet the challenges of globalization. Reformists argued that English in the classroom should maximally simulate English in the real world so that communicative competence could be optimally developed through authentic use of the target language. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which stressed the importance of providing learners with opportunities for real-life language use, was thus promoted as a replacement for the traditional pedagogy in recently released authoritative documents (see Ministry of Education, 2000; 2003; 2012).

Recognizing communicative competence as the primary goal of China’s EFL education, the new curriculum called for a reduction in class time spent on the teaching of linguistic knowledge in order to ensure the implementation of communicative-based pedagogy for the development of oral fluency. However, the existing testing format remained untouched in the curriculum reform, which failed to provide practical incentives to convince teachers of the importance of developing students’ communicative competence. The contradiction caused great confusion and frustration among teachers, who found themselves confronted with what Johnson (1989) called a ‘mismatch of end/means specification’ in an incoherent curriculum. The mismatch between pedagogical methods and pedagogical goals put teachers in constant tensions, which in turn had a great impact on their pedagogical choices and classroom behaviours.

Moreover, the pedagogical reform, which was implemented in a centralized manner, failed to address the increasingly diverse needs of new generations of students. Ignoring the widening gaps across regions, such as the mounting urban-rural disparity, as a consequence of imbalanced development during China’s transformation from a planned economy to a market economy (Gao, 2006), the current curriculum practically intensified this inequality by promoting communicative language teaching with textbooks that were urban-friendly and pro-West (Gong-Yafu, 2009). Communicative needs were not seen as essential in many parts of China, especially rural areas where there was little international contact. Not surprisingly,
it became almost impossible for teachers across the country to agree on a one-size-fits-all curriculum standard, as their perceptions grew increasingly disparate in terms of the relevance of real-life English to classroom English. However, the difficulties they found with the new curriculum were often interpreted as signs of professional incompetence, and their resistance to pedagogical reforms was frequently identified in studies on curriculum implementation, language education and teachers’ professional development.

Teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, if held consistently and robustly, are believed to be crucial to successful implementation of a curriculum. Underlying teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, often implicitly or unconsciously, is their understanding of content, which has nevertheless been left out in existing research. In the field of language education research, the how-question that considers “how language can be taught better” often remain central while very little attention is paid to the what-question which aims for a conceptual understanding of “what it is that is being taught”. Researchers have noticed that English can have different purposes and be used in different domains and tended to label these with polarized terms. For example, Ellis (2012) proposes polarized terms for opposing views of “language as a tool for communication” and “language as an object to be studied and mastered”. This pair of terms is similar to Edge and Garton’s (2009) distinction of “English in the real world” from “English in school/classroom”. Such polarized views recognize English in classroom settings as a unique domain of language, and almost all arguments in the field of ESL/EFL education are essentially about the relevance of ‘language as an object’ to ‘language as a tool’ or the other way around. However, research findings often report difficulties in wholly displacing one view with the other, and the teaching reality often provides evidence of polarized views coexisting in a single setting without a clear-cut boundary between them. The dynamic interplay of different language orientations which are all held as true by teachers has been scarcely studied.

Even more scarce is research which looks into the nature of language within more complex frameworks which incorporate contextual factors and indigenous paradigms into pedagogical concerns. In studies situated in non-Western contexts, local perspectives are often neglected and extant Western theories are widely adopted as the norm (Briggs & Watkins, 2001; Littlewood, 2009; Yang, 2000). The absence of context-specific, indigenous thinking has somehow prevented the generation of an adequate understanding of local phenomena, especially in Asian contexts where ideological principles are radically different from what prevails in Western society (Bodde, 1953). For instance, the indigenous Yin-Yang ideology,
which is the most powerful and pervasive concept in traditional Chinese philosophy, defines contradictions as “the natural and organic core of both existence (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology)” (Li, 2012: 866), which differs from mainstream Western philosophical principles, such as Aristotle’s formal logic or Hegel’s dialectical logic, both of which negate contradictions and expect the complete displacement of one by the other. Obviously, research grounded in contrasting paradigms will yield very different results. Therefore, it is essential to adopt locally-derived perspectives in order to understand local people’s mentality and behaviour better. When it comes to understanding and explaining the dynamic interplay of two opposing forces, the Yin-Yang theory is recommended by both Chinese scholars and Western scholars as an especially useful framework (Moore, 1967; Yuan, 1997).

This study, subscribing to the view of language as a complex, self-conflicting system, adopts the Yin-Yang theory to explore and interpret how conflicting views of English are perceived by Chinese EFL teachers and how their beliefs are manifest in classroom practices. The inquiry is guided by three central questions:

1. What are Chinese EFL teachers’ beliefs about English in terms of tool-vs-object tensions?
2. How are their tension-loaded beliefs about English manifest in their classroom practices?
3. How are their tension-loaded beliefs interpreted within the Yin-Yang framework?

1.2 Significance of the study

This study will make significant theoretical contributions to EFL education not only in China, but also in other similar contexts, by resolving gaps in teacher belief studies in a number of ways. First, it accentuates the importance of understanding teachers’ perceptions of English as subject matter (what), which will provide valuable insights into the field of foreign language education, in which research interests predominantly focus on pedagogical issues (how). It is believed that a thorough and sound understanding of English will have a direct impact on what EFL teachers do. Secondly, this study views English as a complex, self-conflicting system and focuses on the tensions in EFL teachers’ beliefs, which will broaden the scope of research in this area by bringing in some philosophical inquiries. It will have implications for teacher education programmes, in which instruction on how to balance
opposing beliefs is often rare. Finally, this study is carried out within a philosophical framework that is contextually appropriate to both the researcher and the participating teachers. By resorting to Yin-Yang thinking, this study has the potential to provide an alternative way of exploring and interpreting teacher beliefs.

The findings gained from this study will also shed light on current language policies and EFL teacher education in China. As the socio-political and socio-economic power of English continues to grow worldwide, EFL classroom walls have increasingly become blurred with the outside world. One of the intended contributions of this study is to enhance the understanding of English as a contextualized and complex concept so that appropriate EFL learning and teaching theories can be developed.

Another contribution of this study is a response to Zhang-Zhengdong’s (2006) regret that there have not been soundly established TEFL theories that reflect Chinese characteristics. An initial step in building indigenous theories is to seek an indigenous orientation. By incorporating a Chinese philosophical concept in an up-close look at how Chinese practitioners teach English as a foreign language to Chinese students in the Chinese context, this study will contribute to the establishment of EFL teaching theories with strong Chinese characteristics. Efforts in this direction are likely to become a strong incentive for innovation in existing language teaching theories or teacher development programmes.

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter One provides the rationale of the study and specifies the research questions that are to be explored in this study. Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the topic of the present study with a particular interest in how the concept of belief tension is addressed by Western and Chinese scholars alike and, in particular, how the notion of tension is indigenously understood in this context. It also reviews the unsettled debate on the role of English in the Chinese EFL education. Chapter Three, based on Chinese Yin-Yang principles, theorizes an eight-trigram model for data analysis and interpretation. Chapter Four describes the methodological issues, such as choice of research methods, selection of cases, data collection procedures and the coding scheme. Participating teacher’s data are presented and discussed in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight respectively. Chapter Nine takes a cross-case view of the emergent patterns and revisits the three guiding research questions in this study. Finally, Chapter Ten concludes with a discussion of the main contributions, implications and limitations of this study as well as some recommendations for further research.
2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing literature on teacher belief and English, two key concepts in the inquiries made by the present study. To build theoretical rapport for a context-specific understanding of the two concepts, the review includes the words of Chinese scholars who situate themselves in the Chinese context. More specifically, the review on teacher belief takes a comparative perspective to obtain deeper insights into how it is understood, similarly or differently, by Western scholars and Chinese scholars, and the review on English takes a local perspective, mainly drawing on views held by Chinese scholars. Because the present study is based on the assumption that Chinese EFL teachers’ beliefs about English are tension-loaded, the review is especially interested in finding out how the notion of tension is conceptualized and applied in teacher belief studies, especially those situated in the Chinese context.

2.1 Teacher belief

Although research interest in teacher belief began in the 1970s, it was not until the mid-1990s that the study of L2 teachers’ beliefs has emerged as a major area of enquiry in the field of second or foreign language education (Borg, 2006; Ellis, 2012; Freeman, 2002). Research in this area mainly focuses on seeking a conceptual understanding of teacher belief and mapping what teachers think with what they actually do in classroom teaching. Literature in these two areas is reviewed with a comparison between what is found in English academic publications and what is found in Chinese academic publications.

2.1.1 Understanding of teacher belief in Western publications

As teacher belief is a sub-category of belief in general, it is reasonable to begin with a review of the conceptual understanding of belief. Despite its popularity, it has been found impossible to attach a well-defined meaning to the concept of belief (Barcelos, 2003; Pajares, 1992) and the term has been applied in education research in a ‘rather fuzzy’ way (Borg, 2001: 186). In
a chronological order of publication, Table 2.1 lists some definitions of ‘belief’ found in English-written literature. From these definitions, diverse epistemological approaches are identified: (1) the psychological approach; (2) the sociological approach; and (3) the philosophical approach.

**Table 2.1 Some definitions of ‘belief’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rokeach (1968: 113)</td>
<td>Any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase, ‘I believe that …’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigel (1985: 351)</td>
<td>Mental constructions of experience – often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts … that are held to be true and that guide behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey (1986: 660)</td>
<td>A set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villoro (1998: 254)</td>
<td>An acquired dispositional state, which causes a coherent set of responses and which is determined by an apprehended object or an objective situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenden (1998: 517)</td>
<td>Individual subjective understandings, idiosyncratic truths, which are often value related and characterized by a commitment not present in knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borg (2001: 186)</td>
<td>A proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson (2003: 2)</td>
<td>Psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borg (2011: 370)</td>
<td>Propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change.</td>
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As Table 2.1 shows, the three approaches do not share the same amount of popularity. The psychological component of belief is given the greatest prominence in almost all definitions. It has been a strong tradition for researchers to define belief in the psychological approach,
which puts emphasis on the mental representation of belief along the conscious-unconscious dimension (see Borg, 2001; Borg, 2011; Richardson, 2003; Rokeach, 1968; Wenden, 1998) and the cognitive agency of belief on actions (see Borg, 2001; Borg, 2011; Harvey, 1986; Sigel, 1985; Villoro, 1998). The sociological component of belief appears in more recent literature and is receiving growing attention. Researchers in this approach define ‘belief’ as a social construct and recognize its value-loaded aspects (see Borg, 2001; Borg, 2011; Harvey, 1986; Richardson, 2003; Sigel, 1985; Wenden, 1998). What receives the least attention is the philosophical approach, as a smaller number of researchers define ‘belief’ to address ontological issues such as how belief comes into being and how it is related to the objective world (see Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985; Villoro, 1998).

Another observation of the definition list highlights the co-existence of multiple approaches in single definitions of belief. Researchers rarely understand belief in just one perspective; rather, they tend to view it as a complex construct which is compatible with multiple approaches. It is more common for researchers to stress psychological and sociological qualities of belief (e.g. Borg, 2001; Borg, 2011; Harvey, 1986; Richardson, 2003). They agree that belief exists as a psychological phenomenon but is subject to the impact of individuals’ interaction with the surrounding world, and that truth expressed in belief propositions is inevitably contextually-sensitive and socially-bound. Less common is the combination of psychological and philosophical aspects of belief in researchers’ efforts to define it (e.g. Rokeach, 1968; Villoro, 1998). Definitions in this vein, though recognizing belief as a psychological construct with little dispute, turn out to differ in hypothesizing on its ontological existence. For instance, Rokeach (1968) holds a subjectivist position, proposing that belief is innately generated from individuals and its subjectivity is primary and contextually independent, while Villoro (1998) holds an objectivist position, arguing that belief is acquired through an association with the objective world and thus its subjectivity is secondary to the objectivity of the context. An exception is found in Sigel’s (1985) definition, which incorporates all the three approaches at once. It recognizes belief as a mental construct which guides behaviour, a social construct which is held with values or truth, and a philosophical construct which is shaped by the holder’s experience in reality.

A closer examination of the key words or expressions in the definition list reveals that, even in the same approach, belief is defined with different levels of conviction. For instance, there is a higher frequency of phrases about “belief guiding behaviour” than “belief held both
consciously and unconsciously” among definitions with psychological understanding, which suggests that the former is more generally agreed than the latter. Another example is found in the high frequency of true/truth appearing in the definitions. Although most researchers emphasize belief must be held to be true, the social meaning of truth only occurs in a few definitions, such as Richardson’s (2003) and Wenden’s (1998), which means the social understanding of truth is less popular than its psychological understanding. In addition, philosophically-loaded words, such as reality, objective, and subjective, occur with very low frequency and are not necessarily concordant, which indicates that understanding of belief in the philosophical approach is still an ignored area and it is not easy to reach a consensus.

As with efforts to define belief, decisions on its features are also integral to understanding this concept. A further examination of existing literature yields a number of ways in which individual beliefs function as part of the whole belief system, with key words marked in bold below. Not surprisingly, researchers who adopt different perspectives tend to focus on different features. For example, Rokeach (1968), with a primary concern on the psychological aspects of beliefs, highlights the inequality among beliefs with his conjecture that “beliefs are not equally important to individuals” and “vary along a central-peripheral dimension” (p. 3). He differentiates core beliefs from peripheral beliefs with the hypothesis that the former are held with stronger psychological strength than the latter. He also places an emphasis on the changeability of beliefs with two assumptions: (1) the more central a belief is, the greater the difficulty of its being subject to change; and (2) while change is taking place, the more central a belief is, the more disturbance it will cause to the whole belief system.

Green (1971), also taking a psychological position, agrees with Rokeach’s views on the inequality of psychological strength with which individual beliefs are held, but he focuses on the inherent incompatibility among clusters of beliefs, which is likened to the branches sticking out of the stem in diverse directions. He argues that the relations between different types of belief are not fixed or stable, but are open to modification. His argument implies two assumptions. One is that beliefs do not exist with absolute freedom; instead, they are organized in clusters with blurred boundaries so that a single belief may be affiliated to different clusters. The other assumption is that the belief system is capable of accommodating conflicting clusters, and belief tensions may exist between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs, or within core beliefs or peripheral beliefs only.
Pajares (1992) incorporates some sociological concerns in his psychologically-based position, for example, the impact of age and social change on belief holding. According to him, there is a hypothetical link between the psychological strength of beliefs and the stage at which they are formed. Beliefs which are formed early tend to self-perpetuate and are often resistant to change, whereas beliefs acquired late are most vulnerable to change. Thus, he makes a distinction between the sturdiness of early acquired belief and the vulnerability of relatively new beliefs. This actually implies the dynamics of beliefs: what one believes is not a set of static propositions, but the result of complex interactions between new beliefs and old beliefs.

Abelson (1979) finds it necessary to discuss features of belief from multiple perspectives. In the seven features proposed in his study, two of them - ‘alternative worlds’ and ‘episodic material’ (p. 355) - clearly express his philosophical and sociological considerations. By ‘alternative worlds’, he means that belief systems often include representations of a multiplicity of worlds, for instance, the world as it is and the world as it should be. The concept of multiplicity is closely related to incompatibility, as incompatibility is essentially a phenomenon of multiplicity. By ‘episodic material’, he means that belief systems are likely to include a substantial amount of episodic material from personal experience. He notices that experience-derived beliefs are often more resistant to change.

Key features of belief mentioned above can be applied to understanding teacher belief, and different researchers may decide to focus on different features. In Table 2.2, two lists of teacher-belief features are selected for comparative analysis, with each feature annotated with a theme. The first list of nine features is suggested by Phipps and Borg (2009), who seem to be particularly interested in the robust presence and powerful effect of teachers’ beliefs. Half of what they define as key features is related to sturdiness of beliefs (No. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9). Experience serves both as well-established content (No. 1) and context for dynamic interaction (No. 2, 6). Incompatibility of beliefs also occurs once, concerning the tension between what teachers believe they should do and what teachers actually do (No. 5). The second list of ten features, proposed by Ellis (2012), obviously has a different focus from the first. Although it also recognizes the importance of experience in the formation of beliefs (No. 10) and the dynamics of the whole belief system (No. 9), the most frequently addressed feature is incompatibility, which not only occurs within one’s own belief system (No. 1, 2, 3, 7), but also extends to external factors (No. 6, 8). Inequality among beliefs with some being more central than others has two entries (No. 4, 5).
Table 2.2 Features of teacher beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phipps &amp; Borg (2009: 381)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. may be powerfully influenced by teachers’ own experiences as learners and are well established by the time teachers go to university;</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. act as a filter through which teachers interpret new information and experience;</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. may outweigh the effects of teacher education in influencing what teachers do in the classrooms;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. can exert a persistent long-term influence on teachers’ instructional practices;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. are, at the same time, not always reflected in what teachers do in the classroom;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. interact bi-directionally with experience;</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. have a powerful effect on teachers’ pedagogical decisions;</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. strongly influence what and how teachers learn during language teacher education;</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. can be deep-rooted and resistant to change.</td>
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<th>Ellis (2012: 144)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inconsistencies between teachers’ stated beliefs and their actual practices are common.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teachers’ declarative beliefs may not closely match their procedural beliefs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teachers’ belief systems can be inherently conflictual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Not all espoused beliefs are equal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. A core belief concerns the need to attend to students’ own wants and their affective needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teachers’ beliefs sometimes conflict with institutionally mandated practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Purely personal factors may cause a teacher to suspend actions based on a firmly held belief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There may be a lack of congruence between teachers’ beliefs and their students’ beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers’ belief systems are not fixed; they are dynamic and evolving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teachers’ beliefs tend to be influenced much more by their own experiences of teaching and learning in classrooms than by their knowledge and understanding of research.</td>
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It is clear from the comparison that researchers often differ in what they perceive as the most prominent features of teachers’ beliefs. For example, Phipps and Borg highlight **sturdiness** and **experience** in their study, while Ellis accentuates **incompatibility** and **inequality**. It is very likely that different foci are derived from different epistemological approaches and that different epistemological approaches favour different research paradigms. For instance, a focus on **sturdiness** and **experience** in the first list reflects a sociological view of teachers’ beliefs and is more suitable for descriptive, process-oriented methods which emphasize the longitudinal interaction between teachers’ beliefs and contextual factors. On the other hand, a focus on **incompatibility** and **inequality** in the second list suggests the dominance of a psychological approach with fewer concerns for social factors. Research interest in this position often lies in quantifying beliefs as a static product so as to fit them into statistical analyses.

The review of English-mediated literature suggests that belief is often conceptualized as a complex and abstract construct which can be approached from different yet compatible perspectives, and that it is important for researchers to justify the position they take when carrying out studies on teachers’ beliefs. After all, how beliefs are understood is the foundation of how they are identified and interpreted. The review also discovers a research gap which is to be filled by studies with more philosophical considerations. An inclusive approach which integrates psychological, sociological and philosophical perspectives may lead to more fruitful results than a selective or biased position. As sociological and philosophical considerations are context-specific and culturally bound, it is necessary to review the same concept (i.e. teacher belief) with a sense of indigenousness.

### 2.1.2 Understanding of teacher belief in Chinese publications

An examination of research literature on teacher belief in Chinese publications shows that there exist distinctive divisions of epistemological paradigms among Chinese scholars. Many have chosen to investigate belief using theories from Western traditions. For example, a great number of belief studies are conducted using a positivist approach, where belief is viewed as a static, concrete, and self-sufficient entity. Meanwhile, there are also many others who resort to traditional Chinese thinking as epistemological grounds for their studies, and view belief as
a dynamic, contradictory and hierarchical system. Because this section aims to obtain an indigenous understanding of teacher belief in the existing literature, it selectively focuses on studies that are recognized as epistemologically characteristic of Chinese traditions.

Not surprisingly, the conceptual understanding held by Chinese researchers is very similar to that held by their Western counterparts. They agree that teacher beliefs are what teachers hold as true about various aspects of teaching, such as educational goals, subject matter, methods, teachers’ role, students, curriculum (Guo-Xiaona, 2008; Liu-Hua, 2004; Qin-Weifan, 2009; Xie-Fang, 2007; Zhao-Changmu, 2004). They also agree with the following features of teacher beliefs: (1) they are idiosyncratic; (2) they are affective and evaluative; (3) they are context-specific; (4) inconsistencies are common; (5) they are relatively stable and often resistant to change; (6) they drive action in a complex way (Peng-Gang, 2002; Yi-Lingyun & Pang-Lijuan, 2004).

However, there is also some distinct Chineseness in the understanding of teacher beliefs. First of all, there is a stronger tendency for Chinese scholars to conceptualize belief as a system consisting of opposing components in constant and dynamic interplay (Guan-Lina, 2009; Lin-Yigang, 2008; Qin-Chengqiang, 2007; Zhang-Fengjuan & Liu-Yongbing, 2012; Zhang-Jianming, 2009). A typical example of this unity of opposing concepts can be found in Li-Jiali (2009: 10), where belief is described as “a unified entity of (1) stability and openness, (2) rationality and irrationality, (3) reality and possibility, and (4) certainty and uncertainty.”4 This is in line with the Yin-Yang concept, a typical Chinese way of understanding the world, as Yin and Yang represent two opposing forces that are necessary for the operation of the universe (A detailed introduction of the Yin-Yang concept is given in the Theoretical Framework chapter).

Another characteristic is found in the ontological existence of belief. Chinese researchers are more inclined to view belief as a product of their surrounding environment (rather than as something in isolation from the environment) as well as a mechanism to maintain the stability of the surrounding environment (Hao-Deyong, 1997; Peng-Gang, 2002; Wang-Le, 2002). This line of thought, which accentuates the material basis of human beliefs without negating the reverse impact of belief on the environment, may be traced back to an important notion in

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4 This quote is translated from the original text: “信念的基本特征是：(1) 稳定性和开放性的统一；(2) 理性和非理性的统一；(3) 现实性和可能性的统一；(4) 确定性和不确定性的统一。”
By placing emphasis on change in their studies, Chinese researchers often attempt to provide explanations for the change and make predictions about the possible route of belief change. For instance, Wang-Gongzhi (2000) expands Rokeach’s core-periphery dichotomy by adding a third category of ‘middle beliefs’, which is located between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs. He assumes that middle beliefs have the flexibility of being drawn closer to either core beliefs or peripheral beliefs, and that the movement of middle beliefs in different directions may have different consequences on the stability of the individual’s overall belief system as change of middle beliefs into core beliefs brings about more destruction and reconstruction within the system than change into peripheral beliefs.

The notions of opposition, harmony and change are well expressed in models developed by Chinese researchers for a conceptual understanding of teacher belief. Following Rokeach’s (1968) division of core beliefs and peripheral beliefs, Yi-Lingyun and Pang-Lijuan (2004) propose a three-dimensional model, which illustrates teacher belief as a dynamic system (see Figure 2.1). The horizontal dimension indicates the varied strength with which beliefs are
held and is depicted in a core-middle-peripheral structure, which is an improvement on Rokeach’s division by Wang-Gongzhi (2000). Yi-Lingyun and Pang-Lijuan agree that the more central a belief is, the more powerful it is in guiding teachers’ action, and that middle beliefs have the potential to move towards the centre or the edge. In terms of the content of beliefs, they adopt Hao-Deyong’s (1997) description, according to which, core beliefs are defined as teachers’ perceptions of education in the broad sense, such as educational values, goals or functions, while middle beliefs and peripheral beliefs consist of perceptions of education with more concrete bearing. More specifically, middle beliefs include views on non-human objects, such as the curriculum, teaching materials, or instructional methods, whereas peripheral beliefs mainly comprise those about students and teachers. The vertical dimension of this framework, based on the concept of implicitness of beliefs, creates a deep-surface structure to indicate different degrees of internalization. This model suggests that the more internalized a belief is, the more powerful it becomes in guiding teachers’ action. For instance, the theories teachers have learned in a teacher education programme will only be accepted as ‘correct’ temporarily and stay at the surface level. They will not play a significant role in teachers’ action unless they have been successfully internalized through constant reflection and repeated experiential success.

![Figure 2.1 A 3-D model of teachers' belief system (Yi-Lingyun & Pang-Lijuan, 2004: 10)](image)

Yi-Lingyun and Pang-Lijuan’s model not only suggests how teachers’ beliefs are possibly organized in a complex system, but also hypothesizes the potential directions of belief change within this system. This model also provides a good reason for favouring longitudinal studies on this topic, because evidence of changed beliefs can only be obtained through observation
of sufficient duration. Nevertheless, this theory-driven model lacks supporting evidence from empirical studies, and is proposed mainly from the psychological perspective. Moreover, the description of beliefs along the core-middle-periphery dimension is arbitrary, and the mobility of beliefs’ movement along the deep-surface dimension is also ambiguously sketched.

A data-driven model of teacher belief systems (see Figure 2.2) is proposed by Chen-Yangli (2004), who draws on his interview data with a group of novice primary and kindergarten teachers. He confirms that teachers’ beliefs are organized as a system in driving classroom practices and are shaped by contextual factors and personal experience. He also makes inferences about the degree of centrality of a particular belief on the basis of its location within the system. For example, beliefs acquired through teachers’ personal experience seem to be much stronger than those obtained through non-experiential means, which explains why teachers commonly report being more influenced by their early educational experience than formal teacher education programmes. Within the experiential beliefs, those acquired by teachers as insiders (e.g. beliefs formed in their first-hand classroom teaching practice) are more centrally held than those acquired by teachers as outsiders (e.g. beliefs formed while they are students of a similar setting). Within the non-experiential beliefs, those obtained through second-hand experience (e.g. observing others teaching in a similar setting) are held with more strength than those obtained through transmission models (e.g. learning theories about teaching from an authoritative source). Finally, beliefs are differentiated by the degree of automaticity in each category. The more habitual a belief is, the more likely it will be called into use.

**Figure 2.2 A structural model of teachers' belief systems (Chen-Yangli, 2004:23)**
Although limited in terms of novice teachers and absent of observation data, Chen’s model features opposing views acting in dynamic harmony and existing in a hierarchical structure. This way of thinking echoes the fundamental ideology of Yin-Yang theories. Starting from one complex concept (teacher belief), he makes repeated binary divisions at multiple levels until eight categories are generated. This pattern of division not only explains how teachers’ beliefs are structured in a complex system, but also demonstrates the potential evolving route during belief transformation or change.

The comparison of how teacher belief is conceptualized between Western scholars and Chinese scholars shows that they have much in common and both agree in almost all important features (such as inequality, incompatibility, changeability, multiplicity, sturdiness, vulnerability, dynamics and experience). However, studies based on Chinese epistemological traditions emphasize concepts like *contradictory unity* and *dynamic change*, which are not necessarily recognized with the same conviction in research based on Western traditions. It should also be noted that, even among studies which follow Chinese traditions, the degree to which Chinese thinking is applied may differ greatly between researchers. For example, elements of Chinese epistemological traditions are only used as revising or adapting devices in the model developed by Yi-Lingyun and Pang-Lijuan, the core of which still remains a construct of Western origin, whereas Chinese epistemological ideas are used as founding principles in Chen-Yangli’s model, which is more recognizable in Chinese academia. As this study is intended to provide indigenous, context-specific understanding of teacher belief, it will follow the same line as those in which Chinese traditions are recognized as being at the core.

### 2.1.3 Belief-practice mapping studies in Western publications

A better understanding of how teachers’ beliefs are related to their instructional practices is of interest to both Western and Chinese scholars. The topic that enjoys most popularity in this area is belief-practice correspondence, which investigates the extent to which teachers’ beliefs are consistent with practices.

It has been well established that teachers’ beliefs provide a basis for action (Ajzen, 1991; Borg, 2011), but the findings are not conclusive, with the relationship varying from very
consistent to very inconsistent (Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996). It has been found that teachers’ stated beliefs show stronger consistency with planned, rather than improvised, teaching practices in the cases of experienced, rather than novice, teachers (Basturkmen, 2012; Wilson et al. 1987). Nevertheless, the discrepancies between teachers’ espoused beliefs and their observed classroom practices are generally large (Calderhead, 1996; Ellis, 2012).

The literature has indicated three possible explanations for the inconsistencies that are commonly found in research. The first lies in the assumption that teachers can hold conflicting beliefs in their belief systems which in turn lead to contradictory actions (Cornett, 1990). For example, Duffy and Anderson (1986) found that teachers may hold beliefs about teaching which encourage maximum student participation as well as beliefs about classroom realities which call for stronger teacher control. Pinnegar and Carter (1990) reported a clash in teachers’ moral and technical beliefs. Lampert (1985) attributed pedagogical dilemmas to the conflicted ‘self’ of teachers’ working identity. Mak (2011) also found significant discrepancy in beliefs about language teaching, particularly between the Western tradition and the Asian tradition. Deng and Carless (2010) examined teachers’ dilemmas between the exam-oriented tradition and modern theories of effective teaching, and found that teachers’ inconsistent classroom behaviours are influenced by conflicting beliefs which co-exist in one’s personal philosophies and are competing for priority especially in situations where the pressure for change is perceived as great.

The second explanation is the acknowledged inaccessibility to those beliefs that account for what is actually done (Fang, 1996). Ellis (2012) suggests that the belief data in many studies are mostly explicit beliefs which mainly describe what should be done, while implicit beliefs which guide improvised actions are less open for verbalization. Therefore, the inconsistency can be caused by the absence of implicit belief evidence. Woods and Çakir (2011) also agree that teachers’ experientially-derived knowledge is more likely to occur in action than verbally-derived knowledge, and teaching experience has provided chances for teachers’ implicit ability to be made explicit through noticing, reflection and discussion. Basturkmen (2012) notices stronger correspondence between beliefs and practices among more experienced teacher informants and the belief data drawn from them contain fewer discrepancies between the explicit and the implicit.

The third and the most common explanation is to do with contextual constraints. A great number of recent studies, conducted in different EFL contexts, have lent support to the
crucial role that contextual factors play in mediating the belief-practice relationship (Erkmen, 2010; Gahin, 2001; Koubek, 2002; Kuzborska, 2010; Sanchez, 2010; Shihiba, 2011; Sugiyama, 2003; Xing, 2009). For instance, Xing (2009) investigated the belief-practice relationship among ESL/EFL teachers of diverse backgrounds and found time constraints and students’ characteristics were two major contextual factors causing inconsistencies between belief and action. Sanchez (2010) examined two Argentinean EFL teachers and drew the conclusion that contextual factors inside and outside the classroom mediated between teachers’ cognition and practice. Erkmen (2010) investigated nine novice EFL teachers in Northern Cyprus and found that belief-practice inconsistency was mainly attributed to individual experiences and the restrictions of syllabuses. Kuzborska (2010) discovered that contextual factors such as university policy and the lack of English teacher education appeared to play a significant role in determining the degree of congruence between beliefs and practices.

### 2.1.4 Belief-practice mapping studies in Chinese publications

The rise of research interest in teacher belief studies in China coincides with the design and implementation of the New Curriculum Standards, which signals the centralized promotion of modern educational principles (which are mostly borrowed from the developed West) by the Chinese government in the context of globalization (Zhong-Qiquan, 2002). During the last decade, a great number of belief studies have been conducted with the intention of collecting information about how successfully teachers have upgraded their belief systems and how effectively their upgraded belief systems have improved their actual teaching. Despite the vast differences in participating teachers’ backgrounds (such as teachers at primary schools, secondary schools or tertiary institutes, and teachers from rural areas or urban areas, and teachers of key schools or ordinary schools), research findings are surprisingly similar in terms of the difficulties in applying modern theories to teachers’ actual teaching (Chen-Bingbing & Chen-Jianlin, 2008; Cong-Dan, 2012; Feng-Haijia, 2011; Han-Lihong, 2011; Jia-Xiaoxia, 2010; Jiang-Jiahong, 2010; Li-Yan, 2011; Liu-Jun, 2009; Lou-Heying & Liao-Fei, 2005; Song-Mingwei, 2010; Sun-Laiqin, 2008; Sun-Lihua, 2010; Wang-Xi, 2012; Xia-Jimei, 2002; Zhang-Libing, 2005; Zhou-Zhizhong, 2008).
A major criticism on the weak correspondence between beliefs that are promoted and teachers’ personal beliefs is related to the disregard of significant incongruities between contexts. For example, Wang-Le (2002) attributed the mismatch between modern educational principles and teachers’ actual practices to an apparent disregard for the ESL-vs-EFL contextual discrepancies. Similarly, Sun-Laiqin (2008) found greater incongruence among EFL teacher in rural areas, and made the criticism that the current curricular reform has disregarded the merits and values of traditional beliefs which have proven more appropriate for EFL teaching in resource-poor contexts. Lin-Qiongyi (2007) examined questionnaire data from teachers of different contextual backgrounds and found that traditional beliefs were held with stronger conviction among (1) primary teachers in rural regions in comparison to those in urban regions, (2) secondary teachers in non-key schools in comparison to those in key schools within the same region, and (3) head teachers in comparison to non-head teachers within the same institutional setting. Han-Lihong (2011) noticed that, even for individual teachers, the belief-practice congruence varied at different stages. For example, teachers tended to start with a more communicative-based and student-centred approach of teaching, but would readily return to traditional teaching methodology when they perceived that there were stronger contextual constraints (e.g. the test pressure).

There are other criticisms on the disappointing belief-practice mapping in belief studies. Gao-Xiaoyi and Pang-Lijuan (2003) list a number of limitations in the investigation of teacher beliefs as potential pitfalls preventing studies in this area from yielding valid results. These pitfalls include difficulty in eliciting teachers’ implicit beliefs, powerlessness of language in handling abstract thoughts, teachers’ inclination to avoid admitting negative beliefs, context-specific constraints, and methodological inadequacies. Lü-Guoguang (2007) attributes the absence of significant breakthroughs in this area to an incomplete understanding of the belief construct and a lack of theoretically sound frameworks.

It may be noticed that Chinese understanding of correspondence seems to bear a stronger sense of dynamic equilibrium and relativity, and poor correspondence is often seen as inevitable in the process of achieving optimal correspondence. Xu-Yangang (2003) argues that there are very few cases of absolute correspondence and that the prominent manifestation of belief-practice correspondence lies in the form of dynamic inconsistency. This dynamic view is also shared by Peng-Gang (2002), who suggests that belief-practice correspondence be understood in cyclical evolution. If belief and practice are found to be in severe conflict,
the holder may develop an asynchronous relationship between belief and practice, with one being given priority over the other. Through change, compromise or distortion, the holder endeavours to bring back a high level of belief-practice congruence. Such congruence will not last long, as it will soon be broken by the holder’s own will or under authoritative influence. At transitional times, teachers spend most of the time practising with asynchronous beliefs in order to reduce the effects of conflict and regain a new level of congruence.

2.1.5 The Chineseness of the notion of tension in teacher belief studies

As the above review shows, the Western literature and Chinese literature both underscore the notion of tension in the conceptual understanding of belief as well as in studies on the correspondence between belief and action. However, there are significant differences in attitudes towards the notion of tension between Western scholars and Chinese scholars. In the West, tension is often treated as a negative phenomenon which is external to belief and serves as an explanation for inconsistency between belief and practice. It is only in recent years that the notion of tension has been perceived as inherent within belief systems and has thus been given more positive interpretation in belief-practice mapping studies. For example, Phipps and Borg (2007; 2009) argue for the value of research attention on tensions between what teachers say and do, and conclude that a harmonious relationship between different belief sub-systems often leads to practices characterized by fewer tensions.

Understanding of tension in the Chinese scholarship bears more positive and productive characteristics, probably due to the influence of traditional Chinese epistemological beliefs, such as Yin-Yang theories which are intended to achieve harmony through the interplay of opposites (in the Two Forms of Yin and Yang). According to traditional Chinese philosophy, tension resides in all things in the physical world and follows the rules of the Nature (Feng, 1948: 167). Without tension, nothing could exist or develop. The positive attitude towards tension in the Chinese culture provides an explanation for Chinese researchers’ intense interest in the conflicts of belief within one’s belief system or between individuals during the immense transition that China is currently experiencing. With tensions emerging in all aspects of the society on an unprecedented scale, there have been many studies reporting harsh dilemmas for teachers due to the clash between traditional beliefs and modern beliefs (e.g. Guan-Lina, 2009; Li-Jiali, 2009; Zhang-Fengjuan & Liu-Yongbing, 2012). It is found
that traditional beliefs, such as the exam-oriented culture and grammar-translation pedagogy, are mostly derived from teachers’ personal experience and have been held as core beliefs, whereas modern beliefs, such as communicative-based and student-centred methodology, are mainly based on second-hand experience and held on the periphery. Such tensions between conflicting beliefs are found to be more intense in rural areas (Cong-Dan, 2012; Han-Lihong, 2011; Lin-Qiongyi, 2007) and in certain disciplines, such as English (Hu-Xiao, 2010). The centralized promotion of modern pedagogy has also intensified the conflict between the promoted beliefs and teachers’ personal beliefs. For example, Zhang-Libing (2005) found that teachers tended to behave in a prescribed manner in ‘showcase’ classes, whereas they revealed greater variability and individuality when they were practising in a more private setting. Li-Guoqiang and Shao-Guanghua (2009) also reported class-observation evidence that opposing beliefs co-existed within teachers’ overall belief systems as a functioning part of a complex package and were triggered in action either simultaneously or alternatively in dynamic classroom interaction.

In Chinese publications, tension is not just reported as a threat to belief-practice correspondence; it is often positively viewed as a natural product of contextual change and a healing force for renewing harmony between belief and practice. As Hao-Deyong (1997) points out, the perceived tension serves as manifestation of belief change, which corresponds with contextual change. In a period of social transition, contextual diversity makes social contradictions prominent, and individuals’ belief systems will respond and adapt to these. This will put the coherence and stability of a belief system at risk. The effectiveness of practice will be temporarily weakened until the context becomes stable again. Thus, the perception of tensions accounts for humans’ survival instinct. In other words, sensitivity to belief crisis helps people become better adapted to the context. Peng-Gang (2002) also agrees that belief tensions or conflicts will trigger temporary belief-practice incongruence before it eventually achieves a new balance, which will remain stable until newly emergent tension brings about a new round of harmony-achieving interplay. Li-Jiali (2009) shares a similar view that tensions between conflicting beliefs co-exist to enable development. When a belief crisis occurs, teachers’ beliefs systems will be so severely shaken that belief systems are subject to temporary chaos, reconstruction and eventually reconsolidation.

In short, the *Chineseness* of the notion of tension includes a number of features that are highly relevant to the present study which aims to investigate Chinese EFL teachers’ tension-
loaded beliefs. First of all, tension is a product of the physical world. All tensions are contextually bound, arising from and responding to the surrounding reality. Where there is contextual diversification or change, tensions are created. The more diverse or intense the change of context is, the more severely tensions are perceived. Secondly, tension is inherent in one’s belief system. It is natural for individuals to hold conflicting beliefs at the same time. Tensions serve as a force for change, either destructively (in breaking down an old system which has lost harmony) or constructively (in harmony-resuming efforts). Finally, tension is an internal phenomenon and is more likely to exist within concepts like context, belief or practice, than between them. These concept-specific tensions are externally related in a prescribed sequence: contextual diversity causes belief tensions, which in turn cause pedagogical inconsistency. These features are recognized as part of an indigenous understanding of the notion of tension, based on which the present study will carry out an indigenous investigation of teachers’ beliefs in the Chinese EFL context.

2.1.6 Summary

This section reviews belief-related literature with a loose comparison between Chinese scholarship and Western scholarship. The review shows that there is a great deal of similarity between the two areas in understanding belief as a complex concept. Researchers on both sides have admitted the difficulties in providing an accurate definition, theorizing about its structure, describing its content, and attesting its connection with the physical reality. However, research findings have been inconclusive, or even contradictory in studies exploring the nature of teacher belief and the extent to which teachers’ beliefs are related to their practices (Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992; Fang, 1996), which may be attributed to the lack of a sound understanding of belief as a complex concept. This major drawback of misjudging the complexity of belief is that it may result in “using one referent as a basis for the whole” (Bunting, 1984) and thus incur common errors on an epistemological level (Nespor, 1987).

The review of teacher belief studies affirms the unspoken yet powerful presence of one’s epistemological position in theoretical or empirical investigations of this field. Ignorance of the conceptual understanding of belief would lead to shaky conclusions, but it can be remedied through a comparison of alternative paradigms embedded in the concept of belief.
By looking into how similarly and differently key concepts of teacher beliefs are understood by researchers holding different worldviews, studies equipped with a “two-eye” view are likely to overcome the bottleneck caused by a single paradigm and therefore have great potential to make theoretical breakthroughs. The comparison of literature in alternative traditions has also helped clarify the *Chineseness* of the researcher’s paradigmatic position. After all, knowing who one is not is part of knowing who one is. It is also believed that the unique characteristics rooted in traditional Chinese culture help broaden the conceptual understanding of belief and make a significant contribution to this area of research in the international forum.

More specifically, the understanding of belief can be summarized by the following assumptions. First, it is assumed that the composition of belief is a mixture of consciousness and unconsciousness. Those ‘latent’ or ‘potential’ beliefs are not subject to intentional elicitation. This assumption justifies a wary attitude towards what makes ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ evidence of belief data in empirical studies, given that elicited beliefs are inevitably falsified, distorted or incomplete. Secondly, the parenting relationship between context and belief, and between belief and action are prescribed. Context shapes belief and belief drives action, which lends support to the general agreement that human behaviours are psychologically driven as well as socially defined. This assumption provides rationale for incorporating a contextual analysis in teacher belief studies, and justifies the choice of methodology that probes into belief through contextual clues and behavioural manifestations. The third assumption prioritizes the inherent and dynamic existence of tensions within an individual’s belief system, and sees pedagogical inconsistency as the result of tensions between different branches of belief-practice correspondence. This assumption lends support to the adoption of indigenous theories which regard tension as a natural phenomenon and a positive force for change.

Taking a Chinese perspective, this study will explore EFL teachers’ beliefs with the awareness that what teachers hold as true can be tension-loaded, contextually bound, and consciously or unconsciously manifested in their classroom teaching.
2.2 Views of English in the Chinese EFL Context

In many EFL countries (including China), English has been made an important part of the national curriculum. As Richards and Lockhart (1994) correctly point out, people’s views of English, or of any language, are influenced by contacts they have had with the language and its speakers, and the quantity and quality of these contacts are subject to individual differences as well as contextual variations. It is therefore instructive to start an inquiry into individual teachers’ beliefs about English with a careful examination of the context they have been experiencing. This section begins with a historical review of the essence-utility tension inherent in China’s EFL education at policy level. Then, it focuses on the educational aspects of understanding English with a review of scholarly discussions on the status of *English as a foreign language* as opposed to *English as a second language* and *English as a school subject* as opposed to *English as a communicative tool*. Finally, it suggests the necessity of understanding English as a concept, that is contextually situated and consisting of conflicting views.

2.2.1 The essence-utility tension in China’s EFL education

English language education in China began with the nation’s semi-colonization (1840-1911), during which national identity was violently shaken by the invasion of the West. In defense of the Chinese cultural identity in this tremendous political crisis, Zhang-Zhidong (1837-1909), a senior official of the Qing Dynasty, proposed the principle of learning foreign languages: Chinese learning for essence; Western learning for utility\(^6\) (Zhang-Zhidong, 1898). For over a century, *essence* and *utility* (or *tǐ* and *yòng*) have been conceived as two separable concepts which are in constant tension in the field of foreign language education in China, serving as a “barometer” of the socio-political relationship between China and the West (Ross, 1992; Gao, 2009).

In her summary of the historical status of the English language in China (1861 – 1979 onwards), Gao notes that, despite the conspicuous dominance of the utilitarian view of English as a vehicle for technological, intellectual or economic gains in China’s modern history, the essentialist view of English did occur during the New Cultural Movement (1911-

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\(^6\) Translated from the original expression in Chinese: 中学为体 (tǐ), 西学为用 (yòng).
1923), when China was experiencing a momentous sociopolitical and sociocultural transformation from a feudal monarchical system with a history of more than 2,000 years to a modern republican nation (Gao, 2009: 61-62). The Confucian tradition being played down, the English language, which was associated with democracy and science in Western learning, took up a significant role in China’s culture and politics. However, the essentialist view gave way when the Chinese Communist Party, which was allied with the socialist West (particularly the Soviet Union), defeated the National Party, who was allied with the capitalist West (particularly the US), in the Civil War and established New China as a socialist country in 1949.

The utilitarian view dominated foreign language education mainly for political propaganda in the first three decades of China’s socialism, during which time English was replaced by Russian as the foreign language in China’s school curriculum and was seriously marginalized due to its association with imperialism and capitalism and the perception of its being the source of ‘spiritual pollution’ (Adamson, 2004; Fewsmith, 1994; Yue, 1983).

However, the status of English began to rise again within the utility-based paradigm when the Chinese government tried to save its economy from the edge of bankruptcy in the late 1970s by divorcing the Stalinesque centrally planned system and proposing market-oriented reforms. Since its opening-up policy in the late 1970s, China has had more association and negotiation with the capitalist West and become one of the world’s fastest growing economies. The vigorous economic growth has strengthened the Chinese government’s determination to keep opening itself to the West and to increase the status of English in the Chinese education system to an unprecedented level (Liu-Daoyi, 2008), with the perception that English language serves as “an essential instrument for economic development” (Gao, 2009: 62).

This economically-driven perception of English is well reflected in governmental documents on English language teaching (ELT), especially at secondary level. The Ministry of Education drafted, revised, piloted and implemented ten different syllabuses (jiào xué dà gāng) for English language teaching between 1978 and 2000 and three different curricula (kè chéng biāo zhǔn) between 2001 and 2012.

The 1978 Syllabus formally establishes the status of English as a school subject in China’s basic education system and explicitly states a utilitarian view:
In the class antagonism, the economic and trade connection, and the friendly exchange of culture and technology in the international context, English is an important instrument.

Since then, English for instrumental purposes has been strengthened in two ways. On one hand, English proficiency has become a prerequisite for those seeking higher education opportunities. On the other, English as a foreign language has become accessible for all Chinese junior secondary students since 1988, when English learning was made mandatory within the nine-year compulsory education scheme (MoE, 1988).

Among the different versions of ELT syllabi, two trends are identifiable regarding the essence-utility tension. The first trend is that the concept of utility has diversified into “the present tense” (English is just a tool to achieve high scores in tests) and “the future tense” (English will be a useful tool in a future career). The former is test-oriented and compulsory, whereas the latter is career-oriented and optional. The second trend has to do with the movement from utility to essence. For example, as a subject in the senior secondary curriculum, English was defined in the 1993 Syllabus as a tool for daily-life communication, moral cultivation, cross-cultural awareness, and cognitive development (Liu-Daoyi, 1994), while the 2000 Syllabus recognizes English not only as an essential tool for China’s economic development and international communication, but also an essential part of citizenship in the new era which features globalization and information technology:

Since 2001, the Chinese government has launched a new round of educational reforms promoting quality education (sù zhì jiào yù) as a substitute for the highly controversial exam-oriented education (yìng shì jiào yù). The essentialist view is highlighted in new curriculum
documents which prescribe humanism-loaded qualities as not only essential for the country’s modernization but also essential for personal development (Gao-Yongting, 2003; Wu-Jiawen, 2009). The curricula for English as a primary and secondary subject are no exception in this sweeping reform. For instance, the 2001 Curriculum for the primary and junior secondary ELT (revised in 2011), which makes English a compulsory subject for all primary students from grade 3 onwards, explicitly advocates an integrated view of English:

义务教育阶段的英语课程具有工具性和人文性双重性质。…… 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, 2001; 2011）

[Translation: The English curriculum in compulsory education should incorporate both utilitarian views and essentialist views. ... An English curriculum that unifies utilitarian views and essentialist views can lay a facilitative foundation for students’ lifelong development.]

As the curriculum reform continues, the utility-based paradigm is being further marginalized whilst the promotion of essentialist views is growing. The 2003 Curriculum for senior secondary ELT provides evidence of this paradigm shift:

高中阶段的外语教育是培养公民外语素质的重要过程。它既要满足学生心智和情感态度的发展需求以及高中毕业生就业、升学和未来生存发展的需要，同时还要满足国家的经济建设和科技发展对人才培养的需求。因此，高中阶段的外语教育具有多重的人文和社会意义。（MoE, 2003）

[Translation: The foreign language education at senior secondary level is an important process for fostering foreign-language-related qualities which are essential in citizenship. It should not only satisfy students’ needs for cognitive and affective development, but also cater for graduates’ needs in hunting for jobs, seeking higher education and surviving in the future. Moreover, it should satisfy the needs of cultivating talents for China’s economic development and high-tech innovation. Therefore, foreign language education at senior secondary level is significant in both humanistic and social aspects.]

A brief archival study of the status of English in the curriculum indicates that the essence-utility tension has been a fundamental disposition of the Chinese EFL education habitus (Gao, 2009), which is, according to Bourdier (1991), historically acquired and embodied in the individual. In other words, individuals in this specific social context will act in ways that will best adapt themselves for survival or development purposes. It would then be reasonable to

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7 In big cities or private schools, it is very common to start English study from grade 1 or, even earlier, from kindergarten.
speculate that Chinese EFL teachers who implement the curriculum in their local settings would be patterned with behaviours constrained by the *essence-utility* tension to some extent.

Despite the delivery of many versions of syllabi or curricula using a highly centralized approach, the status of English has been found to be ambiguously conceptualized or even unwillingly acknowledged in the past decades. It remains an unexplored issue as to how the ambiguity and ambivalence of the government’s attitudes towards English language teaching affect individual teachers’ perception of English as a school subject in local contexts.

### 2.2.2 The status of English in the Chinese EFL curriculum

Discussions on what counts as justifiable knowledge of English for an English teaching curriculum are essential for pedagogical innovation and curriculum implementation (V. Ellis, Fox & Street, 2007). Researchers have proposed different categories of English varieties according to various language-using societies, and the best known categories are the ENL/ESL/EFL trichotomy. As a native language acquired in a native environment, ENL (English as a native language) is generally understood with little confusion and is often used as a contrastive referent norm for other varieties. However, there is much confusion between ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) due to different understandings. In the narrow sense, ESL and EFL form a dichotomy based on a geographical distinction. For example, English learned by non-native English speakers in an English-speaking environment is a second language, while English learned by non-native English speakers away from an English-speaking environment is a foreign language. In the broad sense, ESL refers to English learned as an additional language other than learners’ native language regardless of environmental implications, and therefore ESL is a cover term and overrides EFL. Since ESL and EFL are both for non-native speakers, the trichotomous terms are often converted into a dichotomy between ENL and ESL/EFL. Therefore, it is not surprising to find ESL and EFL being used interchangeably by many applied linguists. This interchangeable use, however, indicates an obvious disregard for contextual differences between ESL and EFL settings. Researchers who emphasize the role of context in language teaching (e.g. Hayes, 2009; Lantolf, 2009; Stern, 1983) argue for a necessary distinction between ESL and EFL in English teaching curriculum, because they are fundamentally
different in terms of the dominance of English in society and the amount of language exposure outside classrooms.

Similar argument is made by Chinese EFL educators, who believe the ambiguous definition of English in the curriculum is one of the reasons for unsatisfactory implementation of the recent curriculum reform in China (Zhang-Zhengdong, 2006, 2007). The *New Curriculum Standards for Senior English*, which were released in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, promotes ESL-based principles, such as Communicative Language Teaching and learner-centredness (MoE, 2003). It is hoped that, with a shift in focus from linguistic knowledge to communicative competence, the new standards will provide a solution to the so-called “ineffective and inefficient” English teaching in China and to the great number of students who are learning “deaf and dumb” English. However, there has been growing concern that the new curriculum, overtly based on ESL-based principles, is too ambitious in its goals and too crowded in its content and that it would only result in a bigger waste of time, energy and resources with even lower ELT effectiveness. This can only be solved by clarifying the status of English as a foreign language if educational policies are to be made contextually appropriate. Failing to do so, some argue, would severely hamper the development of EFL education in China. For example, Bao-Tianren (2007) points out that ESL-based teaching materials and pedagogies have brought about negative effects in most EFL classrooms, putting many experienced EFL teachers at disadvantage and at a loss. Li-Shaoling (2006) insists that English in China would not and should not become a second or global language and that English education should be re-examined through multiple lenses of local needs. Li-Zongqiang (2008) criticizes that the confusion between ESL and EFL implies an indifference to the local education environment that will inevitably cause a severe mismatch between teaching principles and practices.

Chen-Changyi (2001) is also concerned with the interchangeable use of ESL and EFL in China’s foreign language education. He lists seven characteristics of the Chinese context (see Table 2.3), which justify the EFL status of English in the curriculum:
Table 2.3 Seven characteristics of the Chinese context (Chen-Changyi, 2001: 12-13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 传统教育思想根深蒂固。</td>
<td>Traditional education beliefs are deeply rooted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 汉语的特殊性。</td>
<td>Linguistic distance between Chinese and English is substantial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 语言环境十分贫乏。</td>
<td>English exposure is very limited esp. in underdeveloped areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 教学条件相对落后。</td>
<td>Teaching conditions are relatively poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 师资力量不足。</td>
<td>The teaching force is insufficiently equipped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 学生学习方式不同。</td>
<td>Students are deeply influenced by traditional learning culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 我国幅员辽阔，经济和教育发展很不平衡，外语教育的差距十分悬殊。</td>
<td>There exist huge gaps in China’s foreign language education due to the imbalanced economic development among different regions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a similar position, Zhang-Zhengdong (2004) argues that a critical understanding of the ‘foreign language’ subject is crucial and claims that the goals of foreign language education in China should be unambiguously specified. He defines ‘foreign language’ in the curriculum using “八不是” (bā bù shì, or Eight-Not’s): it is not a mother language, not a native language, not a national language, not an official language, not a commonly used language, not a standard language, not a first language, and not a second language or global language; it is just a target language (p.17). Arguing for an EFL curriculum rather than an ESL one, Zhang-Zhengdong (2006) lists ten reasons why such a distinction is necessary, as shown in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4 Ten reasons for an EFL curriculum in the Chinese context (Zhang-Zhengdong, 2006: 21-22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 远离通用目的语社会</td>
<td>Being far from the authentic target-language society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 生活无使用需要</td>
<td>Weakly perceived needs to use it for communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 母语及其文化的第一性地位</td>
<td>The primary status of the Chinese language and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 思维发展超前于目的语</td>
<td>Thinking ability far in advance of target-language ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 缺乏目的语的结构形式是学习的主要矛盾</td>
<td>Lack of target-language structural expressions being the biggest difficulty in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 难以结合生活</td>
<td>Mismatch between target language and real life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 负迁移和过度推广作用</td>
<td>Negative transfer and overgeneralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 学习目的语的时间精力有限</td>
<td>Limited time and energy in learning a foreign language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 难以坚持学会</td>
<td>A high demand for perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 情感因素不稳定</td>
<td>Emotional turbulence caused by cultural conflicts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the distinction between ESL and EFL is not overtly made in official documents at governmental level, Chinese EFL researchers and educators believe such a distinction has significant implications for English language teaching in China. As Zhang-Zhengdong (2007) points out, an EFL approach in the curriculum is different from an ESL approach in at least three aspects: (1) EFL teaching should accommodate hierarchical goals; (2) EFL teaching should place a primary emphasis on linguistic knowledge; and (3) EFL pedagogies should be diversified.

The ongoing EFL-vs-ESL debate has brought about considerations about the co-presence of contexts and how they are related to each other. Voices calling for a critical stance are becoming stronger. Allwright (1998) warns that communicative language teaching, by promoting classroom interaction as rehearsal for ‘real-life’, produces direct confrontation between the social context of the target language and the classroom context of the recipient society, and it is this co-presence of social contexts that makes English as a foreign language not ‘just another school subject’ for teachers and learners alike around the world (p. 124). The recognition of the ELT classroom as a battleground for multiple contexts is also echoed by other applied linguists or language educators (e.g. Canagarajah, 2002; Holliday, 1994; 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; 2001; Pennycook, 2001; 2012).

2.2.3 English as a school subject vs English as a communicative tool

The unsettled EFL-vs-ESL debate at policy level has an impact on how English would be perceived at classroom level. A core issue is whether English that is being taught every day should be specified as everyday English. Ellis (2012) proposes that views of English in EFL/ESL education commonly fall into two types: (1) an object view, in which English is defined as a linguistic object to be studied and mastered, and (2) a tool view, in which English is seen as a tool for everyday communication. He further outlines how different language orientations affect language teaching differently in various ways such as type of learning, primary focus of attention, acquisitional processes, syllabus type, target selection, and instructional processes (Ellis, 2012: 272).

Such a tool-vs-object distinction is in line with the argument for distinguishing classroom English from real-world English. For instance, Widdowson (1998, 2003, 2009) repeatedly
claims that English as a school subject creates a distinct context, which differs from other English-using contexts. Pennycook (2009) describes differences between the two: ‘English as a curricular subject’ implies an attempt to capture a core to international English communication and teach it, whereas ‘English in the real world’ marks an attempt to account for the amorphous, ongoing, moment-by-moment negotiation of English that is actually its daily reality.

Stodolsky and Grossman’s (1995) study provides empirical evidence why such a distinction is vital. They investigated the relationship between features of subject matter and curricular activities among American high school teachers, and found that subject matter “creates not only a conceptual context for teachers but distinctive operational contexts as well” (p. 246). Their study shows that the subject of native language is usually perceived as loosely defined, composed of various fields, less dependent on prior learning, and more dynamic with a continuing need to stay up to date, whereas the subject of a foreign language is often perceived as well-defined, more limited in scope, sequentially dependent, and relatively stable in its content. Such differences in teachers’ perceptions would lead to different teaching behaviours. For instance, teachers who see their subjects as static, well-defined, and benefitting from curriculum standardization prefer curricular stability and tend to resist content change or instructional change more than those who see their subjects as dynamic and endorse autonomy in selecting curriculum content (p. 245).

With regard to the educational implications of the ESL-vs-EFL distinction, different researchers have different opinions. Based on survey responses regarding Finnish upper secondary school EFL teachers’ views on ‘English in the real world’ and ‘English at school’, Ranta (2010) found that the perception of ‘school English’ remained dominant among teachers through standard models and goals in curriculum and tests, and thus called for a diverse curriculum to incorporate ‘real-world English’ to cater for communicative purposes.

On the other hand, Widdowson (2012) questions the prevailing view that the goal of teaching English as a curricular subject should be teaching real English. Instead, he argues that realistic or feasible English should be taught to students in classroom conditions, which means teaching English that ‘relates to their reality, their purposes and their context’ (p.11). He then describes what he means by this learner reality in which English is made a subject:
As a subject at school, it occurs discontinuously in short periods, inserted in a timetable according to administrative convenience, wedged between other subjects like history or geography or physics ... It does not just occur; it is controlled, it does not just happen, it is designed: it takes the form of things called lessons, which consist of prescribed activities called exercises or tasks or projects, and what learners do with the language is then measured by tests. This is the reality that English represents for its learners. ... It is this learner reality that English teachers have to come to terms with. (Widdowson, 2012:11)

Widdowson suggests that the subject of English has to meet two conditions (1) it has to be a language that learners can engage with and make real for themselves; and (2) it has to be a language that they can learn from and that allows them to convert the formally possible to communicative resources (p. 12). In other words, the key for successful school-based EFL teaching is to ensure that it is not only formally possible, but also contextually appropriate for learners. In this sense, neither the structuralist approach nor the communicative approach alone has fully addressed the conditions of teaching English as a subject.

This explains why the communicative-based principles introduced in the new curriculum have received strong resistance from practising teachers in China (Hu, 2005). During this top-down curricular reform, there has been little effort in relating English to Chinese EFL teachers’ and learners’ reality, especially when this reality has become seriously divergent. When making English a compulsory subject for all primary students, policy makers have ignored two contextual conditions. One is the widening gap between different regions of China, especially between urban and rural areas (Hu, 2002, 2003, 2005; Nunan, 2003). For example, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) have observed significant differences in language teaching developments between the major cities and small cities, between rural towns and the countryside, between coastal and in-land areas, between north and south, and between key and non-key schools or universities. The other problem is the disregard for the diverse purposes of EFL learning among learners. Hu (2005) criticizes the centralized curriculum standards for not taking into consideration the large number of students in underdeveloped areas who study English simply because it is compulsory and they have to pass the exams. “For those students”, he said, “the question is not how to teach them English but whether to teach them English (p.656).”

As the view of English as a communicative tool is given priority in the curriculum, the practice of teaching English as a school subject is typically observed with constant tensions
between different approaches of pedagogy. However, researchers and educators are more interested in whether one view should be replaced by the other, with little attention drawn to the nature of the observed tensions or how they are related to each other.

### 2.2.4 Summary

For over a century, the status of English has remained ambiguously or inconsistently defined in the national curriculum of China. Both the \textit{English-for-essence} view and the \textit{English-for-utility} view have a legitimate existence in Chinese history, with each view becoming dominant during different periods. There is obvious tension existing between the two views, as the dominance of one view often co-occurs with the waning of the other. The essence-utility tension has relevance to the unsettled debate of whether China’s English education should be defined with ESL theories or EFL theories. It is of importance to try to clarify the blurred boundary between ESL and EFL contexts, because such ambiguity or inconsistency will cause great confusion and tension in classroom teaching, where teachers are constantly struggling between the \textit{language-as-tool} orientation and the \textit{language-as-object} orientation. However, the tool-vs-object tension in the perception of English as subject matter in an EFL curriculum has hardly been explored from the teachers’ perspective. More research is needed to investigate teachers’ personal beliefs about English in their local settings with a particular focus on tension.

The literature review on ‘teacher belief’ has helped deepen the understanding of ‘views of English’. Based on what is discovered about ‘teacher belief’ in the Chinese tradition, ‘views of English’ are found to share the same features. Therefore, the epistemological basis for the investigation of teachers’ views about English in the present study can be summarized in the following propositions. To begin with, teachers’ beliefs about English are considered to be a mixture of what they are aware of and what they may not be aware of, which supports the adoption of methodology which has the potential to capture views that remain ‘latent’. Secondly, teachers’ views of English are directly correspondent with the context of their first-hand experience, which includes what they have experienced (past experience), what they are experiencing (the present situation) and what they will be experiencing (an imagined situation). Each teacher’s views are products of the context complex of his or her own domain. The
degree of tension in teachers’ views of English is a mental reflection of the degree of tension in their perceptions of the context complex. Thirdly, teachers’ beliefs about English are directly correspondent with what they actually do. This study recognizes belief as the psychological engine of action. Beliefs without behavioural evidence are not considered ‘real’ or ‘valid’.

Finally, teachers’ views of English are inherently loaded with tension. It is important to identify opposing views in teachers’ belief systems and explore how they interplay with each other.

To achieve an adequate understanding of local teachers’ beliefs about a global phenomenon (English), the investigation calls for a framework based on indigenous epistemology. An ideal framework, according to Wang-Chuanjin and Xie-Limin (2006) should be represented as nothing but a simple diagram so as to capture the core elements of the systems and invite deeper insights (p. 55). The next chapter proposes *Yin-Yang* theory, which is an indigenous Chinese ideology featuring tension, dynamics and complexity, as the theoretical framework for the analysis and interpretation of the present study.
3. Theoretical Framework

As some scholars have observed, local perspectives are often treated with deliberate neglect where there is sharp confrontation between the East and the West (Briggs & Watkins, 2001; Li, 2012; Littlewood, 2009). To avoid 削足适履 [xuē zú shì lǚ, a Chinese idiom which means cutting the feet to fit the shoes], it is desirable to adopt locally-derived theories to explain local people’s mentality and behaviour. This chapter introduces the indigenous Yin-Yang concept as a theoretical framework for the present study. It first outlines the basic principles of Yin-Yang theory, and then argues that Yin-Yang theory can ideally serve as the conceptual basis for the purposes of the present study. Finally, it proposes applying Yin-Yang principles in the construction of a three-level model for the analysis and interpretation of participating teachers’ belief data.

3.1 Basics of Yin-Yang theory

Yin-Yang theory, which is a unique frame of thinking that originated in China, has been the most powerful and pervasive influence on Chinese philosophy, martial arts, medicine, science, literature, politics, daily behaviour, beliefs and thinking for thousands of years (Chen, 2002; Fang, 2011; Graham, 1986). This non-Western concept is, however, agreed by both Chinese and Western scholars to be highly compatible with late-modern science and might be a fruitful way of understanding natural and social phenomena (Li, 2012; Neville, 2008).

3.1.1 The meaning of Yin and Yang

According to Yin-Yang theorists, the interplay between Yin and Yang is the basic principle of the entire universe. The initial step in understanding Yin-Yang theory is to know what Yin and Yang stand for respectively. Originally, these two terms referred to opposite phenomena in nature, such as day and night, heaven and earth, light and shade. Later, these opposing qualities have been vastly extended, often in a metaphorical way, to symbolic traits either in

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8 As it says in the classical text Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng, 阴阳者，天地之道也。
the form of process or in the form of product. As recorded in *Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng*, “*Yin* stands for peace and serenity, while *Yang* stands for recklessness and turmoil. *Yang* gives life, while *Yin* makes it grow. *Yang* is transformed into energy, while *Yin* is transformed into matter”\(^9\).

Table 3.1 lists some examples of opposing qualities assigned to *Yin* and *Yang* respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cold</td>
<td>hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower</td>
<td>upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shady</td>
<td>sunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rest</td>
<td>movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inward</td>
<td>outward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dark</td>
<td>bright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slow</td>
<td>rapid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descending</td>
<td>rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contraction</td>
<td>expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>storage</td>
<td>change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quiet</td>
<td>active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>function</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ancient Chinese believed that everything has both *Yin* and *Yang* aspects and harmony can only be achieved if *Yin* and *Yang* are properly placed and proportioned. According to *Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng*, “*Yin* is active within and acts as guardian of *Yang*, while *Yang* is active on the outside and acts as regulator of *Yin*”\(^10\). Problems will arise if *Yin* is misplaced against *Yang* or interacts mischievously with *Yang*, and vice versa. Mou (2009: 176) gives a more detailed explanation of the *Yin-Yang* concept:

> *In its broad sense, it means the unity of two, mutually opposed but correlative and complementary forces that are considered to exist within anything in the universe. The *Yang* is considered to be the positive, active, and (manifestly) strong forces, while the *Yin* is the negative, passive, and yielding force. In a narrow sense, it means*

\(^9\) The original text is: 阴静阳燥，阳生阴长，阳杀阴藏，阳化气，阴成形。

\(^10\) The original text is: 阴在内，阳之守也，阳在外，阴之使也.
two complementary fluid force elements within qi whose mix determines the existence of all things in the universe.

The notion of *Yin-Yang*, in which *Yin* and *Yang* work against each other competitively and complementarily, reflects a metaphysical vision that is radically different from traditional Western philosophical ideas (Bailey, 1982; Dow, 1982; Gu, 2005; Li, 2012; Mou, 2003; Nisbett, 2003). As Bodde (1953: 61) observed:

Never ... is the suggestion made by [thinkers who adopt the Yin-Yang ideology] that the one [Yin or Yang] can or should wholly displace the other. Hence there is no real analogy with the dualism based on conflict (light vs. darkness, etc.) so familiar to us in the West. On the contrary, the Yin and Yang form a cosmic hierarchy of balanced inequality in which, however, each complements the other and has its own necessary function.

3.1.2 The relationship between *Yin* and *Yang*

*Yin-Yang* theory is essentially about the complex relationship between *Yin* and *Yang*, which can be summarised into four aspects (Liu-Yanchi & Lei-Shunqun, 2005; Maciocia, 2005): (1) 对立制约 (duì lì zhì yuē, meaning ‘Opposition and restriction’); (2) 互根互用 (hù gēn hù yòng, meaning ‘Interdependence’); (3) 消长平衡 (xiāo zhǎng píng héng, meaning ‘Wane-Wax and Equilibrium’); and (4) 相互转化 (xiāng hù zhuǎn huà, meaning ‘Inter-transformation’).

To begin with, *Yin* is opposite to *Yang* and *Yang* is opposite to *Yin*. Everything in the natural world is a unity of these two opposite forces, such as heaven and earth, fire and water, day and night, man and woman. The unity is the outcome of mutual opposition and restriction between *Yin* and *Yang*. Without opposition, there would be no unity. Without unity, there would be no development. In other words, it is precisely due to the unity of opposites between *Yin* and *Yang* that all things can develop and change ceaselessly and the natural world is perpetually full of life. The opposition and restriction between *Yin* and *Yang* also leads to temporary and relative harmony, which will be at risk if the opposition becomes intensified in favour of *Yin* or *Yang* and the mutual restriction is out of control.

The second aspect of the *Yin-Yang* relationship suggests that *Yin* and *Yang* not only oppose each other, but at the same time depend on each other. *Yin* is dependent on *Yang* and *Yang* is dependent on *Yin*. Neither can exist in isolation from the other. As it says in *Huáng Dì Nèi*
Jīng, “The solitary Yin cannot grow and the solitary Yang cannot develop”\textsuperscript{11}. With a sense of wholeness, neither Yin nor Yang can claim absolute priority over the other; they are equally essential for a harmonious existence.

The wane-wax relationship between Yin and Yang, often referred to as “Yang waning while Yin is waxing” and “Yin waning while Yang is waxing”\textsuperscript{12}, is one of the basic movement patterns of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang are in a constant state of change so that when one increases, the other is consumed, to preserve the balance. Due to the mutual restriction relationship between Yin and Yang, the wane-wax movement always maintains a certain limitation to prevent Yin or Yang from becoming excessive. For example, in summer, when the weather becomes hot (Yang), the human body sweats (Yin) more, while in winter, when the external temperature is very cold (Yin), the body starts trembling (Yang) to produce more heat. If the wane-wax movement exceeds the limitation, dynamic equilibrium will be broken and problems will arise. Symptoms of Yin-Yang imbalance include Excessive Yin, Excessive Yang, Deficient Yin or Deficient Yang\textsuperscript{13}. The key to fix problems is to resume the wane-wax movement to balance the scale.

Finally, in given conditions, either Yin or Yang may be transformed into its opposite. \textit{Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng} states, “Extreme Yin gives rise to Yang, while extreme Yang gives rise to Yin,”\textsuperscript{14} and “Extreme cold brings on heat, while extreme heat brings on cold”\textsuperscript{15}. For example, summer changes into winter, day into night, life into death, happiness into unhappiness, and vice versa. If the wane-wax movement of Yin and Yang is said to be a process of quantitative change, then their inter-transformation pertains to a qualitative change as a result of gradual and usually longitudinal quantitative change. The basic features of the Yin-Yang relationship are visually illustrated by a circle divided into two equal halves by a curved line (Figure 3.1), which is probably one of the most recognized symbols in the world. Yang is the white side with the black dot on it, and Yin is the black side with the white dot on it. The black-white distinction means Yin and Yang are fundamentally opposite to each other, but the presence of a small circle of the opposite color indicates that nothing is all Yin or all Yang and that Yin

\textsuperscript{11} The original text is: 孤阴不生，独阳不长.
\textsuperscript{12} Translated from the original text: 阳消阴长，阴消阳长.
\textsuperscript{13} These terms are often used in traditional Chinese medicine in diagnosing diseases. In Chinese, they are 阴盛(yīn shèng), 阳盛(yáng shèng), 阴虚(yīn xū), 阳虚(yáng xū). It is believed by TCM practitioners that almost all diseases are caused by Yin-Yang imbalance.
\textsuperscript{14} Translated from the original text: 重阴必阳，重阳必阴.
\textsuperscript{15} Translated from the original text: 寒极生热，热极生寒.
and Yang are interdependent and inter-transformable. The curved line symbolizes the constant movement and dynamic equilibrium between Yin and Yang.

![Yin-Yang symbol](image)

**Figure 3.1 Yin-Yang symbol**

### 3.1.3 The multi-level manifestation of Yin-Yang tension

The ancient Chinese believed that all objects and phenomena in the universe can be interpreted as the interplay of Yin-Yang opposition. As it says in *Book of Changes* (the *Yì Jīng*, commonly known as *I-Ching* to Western readers), “In all change there is the Supreme Ultimate (Tài Jí) which produces the Two Forms (Liàng Yí, namely Yin and Yang). The Two Forms produce the Four Emblems (Sì Xiàng, namely *Greater Yin*, *Lesser Yin*, *Lesser Yang*, and *Greater Yang*), and these Four Emblems produce the Eight Trigrams (Bā Guà)". The multi-level manifestation of Yin-Yang interplay, in resemblance to the binary system, can also be represented in mathematical formulas with 2 as the base and the number of levels as the exponent, or the superscript to the right of the base:

\[
\begin{align*}
2^0 &= 1 \text{ (the Supreme Ultimate)}, \\
2^1 &= 2 \text{ (Two Forms)}, \\
2^2 &= 4 \text{ (Four Emblems), and} \\
2^3 &= 8 \text{ (Eight Trigrams)}.
\end{align*}
\]

In a graphic representation, Yin and Yang are often depicted by broken (●) and solid (■) lines respectively. Figure 3.2 shows how the multi-level interplay of Yin and Yang are graphically represented by combinations of these two types of lines when the number of levels increases from 1 to 3.

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16 Translated from the original text: 易有太极，是生两仪，两仪生四象，四象生八卦。
### Figure 3.2 The graphic representation of Yin-Yang interplay at three levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>$2^1 = 2$</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Two Forms)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>$2^2 = 4$</th>
<th>Greater Yin</th>
<th>Lesser Yang</th>
<th>Lesser Yin</th>
<th>Greater Yang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Four Emblems)</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>$2^3 = 8$</th>
<th>Kūn</th>
<th>Gèn</th>
<th>Kǎn</th>
<th>Xùn</th>
<th>Zhèn</th>
<th>Lí</th>
<th>Dùi</th>
<th>Qián</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Eight Trigrams)</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
<td>= =</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the first level, there is one pair of Yin and Yang, which acts as the parent of a new pair of Yin and Yang, which makes two pairs of Yin and Yang at the second level. In a similar manner, the two pairs of Yin and Yang become the parents of four new pairs of Yin and Yang, resulting in eight symbols, which are termed as 八卦 (Bā Guà) in Chinese. Due to its three-level structure, the eight symbols are often called “the eight trigrams” in English. From the simplistic Yin-Yang opposition to the complex Bā-Guà structure, the Yin-Yang concept is thus able to be applied to explain phenomena of reality with varied degrees of complexity. The more levels are involved in the Yin-Yang tension, the higher the degree of complexity that is likely to be deciphered.

### Figure 3.3 Eight trigrams of Yin-Yang

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17 Each trigram is termed with a Chinese character which represents a natural phenomenon: 乾 (Qián, heaven), 兌 (Dùi, lake), 离 (Lí, fire), 震 (Zhèn, thunder), 巽 (Xùn, wind), 坎 (Kǎn, water), 坤 (Kūn, earth). Among the eight, Kūn, Xùn, Li and Duì conventionally pertain to Yin while the other four (Gèn, Kǎn, Zhèn, Qián) pertain to Yang.

18 *I-Ching*, for example, deciphers the Yin-Yang interplay at four levels and records the meaning of 64 hexagrams ($2^4 = 64$), each of which consists of 6 lines.

Figure 3.3, with the eight trigrams arranged around the Yin-Yang symbol, depicts the three-level structure of Yin-Yang tension and is familiarly referred to as 阴阳八卦图 (Symbol of Yin-Yang-Ba-gua). In addition to the innate qualities of Yin and Yang introduced in the previous section, the eight-trigram model in a three-level structure of oppositions indicates that the concept of Yin and Yang should also be understood with a sense of relativity and hierarchy. Absolute Yin and absolute Yang are very rare, as each Yin or Yang at any level can be the parent or the child of others. The number of broken and solid lines makes a difference in the Yin-Yang quality assigned to each trigram. For example, Qián (☰), with three unbroken lines in a row, is heavily Yang, while Kūn (☷), with three broken lines, is heavily Yin. The strength of Yin or Yang is also relatively marked. For instance, between Greater Yin (☶) and Lesser Yang (☷), which are both generated from Yin of the first level, the former is more Yin-oriented than the latter. Similarly, Yin pertains more to Kūn (☷) than to Gèn (☴), although both are generated from Greater Yin of the second level.

Moreover, central to the eight-trigram model is the continual process of change, as Wilhelm and Baynes (1977) have observed:

[They] are symbols standing for changing transitional stages; they are images that are constantly undergoing change. Attention centers not on things in their state of being, but upon their movements in change. The eight trigrams therefore are not representations of things as such but of their tendencies in movement. (p.1)

Obviously, the Yin-Yang concept in the eight-trigram model represents a radically different, but not necessarily incompatible, paradigm from Western ideology. Below is a summary of some of the key features of the Yin-Yang concept that are of relevance to the present study:

1. The tension between two opposing forces is regarded as inevitable and desirable.
2. The tension between opposing forces is viewed as relative, temporary and dynamic.
3. The hierarchical structure of tension is recognized.

Following the Yin-Yang principles, the present study attempts to make a basic investigation of teachers’ tension-loaded beliefs about English by identifying three sets of opposing views and building an eight-trigram model for research purposes.
3.2 An eight-trigram model for analysing beliefs about English

This section first discusses the relevance of Yin-Yang theory to the research purposes of the present study, and then identifies Yin-Yang tension within three EFL-related concepts. Finally, it proposes an eight-trigram model for the purpose of understanding Chinese EFL teachers’ beliefs about English.

3.2.1 Relevance of Yin-Yang theory to applied language studies

In recent applied linguistic research, there has been a trend for resorting to theories that embrace the complexity, interconnectedness and dynamism of social phenomena, such as chaos theory (van Gelder & Port, 1995), dynamic systems theory (Smith & Thelen, 1993), sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995), ecological approaches (Kramsch, 2002; van Lier, 2004), and complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Yin-Yang theory, with central themes such as complex contradiction and dynamic balance, bears much resemblance to these theories.

Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) criticize the apparent preference for “an artifice of simplicity and synchronicity” in the scholarly work of applied linguistics and call for an adjusted attitude towards the complexity and constant change that are inherent in language-related research. They argue that language experiences should not be converted into objects but rather be viewed as complex systems which are “heterogeneous, dynamic, non-linear, adaptive and open” (p. 36). These defining qualities of complexity theory turn out to overlap with the key properties of Yin-Yang theory. For instance, both approaches tackle the wholeness of complex systems which consist of heterogeneous elements interacting in a non-linear manner with the ultimate goal of optimum balance. Moreover, both theories accentuate the powerful influence of context and emphasise a positive view of change. However, Yin-Yang theory is different from complexity theory in that it seeks a simplistic expression to explain complexity by exploring the interrelationship between Yin and Yang. This notion of duality is nevertheless absent in complexity theory. In the Yin-Yang approach, identification of Yin or Yang properties is placed first and foremost in any research. Diagnostic suggestions (problem identification) and treatment recommendations (suggested solutions) are often based on an understanding of how to maintain or restore the proper balance between Yin and
Yin-Yang, and thus are more likely to render concrete results than the complexity theory approach. Yin-Yang theory also has the potential to offer robust solutions to some criticism made of complexity theory, such as the blurred distinction between element boundaries within complex systems and the difficulty of putting it into practice (Kretzschmar, 2011).

With social dimensions increasingly recognized in language use and language education, Yin-Yang theory has become a promising framework for language-related research because it is capable of dealing with complex phenomena in reality. It appears extremely simple and yet it has the potential to generate profound findings in pursuit of a deep understanding of social phenomena. According to Yin-Yang theorists, truth always exists in simple forms and simple truth is more instructive and influential in theory-driven practice. In addition, it focuses on the relationship between two opposing forces, which offers the possibility to divide abstract concepts into more concrete, analysable units. The metaphysical thinking in Yin-Yang theory is of great value for researchers who conduct pattern-seeking investigations to discover orderly patterns out of chaos. By narrowing the research scope down to the interrelationship between two opposing forces, studies with a Yin-Yang perspective have a greater possibility of capturing the simple core of a complex phenomenon.

Despite its compatibility with Western theories, the Yin-Yang concept is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and has affected more or less every Chinese person, consciously or subconsciously. Traces of Yin-Yang ideology can be easily identified in what people say and how they act in daily life. This unique way of thinking makes it fit the orientation of the present study, which is undertaken by a Chinese researcher with a group of Chinese teachers who teach English to Chinese students at Chinese schools.

### 3.2.2 Eight trigrams of the concept of English in EFL education

As is discussed in the Literature Review, a conceptual understanding of belief entails perceptions of context, which provides the content basis for belief, and perceptions of practice, which defines the realization of the possibility of belief. Thus, three conceptual parameters are considered to be crucial for an in-depth understanding of teachers’ beliefs about English: context (where English is taught), content (what aspects of English are taught), and pedagogy (how English is taught). The review of literature also provides evidence of
academic controversies on each of the three concepts, based on which Yin-Yang tension is identified as three pairs of opposition: Yin-context vs Yang-context; Yin-content vs Yang-content; and Yin-pedagogy vs Yang-pedagogy. In this way, an eight-trigram model is developed for the analysis and interpretation of teachers’ belief data.

3.2.2.1 Yin-Yang tension at context level

Since belief is a product of context, it is reasonable to begin with the identification of Yin-Yang tension in belief from context. Belief tension at context level is found in the opposing perceptions of the extent to which English plays a functional role in the given context. In this sense, tension lies in the distinction between EFL contexts and ESL contexts. EFL contexts are those which involve teaching English to non-native speakers in a non-native speaking setting, and are characterised by a lack of opportunities to communicate in English outside classroom settings. In contrast, ESL contexts are those in which English is taught to non-native speakers in an English-speaking country, allowing for ample communication opportunities to use the language in the real world. An understanding of ESL contexts is often perceived as being functional, active, outward, light, moving or expanding, which obviously display Yang qualities. On the other hand, EFL contexts are often connected with concepts such as structure, passiveness, withdrawal, heaviness, quietness or lack of movement, which demonstrate Yin properties. However, this division is by no means absolute, but relative. In a typical EFL context in China, for example, although English teaching and learning is mostly conducted in a knowledge-transmitting, teacher-fronted model, there are moments when English is used in communication-oriented activities. In these cases, it has both Yin and Yang characteristics with the Yin aspect being primary and the Yang aspect secondary. A typical ESL context is also a mixture of Yin and Yang with the Yang aspect being primary and the Yin aspect secondary, because intentional instruction with a focus on language forms is also considered necessary in spite of the fact that English is mainly picked up incidentally by means of abundant exposure to language contact.

With a sense of relativity, a typical EFL context in China can be viewed as representing Yin on the whole, but it can also be viewed as a mixture of both Yin and Yang. It is Yang in terms of Chinese as the native language, but Yin in terms of English as a foreign language. Even if the Chinese EFL context is marked as Yin, it is not all Yin within itself. As regions vary
greatly in terms of opportunities to use English for communicative purposes, the more economically developed areas are often better equipped with English teaching and learning resources and have a greater need for English as a communicative tool. There are more Yang elements in these areas than less developed regions. Take Beijing for example, it is Yin in relation to London or Hong Kong, but is Yang in relation to other less developed cities in China. A closer look at Beijing reveals that it is not an evenly developed region within itself, as its rural areas contain fewer ESL-like opportunities than its urban areas. Thus, rural areas in Beijing are Yin in relation to urban areas in Beijing, but may be Yang if compared to rural areas of other less developed provinces.

Understanding the Chinese EFL context with a Yin-Yang perspective also implies a sense of dynamics, which is related to the mutual consumption between Yin and Yang. Any change to a specific EFL context will bring about readjustment of Yin-Yang proportions in order to achieve optimum balance. Increase of one is very likely to co-occur with decline of the other. For example, as a region which used to be EFL-dominant is becoming more assimilated to an ESL setting, it will foster Yang at the expense of Yin. As the assimilation is strengthened further, classroom-situated English contact will expand to the outside world on a greater scale, which signals the increase of its Yang aspect. As a result, its Yin aspect will continue waning until a qualitative change takes place signifying the shift from an EFL-dominant context to an ESL-dominant one.

3.2.2.2 Yin-Yang tension at content level

Belief tension at content level exists in different attitudes towards the selection of teaching materials that facilitate communicative purposes. Distinction is found between the language-as-object view and language-as-tool view. The former, categorised as Yin, sees English as an objectified system that mostly deals with non-communicative structures and is often associated with features such as quiet, heavy, passive, slow and downward. In contrast, the latter favours English as a communicative tool which contains what is needed in real-life functions characteristic of English-speaking settings. With features such as outward, light, active, fast and expanding, the tool-oriented view fits into the Yang category.

With regard to what content should appear in EFL teaching materials, there seems to be an overt preference for the Yang-view of content (i.e. English for communicative purposes),
whereas the *Yin*-view of content (i.e. English for non-communicative purposes) is often given negative connotations and is almost synonymous with ineffectiveness, inferiority, inhumanity or backwardness. However, according to *Yin-Yang* theory, there should be no value judgement on which view is better than the other. *Yin* and *Yang* are equally important for a harmonious balance. *Yin* stays inside and is the material foundation of *Yang*, while *Yang* remains outside and is the manifestation of *Yin*. They co-exist in an optimal balance to fit the context. Without structure (*Yin*), the function (*Yang*) could not perform; without function, the structure would lack vitality.

In China, English is included as a required subject in the national curriculum, which invokes the importance of its role as a means of communication; meanwhile, English is also an important part in high-stake exams, which mainly test knowledge of English rather than communicative competence. As a result of this incoherent policy, both communication-oriented English (*Yang*) and exam-oriented English (*Yin*) are legitimately present in classroom teaching.

### 3.2.2.3 *Yin-Yang* tension at pedagogy level

Belief tension at pedagogy level is found in teachers’ disagreement on the extent to which they should employ communicative methods in classroom teaching. *Yin-Yang* tension is identified between conviction for communicative methods and that for non-communicative methods. More specifically, communicative pedagogy which is *process*-oriented and accentuates *meaning, communication, activity, movement, student-centredness,* or *expressiveness* pertains to *Yang*, whereas non-communicative pedagogy which is *product*-oriented and centred on *form, structure, knowledge, order, teacher-centredness,* or *rote-learning* pertains to *Yin*.

*Yin*-pedagogy and *Yang*-pedagogy are considered to be metaphysically equal, which means neither should be subject to de-contextualized prejudice. The metaphysical equality among pedagogical approaches of different paradigms is well expressed by critical applied linguists who argue for contextual considerations in selecting appropriate pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Pennycook, 1989). Holliday (1994) has noticed that “*process-oriented, task-based, inductive, collaborative, communicative ELT methodology*” is generally worshipped as superior to “*didactic, teacher-fronted, product-oriented approaches*” (p. 54), and insists that
different contexts are conducive to different pedagogic traditions. Canagarajah (1999) also casts criticism upon the assumption that the process-oriented methods are more radical and empowering than the product-oriented methods. *Yin-Yang* theory offers an alternative explanation for such a critical position. In this approach, contextually appropriate pedagogy is defined in terms of the *Yin-Yang* nature of the specific context. For instance, a *Yin* context with a lack of communicative needs in the given context justifies persistent employment of form-focused pedagogy by local teachers. It is equally reasonable to assume that it does not favour teaching with an exclusive focus on the linguistic form because excessive *Yin* is not conducive to language development.

The interdependent nature of *Yin* and *Yang* is also applicable to divergent approaches. As *Yin* or *Yang* cannot endure in isolation, both knowledge-based instruction and task-based instruction are required to make language work. One cannot function without the other. The adoption of an approach that is exclusively *Yin* or exclusively *Yang* is very rare in reality.

Apart from being complementary, different approaches are also competitive due to the trade-off effect of *Yin-Yang* balance under time and resource constraints. For example, an increase of pedagogical attention on linguistic forms will naturally cause the waning of attention on the meaning of communication. Within any given context, the proportion of form-focused instruction and meaning-focused instruction is contextually configured and is subject to constant change to achieve dynamic equilibrium. If too much or too little attention is paid to one aspect, balance is at risk, so the key to pedagogical effectiveness is to maintain an optimal *Yin-Yang* balance.

### 3.2.2.4 The eight-trigram model for beliefs about English

With *Yin-Yang* tension having been identified in the *where, what and how* inquiries of the research topic, a new eight-trigram model (see Figure 3.4) is established on the basis of the conventional *Yin-Yang* representation (see Figure 3.3).

In each trigram, the base line, or the line closest to the central *Yin-Yang* circle, symbolizes what teachers believe about the local EFL context in terms of a quantitative estimation of communicative needs in real life. Positive beliefs that there are greater communicative needs in real life are termed as *Yang*-context beliefs (marked with a solid line —), while negative
beliefs that there are fewer communicative needs in real life are termed as *Yin*-context beliefs (marked with a broken line \(\equiv\)). The middle line of each trigram represents teachers’ attitudes towards the curricular content in terms of the relevance of real-life topics to EFL teaching. Positive beliefs that the content should cater for communicative needs in real life are termed *Yang*-content beliefs (marked with a solid line \(-\)), while negative beliefs that the content does not have to be relevant to real-life communication are termed *Yin*-content beliefs. Finally, the peripheral line, which is most distant from the centre, represents teachers’ perceptions about appropriate pedagogy in terms of the degree of communicativeness. Positive beliefs showing a preference to communicative pedagogy are termed *Yang*-pedagogy beliefs (marked with a solid line \(-\)), whereas negative beliefs showing resistance to communicative pedagogy are termed *Yin*-pedagogy beliefs (marked with a broken line \(\equiv\)).

![Figure 3.4 The eight-trigram model for analysing beliefs about English](image)

For the convenience of presentation, I substitute the numbers 1 and 2 for the solid line (*Yang*) and the broken line (*Yin*), and transform the eight graphic trigrams into a code consisting of one letter (Y) and a three-digit subscript (1 or 2). Y stands for *Yin-Yang* quality, and the three digits are arranged in the order of context, content and pedagogy. Table 3.2 gives a more detailed summary of the meanings of the eight trigrams in this new model.
Table 3.2 A summary of the codes and meanings of the eight trigrams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigram</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☰</td>
<td>Qián</td>
<td>Y_{111}</td>
<td>Yang-context, Yang-content, Yang-pedagogy</td>
<td>Positive beliefs about the communicative role of English in context, the inclusion of communicative content, and the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☱</td>
<td>Duì</td>
<td>Y_{112}</td>
<td>Yang-context, Yang-content, Yin-pedagogy</td>
<td>Positive beliefs about the communicative role of English in context and the inclusion of communicative content, but negative beliefs about the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☲</td>
<td>Lí</td>
<td>Y_{121}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yang-content, Yang-pedagogy</td>
<td>Positive beliefs about the communicative role of English in context and the adoption of communicative pedagogy, but negative beliefs about the inclusion of communicative content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☳</td>
<td>Zhèn</td>
<td>Y_{122}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yin-content, Yin-pedagogy</td>
<td>Positive beliefs about the communicative role of English in context, but negative beliefs about the inclusion of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☴</td>
<td>Xùn</td>
<td>Y_{211}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yang-content, Yang-pedagogy</td>
<td>Negative beliefs about the communicative role of English in context, but positive beliefs about the inclusion of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☵</td>
<td>Kǎn</td>
<td>Y_{212}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yin-content, Yin-pedagogy</td>
<td>Negative beliefs about the communicative role of English in context and the adoption of communicative pedagogy, but positive beliefs about the inclusion of communicative content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☶</td>
<td>Gèn</td>
<td>Y_{221}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yin-content, Yang-pedagogy</td>
<td>Negative beliefs about the communicative role of English in context and the inclusion of communicative content, but positive beliefs about the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☷</td>
<td>Kūn</td>
<td>Y_{222}</td>
<td>Yin-context, Yin-content, Yin-pedagogy</td>
<td>Negative beliefs about the communicative role of English in context, the inclusion of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proposed eight-trigram model, derived from the conventional representation of *Yin-Yang* interplay, provides an innovative framework, with which data on teachers’ beliefs can be thoroughly and systematically processed. In alignment with the *Yin-Yang* way of understanding natural and social phenomena, it embraces complexity, interconnectedness and dynamics, and is likely to shed light on a deeper understanding of teachers and their teaching in their local settings. There are a number of advantages of using this model for data analysis and interpretation. First of all, it is able to accommodate conflicting beliefs and synthesize disparate perceptions about different aspects of the concept of English. By allowing juxtaposition of opposing beliefs, this model has the potential to offer a more complete picture of a teacher’s complex belief system. Secondly, this model describes teachers’ beliefs in multiple aspects, which has the potential of yielding in-depth understanding of what teachers think about the subject matter with added knowledge of where those thoughts come from and how those thoughts shape their teaching behaviours. Finally, this model allows for the emergence of belief patterns on a large or small scale. With a well-defined base, it becomes possible to conduct a detailed exploration of single cases as well as pattern-seeking comparison across multiple cases. Such flexibility of research scope enables it to serve as an ideal framework for researchers with different degrees of experience or resource support.

### 3.3 Summary

It is important to adopt local knowledge in indigenous research. *Yin-Yang* theory, which bears indigenous Chinese philosophical ideas, has been chosen as the theoretical framework for this study. While it reflects an alternative, oriental worldview to the mainstream theories which are mainly Western-oriented, it is an inclusive theory that is highly compatible with Western theories. It is especially useful in the investigation of complex phenomena. As the value of *Yin-Yang* theory in the field of applied linguistics is hardly recognized, it is a worthwhile adventure to fill this vacancy by investigating familiar topics from a *Yin-Yang* perspective. There are also considerations of practicality. *Yin-Yang* theory is easier to put into practice because of its core idea that all complexity stems from simplicity and every phenomenon can be reduced to two opposing aspects and is explainable in terms of *Yin-Yang* balance.
In order to explore the research topic using a *Yin-Yang* approach, it is important to highlight several points in the *Yin-Yang* relationship. First, *Yin* and *Yang* are two fundamental yet complementary modes of existence. Secondly, *Yin* and *Yang*, competitive as they are, are inherently interdependent, interactive, and inter-transformable. Neither could exist without the other. Moreover, a sense of relativity and dynamics is essential to understanding the *Yin-Yang* concept, as the interplay of *Yin* and *Yang* is by no means static, insulated or absolute. Movement of *Yin* or *Yang* is essential; change occurs to maintain stability, and stability provides a basis for change to happen. Thirdly, *Yin* and *Yang* are metaphysically equal; there should be no prejudice against one or the other. *Yin* should not be fostered at the price of *Yang*, and *Yang* should not be reinforced at the expense of *Yin*. Finally, an in-depth understanding of natural or social phenomena rests upon an analysis of the *Yin-Yang* balance in a given system, as all problems are derived from some kind of imbalance.

Based on the conventional representation of *Yin-Yang* interplay in eight trigrams, I propose a new model by dividing the conceptual understanding of belief into three separate but related concepts (i.e. context, content, and pedagogy) and identifying the *Yin-Yang* tension within each of them. This newly constructed model provides an innovative framework for processing and interpreting teacher belief data from a perspective that brings a fresh and unfamiliar approach to the field of applied linguistics and teacher education. By incorporating multiple parameters into the conceptual understanding of teachers’ beliefs, this model has the potential to make original contributions to the theory-building of teacher belief studies, and it is also likely to provide new insights into research in foreign language education.
4. Research Methodology

Paradigms, as basic worldviews, represent beliefs about the nature of reality and the ways in which knowledge is created, and are essentially “matters of faith” (Esterberg, 2002: 9). Therefore, decisions about paradigms reflect researchers’ ontological and epistemological considerations, which in turn have a defining impact on methodological decisions (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Punch, 2009; Walliman, 2006). In this chapter, I first discuss the rationale for adopting a multiple case study design which ideally endorses Yin-Yang principles. Then I elaborate considerations in case selection and data collection. Finally, I propose a coding scheme with which relevant beliefs might be processed and extracted from the data pool for analysis.

4.1 Methodological framework

Despite the substantial research exploring the nature of beliefs and the relationship between teachers’ educational beliefs and classroom practices, a clear understanding has not yet been achieved (Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992; Fang, 1996), which implies two major drawbacks among teacher belief studies – (1) the conceptual model of beliefs may be incompletely constructed; and (2) the instrument for eliciting belief data may be poorly chosen. Nespor (1987) believes that a theoretically-grounded model of belief systems is a prerequisite of systematic and comparative investigations on educational beliefs, and Pajares (1992) agrees with this, considering it hazardous not to reach agreement on the meaning and conceptualization of belief and predicts that failure to do so would prevent researchers from reaching coherently justifiable findings. Bunting (1984) echoes that warning by asserting the risk of “attempting to use one educational referent as a basis for the whole” out of the multidimensionality of beliefs.

As data from multiple sources are believed to be able to provide richer and more accurate inferences about beliefs, recent years have seen the growing popularity of mixed methods (often a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods) or multiple qualitative methods (often a combination of interview, observation and textual analysis). “Not to do so calls into
question the validity of the findings and the value of the study”, as Pajares (1992:327) says. Even within the qualitative paradigm, researchers vary in their nomination of the primary data source. Some mainly rely on written journals (e.g. Johnson, 1997; Choi, 2000), while some value expressed opinions the most (e.g. Basturkmen et al., 2004; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Nespor, 1987; Ng & Farrell, 2003), and still others prioritize the analysis of observed teaching (e.g. Phipps & Borg, 2009).

In a recent review, Basturkmen (2012) has noticed that the topic of language teachers’ beliefs has mainly been addressed in the form of case studies, especially among doctoral studies of recent years, with findings revealing limited correspondence between teachers’ stated beliefs and their practices. She argues that stronger correspondence can be achieved byremedying methodological shortfalls in two ways. One is to adjust data-collecting techniques within case studies so that beliefs which determine incidental practices can be captured along with those that trigger planned practices. The other is to strive for comparative cases with the intention of minimizing the complicating impact of contextual factors and thus allowing for more in-depth investigation of the topic.

The above critics of methodological options for belief studies seems to suggest that case study, with qualitative and contextualized traditions, can be a suitable method for the purposes of this study, but it needs to be modified so as to accommodate a number of important considerations. The first of these is about the number of cases. Yin (2003) believes that a multiple-case design is preferable to single-case studies for both practical and validating reasons. It enables the researcher to avoid “putting all the eggs in one basket”, and more importantly, it can be viewed as containing direct replication under varied circumstances, which will “expand the external generalizability of the findings” and thus “vastly strengthen the external validity of the findings” (p. 53). The second consideration involves the employment of mixed methods. Case studies can include mixed methods to obtain belief data from multiple channels (e.g. elicited speech, planned observation and incidental observation), which allows access to be gained to those internalized, real-time beliefs that are of greater subtlety and more importance. The third consideration lies in the extent to which these methods complement each other, and possible complementation includes whether methods generate quantitative data as well as qualitative data, verbal data as well as behavioural data, or planned data as well as incidental data. Last but not least, the comparability between cases should be considered because, according to Yin (2003), a
comparative design enhances the reliability of the research by allowing for literal replication in the case of identical cases, or theoretical replication in the case of contrastive cases, or both.

Therefore, a multiple case study which contains mixed methods and incorporates both comparative and contrastive elements has greater potential for the emergence of salient themes in internally incoherent contexts. It is especially pertinent for a highly divergent EFL context like China. Furthermore, this method is extremely compatible with Yin-Yang theory in that there are flexible ways of setting boundaries for units of analysis in terms of the Yin or Yang properties of the selected cases. Thus, multiple case studies guided by Yin-Yang principles enjoy theory-and-method integration and provide a promising solution to the conceptualization-and-operationalization incongruence found in many teacher belief studies.

A Yin-Yang understanding of the chosen research design is at least three-fold. First of all, the “diversity within harmony” notion of Yin-Yang balance means that the theme of wholeness should be valued more than the theme of multiplicity. In other words, it is more important to view cases as different components of a unity than to view them as dissociated entities. Secondly, the intrinsic conflict between Yin and Yang suggests that contrasting cases with internal tensions should be selected. There should be Yin-dominant cases in contrast to Yang-dominant cases. Finally, the hierarchical duality between Yin and Yang implies the existence of multiple levels of Yin-Yang opposition within each case. There should be instances in which a case varies its Yin-Yang quality at different layers of comparison.

4.2 Case selection

The selection of cases follows the principle of representativeness or typicality and adopts the design of “one region, two schools, and four teachers” (see Table 4.1), with units of analysis identifiable at each level. To cater for the research goals, the region should be open to the influences of globalization and thus exemplify a contemporary Chinese EFL context, where English is not only intensively studied as a subject in school-based curriculums, but also widely used for communicative purposes in daily life. To put it in another way, this region should entail discrete sub-contexts which significantly differ in terms of the amount of
exposure to real-life communicative opportunities. In that case, two schools representing divergent sub-contexts (such as urban settings in contrast to rural settings) should be considered. The next step is to select two teachers from each school to demonstrate individual differences. More details of the region, the two schools and the four teachers are given in the following sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Design of case selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>One region</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Four teachers</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 One region

“The capital of China, Beijing is a mishmash of traditional versus modern, with ancient relics like the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China interwoven with huge flyovers, millions of cars and shimmering skyscrapers.”

-- Rachel Zammit Cutajar, journalist

The major criterion for selecting a region within the Chinese context is that it should have ample opportunities of using English for communicative purposes. Such opportunities are more likely to occur in well-developed regions where there is a great deal of international exchange both in economy and culture. Among the few well-developed regions, Beijing is chosen as the social setting for this study for both theoretical and practical reasons.

First of all, Beijing is a mixture of tradition and modernity. As the capital city of modern China, Beijing is the national centre of politics, culture, education, economy and international communication. It also has a history of over 850 years as the capital of ancient China, with an impressive number of world-class cultural heritage sites, such as the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, and the Temple of Heaven. The coexistence of new Beijing and old Beijing nicely fits the Yin-Yang concept which features conflict in harmony.

Another consideration in selecting Beijing lies in its having ample opportunities to use English in many aspects of life. For instance, in politics, Beijing is the base of most foreign embassies and is most frequently visited by politicians from other countries. In tourism,
Beijing remains a hot destination for foreign visitors. It is reported that it attracted 3.8 million tourists from overseas in 2013\(^\text{20}\). In business, Beijing is home to a great number of big and small international companies. The business magazine *Fortune* reported that 44 of the world’s top 500 companies have established their headquarters in Beijing with sales and procurement functions by 2011. Also, according to the Beijing Municipal Commission of Commerce, 279 of the 500 global corporations had invested in 637 projects in this city\(^\text{21}\). In education, Beijing has witnessed an increasing number of privately-run English-Chinese bilingual or English-immersion schools in recent years. In addition, Beijing is a popular place for international students to study Chinese language and culture. According to a statistical report\(^\text{22}\), there were 77,706 foreign students studying in Beijing in 2012. With so many channels of English contact, Beijing stands out as one of the most favourable contexts for the needs of real-life English use.

During the last three decades, Beijing has greatly expanded its urban area and developed into a cosmopolitan city with a total of 16 districts (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1 A map of administrative divisions of Beijing**


\(^{21}\) Source: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2012-07/19/content_15600916.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2012-07/19/content_15600916.htm)

The core, located in Zone 1 and 2, is called “old city” or “inner city”, which is the original historical urban centre of Beijing. “New city” has expanded from the core and comprises four districts (Zones 3-6). Among them, Haidian takes the lead in education and technology, while Chaoyang prospers in international trade and business. Outside the well-established urban districts are six suburban districts (Zones 7-12) and four rural districts (Zones 13-16), which are not fully urbanized yet. Therefore, it can be assumed that asynchronous urbanization is likely to create inequality among districts, especially between urban districts and rural districts, in terms of the extent to which English is needed for real-life communication. In this sense, Beijing makes an ideal case for contextual divergence, which is highly relevant to the interests of this study.

4.2.2 Two schools

The selection of two participating schools is based on four criteria. The most important one is that they should make up contrasting cases in terms of Yin-Yang properties. With this consideration, an urban school and a rural school are selected with the assumption that the former pertains to Yang and the latter to Yin. The second criterion is that they should be representative of their category. For this reason, public schools are preferred to private schools. Also, these two schools should be ranked average in the local district so that they will not constitute extreme cases in terms of EFL teaching quality. The third criterion is that the two selected schools should have evident tensions between exam-oriented teaching and communicative-based teaching so as to provide an arena for the Yin-Yang interplay between English for tests and English for use. In this regard, senior secondary schools are considered to be more suitable than junior secondary schools. Because senior secondary education is not included in China’s nine-year compulsory education, most students are enrolled with a clear goal: to win a place at a prestigious university by performing well in the National Matriculation Test (NMT, or Gāo Kǎo) at the end of the three-year study. For them, English study is a must because it is one of the three key subjects to be tested (the other two are Chinese and mathematics). However, this goal is not aligned with the current curriculum, which encourages students to become fluent in speaking English, and thus tensions between English for tests and English for use are more evident in senior secondary education.
As revealed in official documents\(^\text{23}\), there are a total of 305 senior secondary schools in Beijing. 2009 statistics shows that the enrolment of students has reached 203,477 and they are distributed among 5,544 classes. The average class size is 36.7, a relatively smaller number compared to most other municipal regions in China. However, these schools are not evenly distributed among the administrative divisions. The contrast between urban districts and rural districts is substantial. With a smaller area in size and a much bigger population in density, urban districts (Zones 1-6) have 201 schools in total, whereas rural districts (Zones 13-16), which are bigger in size but less densely populated, only have 23 schools.

I selected one urban school out of the 62 schools in Haidian district (School A henceforth) and one rural school out of the 4 schools in Huairou district (School B henceforth). Luckily, the two schools both readily agreed to participate in my study (see Appendix II for “participation information sheet for the head of school” and “consent form for the head of school”\(^\text{24}\)). I conducted a 12-week field study in School A during the first semester of Senior Year One, and a 6-week field study in School B during the second semester of Senior Year One.

School A and School B are both co-ed public schools, 60 kilometres apart, with a similar class size of about 40 students. School A has both junior and senior secondary sections. It is quite common for a student to spend 6 years here. School B only has senior secondary grades, where most students spend 3 years until graduation. Both schools entail typical EFL aspects with an explicit emphasis on test-oriented teaching for good reasons. In the current education system, the better its students perform in the high-stake matriculation test, the higher the reputation the school enjoys, and in return schools with a higher reputation are more likely to recruit high-achieving students to ensure a satisfactory performance in subsequent NMTs. As one of the important stakeholders in this chain, schools intuitively come to terms with teaching for tests. As English is a key subject to be tested in NMT, it is reasonable to assume that the status of English as a curricular subject cannot be overemphasized in all schools, with School A and School B being no exceptions.


\(^{24}\) If human participants are involved in the research, it is obligatory for the researcher to obtain an ethics approval from the ethics committee of the university prior to the on-site research. The ethics approval for this project is valid from 19 June 2009 to 17 June 2012 and the reference number is 2009/256.
Another area of common ground for comparison between School A and School B is that they adopt the same series of textbooks in English teaching. *Senior High English* is a series jointly written by British and Chinese TEFL experts (see Figure 4.2). Since its first publication in 2004, it has become by far the dominant English textbook all over Beijing. Both School A and School B have been using it since the summer of 2008. Compared to the previous textbook, this series contains a wider range of topics, an enlarged vocabulary, a greater number of lengthy articles, and more communication activities (see Appendix I for a sample of the content page). Both schools are facing the challenge of fitting this ESL-oriented textbook into a school culture that is obviously EFL-oriented.

![Image of Senior High English textbook](image)

**Figure 4.2 An image of the EFL textbook adopted by both School A and School B**

In spite of their common ground in terms of the EFL orientation, School A and School B form contrasting cases in terms of the amount of ESL exposure. To begin with, School A is situated in the centre of urban Beijing with abundant opportunities for direct English contact with native English speakers who study and work nearby. Attached to a prominent university, School A enrols many students whose parents are well-educated and fairly proficient in English. A multi-cultural environment is also within reach. With an increasing number of international students accommodated on campus and China’s only international university located nearby, it is not uncommon for its students to come across foreign faces outside the classroom during their off-campus time. Additionally, School A has hired two foreign teachers to teach Spoken English to students of different grades. In contrast, School B is located in a quiet corner and remains detached from the cosmopolitan bustle. There are no foreign teachers working in this school, and there is little international exchange in this area.
Another difference can be found in the timetables that each school follows (see Table 4.2). School A is an ordinary day school, where students study from 7:30 am until 5:00 pm, while School B is a boarding school, where students study from 7:05 am until 9:00 pm on weekdays. Both School A and School B have eight periods of formal classroom teaching every day. However, the length of ‘morning study’ and each period differs at the two schools. At School A, morning study is 20 minutes long, while it is 45 minutes long at School B. The length of a period at School A is 5 minutes shorter than that at School B. Another difference in the timetable is the division of morning periods and afternoon periods. At School A, students have a lunch break after 5 periods, while the lunch break takes place after the fourth period at School B.

Table 4.2 Timetable of School A and School B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning exercise (zǎo cāo)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>6:30-7:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning study (zǎo dú)</td>
<td>7:30-7:50</td>
<td>7:05-7:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 1</td>
<td>8:00-8:40</td>
<td>8:00-8:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>8:50-9:30</td>
<td>8:55-9:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise interval (kè jiān cāo)</td>
<td>9:30-10:00</td>
<td>9:40-10:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 3</td>
<td>10:00-10:40</td>
<td>10:20-11:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td>10:50-11:30</td>
<td>11:15-12:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5</td>
<td>11:40-12:20</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch break (wǔ xiū)</td>
<td>12:20-14:00</td>
<td>12:00-14:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 5</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>14:00-14:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 6</td>
<td>14:00-14:40</td>
<td>14:55-15:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 7</td>
<td>14:50-15:30</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-exercise (yǎn bǎo jiàn cāo)</td>
<td>15:30-15:35</td>
<td>15:40-15:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 7</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>15:55-16:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period 8</td>
<td>15:00-15:40</td>
<td>16:50-17:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class meeting (bān huì)</td>
<td>15:20-17:00</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening self-study (wǎn zì xǐ)</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>19:00-21:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English occupies an important place in the timetable at both schools. At least one period of formal teaching is allocated to English every day. Also, three out of the five ‘morning study’ sessions are allocated to English. The total time for formal EFL teaching is different between the two schools. There are seven English lessons per week at School A, which makes a total of 280 minutes per week, whereas at School B, one English lesson per day constitutes 225 minutes per week. However, if the morning-study sessions are counted, School B has a little more EFL teaching and learning time (135+225=360) than School A (60+280=340). Therefore, it seems that School A and School B provide approximately equal EFL exposure in terms of the time allocated to English teaching and learning. Nevertheless, as students at School A have more free time at home or in the open, there is greater likelihood that they will encounter more communicative opportunities than their counterparts at School B.

To sum up, School A and School B are similar in that they both have an exam-oriented culture on site and that the teaching of English as a school subject is mainly implemented through the use of ESL-featured textbooks. Although they provide an environment with similar amounts of classroom English exposure, they differ in terms of the degree of real-life English exposure within the local context, with School A obviously on a higher end than School B. To apply the notion of Yin-Yang to these two school cases, it is assumed that the greater communicative needs of English at School A bring about more Yang while the closed EFL setting at School B shows more features of Yin.

4.2.3 Four teachers

Given that it is a common practice for schools to encourage teachers to devote the entire gāo sān year (senior grade 3) to preparations for the NMT, the test-vs-use conflict is more evident in the teaching of senior grade 1 and senior grade 2. Therefore, teachers of these two grades are preferred as participants in this study. Eventually, two teachers from each school were selected with Yin-Yang considerations made in a number of ways. As Yin is often related to the feminine gender and Yang to the masculine gender, it is necessary to have both male teachers and female teachers as participants. In addition, as communicative needs of English often have close associations with economic development, it would make sense to include participants from different backgrounds so that their professional development displays
different routes of contextual change. Prior to data collection, the teachers were given a Participation Information Sheet and then decided whether they wanted to participate. Four teachers were then selected from those who had signed the Consent Form. The “Participation Information Sheet for Teachers” and “Consent Form for Participating Teachers” are attached in Appendix II, and profiles of the four teachers are summarized in Table 4.3 (A more detailed profile of each participant is given in the data analysis chapters).

Table 4.3 Profiles of the participating teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliated School</th>
<th>Teaching Grade</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Family background</th>
<th>Relation to Beijing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>School A</td>
<td>Senior 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>School A</td>
<td>Senior 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>non-native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao</td>
<td>School B</td>
<td>Senior 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>non-native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>School B</td>
<td>Senior 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37-year-old Jing had been working at School A for 14 years by the time he participated in this study. He grew up in a rural district of Beijing and started learning English at a local secondary school, where he developed a love for this foreign language. His achievements in this subject won him a place at a teachers’ college located in an urban district of Beijing. Naturally, he entered the teaching profession upon graduation and became an EFL teacher at School A. Unsatisfied with the pre-service teacher education offered by that college, he voluntarily undertook some postgraduate courses in Applied Linguistics in his spare time. He has had some government-funded, short-term overseas experiences. In 2005, he travelled to Japan for a few days to act as an interpreter for a visiting group. In 2007, he took part in a 20-day teacher training programme at Boston University. Initially, Jing taught in junior grades, but later he was transferred to the senior section.

A contemporary of Jing, Yun is similar to him in that she settled down at School A as an EFL teacher upon the completion of her tertiary education at a prestigious university based in an urban district of Beijing. Before coming to the capital, Yun lived in a city of a south-western province and started learning English from junior grade one. Although she did well in English exams, she was not fond of this subject. Unlike Jing, Yun did not receive any formal pre-service training from her university, which is common for majors related to science and
technology. To make up for her lack of professional knowledge, she signed up for an 18-month part-time postgraduate programme in Applied Linguistics, and seized every chance for in-service training available. In 2007, she went to Boston for a 20-day teacher training programme, in the same group as Jing. As well as academic trips, Yun has also been on a couple of overseas trips with her family. She has been teaching senior grades throughout her teaching career. At the time when she participated in this study, she was the head of the Teaching and Research Section of School A and was in charge of employing foreign teachers for the school.

52-year-old Yao is the most experienced of all and the only one whose teaching experience is not exclusively Beijing-based. He received basic education in an underdeveloped area of a neighbouring province. Shortly after his talent in English was discovered in a province-wide English speaking contest, he was given a place to study at a key senior secondary school in the provincial capital. From there he went on to major in English at a local university. Upon graduation, he chose to become a secondary school teacher because he felt it was the best way to express his gratitude to the teachers who had changed his life. After over twenty years’ teaching with honours, he moved to Beijing for family reasons and continued to work as an English teacher at School B.

Ping is a Beijing native of rural background, like Jing. She had always aspired to be a teacher when she was young, and she chose to teach English simply because English happened to be one of her best subjects. She completed her three-year tertiary education at a local teachers’ college and started her teaching career at a secondary school in a mountainous area. Nine years later, she was transferred to School B. As part of her in-service training, Ping had enrolled in a part-time postgraduate programme. She had also attended a number of local training sessions. She had never gone abroad for travelling or training purposes.

4.3 Data collection

The data-collection process involves two phases of field research at School A and School B respectively, each lasting two months. Methods employed to generate data include (1) impressionistic observation which occurs during the on-site visits I paid to participating
schools, (2) interviews with teachers on both focused and unfocused topics, and (3) classroom observation.

Interestingly, these commonly used methods in the field of social science make a well-matched analogy to the four diagnostic methods (namely wàng, wén, wèn, and qiē) adopted by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM in short henceforth), in which “the concept of Yin-Yang is probably the single and most important and distinctive theory” (Maciocia, 2005: 3). In practising wàng （望）, a TCM practitioner uses his visual sense to gather information about the patient’s outlook on illness. By means of wén （闻）, he uses his ears and nose to detect abnormal sound or smell. To wèn （问） is to get verbal information by asking questions, and to qiē （切） is to feel the patient’s pulse for an up-close examination. These four methods constitute a holistic and contextualized approach in which TCM practitioners collect symptom-related information in order to make a pertinent diagnosis of threats to Yin-Yang balance and to suggest treatment to restore the balance.

The TCM diagnosing process, which utilizes a combination of “wàng-wén-wèn-qiē” devices to capture the most relevant information needed to find health problems, provides a good analogy for my field-work endeavours in search of useful data for research inquiries. For example, wàng and wén were carried out in field visits during which I entered the institutional setting where teachers fulfilled their teaching responsibilities and observed, in a casual way, teachers’ incidental behaviours during their non-teaching hours. Wèn was done by means of a series of interviews, from which I collected verbal data from teachers in the form of both elicited speech (in response to structured questions) and free speech (in response to open questions). Finally, qiē took place in classroom observation sessions, where I had a chance to “feel” the English class, gathering both verbal and non-verbal data of how teachers planned and managed their teaching in cooperation with students to achieve teaching goals.

4.3.1 Field visits (practice of wàng and wén)

In the Chinese basic education system, an academic year consists of two semesters with each lasting about twenty weeks. Semester one, which is also called Autumn Semester, usually begins in September and ends in January, followed by a winter vacation in which the Spring Festival falls. Semester Two, also named Spring Semester, lasts from end of February or
early March until July, followed by a long summer vacation. I conducted two phases of field research in semester one and semester two at two schools respectively. Field-work at School A was carried out in the first half of semester one and lasted twelve weeks from September to November (2009), while on-site research at School B occurred in the first half of semester two with a shorter time span of six weeks from February to April (2010).

Upon gaining entry to School A, I initiated contact with Yun, whom I had got to know at a local conference. She introduced me as an independent researcher to the headmaster, who quickly agreed to my research plan and granted me unlimited access to the interior of the site. The school is on a closed site with the entrance guarded by security personnel. The gate was open only at the opening hour in the morning, lunch hour, and the closing hour in the afternoon. At other times, the gate was closed and entry was restricted. Yun helped me gain a multiple-entry privilege so that I could visit the school on a daily basis. For this reason, my visits to School A were mainly target-oriented, which means I visited it by prior arrangement and left as soon as the data-collecting goals of the day were accomplished. Sometimes I paid a visit in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, but rarely for a whole day. Apart from the planned observation, I was also given permission to observe public demonstration classes given by non-participating teachers and was sometimes invited to join the post-demo discussion. Before withdrawing from the site, I was invited to give one of these demo classes to a class of students who were participants in my observation. From observing to being observed, this demo experience helped me gain an emic perspective on what I had observed.

Field work at School B was implemented in a different way. My initial contact with the headmaster was enabled by a friend who happened to be socially connected with him. Consent was readily given for the entry to the site and on-campus accommodation was kindly offered. I was put in a single room in a guest house, which was located between the teaching building and the students’ dorm. On one side was the playground and on the other was the teachers’ canteen. By being immersed in this boarding school, I was able to observe the setting to a fuller extent. Whereas I had performed a researcher’s role in School A, I introduced myself as a voluntary teacher in School B. This decision was made in response to the reluctance or worries expressed by the teachers. To make my presence less unwanted, I volunteered to take over the teaching workload of one class in senior grade one and

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25 It is a local policy that, in every semester, all teachers who are under 45 years old must demonstrate how they teach their subject to students. The demo classes are open to all other teachers and school administrators. As a routine of reflective practice, a post-demo discussion is held immediately after the demo class for feedback from observers.
encouraged teachers to observe my lessons. I started making closer contact with them after a week or two, when they had become more accustomed to my role as a peer teacher, rather than a disturbing researcher. I stayed longer in classroom, attended group meetings in collective preparation for new lessons, joined the teachers in their lunch time discussions, and exchanged information about students’ problems and progress. With this enriched experience of a teacher’s life during both teaching and non-teaching hours in various settings, I deepened the *emic* perspective of my understanding and gained an insider’s view on teachers’ words and actions.

To use a metaphor, my stay at School A was grounded on a “multiple-entry visiting permit”, whereas a “temporary resident permit” was granted for my stay at School B. Data collected in my visits are mainly in the form of filed notes, which recount what I saw and heard when situated in the setting. In principle, field notes should be taken in as faithful and detailed a way as possible to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Clandinin et al., 2007). However, it is unavoidable for the researcher’s subjectivity to become activated in the process of absorbing useful information from the surrounding context. For one thing, field notes only provide a partial record of on-going events because many more “notes” will be taken in the mind without making their way into written language. For another, due to the limited capacity of human attention, field notes are inevitably selective with preference given to the researcher’s primary interest. Also, field notes are largely inferential as the researcher weaves personal interpretation into how events are recorded. Although field notes provide valuable data, they must be supplemented and triangulated by other means in which different senses are engaged, such as inquiry and observation.

### 4.3.2 Interviews (practice of wèn)

Commonly defined as a conversation between two or more people to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses (Kvale, 1996: 11), interview is often regarded as a flexible and powerful tool which allows for multi-sensory channels to be used in data collection (Cohen & Morrison, 2007), and lies at the heart of many social studies (Denzin, 1989). By providing access to what is inside a person’s head, interview elicits what a person knows, feels, or thinks (Tuckman, 1972) with the assumption that “the perspective of others
is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2001: 341). However, some scholars point out that the interviewer-interviewee relationship is socioculturally bound in issues like power inequality and willingness to reveal oneself (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Stacey, 1996). Such issues are especially pertinent when respondents are from a culture where collectivism is more valued than individualism. According to Viruru and Cannella (2006), the notion of two individuals sitting down and talking things over reflects Western practices and the encouragement of self-disclosure in the interview process has essentially “silenced” the collective perspectives of the person interviewed. They also argue against the Western views of language as the only legitimate form of data and call for recognition of the significance of non-verbal evidence. For instance, silence in the discourse of qualitative interviews is generally perceived in the West as a symbol of passivity, powerlessness or a lack of something, but it can be a way of knowing, a strategic defence or a form of avoidance in Oriental contexts (p. 184).

Coming from a Chinese background, I subscribe to this critical view of interview. However, this does not mean a total disregard of interview data; rather, the elicited responses will mainly function as supplementary or confirmatory data in combination with observation data. A number of measures were taken to facilitate the production of interview data and to improve their credibility. To begin with, all the interviews were conducted in the Chinese language so that teachers would understand the questions better and could speak with more ease. Caution was also taken to make sure important questions were not asked at moments when anxiety or reluctance was sensed on the teacher’s side. Another measure was to repeat important questions in two separate interviews, one at the beginning and the other at the end, so that the congruence of the responses could be checked. Moreover, some topic questions were addressed both in structured interviews with planned questions and casual interviews with spontaneous questions. By doing so, teachers’ responses in different situations could be compared for consistency across interviews or with observation data.

The interview process, as summarized in Table 4.4, was similar in the cases of all four participating teachers. They all received an interview at the initial stage, a few casual interviews during the weeks of study, and a final interview before my withdrawal from the site. The initial interview and the final interview each took between about one and one and a half hours on average. Casual interviews were briefer, lasting between about fifteen and thirty minutes each. Generally speaking, the interview process went more smoothly at School A
than at School B. Except Ping, the other three teachers all appeared to be outspoken and comfortable with self-disclosure. As Ping expressed her uneasiness with the interview setting, I skipped the post-observation interviews in her case until the final week. The reason for fewer casual interviews in Yao’s case is that he joined this study later than Ping and was away for a week at a teaching competition event.

Table 4.4 A summary of the interview procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jing</th>
<th>Yun</th>
<th>Yao</th>
<th>Ping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial interview</td>
<td>09/09/09</td>
<td>09/09/09</td>
<td>11/03/10</td>
<td>04/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual interview 1</td>
<td>18/09/09</td>
<td>18/09/09</td>
<td>15/03/10</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual interview 2</td>
<td>25/09/09</td>
<td>25/09/09</td>
<td>17/03/10</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual interview 3</td>
<td>13/10/09</td>
<td>15/10/09</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual interview 4</td>
<td>20/10/09</td>
<td>23/10/09</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual interview 5</td>
<td>29/10/09</td>
<td>30/10/09</td>
<td>23/03/10</td>
<td>29/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final interview</td>
<td>23/11/09</td>
<td>24/11/09</td>
<td>01/04/10</td>
<td>02/04/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all the interviews took place in a quiet, small office room, where the teachers felt familiar and comfortable. The initial interview was conducted with the purpose of getting to know the teachers better and eliciting their stated beliefs about English both as a communicative tool and a school subject. It was semi-structured with three groups of questions: (1) teachers’ personal experience related to EFL learning and teaching, (2) their perceptions of English as a communicative tool, and (3) their perceptions of English as a curricular subject. The interviews did not strictly follow the interview guide (see Appendix III); not all questions were covered in all cases and new questions were added when an interesting theme occurred in the talk.

The final interview consisted of two parts. The first was a two-item survey (see Appendix IV). In the first item, the teachers were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how Chinese or how international they perceived their local context, their teaching style, their teaching subject (English), their students and themselves. The second item asked the difficulty level teachers had perceived in various aspects of their teaching. While making decisions on the scale,
teachers were also asked to explain their decisions. The second part was semi-structured with questions about the relationship between EFL teaching beliefs and EFL teaching practices.

The reason for combining a survey with the interview was two-fold. Firstly, the survey was meant to serve as an easier starter for teachers to talk about questions addressing abstract themes, such as language, curriculum, and context. It was a successful attempt in this sense, as teachers seemed quite interested in this form of inquiry and they looked more relaxed in discussion. For another, the quantified responses of the first question, which were given on a scale from Yin-dominance (the Chinese end) to Yang-dominance (the international end), provided a more objective basis for judgements on the Yin-Yang property of the local EFL context and the degree of contextual divergence within and across specific settings. The ordinal responses given to the second question suggested the varied degree of hardship such contextual divergence had created among individual teachers in specific contexts.

Casual interviews were often conducted after an in-class observation with questions directly related to teachers’ classroom teaching. The main purpose of these post-observation talks was to collect some practice-oriented belief data and to look for evidence of the consistency or inconsistency between what they thought should be done and what they actually did.

4.3.3 Classroom observation (practice of qiē)

Observation is a core method in teacher education studies, and is often used in combination with other methods, such as interviews and questionnaires. It has several unique strengths. First, this method has strong ecological validity and a high degree of contextual sensitivity. The researcher is the research instrument and uses immediate awareness or direct cognition as a principal mode of data collection. Secondly, observation provides a reality check, as what people do may differ from what they say. Thirdly, observation helps discover things that participants might not freely express in other ways (for example, an interview, a questionnaire, or a test). Finally, observation enables the researcher to look afresh at everyday behaviours that otherwise might be taken for granted or go unnoticed (Cooper & Schindler, 2001; Esterberg, 2002; Moyles, 2002; Robson, 2003). However, Pring (2000) correctly points out that observations are “filtered” through the understanding, preferences and beliefs of the observer, and that observations, in many cases, do not take into account the meanings and motives of those who are observed.
This potential bias and misinterpretation was reduced, if not totally resolved, in this study. Coming from the same cultural background as the participating teachers, I was able to make more contextually appropriate interpretations of their practices. In addition, I was familiar with the local setting because I had had similar experience of learning and teaching English at secondary schools. Moreover, the professional development that I had undergone was very similar to what the teachers had experienced. For example, we were all familiar with traditional teaching methods as well as some modern pedagogical theories, and we all believed in the importance of test scores as we shared the experience of being admitted to a tertiary institute because of successful performance in tests.

Observation is especially valued in the Chinese culture. According to Cheng-Zhongying (2004), observing and feeling are the two major means of primitive epistemology in ancient China. Observation is not just a tool for collecting data; more importantly, it is a philosophical stance to understand social reality. In this study, different types of observation were employed, with general field-observation supplemented by up-close classroom-observation. Due to the different types of “permits” I was granted for my visits to each research site, the observation schedules at the two schools were somewhat different. Table 4.5 summarizes the observation procedure in the four cases of teachers.

Table 4.5 The summary of observation procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jing (School A)</th>
<th>Yun (School A)</th>
<th>Yao (School B)</th>
<th>Ping (School B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observation 1</td>
<td>18/08/09</td>
<td>18/09/09</td>
<td>04/03/10</td>
<td>03/03/10 (Demo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 2</td>
<td>25/09/09</td>
<td>25/09/09</td>
<td>11/03/10</td>
<td>04/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 3</td>
<td>13/10/09</td>
<td>29/09/09</td>
<td>12/03/10</td>
<td>10/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 4</td>
<td>14/10/09</td>
<td>15/10/09</td>
<td>15/03/10</td>
<td>12/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 5</td>
<td>20/10/09</td>
<td>19/10/09</td>
<td>16/03/10</td>
<td>25/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 6</td>
<td>29/10/09</td>
<td>23/10/09</td>
<td>17/03/10</td>
<td>26/03/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 7</td>
<td>18/11/09 (Demo)</td>
<td>29/10/09</td>
<td>23/03/10</td>
<td>29/03/10 (Demo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 8</td>
<td>30/10/09</td>
<td>24/03/10</td>
<td>02/04/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 9</td>
<td>20/11/09 (Demo)</td>
<td>25/03/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>31/03/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>01/04/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In total, I observed thirty-five lessons, twenty-one of which were recorded. Although my stay at School A was twice as long as my stay at School B, I observed fewer lessons at School A than at School B. Also, there were fewer cases of continuous observation at School A. Among the four teachers, Jing and Ping were less willing to be observed and therefore there were fewer observed classes in their cases. The entries marked as “demo” were public classes open to the whole school and were to be evaluated by the audience, and so I was not the only observer in these “demo” classes. There were no “demo” classes in Yao’s case because he was exempted from this “demo” policy which applied to teachers below forty-five years old.

4.4 Coding scheme

Borg (2006) is correct in pointing out that research findings are the product of the manner in which data are elicited and how they are used in the process of analysis. As beliefs are defined in this study as “consciously or unconsciously held propositions which are shaped by social contexts and provide a basis for action”, behavioural data were regarded as the primary source of beliefs in efforts to capture ‘real’ ones most relevant to the research inquiry. The data gathered from the field work were processed with a coding scheme that provided an operational basis for the identification and extraction of beliefs to be analysed. More specifically, observation data and interview data were synthesized in a supplementary and interactive way. Observation opened a channel to contemporary contexts which were synchronous with on-going action, while interview provided access to old-time (experienced) contexts or future-time (imagined) contexts, both of which would have an asynchronous impact on current practices.

With a primary focus on what teachers actually do in the classroom, the coding scheme attempts to identify what teachers really believe by means of examining two types of behavioural data: (1) those captured through naturalistic observation of the present; and (2) those retrieved through retrospective account of the past. It recognizes behavioural data as a valid source of real beliefs, with or without supporting evidence from verbal data. It also takes into account verbal data which are congruent with behavioural data. Meanwhile, verbal data which lack supporting evidence from behavioural data are excluded from the analysis. For instance, judgemental statements (i.e. how teaching should be done or should have been
done) as well as prospective imagination of the future (i.e. how teaching will be done) are considered ‘invalid’ or ‘unsupported’ data. Although it is possible to misjudge some ‘unsupported’ verbal data, which may be valid provided the observation goes on long enough or is sufficiently intensive, I have decided to exclude them for the time being for the purpose of this study.

As a product of constant adjustment throughout data analysis, the coding scheme eventually highlights four categories of data source on the basis of action-speech congruence (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Four categories of action-speech congruence in data coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Manifest Congruence</td>
<td>manifested practice + positive statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Latent Congruence</td>
<td>avoided practice + negative statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Subconscious Congruence</td>
<td>manifested practice + absent statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Embedded Congruence</td>
<td>recalled practice + positive statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a positive belief is not only expressed by the teacher in his/her interviews but also observed in his/her classroom practices, it falls into the category of Manifest Congruence (MC). Examples of beliefs in this category can be found in all four cases. Although with varied degrees of conviction, the belief that “It’s important to teach English to prepare students for exams” was clearly articulated in interviews by Jing, Yun and Ping. Such test-oriented teaching was also recorded in the classroom observation of all the three teachers. Yao, on the other hand, repeatedly expressed in his interviews the belief that “It’s important to relate the content of EFL teaching to students’ real life”, and this belief was consistently manifested in his efforts to engage students in real-life topics in classroom teaching.

If a negative belief is expressed by the teacher in his/her interviews and is also supported by his/her intentional avoidance of such practices, it is categorized as Latent Congruence (LC). For instance, Yao’s interview data provided evidence of his opposition to the language-as-object view, which turned out to be highly congruent with the absence of knowledge-transmission pedagogy in his observation data. In contrast, Ping articulated her opposition to the language-as-tool view, which was manifested in the absence of communicative-based
teaching in her observation data. Both MC and LC include espoused beliefs that are manifested in practices, but MC beliefs are in positive statements while LC beliefs are in negative statements. For LC beliefs, absence of action-based evidence serves as evidence of the presence of beliefs that are consciously opposed to certain practices.

In circumstances where teachers’ pedagogical behaviour is observed with the absence of interview data, it is assumed that, behind the action, there must be the presence of a driving belief which may exist beyond their consciousness. Such inferred beliefs are therefore categorized as **Subconscious Congruence** (SC). For example, more than once Jing was observed staying in the classroom after the class was over, with students queuing in front of him and reciting a text one by one. If the recitation went well, Jing would nod and the student would leave with relief. Although this recitation practice was not mentioned in Jing’s interviews, it was clear that this action was driven by the belief that “English learning involves rote-learning and recitation.” Another example occurs in Ping’s case. While she said very little about her opinions on the use of Chinese in classroom teaching, a large part of her instruction was delivered in Chinese. It is inferred that she believes in making use of L1 in EFL teaching.

Finally, there are instances of interview episodes in which teachers recall how they practised teaching at a particular moment in the past. This is considered as a special case of action-speech congruence in that manifested practices are embedded in verbal evidence. Categorized as **Embedded Congruence** (EC), beliefs of this type are often extractable from narrative accounts of past events, especially those expressed with positive feelings or deep impressions. For instance, both Jing and Yun had attended a 20-day teacher development programme in Boston in the United States, which she had first-hand experience of using English in an English-speaking environment. When talking about this experience, both Jing and Yun were more convinced in their belief that “English is a communicative tool.” Meanwhile, they both became more contextually conscious in terms of pedagogical appropriateness, with the stated belief that “EFL pedagogy should not be a copy of ESL pedagogy.”

The coding scheme, based on four categories of belief-practice congruence, was employed in the data-identification stage as well as in the data-reduction stage. For each data set, belief propositions were marked as valid when some kind of congruence was spotted. Then, propositions that shared a similar theme were grouped into a more general belief. Eventually,
a small number of belief statements emerged as representatives of each participant’s beliefs about English, and these are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Summary of four teachers’ beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A (urban)</td>
<td>Jing</td>
<td>English should be taught with a focus on accuracy.</td>
<td>SC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.</td>
<td>MC, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary teaching is of the most importance.</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom English should have relevance to real-life English.</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should be appropriate to the EFL context.</td>
<td>MC, EC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yun</td>
<td>English is a rule-based linguistic system.</td>
<td>SC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching is about teacher-student interaction.</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School English should be relevant to students’ real life.</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching should be contextually appropriate.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B (rural)</td>
<td>Yao</td>
<td>English should be learned by use and for use.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English should be used with relevance to students’ real life.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English should be made a source of enjoyment.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should be cognitively challenging.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ping</td>
<td>English is a linguistic system.</td>
<td>MC, LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching should make use of L1.</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching is test-oriented.</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFL teaching should cater for the interest of the majority.</td>
<td>LC, EC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table, a large number of identified beliefs come from the MC category, which means they are supported by both verbal and behavioural data. It is also noted that most of the identified beliefs do not come from MC alone; they are often observed in multiple categories, which means they are repeatedly and yet differently manifested in practices. For instance, if a belief is identified in both MC and EC categories, it can be assumed that it is held with a strong degree of explicit consciousness enhanced by positive experience. A belief that repeatedly emerges in both MC and SC categories is likely to be
held both consciously and subconsciously. A possible interpretation for this combination is that this belief is explicitly held by the teacher, but not espoused as strongly as it is actually held. It may indicate some sort of negative reflection on the belief, but not strong enough for an overwhelming change to happen. Positive reflection is likely to occur in the combination of MC and LC, where a belief is held with clear boundaries of what to do and what not to do. It usually involves intentional choice of position. It is interesting to note that LC and SC do not co-occur in a single belief, probably because a belief will become explicit once it undergoes some kind of reflection. There are a few beliefs occurring in more than two categories, as in the case of MC + LC + EC, which possibly indicates they are the most important beliefs of all, or the core of the core. They are so strong that they might have become a natural, indispensable part of the holder’s mind.

The beliefs listed in the table will be further discussed in the four data analysis chapters that follow. Since the three research questions asked in the Introduction chapter essentially inquire about belief propositions, belief-practice congruence and a Yin-Yang understanding of beliefs, all four chapters will begin with a description of salient beliefs identified in each case, and end with a discussion of the Yin-Yang tensions displayed in those beliefs within the eight-trigram framework. Interpretation of emergent patterns from a cross-case comparison will be given in the Discussion chapter.
5. Jing’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

In my view, the English language is not just a tool with which people can communicate. More importantly, it is also a working tool in my teaching role, with which I make money to support my family.\(^26\) (Jing: 1-1-1\(^27\))

5.1 Jing’s profile

Jing had been working at School A for 14 years by the time he participated in this study. He had 11 years’ experience in teaching English to junior secondary students and only 3 years’ teaching experience of senior secondary English. He was a Beijing native, with his childhood and adolescence spent in rural areas and his adulthood spent in urban areas. He moved to the metropolitan centre of Beijing to receive a tertiary education, which enabled him to settle down as an English teacher. His change of identity from a rural boy of a low-income family to an urban resident with a secure job in a respectable profession is typical of Chinese cultural success stories, in which people of lower social status succeeded in moving upward to a higher status through academic achievements.

Like others of his generation, Jing did not start learning English until his enrolment in a local junior secondary school. He immediately became fascinated by the “beautiful pronunciation” of this foreign language (Jing: 1-1-6). His fondness for English was strengthened by his adoration of his English teachers, who had a great impact on his “aspiration and world views” (Jing: 1-1-4). Strictly following his teachers’ instruction, he learned English voluntarily and diligently. English became his best subject, and his outstanding performance in this subject earned him a place at a teachers’ college as an English major through the \textit{Baosong}\(^28\) system, which exempted him from taking the competitive national matriculation test.

\(^{26}\) Interview quotes in this thesis are originally in Chinese and translated into English by the researcher.

\(^{27}\) When referring to interview data, I use three numbers to indicate the source. The first number refers to the number of the interview the teacher receives; the second number refers to the page number of the transcript of that interview; and the third number refers to the paragraph number of that quote on that page. Therefore, (Jing: 1-1-1) means Jing’s interview data quoted from the first paragraph of the first page of his first interview.

\(^{28}\) Parallel to the score-based selection, the \textit{Baosong} system allows some tertiary institutes to offer places to a very small number of secondary graduates, usually those who are high-achieving students or have particular talents, before the national matriculation test takes place.
During his four years of tertiary education as a pre-service English teacher, Jing continued learning English with great passion. Two major tasks in his learning at advanced level, as he recalled, included memorizing advanced words in vocabulary books and practising speaking in English for communicative purposes. He felt his English proficiency was at the highest level when he was in the third year of tertiary schooling, compared to other times in his life (Jing: 7-11-6). In the final year, some pedagogic courses were offered in this programme to prepare student teachers for their future careers; however, Jing did not find them very helpful because they were taught as something “detached from real practices” (Jing: 7-7-1). To meet the challenges of his initial teaching, he readily resorted to personal memories and his own experiences of secondary schooling.

In the first few years of his career, Jing continued to be a keen learner of English, looking for every possible opportunity to study on his own in his spare time. However, his passion was gradually worn out due to growing family responsibilities and excessive workload (Jing: 1-3-2). His learning became more incidental as he picked up English words only when he came across them in life as well as in teaching (Jing: 1-2-4). He also felt his ability to speak in English gradually weakened over the years:

Since I have started teaching English at this school, I have felt my spoken English has become more and more confined. Most of the time, I speak to junior secondary students. Very rarely will I need to use advanced words. The fewer the opportunities to use the language, the weaker my English has become. It seems inevitable, so I must continue learning. (Jing: 7-11-5)

With a passion for learning, Jing actively took part in development programmes offered by the local educational committee that aimed to update in-service teachers with trendy theories and methodology. Feeling that he was like a student again, Jing enjoyed the lectures and workshops given by invited foreign experts, and cherished the experience of taking part in interesting communicative tasks.

In addition, Jing had some “eye-widening” and “enjoyable” overseas travelling experiences. In 2005, he visited Japan on an educational tour, and was impressed by the emphasis on traditional culture (e.g. calligraphy) in their curriculum (Jing: 7-2-3). In 2007, together with Yun and other teachers, he went to the United States to participate in a 20-day summer programme, which was based in Boston University. Immersing himself in the all-English environment, Jing experienced authentic communication with native-speakers and observed a
totally different approach to English language teaching. The overseas experience made him reflect on his own understanding of English as a contextualized product and of EFL pedagogy as a contextualized practice.

5.2 Jing’s core beliefs about English

As his data suggested, Jing’s beliefs about English are derived from multiple perspectives. As an English learner brought up in a relatively closed setting, Jing benefited from the traditional test-oriented education in that his academic achievements won him a place in a tertiary institute, which entitled him to a secure job after graduation. As an English user situated in an international city, he perceived the growing need for using English for communicative purposes with a stronger awareness of globalization. As an English teacher residing at an urban school, he saw English as a working tool with which he made a living and supported his family. Both the learner perspective and the user perspective have relevance, in a complex manner, to his understanding and practices of EFL teaching. Five core beliefs have been identified and are elaborated as follows (A summary of Jing’s beliefs and their data codes is available in Table 4.7 and Table 5.1).

5.2.1 English should be taught with a focus on accuracy

The belief regarding linguistic accuracy was identified in data of Subconscious Congruence, the recognized agreement between an unspoken belief and its behavioural manifestation, and Embedded Congruence, which recognizes instances of belief-practice agreement in episodic accounts. As a successful learner within a curriculum where the subject content of English was mainly defined as linguistic knowledge, Jing readily subscribed to the belief that English teaching should lay an emphasis on the accuracy of the linguistic form, although he did not explicitly espouse this in his interviews. Held subconsciously and yet powerfully, this belief had its root in the form-focused pedagogy that he had experienced in his early EFL learning. He recalled, with positive memories, being taught by his English teacher with accuracy-favouring methods, such as repetition, imitation, and translation. Voluntarily, he ‘copied’ these methods in his own teaching. For example, I observed more than once that, after the
class was over and during the break, Jing would stay in the classroom for a few minutes if he was stopped by students, who said “Teacher, I’m ready to recite.” Then they would stand in a queue in front of him, reciting a text one by one. If the recitation went well, Jing would nod and the student would leave with relief.

Another example of accuracy-oriented teaching was captured in a class where Jing started a new unit with the theme of “Celebration” (Jing: O-3). At first, he asked students to brainstorm the occasions of celebration. Then he showed ten pictures of celebration occasions in both Chinese and English culture and asked students to describe those occasions with words related to the theme. Once the students were warmed up with these celebration occasions, Jing played a short audio file which had five situated utterances, each indicating one particular occasion. After briefly checking the answers, Jing shifted the pedagogic focus to linguistic knowledge, as shown in Excerpt 1-1 below:

**Excerpt 1-1**

1. T: Now, class, **read after me**. Graduation.
2. Ss: *(in chorus)* Graduation.
3. T: A birthday.
4. Ss: *(in chorus)* A birthday.
5. T: Christmas.
7. T: Passing an exam.
8. Ss: *(in chorus)* Passing an exam.
10. Ss: *(in chorus)* Winning a scholarship.
15. T: The New Year.
16. Ss: *(in chorus)* The New Year.
17. T: A wedding.
20. Ss: *(in chorus)* Halloween.
22. Ss: *(in chorus)* The Dragon Boat Festival.
23. T: The Dragon Boat Festival.
24. Ss: *(in chorus)* The Dragon Boat Festival.
25. T: So much for the exercise. Now, let’s come to **Language points. Celebration. Hold a celebration. In celebration of**. This is the sentence: **We will hold a celebration**
in celebration of his return from the space. What does it mean?

Ss: 我们将要举办一个庆祝会，来庆祝他从太空归来。（We will hold a celebration in celebration of his return from the space.）

T: 我们将要举办一个庆祝会，来庆祝他从太空归来。（We will hold a celebration in celebration of his return from the space.）Celebrate is a verb. OK? They will hold a party to celebrate their victory. Next one: invitation. A letter of invitation. Also we can say the invitation letter. Next one, send out invitations. 发请帖（send out invitations）. He made a refusal of her invitation. Have the invitations gone out yet? I am only too glad to accept your kind invitation. Next one: graduation. After graduation. 毕业后我想去北京大学学习法律（I would like to study law at Beijing University after graduation.）How to translate this sentence?

T: I would like to study law at Beijing University after graduation. Graduate from...It means ‘to leave a certain school’. 毕业于（graduate from）. He graduated from Cambridge University. （He graduated from the University of Cambridge.）

Ss: He graduated from Cambridge University.

T: He graduated from Cambridge University. OK.

By means of a reading aloud activity signalled by the instruction “read after me” (Line 1), Jing drew students’ attention from the communicative meaning to the linguistic form. He himself took the lead in reading aloud some key phrases that appeared in the speaking activity (see Lines 1-24). This practice, as Jing revealed in the interview, was ‘copied’ from his favourite teacher:

My teacher consistently asked us to read aloud, and he himself often led the chorus in class. That is what I am doing to my students too. I lead my students to read aloud. Other teachers may let the recorder lead the reading, or ask a student representative to take the lead. They keep their mouths shut. I am not like them. I insist on taking the lead myself and read aloud together with my students. (Jing: 1-3-2)

This reading-aloud practice was driven by a behaviouristic belief that emphasized the accuracy of linguistic forms as well as pedagogic acts of imitation and repetition. It seemed to be held with great psychological strength and stored with conscious awareness, because it was associated with positive emotions, such as admiration and trust for his teacher, and had proved effective in his own learning experience.

The second half of the selected episode, when Jing dealt with “Language points”, suggested a structural understanding of English as a foreign language. Jing highlighted three nouns, namely celebration, invitation and graduation. He presented each word along with some phrases and asked students to translate sentences. A good mastery of these words, as he
believed, could be manifested in accurate translation either from English to Chinese (see Lines 26-30) or from Chinese to English (see Lines 36-37 and 41-42).

Jing’s strong belief in form-focused teaching was also evident in his attitudes towards other teachers. When asked what would be his ideal way of teaching, Jing expressed his admiration for those who could transmit linguistic knowledge of English efficiently and effectively. One colleague whom Jing admired was “very organized with the definition and collocation of new words in each unit” (Jing: 3-4-3). He also recalled how he was inspired by one senior colleague who excelled in traditional transmission-model pedagogy:

_Not long ago, I observed an English class taught by Mr Zheng, who had many years’ experience. I admired him for his good command of the English language, especially grammar. His teaching style was very traditional and may not fit the so-called modern methodology; he hardly set aside any class time for communicative activities. Most of the time, he was standing in the front talking to his students. However, his teaching was not boring at all because he explained language points far better than others. It was an enjoyable experience to listen to his talk (Jing: 1-3-3)_

_5.2.2 EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system._

Having benefited from a test-oriented curriculum himself, Jing readily subscribed to the view that teaching should prepare students for tests. Evidence of this belief mainly came from data of Manifest Congruence, which results from a recognizable agreement between his interview data and observation data. Sometimes, when Jing consciously tried to implement pedagogy with some communicativeness, the belief in “teaching for tests” was found being practised without being explicitly stated, which places it in the category of Subconscious Congruence.

In the circumstances where the testing system was an important mechanism for the selection of candidates for better educational opportunities, Jing believed it was teachers’ natural responsibility to help students succeed in the competitions they were destined to go through. He also felt it was reasonable for teachers to be evaluated according to students’ performance on tests. His positive attitude towards the test-oriented system was expressed in the quote below:
Exams are important to the students, because the scores can serve as an indicator of how well they have done in their study. Exam scores are also important to us teachers, because they also indicate how well we teach. (Jing: 6-2-3)

Placing an emphasis on the linguistic knowledge presented in the textbook, as mentioned in the previous section, was an important aspect of his concern for testing purposes. Another important aspect of his test-oriented pedagogy was evident in the large amount of time he spent explaining language-study exercises or test papers. Students were tested on a regular monthly basis, usually upon the completion of the teaching of a unit, a module or the entire textbook. Therefore, every now and then, Jing would allocate a large proportion of class time to answer-checking.

On one occasion, Jing was observed going over a test which his students had recently taken upon the completion of teaching of Unit 2 (Jing: O-329). This test was obviously knowledge-oriented, as it consisted of four parts: (1) Synonyms; (2) Translation of phrases; (3) Grammar; and (4) Summarizing a passage. Arranged in order of linguistic complexity, these four parts checked students’ mastery of words and phrases at lexical level, grammar at syntactic level, and texts at discourse level. Jing spent more time on “Synonyms” and “Grammar”, probably because these two parts required answers of a higher degree of accuracy and were more applicable to testing skills.

Excerpt 1-2 demonstrated how Jing checked answers in “Synonyms”. After having elicited the correct answer from students for the first item, he did not move on to the next item right away. Instead, he wanted to know whether the students knew the reasons for the choice out of three synonyms. Even though students’ reply suggested they were test-wise on this item, Jing still felt the need to provide an explicit explanation and accentuated the exclusiveness of the correct answer (see Line 8). In the second item, where there were fewer syntactical constraints, Jing encouraged students to produce more than one answer and then he provided confirmative feedback to their production (see Line 12).

Although the two synonym-based items were both short in terms of the discourse length, it was noted that Item One had received more attention from Jing than Item Two. A possible reason might be that Item One was more likely to appear in standard tests featuring multiple

29 The code “Jing: O-3” means the quoted data are taken from the third of Jing’s observed lessons.
choice items with only one correct answer, whereas Item Two was more likely to occur in
classroom teaching where multiplicity of correct answers was more common and acceptable.

Excerpt 1-2

1 T: OK, the first part, Synonyms. No.1. She is a …
2 Ss: Brilliant.
3 T: (writing “brilliant” on the blackboard). She is a brilliant swimmer. Can we say excellent
or outstanding? (writing “excellent” and “outstanding” under “brilliant”) Can we use
these two words? Can we?
4 Ss: No.
5 T: Why not? We should use an excellent or an outstanding swimmer. OK? So a brilliant
swimmer. So, this one is correct. OK? No. 2. His grandmother is…
6 Ss: Awful.
7 T: Awful. Or?
8 Ss: Terrible.
9 T: Terrible. OK, both are correct.

Excerpt 1-3, with grammar teaching in focus, provided additional evidence of Jing’s
emphasis on an accurate understanding of linguistic form and his endeavour to develop
students’ ability in tests. Given that the “Grammar” part of this test was centred on tenses and
aspects, Jing raised students’ awareness of the correspondence between time phrases and
tense choices. In the first item (see Lines 3-6), Jing realized that students had not completely
mastered the grammatical correspondence between a future-tense main clause and a present-
tense conditional clause, so he provided an answer in the present perfect tense in addition to
students’ answer in the simple present tense, and assured them that both were grammatically
correct. When explaining Item Two and Item Three, Jing asked students to pay attention to
the time phrases, such as ‘for ages’ and ‘just now’, which required a particular tense or aspect.
Jing’s teaching of this test-taking tip seemed to be well achieved. As can be seen in Lines 17-
19, students had acquired the correspondence so well that they even pointed out Jing’s slip of
tongue, even though they did not know the grammatical terminology about tenses and aspects.

Excerpt 1-3

1 T: OK, the first one. I will lend you the book as soon as I…
2 Ss: Finish.
3 T: Finish reading it. 没有其他形式吗? {Does it have other forms?}
4 Ss: 没有。{No.}
5 T: Also we can say “As soon as I have finished reading it”. Both are correct, OK? I will
lend you the book as soon as I have finished reading it. No. 2. The company …
6 Ss: Promised.
7 T: Promised a rise in salary for ages. 什么叫 for ages? {What does “for ages” mean?} A
very long time, OK? 因为它在这表示一个延续，那应该怎么说呀，什么时态最好?

[Because it indicates a duration here, how to express it? Which tense is the best?]

Ss: 现在完成时。[Present perfect]
T: 现在完成时。Present perfect. OK? So, the company has promised to, oh, has promised a
rise in salary for ages. OK? No. 3. Mr. Smith…

Ss: Came… has come.
T: Came, or has come, or is coming? Which one? What is the time?
Ss: Present simple 不是表现在吗? [Doesn’t Present simple indicate the present?]
T: Oh, Past simple. Past simple.

Although Jing’s belief in “teaching for tests” still remained central, there was evidence showing that this belief was moving away from the very centre of his belief system. Influenced by the New Curriculum and up-to-date teacher development programmes, which had risen up against test-oriented education, Jing regarded “teaching for tests” as undesirable in the current curricular reform. Although he would not totally give up the test-oriented approach, he tried to avoid doing so when teaching in public. For example, he preferred being observed at the beginning of a unit with a new topic, where communicative speaking was more likely to occur in class. Prior to my observation of his test-prep class, he showed his concern with some embarrassment, saying that “I am not sure whether this class is suitable for you to observe and you may not get what you want from my class” (Jing: FN-09092530). Also, test-oriented teaching was absent from his demo class, which was open to school administrators and his colleagues.

5.2.3 Vocabulary teaching is of the most importance.

In Jing’s view, the subject content of English curriculum mainly consisted of vocabulary and grammar, between which vocabulary was more important but more difficult to learn:

We would have a pretty good command of grammar knowledge by the time we graduate from secondary school. There is very little new grammar to be learned at college. ... For me, vocabulary is the biggest challenge. I tried memorising advanced word lists, but without much success. I am always worried that my vocabulary is too small. It is a very big problem for me. (Jing: 1-2-2)

30 The code “Jing: FN-090925” means the quoted data are taken from my field notes about Jing on the date 25 September, 2009.
Identified in data of both Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence, Jing’s perception of vocabulary learning was obviously associated with a sense of frustration, as he believed that “one must possess a good number of advanced words in order to be qualified as an advanced learner” (Jing: 7-11-3). With regret that his vocabulary repertoire was not big enough for free expression, he developed the habit of “noticing new words in daily life” (Jing: 1-2-5). His classroom practices demonstrated his efforts to prevent his students from repeating his ‘failure’. Much of the class time was spent on vocabulary activities. For instance, when introducing new words, he liked to use PowerPoint slides to provide a context. When explaining a new passage, he always highlighted important words by asking students “What does it mean?” His chalk writing on the blackboard was exclusively about vocabulary, usually at lexical level, sometimes at phrasal level, but hardly ever beyond sentence level.

On one occasion (Jing: O-5), I observed him teaching vocabulary with an activity of his own design with the aim of helping students memorize some new words that had just been taught. Jing showed to his students a PowerPoint slide with 12 words written in different directions (see Figure 5.1), and after 30 seconds these words faded away one by one under the animation effect. The students were asked to recall the words and to restore them as they appeared on the slide. While doing this activity, the students read the slide carefully, twisting their necks from left to right in order to recognize these words better. They were apparently excited with this memory-challenging task, as they yelled to Jing after they had successfully restored all the words, “老师，再来一段！ {Teacher, we want more!}”.

Figure 5.1 An example of Jing’s vocabulary teaching activity
Jing was surprised with the students’ surging enthusiasm, and he noticed how this activity had affected their attitude to English learning:

*I was surprised by how students reacted after that class. This part has not been taught yet, but the students already showed great enthusiasm in learning it on their own. After class, I was surrounded by many students who kept asking me questions. More students came to me during lunch break to recite the text.* (Jing: 6-1-2)

Inspired by students’ surging enthusiasm, Jing used this vocabulary activity again in a demo class in the following week. However, Jing was aware that activities like this one should be used with caution because overuse or misuse may “result in loss of interest or motivation among students” (Jing: 6-1-5).

Compared to vocabulary, grammar was less stressed in Jing’s teaching. There were few episodes of grammar teaching in his data set. When explaining test papers, Jing spent more time on words than on grammar. Explanation of grammar items was often short and given in Chinese. One reason may be related to Jing’s belief that “grammar is easier to learn” and that “grammar is less important than vocabulary” (Jing: 1-2-2). The lack of data on grammar teaching may also be the result of the selective observation schedule in Jing’s case, as he preferred himself being observed ‘doing good teaching’ (e.g. presenting new words in theme-based discussions), while avoiding being observed ‘doing bad teaching’, such as teaching grammar in L1.

### 5.2.4 Classroom English should have relevance to real-life English

Jing had realized that his teaching context was somewhat different from his learning context. Such contextual changes were closely related to the internationalization of the capital city of Beijing. As he recalled, during his secondary years, English was rarely seen or heard outside of the classroom, and the subject content of English was hardly relevant to real life situations (Jing: 7-3-1). After he had become a teacher, he noticed that the permeation of the English language into people’s daily life had become part of his teaching reality. For instance, English can be easily identified on road signs, brand names of daily commodities, and books (Jing: 7-2-4). English pop culture, as well as the Japanese or Korean pop culture, was very popular among students (Jing: 7-2-1). He also noticed that students’ contact with English was
extended to their family life because many of their parents were proficient in English (Jing: 1-1-2).

With significant changes in the surrounding context, Jing felt it was no longer sufficient to teach English just for academic purposes. Other purposes, such as teaching for communicative competence, should also be emphasized in the English curriculum. This understanding, emerging in data of both Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence, was manifested in his practices in three ways: (1) selecting teaching materials with a communicative focus; (2) highlighting real-life topics; and (3) engaging students in casual conversations.

Jing was happy to see the change of subject content brought about by the upgrading of curricular materials. He preferred the new series of textbooks, compiled under the guidelines in New Curriculum Standards, to the older ones, because new textbooks contained “a larger amount of textual input with a bigger vocabulary size” and presented “up-to-date content which is closer to the current life” (Jing: 7-3-5). Although the subject content seemed quantitatively overwhelming, he agreed that it was time for such changes to take place and appreciated the closer link between the teaching materials and actual life (Jing: 5-5-2).

However, his feelings towards the new textbooks were mixed. Although his fondness for these modern-looking materials was obvious, he also expressed his concern that they were sometimes distant from the reality of the local context both linguistically and culturally. In one of the post-observation interviews, Jing asked me whether I had ever come across phrases such as “come off it” and “dead right”. I honestly replied that I had not. He told me that these phrases were presented in the textbook as key phrases expressing agreement and disagreement; however, he felt that they were not proper language samples and did not see the point of requiring students to learn them (Jing: 6-5-4). On the other hand, he felt that the textbook had failed to sample the most frequently used phrases:

When I was in an all-English setting, I found my English knowledge far from enough. For example, when I booked hotels, I came to know the meaning of ‘check in’ and ‘check out’, which did not appear in the old textbook. Only then did I know they meant “to start living in a hotel” and “to leave a hotel”. To my surprise, useful phrases like these are not found in the new textbook either. Therefore, I think the selection of language samples for real-life situations still has room to improve. (Jing: 6-5-5)
In addition to the problems of language sample selection, another big flaw in the new textbook, as Jing saw it, lay in the misrepresentation or even absence of an indigenous perspective in some content addressing the Chinese culture:

*I have always felt that our Chinese culture should be more seriously presented. For example, when presenting the Chinese New Year, the textbook has failed to present it properly. I was surprised that it did not even mention the cultural meaning of 年 (Year) or 岁 (Year) being an evil monster in folk stories, which was all too familiar to us Chinese people. So, from the cultural perspective, it is not indigenous enough. Also, in the text about the Lantern Festival, the writer told a folk tale of which I had no idea at all. At least I haven’t heard of it. (Jing: 6-5-8)*

While Jing liked the stronger association the new textbooks had with modern times, he felt it a pity that Chinese cultural characteristics were missing:

*We could offer some cultural courses on unique Chinese characteristics. For example, Martial Arts have a long history in China and have now become well-known throughout the world. Why don’t we include it in our curriculum, rather than 束之高阁 {shū zhī gāo gé, meaning “tie something up and then put it aside in the deserted attic”}? Others like Beijing Opera and Paper-cutting are also absent from our curriculum. I think this situation needs to be changed. (Jing: 7-2-3)*

Despite all these concerns, Jing consistently highlighted real-life topics in his teaching and engaged students in informal, casual conversations. More often than not, this kind of teaching occurred when he started a new unit or a new lesson. For instance, when teaching the unit on “Heroes” (Jing: O-2), he asked students to talk about who they regarded as heroes. When he came to the lesson on “Weddings” (Jing: O-5), he first asked students to describe a wedding that they had been to, and then shared his own experience of going to a wedding two weeks before.

During his teaching, Jing was observed raising students’ awareness of the relevance of English to their surrounding life, as shown in the episode below (Excerpt 1-4) in which Jing focused on a word that he thought was relevant to real life (Jing: O-4). At first, he asked whether students knew its meaning. After getting a number of wrong guesses, he provided a detailed definition (Lines 8-10). Then he asked whether students had noticed this word in the local setting (see the underlined question). Having received mixed answers, he explicitly confirmed the relevance of this word to the locality (see Line 15).
And now, who can tell us the meaning of drive-through? What is the drive-through?

No. It is not the word’s meaning. Drive-through?

Across.

Across? What is it?

The passage says that they drive to that restaurant to order food.

OK, very good. Usually, a drive-through shop, the drive-through shop is a shop in which you can buy something without leaving your car. You do not leave your car and you just have to drive there and buy something. OK? This is a drive-through shop. Also we can say … (writing ‘restaurant’ on the blackboard)

(in chorus) A drive-through restaurant.

Are there any drive-through restaurants in Beijing? Yes or no?

Yes.

You can drive through in McDonald’s and buy something, for example, buy some hamburgers without leaving your car, OK? It is a drive-through restaurant.

Jing’s comments in lines 17-18 suggested a number of new phenomena in today’s Beijing, especially in its urban areas. These new phenomena, emerging along with dramatic social changes as consequences of globalization, were perceived by Jing as part of a very different context from the one in which he had grown up in terms of its socioeconomic and sociocultural dimensions. He tried to include as much of his perception in this regard as possible while interacting with students. At least three phenomena of social changes could be identified in this instance. Firstly, “you can drive through” indicated his perception of the rapidly growing population who were attached to car wheels, as opposed to the fact that very few people owned cars two decades ago. Secondly, he mentioned “McDonald’s” without asking students what it was, which indicated the widespread nature of this fast-food chain store as a landmark of Beijing’s internationalization. Finally, he talked about “hamburgers” as an everyday concept, which signposted his perception of the rising popularity of Western food as an alternative to local food.

When Jing tried to associate his teaching with real life, he had realized that students did not necessarily share the same perceptions of “real life” as his. In one class (Jing: O-2), he asked students to give examples of heroes they knew. Students’ answers included imaginary characters in Hollywood movies or Japanese cartoons, such as Spider-Man, Superman, and
Ultraman. Jing then asked them whether they regarded Lei Feng as a hero. With students looking puzzled, Jing articulated his viewpoint, “I think he is a hero.”

Despite the discrepancies between his perceptions of real-life and students’, Jing expressed strong willingness to allocate more class time to highlight language use in real-life situations. However, he had to be very brief and selective due to time constraints and conflicting goals. His efforts in building real-life relevance would often give way to test-prep pressure, as he complained:

*We only have 40 minutes in a class, and there are so many things to cover. It is impossible to cover everything, and I have to make choices all the time. Very often, I make wrong choices and fail to touch upon things I want to teach, especially those requiring longer time. If I feel the time pressure, I will have to cut those communicative activities or speaking tasks. Every class is like a live broadcast, you can’t redo it or go back to edit it. I teach by my instinct. I don’t know how much they can remember, maybe very little, but I will only feel assured if I have explicitly told them what I think important.* (Jing: 7-5-2)

Interestingly, Jing’s belief in relating EFL teaching to real-life situations was established in his belief system as a deviation from his former teachers. He recalled that there was very little communication on real-life topics in English classes when he was a secondary school student, and he decided to make a change by adding more life elements into the classroom (Jing: 1-6-5). Having perceived significant contextual changes, he naturally felt the drive to adapt himself as well as his teaching to a changed context. Without denying the effectiveness and efficiency of the traditional transmission model, Jing also believed that such real-life relevance could upscale the teacher-student interaction and would help maintain a harmonious teacher-student relationship, which seemed vital in either the traditional transmission model or the modern communicative approach (Jing: 1-4-5).

### 5.2.5 EFL pedagogy should be appropriate to the EFL context

The belief regarding contextual appropriateness seemed to be the most central one, because it was repeatedly spotted in data of various categories including Manifest Congruence,  

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31 Lei Feng was a soldier of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and is a cultural icon in China symbolizing selflessness, modesty, and dedication. Lei Feng died in 1962 at the age of 22. On March 5, 1963, Chairman Mao Zedong initiated the “Learn from Comrade Lei Feng” campaign and encouraged the youth in China to follow his example. March 5th has since become the official “Learn from Lei Feng Day.”
Embedded Congruence and Latent Congruence, which recognizes an agreement between negatively stated beliefs and conscious avoidance of them in practices. The multiplicity of data categories implied that Jing had a clear idea of what to do (i.e. to implement contextually appropriate pedagogy) as well as what not to do (i.e. to avoid contextually inappropriate pedagogy), and his conviction was enhanced by his reflection on his cross-contextual experiences.

Jing had realized that the current EFL context, in which he worked as a teacher, was very different from the previous EFL context, when he was a learner. Some aspects of the current context remained unchanged, reinforcing the needs of learning English as a linguistic object, such as “classroom teaching was the primary form of schooling” (Jing: 7-3-1), “English remained one of the key subjects in high-stake exams” (Jing: 1-7-2) and “both teachers and students were subject to a test-based evaluation mechanism” (Jing: 7-3-4). These aspects, which were all too familiar to Jing, constituted a default context for the shaping of his pedagogical beliefs. Meanwhile, Jing was aware of the emergence of other contextual aspects, which nurtured the needs of learning English as a communicative tool, such as “Beijing was becoming more international” (Jing: 7-2-5), “cross-cultural experiences were more readily available” (Jing: 1-9-3; 1-10-4), “students’ exposure to the English language and English culture was greatly expanded” (Jing: 7-2-1), and “students’ future development was more likely to be linked with the functional use of English” (Jing: 1-7-6). With these newly emergent aspects redefining the current EFL context, Jing found his beliefs about EFL teaching also being reshaped.

His pedagogical beliefs, seemingly held on an eclectic and experiential basis, were a mixture of conflicting beliefs. Jing found it hard to abandon the traditional approach all at once, nor was he totally convinced of the rationale for the communicative approach (Jing: 1-4-3; 3-4-1; 6-2-4; 7-4-2). As he saw it, the traditional approach was more effective than the communicative approach for meeting the needs of teaching English as linguistic knowledge. As long as the test-oriented education system remained unchanged, the communicative approach would not and should not replace the traditional one:

During these years, we have been pushed to accept new ideas in English teaching. I myself would like to adopt a teaching style that looks modern and active. But, it’s very difficult for us to make the change. After all, we are evaluated by the students’ performance in exams. (Jing: 7-2-5)
Jing had always wondered whether the communicative approach was an ideal solution for the emergent needs of language use and whether it was easily applicable to local classrooms. After observing how communicative language teaching was implemented in both EFL and ESL settings, Jing came to the understanding that communicative language teaching (CLT) was indeed more engaging and dynamic than traditional methods, but he disagreed with the view that CLT would automatically work in all settings. He expressed his concerns that CLT might create a sense of insecurity and a lack of control in terms of classroom management:

I remember observing one teacher using a communicative task called “running dictation”. Students ran around to pass a message. They needed to listen, memorize and repeat, but I found some students did not treat it as a language learning activity. Instead, they used mobile phones to take a picture of the message or wrote it on their hand. Besides cheating, there is also a safety problem. When running around, a student fell and broke his teeth. (Jing: 6-2-2)

Jing’s doubts about the applicability of the communicative approach to his classroom became stronger after his visit to the U. S., where he had witnessed authentic implementation of communicative language teaching by experienced ESL teachers in typical ESL classrooms. He liked the dynamics of ESL classrooms, but felt it was unwise to adopt their pedagogy without considering contextual appropriateness:

On the whole, I have always felt that it [the communicative language teaching] may not be applicable to the Chinese EFL teaching context. The first reason is that English is not a functional language in our country after all; not everyone felt the need to use English after class. Secondly, students were not taught in this approach from the very beginning, and the teachers were not competent enough to teach in this approach. In this case, both students and teachers may find it OK to adopt one or two activities of this kind; however, problems will surely arise if teachers adopt this approach all the time. Another reason has to do with the educational system. Entrance examinations impose great pressure on both students and teachers. If you make the classroom too dynamic or entertaining, students may not be able to learn facts in a solid way. This teaching approach does not match our educational goals well. They contradict each other to some extent. If you just aim to design a good-looking class, you may do it at the cost of students’ mastery of knowledge. (Jing: 1-5-4)

This long quote explains why Jing was cautious when making a communicative turn in his class. In addition to the contextual constraints mentioned in the quote, Jing also noticed some internal characteristics of the students that called for caution in applying communicative
teaching. For instance, Chinese teenagers were less outspoken than their western counterparts. They were unwilling to open their mouths even if the teacher encouraged them to do so (Jing: 7-4-8). Also, they were used to following the teacher, rather than taking the lead in their study, so they hardly ever asked questions or expressed their opinions in public (Jing: 7-4-6). Finally, they tended to form a fixed social circle and showed reluctance to communicate with partners outside these circles (Jing: 3-7-3). These characteristics, which would hinder students from active participation in the communicative approach, fit the traditional approach quite well.

Jing also realized that, even within the traditional approach, there may be divergent perceptions about contextual constraints of appropriate pedagogy. In one interview, he talked about his experience of teaching English in a different context and stressed the importance of understanding contextually situated language teaching:

> I think it [the context] is very important; after all, you can’t get free from it. I once went to a mountainous region to teach English to the students there. I was told that it was common for teachers, not just the head teacher, to beat naughty students. I told them that it would not happen in Beijing, because if I did so, I would be sued and lose my job. They looked astonished. So I think it is very important to understand the local context, because it not only constrains students, but also constrains the teacher. It may exert a facilitative or guiding function. Surely it will function in some way. In this area, violent behaviour is acceptable, so the teacher may find it natural to adopt it, and they may find it the only effective way to force their students to learn. But in Beijing, this would not be acceptable. So, you see, the local context has a direct impact on your choice of pedagogy. (Jing: 1-10-3)

Aware of contextual discrepancies, Jing insisted that there should not be one absolute answer to the prescription of the best teaching method, and the understanding of the best pedagogy essentially involved an individualistic understanding of contextual appropriateness on an eclectic basis. It was, therefore, not surprising to identify evidence of his adopting different approaches in classroom practices.

### 5.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Jing’s beliefs about English

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework), the quality of Yin is often associated with notions such as form, structure, object, downward, quiet, cold and inactive, as opposed
to *Yang* characteristics such as *function*, *construction*, *movement*, *upward*, *noisy*, *warm* and *active*. A single belief, when analyzed at each of the three levels, may be identified in three conditions: (1) it is mainly characteristic of *Yin*; (2) it is mainly characteristic of *Yang*; and (3) it is characteristic of both *Yin* and *Yang*. If a belief is consistently *Yin* or *Yang* at all the three levels, it will be coded as Y_{222} (all *Yin*) or Y_{111} (all *Yang*). If a belief is judged to be mixed with *Yin* and *Yang* at a certain level, it is possible for it to fall into multiple codes.

In this section, I analyze the *Yin-Yang* nature of each of the five beliefs discussed above by examining how it is related to the three key themes of context, content and pedagogy respectively, and then classify these qualities into *Yin-Yang* codes, which are summarized in Table 5.1.

### Table 5.1 A *Yin-Yang* analysis of Jing’s beliefs about English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Data code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
<th>Yin-Yang code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English should be taught with a focus on accuracy. (A focus on accuracy)</td>
<td>SC, EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y_{222}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system. (Compliance with the test-oriented system)</td>
<td>MC, SC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y_{222}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vocabulary teaching is of the most importance. (An emphasis on vocabulary)</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{222}, Y_{212}, Y_{122}, Y_{112}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Classroom English should have relevance to real-life English. (Relevance to real life)</td>
<td>MC, EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{111}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should be appropriate to the EFL context. (Conviction in favour of contextual appropriateness)</td>
<td>MC, LC, EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{222}, Y_{212}, Y_{211}, Y_{122}, Y_{112}, Y_{111}, [-]Y_{121}, [-]Y_{221}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(1) English should be taught with a focus on accuracy.

**Context:** This belief is based on Jing’s perceptions of a chronically coherent context. In the past, when Jing himself was an EFL learner at a secondary school, English was rarely used outside the classroom, and the main purpose of learning English was to fulfil curricular obligations and to meet the challenges of accuracy-oriented tests. After he has returned to a secondary school as an EFL teacher, he found the institutional context of the present unchanged in its manner of preparing students for accuracy-oriented English tests. Therefore, the contextual meaning of this belief is of *Yin* quality.

**Content:** The content selection associated with this belief lays an emphasis on linguistic knowledge which is subject to accuracy-based judgement, for example, the meaning of a word in the given context, the grammatical items in a test or the comprehension questions on a text. The rationale is clear: if the teaching is accuracy-oriented, the learning would be likely to be accuracy-oriented, and students would consequently do well in accuracy-oriented tests. Thus, the content meaning of this belief is marked as *Yin*.

**Pedagogy:** In terms of pedagogical manifestation, this belief is closely associated with form-focused instruction. When teaching for accuracy, Jing acts like an authority and the source of knowledge. He makes judgments on students’ responses, provides correct answers, and offers explanations. The teacher talk he uses in this case is mostly imperative, such as “Read after me”, “Recite this passage”, “Complete these exercises”, and “How do you translate it?” The teacher-student interaction exclusively centres on linguistic form, which justifies the *Yin* quality at pedagogical level.

**Yin-Yang code:** In short, Jing’s belief in teaching for accuracy is situated within chronically coherent *Yin* contexts, manifested in *Yin* content, and implemented by *Yin* pedagogy. It can be described by the code Y222, which stands for “*Yin*-context, *Yin*-content, and *Yin*-pedagogy”.

(2) EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.

**Context:** Like the previous one, this belief is also situated in contexts where English is rarely used for communication. However, the context of this belief carries more social meaning and refers to the testing culture of the macro EFL environment in which educational resources
and opportunities are allocated on the basis of test scores. Schools which produce more high-achieving students receive more support from the government as well as parents. In turn, school leaders would evaluate teachers on a score basis, and teachers would naturally strive to help students stand out in tests. The test-oriented system creates such a powerful context that most teachers feel obliged to conform to it. As school-based tests are often designed to measure mastery of linguistic knowledge, the context of this belief pertains to Yin.

Content: At content level, this belief is associated with Jing’s decision to focus on linguistic knowledge that is likely to occur in tests. This includes intensive study of words required in the curriculum, explicit instruction on grammatical rules, careful explanation of language-study exercises, and supplementary test-simulation materials. Thus, content in this aspect shows Yin qualities.

Pedagogy: In practice, this belief is mainly manifested in the knowledge-transmission model. Pedagogical behaviours include analytical instruction, translation, and the teaching of test-taking strategies. The goals of pedagogy in this area are to enhance students’ mastery of linguistic knowledge and to improve their performance on tests. Little consideration is given to communicative use of English. Therefore, the pedagogical aspect of this belief is also characteristic of Yin.

Yin-Yang code: Jing’s belief in teaching English for tests is situated in systematically coherent Yin contexts, manifested in the selection of content which is largely Yin, and implemented by Yin pedagogy, which justifies the code Y\textsubscript{222}.

(3) Vocabulary teaching is of the most importance.

Context: The expression of this vocabulary-centred belief is associated with both EFL context and ESL context. Initially nurtured in a typical EFL context, like the one in which Jing grew up as an EFL learner, this belief remained dominant throughout the years when Jing developed into an EFL teacher at his workplace, because it is still the case that a good size of vocabulary is essential for a good performance in the tests. Meanwhile, compared to grammar, vocabulary is more sensitive to contextual changes. Having been briefly immersed in an English-speaking environment and experiencing the on-going modernization of the surrounding environment, Jing has developed another branch of this belief that a good
command of active vocabulary is essential for effective communication in real life. Thus, this belief carries contextual characteristics of both Yin and Yang.

**Content:** During his vocabulary teaching, Jing is found shifting his focus between different domains of words. There are moments when he is teaching words required in the curriculum or words appearing in test papers. There are also moments when he inserts into classroom teaching extracurricular words which are likely to occur in real-life communication. However, extracurricular words would give way to curricular ones when time constraints are perceived. Therefore, the content of this belief is primarily Yin and secondarily Yang.

**Pedagogy:** Jing’s vocabulary teaching is hardly ever communicative. Most of the time, he delivers words in a knowledge-transmission manner. He uses pictures to introduce new words, writes words on the blackboard, leads the answer-checking of vocabulary exercises, and elicits translation from students. He expects students to know the spelling and lexical meaning of words listed in the textbook, but his attention is scarcely on how they are used in communicative situations. Thus, the pedagogical aspect of this belief is predominantly Yin.

**Yin-Yang code:** There are a number of possibilities regarding the Yin-Yang manifestation of this belief. The strongest turns out to be Y\textsubscript{222}, where Jing perceives the test-oriented context and chooses to focus on lexical knowledge which is to be delivered in a transmission model. Occasionally, it falls into Y\textsubscript{112}, where Jing perceives the growing communicative needs in the surrounding context and incorporates communicative words which are nevertheless taught using non-communicative approaches. Less frequent is Y\textsubscript{212}, where Jing temporarily focuses on extracurricular words while preparing students for knowledge-oriented tests in a non-communicative manner (e.g. the ‘drive-through’ episode in Excerpt 1-4). Even less frequent is Y\textsubscript{122}, where Jing perceives himself to be situated in a communicative context and yet he sticks to the teaching of lexical knowledge in a non-communicative approach (e.g. his conservative teaching in one of the demo classes).

(4) Classroom English should have relevance to real-life English.

**Context:** The belief in associating classroom English with real-life English is rooted in Jing’s awareness of the on-going contextual change in the local setting. He has sensed the increased needs for using English as a communicative tool in today’s Beijing, and felt the need to open
a small channel for real-life English to bring some freshness and dynamics into the classroom. Thus, the contextual meaning of this belief is loaded with Yang qualities.

**Content:** Whenever there is time, Jing would incorporate real-life topics into classroom teaching. The selection of content is facilitated by the new textbook, which contains plenty of speaking activities with fashionable topics. For Jing, it serves as an ideal resource book for his teaching. He has been observed addressing these topics every now and then (e.g. the topics of heroes, festivals, and weddings). The content selected in relation to this belief largely pertains to Yang.

**Pedagogy:** The pedagogical manifestation of this belief is mostly situated in meaning-focused interaction. With a given topic, Jing would initiate casual talks with students or get them to talk by themselves. While doing so, Jing does not attend to the linguistic form of students’ utterances; rather, he facilitates the meaningful production of teacher-student or student-student talks. In this case, the pedagogical aspect of this belief is characteristic of Yang as well.

**Yin-Yang code:** Jing’s belief in bringing in real-life English into the classroom is nurtured in a changing context with growing communicative needs, manifested in the selection of content which reflect the use of English in real life, and implemented in pedagogical methods that stress the negotiation of meaning. It is therefore categorized as Y_{111}.

\[(5)\] **EFL pedagogy should be appropriate to the EFL context.**

**Context:** This belief has developed out of Jing’s experience of multiple contexts in which the needs for using English vary quantitatively along a continuum. On one extreme is the typical ESL context (e.g. the U.S.), which is followed by a mixed EFL-and-ESL context (e.g. urban Beijing). Then comes the institutional setting where there is limited exposure to communicative English (e.g. the urban school where Jing works), which is followed by a context with fewer communicative opportunities (e.g. the rural school where Jing studied). On the other extreme is the typical EFL context with very few needs for using English (e.g. the school in a mountainous area which Jing visited). On a relative basis, the contextual meaning embedded in this belief is considered to be both Yin and Yang. For instance, when compared to a Boston-based classroom, Jing’s classroom is characteristic of Yin; however, if
compared to a classroom situated in remote, underdeveloped regions, his classroom is perceived as Yang.

**Content:** Different contexts define the appropriateness of content differently. Jing finds it justifiable to focus on the communicative aspect of English (Yang) given that communicative needs of English are growing in the local context, and it is more fun to teach. Meanwhile, he feels more secure grappling with the linguistic knowledge (Yin), which has been traditionally defined as the solid base of a subject. It is clear that Jing’s belief about appropriate pedagogy is associated with both Yin-loaded and Yang-loaded content. If measured with time allocated to the two types of content, the former is primary while the latter is secondary. Yin content usually makes the main body of his teaching by default, while Yang content is often treated as a starter or time-filler. Also, the two types of content do not seem to mingle in Jing’s classes. He is observed focusing either on Yin content or Yang content.

**Pedagogy:** Pedagogically speaking, this belief implies an eclectic approach on the basis of contextual appropriateness. Having been immersed in both EFL and ESL contexts, Jing has had first-hand experience of both traditional methods and communicative methods. He has seen the traditional pedagogy being successfully implemented in EFL contexts, and he has also seen the communicative approach working very well in ESL contexts. To him, both approaches have merits and demerits, and neither should be regarded as a one-size-fits-all solution. As a compromise, he retains much of the knowledge-transmission method that has proved effective in helping students prepare for accuracy-oriented tests; meanwhile, he is also interested in trying out some new techniques using a communicative approach so that students have a chance to develop their communicative competence. Considering the skewed proportion of time allocated to transmission methods and communicative endeavours, it can be judged that the pedagogical aspect of this belief is primarily Yin and secondarily Yang.

**Yin-Yang code:** In the belief about contextual appropriateness, both Yin and Yang elements are found in all the three concepts, which allows for the possibility of multiple codes. Out of the eight trigrams, six trigrams are identified in Jing’s data set (namely $Y_{222}$, $Y_{212}$, $Y_{211}$, $Y_{122}$, $Y_{112}$, and $Y_{111}$). Three findings emerge from the six-trigram pattern in his case. First, the presence of all four trigrams entailing Yin-pedagogy (those ending with 2 -- $Y_{222}$, $Y_{212}$, $Y_{122}$ and $Y_{112}$) provides positive evidence for Jing’s strong adherence to traditional methods. He is inclined to implement Yin-style pedagogy regardless of what purposes he is teaching for or what content he is teaching with. Secondly, the presence of two trigrams entailing coherence
between *Yin*-content and *Yin*-pedagogy (those ending with double 1 -- **Y**\textsubscript{211} and **Y**\textsubscript{111}) suggests Jing’s conviction that a focus on linguistic forms is applicable in both communication-rich and communication-poor contexts. Finally, the two missing trigrams (**Y**\textsubscript{221} and **Y**\textsubscript{121}, marked with [-] in Table 5.1), ending with the co-occurrence of *Yin*-content and *Yang*-pedagogy, provides reverse evidence of Jing’s conservative pedagogy. From such an absence pattern, it is inferred that Jing may not be an independent practitioner of communicative teaching, as he would only try out communicative teaching with the aid of communicative content.

(6) Summary

![Figure 5.2 Jing’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model](image-url)
Figure 5.2 presents a graphic summary of Jing’s beliefs about English within the proposed eight-trigram model. The distribution pattern of Jing’s belief system regarding the topic of inquiry suggests a number of features in his case, as summarized below:

1. With beliefs found in trigrams indicating Yin-context (those with initial digit 2, such as Y222, Y212 and Y211) as well as Yang-context (those with initial digit 1, such as Y112, Y122, Y111), Jing seems to hold an inclusive and flexible position towards the local setting for his teaching.

2. With a higher frequency and density, beliefs in the Yin-context trigrams (Y222, Y212 and Y211) in overall seem to be held with more strength than beliefs in the Yang-context (Y112, Y122, Y111). This may indicate that, although Jing perceives both types of context as justifiable, he holds the traditional view about an EFL context with more conviction. The teaching of English at school is, after all, academically driven.

3. Among the eight trigrams, the most frequently marked one is Y222, which provides further evidence of the fundamental status of Yin-loaded beliefs in Jing’s case. His views on the local EFL context as primarily non-communicative or test-driven go well with his preference for selecting objectified linguistic knowledge and his adherence to traditional transmission pedagogy. With a high level of logic coherence, Y222 beliefs appear to be held with more robustness and persistence than beliefs of other codes.

4. Yin-Yang tension is identified at all the three levels. For instance, contextual tension exists in the juxtaposition of Y111 and Y211, or Y222 and Y122 (both pairs vary in the initial digit, which stands for context). Co-existence of Y222 and Y212, or Y112 and Y122 (both pairs vary in the middle digit, which stands for content) suggests perceptual tension in the selection of content. In addition, pedagogical tension is found in the pair of Y111 and Y112, or Y211 and Y212 (both vary in the final digit, which stands for pedagogy). Such a loose and seemingly chaotic pattern, which is well exemplified in Jing’s divided beliefs about vocabulary, may be interpreted as a dissociative position of perceived tensions. In other words, Jing has not been able to integrate split beliefs newly emergent from a diverging context, nor has he managed to formulate a coherent mechanism for decisions in the selection of content or pedagogy.

5. The chaotic Yin-Yang pattern of Jing’s belief system may also be explained by his pedagogical conservativeness, which is shown in the partial congruence between content
and pedagogy, with the presence of $Y_{112}$ and $Y_{212}$ as opposed to the absence of $Y_{121}$ and $Y_{221}$. Such a pattern suggests that Jing is likely to treat communicative materials (such as dialogues in the textbook) as objectified knowledge, but is not likely to treat non-communicative materials (such as items in the test paper) as conversational topics. It can then be inferred that, although Jing accepts the surrounding EFL context as incoherent, he is not pedagogically prepared for the emergent tensions. In particular, he feels more challenged with communicative-based pedagogy than with communicative-based materials, and grapples with traditional methods when he needs to maintain a sense of security.
6. Yun’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

To me, English is a tool which can be used to communicate with others, acquire new information or broaden our scope. It is just a tool. (Yun: 1-1-4)

6.1 Yun’s profile

A contemporary of Jing, Yun had been teaching English in the Senior Secondary Section of School A for 15 years by the time she participated in this study. She was born and grew up in Sichuan, one of the south-western provinces. When she started her junior secondary schooling, English had become a compulsory subject in the national curriculum. All her learning was confined to the formal teaching setting at school. The only material was the textbook and the teaching methods were very traditional. Like her peers, she memorized words, did grammar exercises and took tests. Although English was not her favourite subject at school, she always managed to score highly in English tests. She did well in the college entrance examination and was accepted by the English Department of a prestigious university based in the Haidian district in Beijing. However, this decision to major in English was not made by her, but by her mother, who believed “it’s good for girls to specialize in a foreign language” (Yun: 1-1-3).

Yun moved to Beijing at the age of 18 to embrace an entirely new way of living and studying. The newly found spare time in college made it possible for her to decide how her English should be improved. Disappointed with the ineffectiveness and irrelevance of classroom teaching, she made a strategic self-study plan in order to improve those aspects of English that she felt were important or that she was weak at, such as vocabulary, reading and listening (Yun: 1-2-1). She discovered that improvement in vocabulary and reading was easier to achieve through disciplined individual learning, while painstaking efforts in listening and speaking did not necessarily result in gains (Yun: 1-2-2). She also felt the transformative impact that English learning had on her. For instance, she found herself less introverted, more open-minded, more willing to communicate, and more inclined to accept Western culture and lifestyle (Yun: 1-2-4).
Yun studied for four years and graduated with a BA degree in English for Science and Technology. She had never thought she would become a teacher until the last few months of her time at university. Her imagined career was as a translator or interpreter in a research institute in her hometown, but she finally decided to stay in Beijing with her boyfriend, who was employed by a Beijing-based company. Upon graduation, she became an EFL teacher at School A with a very vague idea of what this job was about. It was not easy for her in the novice years, as she recalled:

*I soon realized what I had learned at university was far from sufficient for my teaching. I had to learn to teach and teach to learn at the same time on my own. (Yun: 1-4-2)*

With hardly any pre-service training experience, she started her teaching career with segmented, vague memories of her own senior secondary schooling and an ambiguously defined knowledge structure of the English language. Her progress was marked by the degree of freedom in terms of textbook use. At the beginning, she was totally dependent on the textbook, not daring to risk on any changes, but gradually she became more thoughtful in deciding how it should be used (Yun: 1-5-2).

In the summer of 2007, Yun went to Boston with a group of secondary school teachers (including Jing) to attend a 20-day teacher training programme on TESOL methodology, which turned out to be an awakening, cross-cultural experience. She had some first-hand experience of using English in authentic settings, and was also impressed with the different approaches to English teaching. In the following year, to her much delight, School A adopted a new series of English textbooks published by Beijing Normal University Press. She liked the topics covered in this series because they were more closely related to real-life situations and more useful on communicative occasions. Yun could easily recognize the authenticity of the communicative elements presented in the textbook, as she had found after a few trips abroad with her family that English “is indeed functional when searching for information about foreign destinations, asking for directions, checking in at hotels, ordering food in restaurants, or finding the way in airports” (Yun: 1-2-4).

As well as using English for overseas travel, Yun also had occasional contact with the foreign teachers in her school. She was put in charge of hiring foreign teachers for School A and often conducted telephone interviews with native-speaking applicants. This experience
had reshaped her perception of English as a tool for communication and enhanced her confidence in using English for cross-cultural purposes.

6.2 Yun’s core beliefs about English

During her transformation from an EFL learner to an EFL teacher, Yun has experienced different roles for English, such as English as a testing object and English as a communicative tool. Seeing them both as relevant to her teaching, she takes a positive attitude and a proactive approach, readily reconstructing her pedagogical perceptions to meet newly emergent challenges at work. However, she finds it difficult to accommodate the different goals of EFL teaching coherently in her classroom teaching. Her dilemma is manifested in the five core beliefs identified in her data set (A summary of her beliefs and their data codes can be found in Table 4.7 and Table 6.1).

6.2.1 English is a rule-based linguistic system.

Yun believed that the view of English as a rule-based system would help students learn it better and more easily. Evidence of this belief came from data of Subconscious Congruence and Embedded Congruence, which means she had little explicit knowledge to support this belief but instinctively felt it was the right thing to do, and this belief was reinforced by her experience which had yielded satisfactory results. As Yun recalled, the greatest challenge in the first few years of her teaching was a lack of explicit grammatical knowledge, and she quickly overcame this barrier by a thorough revision of the grammar covered in the textbook (Yun: 1-3-2).

Inspired by her own learning experience, Yun tried her best to teach grammar using an inductive approach, in which she presented language samples of a particular structure and asked students to discover its syntactic meaning and to use it to produce new sentences. An example was found in the first observation of her lesson (Yun: O-1), when she was teaching “Modal verbs for guessing”. She began with a warm-up activity, in which she showed a
picture of two students who looked frustrated and asked students to guess what might have happened. Students made guesses like “they may have been separated from other students” and “they may have fallen behind”. After that, she showed a number of other pictures, about which students continued making guesses using modal verbs. She then drew a table on the blackboard, asking students to fill in the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>现在 {present tense}</th>
<th>现在进行 {present progressive tense}</th>
<th>过去 {past tense}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>might</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>might not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After she had elicited the grammatical forms of modal verbs, Yun played back those pictures with sample sentences. This time, she wanted the students to discover the “rules” of this grammatical structure from these sample sentences and explain it explicitly in Chinese. Students summarized that “modal verb + do” means making guesses about present events, “modal verb + be doing” means making guesses about on-going events, and “modal verb + have done” means making guesses about past events. Yun then told students what she intended to achieve with this activity:

You [students] should try to discover the rules by yourselves. Look at the table, what rules can you notice? First, which modal verbs can be used for expressing probability? Second, how do you use them to make guesses about events happening in the present, present progressive or past tense? I hope you can discover the rules by yourselves. You should learn to learn on your own. (Translated from Yun’s instruction which was given to her students in Chinese)

Yun was very happy when one student raised the question of why mustn’t was not listed in the table. She praised the student for asking “a good question” before replying that mustn’t has only one meaning, which is to describe something forbidden, and it doesn’t have the meaning of probability. Then, she brought the class to the stage of rule-application. She showed new pictures with verbs given, asking students to practise the rules they had just discovered.

Consistent with what was observed in the class, Yun talked about her views on grammar teaching in the interview:
Basically I teach grammar in this way: first ask students to see, to feel, and to understand the structure, then let them discover the rules by themselves, and then give them opportunities to use it. If they learn grammar in this way, they will do some inductive thinking. This may help them memorize it more easily. If I directly tell them the rule, it may take less teaching time, but I feel it’s better to let them make the discovery. I don’t know whether I am doing the right thing, but my experience tells me this is worth trying. (Yun: 2-2-5)

As with grammar, Yun adopted a rule-based approach to the teaching of vocabulary whenever she saw the applicability of some lexical rule. She liked to organize the target words in ways that would allow students to discover lexical rules easily, such as words ending with different inflectional suffixes and words made up of the same roots. For instance, when there was a reading task, she would draw a "vocabulary bank" (see Figure 6.1) on the blackboard, which students were to fill in with unfamiliar words they came across in reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>adj.</th>
<th>n.</th>
<th>v.</th>
<th>phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 6.1 Yun’s “Vocabulary Bank”

When asked why she used this table for new words and called it “vocabulary bank”, Yun answered:

As the biggest challenge of the new textbook is the overwhelming size of vocabulary, I try to raise their attention on the rules of word-formation, such as words of the same roots or suffixes. If they become used to making such associations, they will find vocabulary learning less daunting. I tell them, if they keep accumulating words into the ‘bank’, like the way they save money into the bank, they will eventually become a ‘rich’ person [laughing]. (Yun: 3-2-6)

Yun also raised students’ attention on the stylistic rules of reading passages. She believed it was to students’ long-term benefit to develop reading strategies which involved pattern-seeking skills. This belief was stated in one of her interviews:

When I teach reading passages, I would first ask them for the main idea and the structure. I don’t want them to dive into the details too soon. When teaching reading, I often follow this order: the main idea first, then the structure, then the details, and finally language points. Students are too used to studying the text for words and grammar. I am trying to change their reading habits. It takes them a long time to
become strategic readers, but I will continue doing so because these skills, I believe, are useful for taking tests as well as acquiring information. (Yun: 3-2-2)

The excerpt below (Excerpt 6-1) illustrated how she helped students identify the location of the topic sentence of a paragraph (with focal instruction underlined in the transcript). Yun made the task explicit to students before they started to read and listen. By paraphrasing what a topic sentence was, she was telling students that it was a stylistic convention of written English to express the main idea or the writer’s opinion in a topic sentence. Correct identification of the topic sentence would indicate correct reading comprehension. When students failed to produce the correct answer at first, Yun switched to Chinese instruction and gave a detailed explanation of how to distinguish the writer’s opinion from others’ and correctly locate the topic sentence. After students had successfully found the topic sentence, she went on with another stylistic convention highlighting the echoing association between the beginning paragraph and the last paragraph.

Excerpt 6-1

T: OK, now, look at your books, page 18. Let’s read the passage about personalities and national types. At first, I would like you to read the first paragraph. Listen to the tape and read the first paragraph. Try to find out the topic sentence. Try to find out the topic sentence. That is, what is the main idea of this passage? What is the writer’s opinion? Listen carefully. Just the first paragraph.

(T plays the recording.) Unit 13, Culture Corner, “Personalities and National Types”. Some people believe that your nationality can influence your personality. This is what you might hear someone saying “He is a typical American” or “She is so Spanish”. Of course, it is impossible that every person from a certain country has the same personality, but it seems that people of the same nationality do sometimes share certain personality characteristics. This is the idea of national types. These are general ideas about a nationality that can be positive or negative. As long as national types are not taken too seriously, it’s fun trying to guess a person’s nationality from their personality.

T: OK, let’s stop here for Paragraph One. Have you found the topic sentence? That’s the main idea. What’s the main idea of this paragraph?

S1: Nationality can influence personality.

T: Nationality?

Ss: Your nationality can influence your personality.

T: The other students, do you agree? 一般来讲，我们都在第一句话里面找 topic sentence，right? (looking around the class for different answers) 有没有不同意见? (Ss in silence) 好好想一下，我要的是作者的 opinion，我不是要别人的 opinion. 大家注意第一句话前面有一个什么? Some (Translation) The other students, do you agree? Generally speaking, we can find the topic sentence in the first sentence, right? Do you have different opinions this time? Think about it. I am asking for the writer’s opinion, not other people’s opinions. Class, pay attention to the beginning of the first sentence. What do you
Some people believe. So you must be careful when you are reading for the main idea. Some people believe, which means he is stating a fact. He just tells us a fact. Right? Some people believe your nationality can influence your personality. This is the opinion held by other people. Do you see why your answer is wrong? You should be more strategic next time. Then where does the writer state his opinion? Does he agree with this opinion, or disagree with it? There must be a statement somewhere below, right? Try again. Have you found it?

{Translation} Very good. Do you see the ‘but’? ‘But’ here makes a very important clue. It seems that people of the same nationality do sometimes share certain personality characteristics. What does this do mean? It is used to give an emphatic effect, right? This is where the writer states his opinion. So, when you are reading, you must be careful. When finding the location of the main idea, there is a tip, we can often find it in the first paragraph and… what?

{Translation} The last paragraph. So, let’s have a look at the last paragraph now. Usually, the writer will reemphasize or restate his opinion in the last paragraph. Look at the last sentence: But people are themselves, no matter where we are from. So here is the writer’s opinion: People of the same nationality do sometimes share certain personality characteristics, but they are themselves, no matter where they are from. OK, so much for the main idea. Now, let’s look at the middle of the passage.

Yun’s view of the English language as a rule-based system was manifested in various aspects of her teaching, such as grammar, vocabulary and the skills of listening, reading and writing. She believed such pattern-seeking pedagogy, compared to memory-oriented pedagogy, was better attuned to students’ thinking level at their age and would also increase their efficiency in EFL learning.
6.2.2 EFL teaching is about teacher-student interaction.

Yun’s belief in a good teacher-student relationship was supported by data of Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence. She expected to see her students being responsive in the classroom. Students’ responses, as she said in an interview, would affect the pace of her teaching and the state of her mind (Yun: 1-5-5). She would feel happy if students responded positively, and would feel upset if they kept silent. She told a small story about how she felt differently with different responses from two classes of students:

Students’ responses will affect how I proceed with my teaching. If I don’t get their responses as I expect, I would rewind and go over once more. Today, I had two totally different experiences in two classes. In the first class, everything went well. Students responded to me well on what I had intended to teach. It was about a reading skill, and we did structural analysis. I felt so happy that I even joked with them. But when I went to the second class, things were totally different. No one responded to me, and I felt ignored. No matter how hard I tried, they just kept silence. I had to stop my teaching and spent a few minutes talking to them about how I felt. I said I did not want to read their lips. I told them, “I hope to get your responses. If you know the answer, tell me you know it. If you don’t know it, also tell me you don’t know it. I hate going on teaching without your responses.” Then they became better, and I got more responses from them. At least some students would open their mouth and say something. When there is no response from students, I will have to slow down my teaching pace, which will then disturb my thinking flow. I cannot hold the class as a whole; it’s like breaking into pieces. I think, not wanting to speak may be a common problem among students of this age. I notice it when I observe other teachers’ classes. Some students just don’t want to speak in public. Students who are better at English are even more afraid of making mistakes. That’s how I see it. (Yun: 1-6-1)

According to Yun, students’ responses were not only a sign of active learning or successful teaching, they also helped build a harmonious teacher-student relationship which would last for a long time. She felt that her job was rewarding in that she gained respect and popularity from students:

Each semester, our school would give an evaluation sheet to students, asking them to evaluate the teachers from many aspects, such as teaching effectiveness and teaching attitude. I always get a score above 90 out of 100. The relationship between me and my students is very good. Students would remember you for a long time, even after they have left the school. Like the students I had in my first year of teaching, they still come to visit me from time to time. When they greet me outside the school, and when
they remember me on some special occasions, I feel quite content. I mean I am mentally satisfied (laugh). (Yun: 1-5-4)

Teacher-student communication was mostly found in language study activities, where Yun guided students to discover the linguistic meaning of content in focus. However, she was occasionally observed encouraging students in group-work activities to exchange information or have a topic-related discussion. For instance, when teaching a passage about “personalities and national stereotypes” (Yun: O-2), Yun divided students into six groups with each group representing one nation mentioned in the passage. At the information exchange stage, students left their desks and walked around to meet others of a different group. They were supposed to inform each other of the message about the national stereotypes they had read in the passage. In this activity, Yun did not interact with students directly; instead, she walked around to listen to students talking to each other and offered help when students had language or socializing problems.

Although Yun was keen to get students involved in her teaching, she did not expect all students to respond actively in the same way in her class. She would keep interacting with a small number of students in a less ‘visible’ way, after she had noticed that they were afraid of speaking in public. She consciously provided them with some sheltered space in her teaching:

Some students have a different personality from others. They are extremely shy and they hate to stand up to speak. If you keep pushing them, or do not protect them, they will become even more withdrawn and eventually give up learning. I have found quite a number of students like that. Every time when you call them to answer a question, they will become extremely nervous. They tell me in private that they don’t want to answer questions in class, and I assure them by saying “it’s all right”. So when I am teaching in class, I will consciously protect them. I would not call them to stand up or to criticize them in front of the other students. I think it’s necessary to treat them in a special way. After all, you have more than 40 students in one class, and you are very likely to have students like that. (Yun: 7-16-1)

6.2.3 EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.

Data of Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence supported Yun’s conviction that English teaching needed to be test-oriented to some extent. Her attitude towards the testing
system of EFL education seemed to be mixed. On the one hand, she did not believe in teaching for tests to a full extent at the price of the functional aspect of English:

I don’t think English should be included in the national university entrance test. More attention should be paid to the functional applications of English. I myself hate to do test-oriented teaching. What’s the point in explaining all these clauses? Students still don’t know how to use it in authentic situations. It’s meaningless if we only teach them to make ABCD choices. It is a language and is more of a tool. Why should it be made a compulsory subject and treated so seriously in the test? If students were free to choose, they would still choose to learn it and there would be higher self-driven motivation in their choice, because it would be useful for their future and surely they would be more willing to learn in a way that suits their needs better. (Yun: 6-1-4)

On the other hand, she felt obliged to teach for tests, because “test scores mean a lot to the students and the school alike in the existing educational system” (Yun: 6-2-1). She explained that students would be ranked according to their test scores, so would the schools. High-achieving students were more likely to go to high-ranking schools, and high-ranking schools were more likely to send their students to high-ranking universities. For instance, School A took in students who were ranked around 5000th in the Beijing-wide Zhongkao (the test that all Beijing students have to take at the end of their junior secondary schooling), and a 10-point difference in score would mean being admitted to a different senior secondary school (Yun: 6-2-2). In such a selection system, it was natural for students to want to go to a high-ranking school and for schools to want to advance in the ranking so as to attract high-achieving students. Yun had observed English classes given in schools of different rankings, and noticed that the test score did help differentiate students in terms of their language ability (Yun: 7-3-6). According to her observation, students in top-ranking schools would have no problem answering open-ended questions. Those in lower-ranking schools (like School A) would have more difficulty in doing in-depth discussions, and those in bottom-ranking schools would even have difficulty understanding the question.

Therefore, Yun agreed that test scores could be used as an important indicator of students’ language ability to some extent. It was wrong to think test scores were everything, and it was also wrong to think test scores were totally useless. Such a mixed view was manifested in the dilemma that Yun often came across when making decisions about what to teach and how to teach it. She wanted her students to learn English as a functional tool, but she did not want them to do so at the risk of underachievement in tests. While trying to find a balanced
position for her mixed view on teaching for tests, she passed to her students the message that they should study for tests but they should not study just for tests:

_The message I have always wanted to pass to my students is that the test is just one of the learning goals, and there are other goals as well. When they are not doing well in a test, I would talk to them individually, helping them to see what problems they have. I want to pass my view on to them through what I do. My point is that the test is compulsory and no one can be exempt from it, but besides tests there is something else in my routine class. I hope they can get my point._ (Yun: 6-3-1)

When selecting the content to be covered in her class, Yun said she had two criteria which were directed to two different goals. One was topic-based and the other was test-based. Yun thought the two orientations were both important, but she could not combine them well in classroom teaching. In order to save time for test-oriented teaching, she had to skip many interesting activities suggested in the textbook, which upset her:

_I felt upset yesterday. The time was so constrained that I had to cut many things. I felt my teaching was so chaotic that it had lost its logical sense. But I had no choice. This is the way things are. I have to pick the most important part and cut all the rest. My teaching is pretty much test-centred._ (Yun: 6-3-3)

Purely test-centred teaching was observed in one lesson where Yun prepared students for an upcoming test (Yun: O-7). As the test outcome would be compared and ranked among students as well as schools, Yun felt obliged to attune her teaching for testing purposes. At the beginning of the class, Yun wrote on the blackboard “Seconds count!”, and told students to gather themselves for the coming test. Throughout the class, Yun was explaining the items on a simulated test paper that students had completed not long ago. Students were given little time for discovery or questions. Teacher-student interaction was different from the usual style, with a sole focus on the explanation of how to get correct answers for the items. Yun admitted in the post-observation interview that she “was exhausted after talking too much and too fast” (Yun: 6-2-3). She found it hard to drop the practice of explaining test items in class, as it was helpful to the lower-achieving students:

_For those who know how to study, they can check the answers after class or at home. They will find me if they have questions. They don’t need me to explain the test from the beginning to the end. But for those lower-achieving students, they need the teacher’s guidance. If they are attentive in class, they will probably get more correct answers. Otherwise, they would lose marks. That’s the best I can do to help them._ (Yun: 6-2-3)
Despite all the confusion and tensions, Yun has always tried to make compromises by incorporating opposing orientations in the selection of teaching content, as she said:

_I will make sure my teaching is organized around a main thread, which is the topic. Texts that are relevant to the topic will be selected. Texts or exercises that are not so relevant will be cut. As I also have test-oriented goals, things that are highly relevant to the test will be selected with priority._ (Yun: 6-3-4)

Yun admitted that balancing between the topic-oriented goals and test-oriented goals had been one of the biggest challenges in her teaching, as she found it very difficult to squeeze both into the curriculum, which is already very crowded, and she may not always make the correct decisions as to which to cut in order to keep the other (Yun: 7-9-1).

6.2.4 School English should be relevant to students’ real life.

Yun’s belief that school English should be relevant to real-life English is more strongly identified in her interview data than in her observation data. She expressed such conviction more frequently in speech than in action. Although this belief is supported by data of Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence, it is not as evident as the other beliefs.

Yun’s belief in teaching real-life English was mainly expressed in her appreciation of the new textbook. The reason for such preference was because “it [the new series of textbooks] was organized by themes that were more closely related to students’ real lives” (Yun: 2-3-5). She saw how such strong relevance had an impact on students’ productive performance:

_If you let the students talk about a topic, they will surely do better than students in previous years. They have a bigger vocabulary and a repertoire of more sentence structures. They will speak better. And they will write better as well, probably because they have seen more theme-related words and are more exposed to English as it is used in real life. Sometimes I am surprised with what they write in a writing task. Some students can produce really good sentences, which are even beyond my knowledge._ (Yun: 2-4-1)

The use of the new textbook made it easier for her to emphasize the relevance, although to a limited extent. For instance, before she taught the unit on “National stereotypes” (Yun: O-4), she had a brief conversation with students, asking them to name as many foreign countries in English as they could. She did not go on with discussions that were more open, such as
foreign countries they wanted to visit the most or national stereotypes they had heard about. Another instance occurred in the teaching of another unit “Jobs”, when she encouraged students to apply the sample job-application letter to the election of Student Union members that was happening then (Yun: O-6).

In her interview, Yun expressed her regret at not stressing the connection between school English and students’ real life as much as she had planned due to the tight schedule (Yun: 5-4-3). If time allows, she would like to give students more project-based assignment. She described how she was impressed by what the students came up with in a project assignment in the previous semester:

*The curricular schedule is so tight this semester that we don't have time for any project assignments, which is a great pity. We did it a couple of times last semester. I remember we had a unit about advertisements, and I asked them to design an advertisement about anything in any form. Some groups did it so well. At that time, H1N1 flu was epidemic. One group borrowed the name of H1N1 and used it as the brand of some canned food -- H stood for health and N stood for nutrition. I was impressed.* (Yun: 5-5-3)

Having noticed the growing communicative needs among her students in recent years, Yun was aware that communicative-based teaching fitted the needs of some students who planned to go abroad to work, study or live. However, she also admitted that such a population change had put her under great pressure as she no longer felt as authoritative as she used to be:

*Some of my students are better at English than me. They usually had a few years’ experience in an English-speaking country when they were young. In recent years, I have seen more and more junior ROC (returned overseas Chinese) students in my class. This has put great pressure on us teachers. Other students who haven’t had such a background are nowadays more exposed to all kinds of English on the Internet. They have received a lot of English input. When I am teaching, I feel under a lot of pressure. For example, when I say something, my students would tell me how they would say it differently. Sometimes they ask me a word which I have never seen. Their vocabulary is even bigger than me. I have some students who are just like native speakers. They have lived abroad since kindergarten and only returned two years ago. Their Chinese is not as good as that of their peers, but their English is very fluent.* (Yun: 1-4-3)
6.2.5 EFL teaching should be contextually appropriate.

Yun’s belief in contextually proper pedagogy was easily and strongly identified in various categories of data, including Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence. This variety of data support suggested that this belief might be one of the most important beliefs of all.

Yun was aware that the local EFL context was changing significantly. For instance, Beijing was becoming more international, especially the urban areas (Yun: 7-1-1). The school where she worked provided more exchange opportunities for both teachers and students (Yun: 7-1-2). Her students came from a more international background and were more exposed to the outside world through virtual or non-virtual reality (Yun: 7-1-5). The textbook, with up-to-date topics and well-written language samples, took on a more international outlook as well (Yun: 7-4-2). As for herself, she found that the cross-cultural experience she had had on the job or with her family had helped her become more open-minded and more willing to accept new concepts about education (Yun: 7-1-3).

However, she also realized that the contextual change had not taken place thoroughly, as she sounded conservative when talking about the discrepancies created by the change in various aspects. From a socioeconomic perspective, she saw the development as being unbalanced among different regions, especially between the central urban areas and the remote rural areas. Rural areas remained a closed setting for EFL education (Yun: 7-1-1). From the institutional perspective, she saw School A, more open as it had become, as still administered in a traditional way and remaining a closed setting (Yun: 7-1-2). From the students’ perspective, despite their vision of a more globalized future, she saw them as still too used to the Chinese-style study methods or habits to become creative or to show initiative immediately (Yun: 7-1-4). Finally, she had changed her mind about EFL teaching, she found herself much constrained by the test-oriented goals in the current teaching and by the fear of teaching things unfamiliar to her (Yun: 7-5-6). She was looking forward to the day when English was taken out of the high-stake test, which would justify her decision to make bigger changes in her teaching (Yun: 7-4-4).

With the context becoming more varied and students’ learning needs becoming more divergent, Yun had realized that traditional pedagogy could no longer work well for all, but she had not found an ideal replacement yet. She was attracted by the idea of communicative
language teaching and would like to try out a bit of it in her class. However, she doubted that absolute adoption of this approach would work well in the local setting without modification. This view was shown in her comments about what she had observed in ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes in the U.S.:

*The good thing about this visit was that I had seen different teaching methods. There (in the U.S.), the class size was about 10-15 students. The biggest class had 17 students. I was impressed with the teacher’s efforts to engage each student in a way that made them feel he was really trying to help. I had seen many good methods being used. But when I thought back, those methods could only be used in small-sized classes. We have 40 students in a class. It is impossible to achieve the same effect here. But I was so inspired by the idea of engaging students as much as possible that I would like to try out some group work once in a while. I should modify it so it could be used in big classes. (Yun: 7-15-4)*

Yun believed it was important to seek local solutions for contextually appropriate pedagogy. She was open-minded towards new approaches and concepts, but insisted that pedagogical implementation should follow the principle of 因地制宜 [yīn dì zhì yí, a Chinese idiom which means to define appropriateness with context-specific considerations], because “what worked well in foreign cultures may not fit the Chinese context” (Yun: 7-15-3).

### 6.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Yun’s beliefs about English

Coexistence of conflicting beliefs is identified in Yun’s beliefs about English. She agrees with both the view of English as a linguistic object and that of English as a communicative tool, but has difficulties in integrating both orientations into her classroom teaching. Unlike Jing, who swings between the two orientations, Yun is more consistent in delivering form-focused instruction without giving much room to casual discussion. She believes the classroom setting is more conducive to students’ mastery of linguistic knowledge, while communicative ability should be developed in communicative settings outside the classroom.

Yun has managed to find a common ground for the two orientations, which is an information-based view of English. Her belief data have shown that she perceives English both as linguistically organized information as well as a medium of interpersonal communication. The study of linguistic knowledge can be seen as the development of information-processing
skills, and the discussion of real-life topics can be seen as a practice of information exchange. In other words, she sees EFL teaching as both an organizational act and a social act. She aims for relevance, efficiency and effectiveness for the organizational aspect of teaching, and aims for engagement and interaction for the social aspect of teaching. In this way, she is able to conduct her teaching with a higher level of consistency.

Although Yun shares some beliefs with Jing, the Yin-Yang nature of her beliefs is somewhat different from his. Table 6.1 summarizes the three-level Yin-Yang interplay within each of her beliefs.

Table 6.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Yun’s beliefs about English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Data code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
<th>Yin-Yang code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English is a rule-based linguistic system. (Rule discovery)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y_{222}; Y_{221}; Y_{212}; [-]Y_{211}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EFL teaching is about teacher-student interaction. (Teacher-student interaction)</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{222}; Y_{212}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{122}; Y_{112}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system. (Compliance with the test-oriented system)</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y_{222}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>School English should be relevant to students’ real life. (Relevance to real life)</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{212}; Y_{112}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EFL teaching should be contextually appropriate. (Conviction in favour of contextual appropriateness)</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{222}; Y_{212}; Y_{122}; Y_{112}; [-]Y_{211}; [-]Y_{111}; [-]Y_{121}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

120
(1) *English is a rule-based linguistic system.*

**Context:** This belief is largely rooted in Yun’s own learning experience, which mostly took place in institutional settings where English only serves academic purposes. Her views in this regard are mostly associated with her efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of EFL learning. Related contextual factors include the time constraint and a form-focused evaluation system, both of which are typical features of EFL contexts. Thus, the contextual meaning of this belief pertains to *Yin.*

**Content:** When selecting content to present English as a rule-based system, Yun mostly focuses on linguistic information that needs some sort of processing efforts, such as classifying words according to derivational patterns or identifying the rules of a particular grammatical structure. She also uses topic-loaded texts as materials for training students’ listening and reading strategies. In this sense, the content of this belief is primarily *Yin* and secondarily *Yang.*

**Pedagogy:** The pedagogical manifestation of this belief is a mixture of *Yin* and *Yang* in two ways. The first type of mixture is termed “*Yang* approach with *Yin* rules”. When focusing on the teaching of linguistic rules, which are knowledge of a closed nature, Yun often leaves some room for the negotiation of meaning when she tries to help students with the inductive thinking needed to make sense of the linguistic system. She is keen to launch intellectual conversations with students, which are loaded with responses and feedback. Thus, the “closed” end of rule-based teaching (i.e. linguistic rules) falls into the *Yin* category, while the course along which Yun leads students to reach that end is somewhat open and dynamic and indicates some *Yang* elements. The second type of mixture is termed “*Yin* approach with *Yang* rules”. When the focus of teaching is on strategic rules, which involve knowledge of language use, Yun tends to adopt a transmission model to make sure such a rule-discovery process is well timed and controlled.

**Yin-Yang code:** A maximum of four trigrams are possibly identified in this belief. However, this belief is evident only in three trigrams: $Y_{222}$ (*Yin* context, *Yin* content, *Yin* pedagogy), $Y_{221}$ (*Yin* context, *Yin* content, *Yang* pedagogy), and $Y_{212}$ (*Yin* context, *Yang* content, *Yin* pedagogy). The missing trigram is $Y_{211}$ (marked with [-] in Table 6.1), which suggests the coherence between *Yang*-content and *Yang*-pedagogy. A possible reason for its absence is that the *Yang* aspect of Yun’s rule-discovery pedagogy applies to *Yin*-content only. She has
not been found implementing inductive methods when teaching communicative rules or strategies.

(2) **EFL teaching is about teacher-student interaction.**

**Context:** Yun has always good responses to her teaching, regardless of the communicative nature of the surrounding context. This belief is embedded with Yun’s understanding of a teacher’s job and has been a dominant one even in the years when the local context heavily emphasized test-oriented goals. She finds the teacher-student interaction essential to keep her motivated in teaching, and tries to avoid making monologues in class. Such an interactive mode is frequently observed in her class where students are encouraged to make oral responses, although most of the in-class conversations are linguistically focused. It can be assumed that Yun would keep doing so in the circumstances that her perceptions about the communicative aspect of the local context have increased. Therefore, her conviction in favour of a good teacher-student relationship is contextually defined as a mixture of Yin and Yang.

**Content:** The content that Yun selects for teacher-student interaction is found to be mainly textbook-based and lacking in topical discussion. Most of the time, she is engaging students in linguistically-loaded conversations with a focus on words, grammar or textual comprehension. Discussion, although interactive in its outlook, contains little communicative practice. Yun often skips speaking activities suggested in the textbook in order to ensure time for linguistic study. This emphasis on the linguistic aspect of English is indicative of Yin quality. However, Yun has expressed her willingness to make use of the functional content in the textbook once she feels a reduced degree of test pressure. Although weakly evident, her attempts in this regard are seen in her classroom teaching (e.g. how to write an application letter), which is indicative of Yang quality. Therefore, the content perception of this teacher-student belief is primarily Yin and secondarily Yang.

**Pedagogy:** In terms of the pedagogy concerning teacher-student interaction, Yun mainly sticks to form-focused instruction throughout her classes. Apart from the rule-discovery discussions, she is often found using L1 to give explicit explanations while teaching grammar. Although she has stronger willingness to try out more communicative teaching if time allows, she does so mostly in the designing of communicative tasks, such as the information-gap activity on national stereotypes and the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of
traditional schools and alternative schools. Her interaction in the implementation of these tasks is, however, absent in the observation data. In this case, the pedagogical meaning of this belief is judged as Yin only.

**Yin-Yang code:** Although Yun is open-minded enough to accept new changes to the context and the content, she insists on form-focused pedagogy. Thus, the Yin-Yang pattern of this belief falls into four trigrams: Y\textsubscript{222} (Yin context, Yin content, Yin pedagogy), Y\textsubscript{212} (Yin context, Yang content, Yin pedagogy), Y\textsubscript{122} (Yang context, Yin content, Yin pedagogy) and Y\textsubscript{112} (Yang context, Yang content, Yin pedagogy).

(3) **EFL teaching should comply with the test-oriented system.**

**Context:** Despite her mixed attitudes towards the current testing system, Yun has felt it is a reality that cannot be over-compromised. She finds it as difficult to disagree completely with the long-standing testing culture as to agree completely with it. As long as the context remains heavily test-oriented and test scores are still important to students for academic purposes, it would be wrong not to switch to the teach-for-tests mode. Therefore, this belief pertains to Yin at context level.

**Content:** The content base of this belief is a reflection of the content base of tests that Yun and her students are preparing for. Still in the conventional format, these tests mainly consist of multiple-choice items of vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension. The key to successful performance in these tests is an accuracy-based mastery of linguistic knowledge. Without a speaking component, they are hardly communicative. Therefore, the content base of Yun’s belief in teaching for tests is largely Yin.

**Pedagogy:** When catering for the testing purposes of her teaching, Yun mostly adopts the traditional transmission models with a sole focus on linguistic forms. She lays exclusive emphasis on the accuracy of test items, such as checking lexical meaning, giving explicit explanation of grammatical structures, and offering translation to improve students’ comprehension. All these behaviours are recognized as Yin pedagogy.

**Yin-Yang code:** As all three levels are consistently Yin, the analysis results in only one trigram – Y\textsubscript{222}, which stands for Yin-context, Yin-content and Yin-pedagogy.
(4) School English should be relevant to students’ real life.

**Context:** The context in which this belief is held is more associated with Yun’s awareness of the growing needs for English-mediated communication. To her, the appearance of real-life topics in the textbook is a progressive divorce from the older ones which did not emphasize authenticity or practicality. Although the enhanced relevance to students’ real life may not help improve their test scores, Yun still thinks it is a positive change she is happy to see. Therefore, *Yang* is assigned to the context level of this belief.

**Content:** As for the content, Yun shows her appreciation of the new textbook which provides many real-life topics and language samples that can be used in real communication situations. She does not think she needs to look elsewhere to find more. Use of the communicative-based textbook implies *Yang*-oriented content.

**Pedagogy:** Yun does not treat the materials as being for communication purposes only. She first uses them for linguistic study or strategy training, and would then use them for some meaning-focused instruction only if time allowed. If she feels time-constrained, she will surely prioritize the teaching on linguistic forms and cut that on meaning. For example, after she finished teaching a lesson on job application letters, she gave students an assignment to write an application letter for a position in the school’s students’ union. Therefore, both *Yin* and *Yang* are identified in Yun’s teaching with regard to its connection to real life.

**Yin-Yang code:** Yun’s belief in the relevance of school English to real-life English resides in her perception of a context that increasingly requires English-mediated information exchange (*Yang*) and her preference for teaching materials that address the emerging needs of communication (*Yang*). However, she often feels at loss when it comes to pedagogical implementation. She intuitively holds on to traditional pedagogy (*Yin*), but there is evidence showing her increasing momentum in making her teaching more communicative (*Yang*). Such a pattern generates two trigrams, which are Y112 (*Yang* context, *Yang* content, *Yin* pedagogy) and Y111 (*Yang* context, *Yang* content, *Yang* pedagogy).

(5) EFL teaching should be contextually appropriate.

**Context:** The belief in seeking local solutions for EFL teaching has developed out of Yun’s experience in different contexts. The initial context, in which she grew up to be an English
learner, was academically oriented and had little relevance to local life. Since then, after she settled down in Beijing as an English teacher, the nature of her contact with English has become divergent. On the one hand, English still remains an important subject in the curriculum, but on the other hand, it has more relevance to the reality of Beijing’s development into an international city. The traditional non-communicative context is being broken into a divergent context with unevenly distributed opportunities for English use, and this divergent context indicates intensified interplay between Yin and Yang, with Yang rising against Yin.

**Content:** Although Yun agrees with the inclusion of real-life topics in the textbook, she is cautious not to let the content change affect her teaching routine. Feeling constrained by the institutional context (such as the limited study time and the test pressure), she defines the subject matter of English mainly as linguistic knowledge (Yin) and teaches with a concern for efficiency and effectiveness. Meanwhile, there is weak evidence for her selection of Yang content, which is largely textbook-based. She seldom initiates casual discussion or brings in extracurricular materials. Therefore, in line with her mixed perceptions about the context, the selection of content also shows mixed signs of Yin and Yang.

**Pedagogy:** The belief in contextually appropriate pedagogy implies an open attitude towards teaching methods of different paradigms and is often manifested in an eclectic approach. For Yun, it is as rational to transmit what is to be tested in a test-oriented context as to communicate what is to be communicated in a communicative context. Thus, both Yin-pedagogy and Yang-pedagogy are justified in her beliefs. However, she is more conservative about pedagogical implementation, compared to contextual perceptions and content selection. Not convinced of the effectiveness of the communicative approach for students’ test-taking performance, Yun prefers to stick to form-focused instruction, with which she feels more confident and comfortable, until she has found other better alternatives. On the whole, her pedagogy primarily pertains to Yin.

**Yin-Yang code:** In this belief, both Yin and Yang elements are found in all the three concepts, which allows for the possibility of multiple codes. Out of the eight trigrams, five are identified in Yun’s data set (namely Y222, Y212, Y122, Y112, and Y221). Evidence of the other three trigrams (Y211, Y111 and Y121, which are marked with [-] in Table 6.1) is missing. Such a Yin-Yang pattern reveals a number of features regarding Yun’s conviction in favour of contextually appropriate pedagogy. First, the presence of all four trigrams entailing Yin-
pedagogy (those ending with 2 - Y_{222}, Y_{212}, Y_{122} and Y_{112}) provides positive evidence for Yun’s strong adherence to traditional methods. She is likely to implement Yin-style pedagogy regardless of considerations related to context or content. Secondly, the presence of a single trigram ending with 1 (i.e. Y_{221}) suggests that Yun’s Yang-pedagogy is always situated in Yin-context and based on Yin-content. It reveals her rationalistic ideas about English teaching; there should be some practical reasons for the allocation of class time to “simply let students talk”. If the talk cannot help students with their academic records, it should not be used as it is a waste of time in an academic setting. Finally, the three missing trigrams (Y_{211}, Y_{111} and Y_{121}), all ending with 1 which stands for Yang-pedagogy, provides supporting evidence of Yun’s conservative teaching style. Although she is mentally ready to develop a more communicative approach, her action seems to lag behind.

(6) Summary

![Diagram of Yun's beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model](image-url)

Figure 6.2 Yun’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model
Yun’s beliefs about English within the proposed eight-trigram model are shown in Figure 6.2, from which emerge a number of features, as summarized below:

1. Yun’s beliefs are found in both trigrams indicating *Yin*-context (those with initial digit 2, such as Y_{222}, Y_{221} and Y_{212}) as well as *Yang*-context (those with initial digit 1, such as Y_{111}, Y_{112}, Y_{122}), which suggests that she has an open mind to the changes taking place in the local setting.

2. Beliefs identified in *Yin*-context trigrams (Y_{222}, Y_{221} and Y_{212}) have a higher frequency and density than those found in *Yang*-context trigrams (Y_{122}, Y_{112} and Y_{111}), which means *Yin*-context beliefs are held more strongly than *Yang*-context ones. In other words, although both communicative functions and non-communicative functions of English are justifiable in the local context, Yun believes that EFL teaching is fundamentally to help students with academic goals.

3. Among the eight trigrams, the most frequently marked one is Y_{222}, which provides further evidence of the fundamental status of *Yin*-loaded beliefs in Yun’s case. It makes great sense to her to adopt the right methods to teach the right content for the right purpose. Such coherence helps with teaching effectiveness and efficiency, and thus is likely to be held with strong conviction.

4. *Yin-Yang* tension is identified at all the three levels. For instance, contextual tension exists in the juxtaposition of Y_{212} and Y_{112}, or Y_{222} and Y_{122} (both pairs vary in the initial digit, which stands for context). Co-existence of Y_{222} and Y_{212}, or Y_{112} and Y_{122} (both pairs vary in the middle digit, which stands for content) suggests perceptual tension in the selection of content. In addition, pedagogical tension is found in the pair of Y_{111} and Y_{112}, or Y_{221} and Y_{222} (both vary in the final digit, which stands for pedagogy). Such a loose and seemingly chaotic pattern, which is well exemplified in Yun’s divided beliefs about contextual appropriateness, suggests confusion about the diverging context from which tensions are perceived without a good sense of balance.

5. Yun’s efforts to maintain the *Yin-Yang* balance are shown in three trigrams: Y_{112}, Y_{212} and Y_{221}. A high frequency of beliefs in Y_{112} and Y_{212} describes her routine practice of “teaching *Yang* content in a *Yin* approach”, which indicates her adherence to pedagogy with a focus on linguistic knowledge. A lower frequency of beliefs in Y_{221} describes her tentative trial of “teaching *Yin* content in a *Yang* approach” by encouraging students to
think about linguistic patterns and talk about linguistic rules instead of telling them directly what those rules are. With these two types of Yin-Yang interaction, Yun’s position seems to be a balanced or compromised one between the position of teaching English as objectified knowledge through mechanical drill (teaching Yin-content through Yin-pedagogy) and the position of teaching English as a communicative tool through functional uses (teaching Yang-content through Yang-pedagogy).
7. Yao’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

In my view, language is just like water. No matter where you put it, in a glass, a mug or a lunchbox, it remains the same in quality and in quantity. Teachers should encourage students to experiment using it in different situations. (Yao: 4-5-1)

7.1 Yao’s profile

By the time Yao participated in this study, he had been teaching English at secondary schools for 30 years. For twenty-six years, he worked at a key secondary school in the capital city of a neighbouring province to Beijing. In 2006, in order to stay closer to his son, who was admitted to Beijing University, Yao took a job offer from School B, which was a rural, non-key secondary school in the Huairou District of Beijing.

Yao’s becoming an English teacher was a reward for his talent and diligence. Growing up in a rural area, he started learning English from the second year of his junior secondary schooling with a teacher who herself had learned it for no more than three months. English teaching at that time was mainly about sentence drills or memorizing words, which Yao recalled as “very boring” (Yao: 1-1-1). It did not take him long to realize that, compared to his classmates, he could memorize words more easily and read the texts more fluently. He became more interested in learning English and began to extend his learning beyond textbook study with the help of his “incompetent but very nice” teacher, who kept feeding him with tertiary-level English books she had borrowed from the library and encouraged him to watch English-teaching programmes on TV, such as Xu Guozhang English and Follow Me (Yao: 1-2-1).

In the second year of his senior secondary education, Yao entered the finals of a regional English speaking competition. His performance caught the attention of one of the judges, who immediately offered him a place at a top-ranking key school in the capital city of the province. Yao left the rural school and enrolled in the urban school, where he was recognized as a talented English student. He studied English with greater interest, motivation and enthusiasm. Yao revealed in the interview that this competition had changed his destiny and
this judge, who was an expert on English and an excellent teacher himself, had greatly influenced his career choice (Yao: 3-7-2).

Inspired by his new English teacher whom he admired very much, Yao chose to major in English at a prestigious normal university. Upon graduation, he returned to a city near his hometown and became an English teacher at a local key secondary school. Not until then did Yao begin reflecting on the pedagogical aspects of his teaching job. In one of the interviews he explained why he benefitted very little from the pre-service programme:

*We did have a Pedagogy course in the final year, which was offered as if it were something that we had to learn. With little hands-on experience, you wouldn’t be able to make sensible judgements and you had to follow the rules without knowing whether they were right or not. Only after I started teaching in the field, did I gradually understand what teaching really meant. (Yao: 3-8-1)*

Yao did not regard pedagogical knowledge as something that could be directly transmitted; instead, he believed it was generated from situated experience and co-constructed with his students. When he was still a novice teacher, Yao decided not to follow any established methodology, but to commit himself to exploring appropriate methods for the students with his own understanding (Yao: 1-6-3). His innovative teaching proved to be very successful since his students would always perform far above average in tests.

Yao did not receive a formal postgraduate education on language teaching, but he was keen to attend teacher training programmes or workshops. He also had a brief encounter with English-speaking countries when, in 2005, he paid a one-week visit to the U.K. as part of a public-funded teacher development programme.

### 7.2 Yao’s core beliefs about English

Despite the conservative background in which he had developed as a teacher, Yao was by no means a traditional practitioner. For instance, he did not believe in teaching for tests or treating English as a lifeless object. His teaching style, described by his colleagues as 曲高和寡 [qǔ gāo hè guǎ, a Chinese idiom which means *highbrow songs have fewer people in chorus*], was admired by many but followed by few. Below are five beliefs that have
repeatedly occurred in interviews and have been evident in his classroom practices. A summary of Yao’s beliefs and their data codes is available in Table 4.7 and Table 7.1.

7.2.1 English should be learned by use and for use.

Yao firmly believed that the ultimate goal of EFL learning was to be able to use the target language and it was teachers’ responsibility to provide students with abundant language-use opportunities. With evidence from data in support of this belief found in the categories of Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence, this seemed to be the overarching belief of Yao’s pedagogical ideas. It was repeatedly emphasized in each of his interviews. The quote below is selected as an example:

"It is my pedagogical principle that all language knowledge, including grammar and vocabulary, must be learned through repetitive use. It won’t be picked up by students if delivered in lectures once or twice. ... We teachers must try our best to provide them with a good platform on which they can practise using the language. (Yao: 2-1-1)"

Yao said his teaching was all about “helping students learn the language by means of maximizing the extent to which they feel free to use it” (Yao: 3-1-2). This was evident in observations of his classes. In every class, he would design at least one task in which students were encouraged to use what they had learned (grammatical structures, new words, or textual information) from previous lessons. For instance, he asked students to retell a breath-taking sea story after the teaching of a short novel authored by Edgar Allan Poe (Yao: O-1), plan an adventurous hike after the teaching of a hiking advertisement (Yao: O-3), or play a word-guessing game after finishing the teaching of a whole unit (Yao: O-4). He believed that students should be given the opportunity to provide output as early as possible, and their learning potential should not be underestimated:

"Students should be given opportunities to use the language. With a given topic and some basic knowledge, they are ready to use it. Teachers should let them explore with the language. (Yao: 4-3-1)"

In order to maximize the time for language use, Yao had to minimize the time for other aspects of language teaching, especially mechanical language drills. As well as a clear idea of what to do, Yao also had a clear mind about what not to do. A number of “not-to-do’s” were
identified in his interviews, which were logically absent in observations. For example, Yao explained why he avoided doing word-dictation in class:

While doing word-dictation, the teacher is actually passing a message to students that the words are to be learned by rote. Students will learn these words as if they were dead knowledge. I would not use dictation if I want them to memorize a word. For example, to teach the word “desk”, I would write it on the blackboard and ask students to expand it freely. They may write “two desks”, “new desk” or “our desk”. All are acceptable answers. As long as the expansion is going on, students are using the word. Other colleagues once raised doubts on my teaching by asking “how can your students learn words well if you don't do dictation?” I don’t think dictation is the only way or the best way to memorize new words, because students will only know how to spell the word, “d-e-s-k, desk, desk”, but they still don’t know how to use it. (Yao: 3-1-2)

Yao said that his teaching style remained unchanged even when he was teaching students of senior grade 3 prior to the university entrance test. Instead of filling the lesson with multiple-choice grammar exercises, he would provide new situations for students to use target structures (Yao: 2-6-2).

The belief that “English should be learned by use and for use” seemed to be held by Yao with great strength as one of his core beliefs. It was derived from his personal experience and was enhanced by his students’ successful performance in tests. Two episodes were identified as EC data in support of this use-oriented view.

I think English is useful, as it indicates the development of a modern society. Take my son for example. He has recently served as a student volunteer at two international conferences. One is the World Climate Change Conference. He worked in the organizing committee, sitting in the very front row and meeting people from all over the world. So I think it is worthwhile to learn English. You may not know when you are going to use it, but if you are well prepared, you will have chances to use it. (Yao: 1-3-3)

It is commonly held by many that it is useless to study English. I don’t agree. During this Spring Festival, one of my nephews came to visit me. He was already in his 30s and his child was already a primary student. To my surprise, he asked me how to learn English. I asked him why he wanted to learn English at this age, as I remembered having told him, when he was a young college student, that it was very important to learn a foreign language well, but he ignored my advice. After graduation he went to Beijing to work at a construction company. In recent years, he has had more joint-venture projects on his hands. Without good English, he found it
difficult to communicate with his foreign partners and clients. So he wanted to pick up his English again. I told him that he should have studied harder when he was young, and now he felt the need to use it but it was already too late. (Yao: 1-8-2)

Unlike Jing, Yao’s academic success was based not on test scores, but on his passion for learning and his ability to speak English. He had always believed that English teaching should be detached from tests, even the high-stake ones, because they were distant from real-life communication and emphasized accuracy to an unnecessary extent (Yao: 4-3-2). He also firmly held that teaching for language-use purposes did not necessarily contradict teaching for test purposes. In his view, these two sets of goals were hierarchical rather than competitive. The former would fulfil higher-level goals than the latter, which meant “if students understand how language is used, they would automatically be ready for any kind of tests, but not vice versa” (Yao: 4-6-4). It was clear that use-oriented teaching was placed in absolute priority in Yao’s pedagogical beliefs and was highly consistent with his classroom practices.

7.2.2 English should be used with relevance to students’ real life.

Closely related to Yao’s principle of “teaching English in use and for use” was his belief in the relevance of language-use activities to students’ real life, as expressed in the following quote:

When you design language-use activities, you should connect them with students’ real life so that they find it easier to be responsive and productive. Learning will then be a matter of 水到渠成 [shuǐ dào qú chéng, a Chinese idiom which literally means “a canal is formed when water comes” and metaphorically means “when conditions are ripe, achievements will come without extra efforts”]. (Yao: 4-5-4)

Yao had a clear idea of what he meant by “real life”. He defined it as the tangible reality in which he and his students were situated. As he saw it, relevance to real life meant that English should be used to talk about local topics and students’ world knowledge should be maximally involved. Abundant data of Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence were identified in his case. In his classroom teaching, he was frequently observed building such relevance in the form of improvised teacher-student dialogues or specially designed activities. For instance, an unexpectedly strong gale took
place one night and Yao included this event in his class the next day, as shown in Excerpt 7-1 below (Yao: O-3):

**Excerpt 7-1**

1. T: What was the weather like last night?
2. Ss: Windy.
3. T: Windy. Did you sleep well?
4. Ss: No.
5. T: Were you terrified?
6. (Mixed answers of “yes” and “no” from students)
7. T: Wang was terrified. She was afraid of the wind. Was it a storm?
8. Ss: No.
9. T: No. Just strong… (Ss join in) wind. (T turns to a student) How did you feel?
10. S1: Happy.
11. T: Happy? (Ss laugh. T turns to another student) S2, how did you feel?
12. S2: I feel… it was terrified.
13. T: Terrifying or terrified?
15. T: (to S2) You feel terrified. Can you give us more information?
16. S2: I didn’t like the wind.
17. T: Wind is only one part of last night’s weather. S3, how did you feel about last night’s weather?
18. S3: I don’t know.
19. T: You don’t know? You can say “I feel…” If you don’t know, perhaps you are happy. (Ss laugh)
20. T: (to another student) S4, what about you?
21. S4: I feel… last night the wind was very strong. I was scared.
22. T: You were scared of the strong wind?
23. S4: Yes.
24. T: Could you sleep very well?
25. S4: Yes. (Ss laugh) Oh, no.
26. T: So you couldn’t sleep very well?
27. S4: No.
29. S4: No, I mean I didn’t sleep well.
30. T: Why you didn’t sleep well?
31. S4: Because the wind was terrible.
32. T: Yes, terrible wind. Can you use new words to describe this?
33. Ss: Frightening.
34. T: Frightening. Another word?
35. Ss: Horrible.
36. T: Yes, horrible. Can you remember?
37. Ss: Yes.
38. T: (raising his voice) Horrible.
39. Ss: (in chorus) Horrible.
40. T: Horrible.
By engaging students in a casual conversation on the topic of the bad weather, Yao meant to raise students’ awareness of new words they had recently learned in real-life situations. While doing so, he also tried to make the communicative interaction intertwined with some knowledge-teaching aspects, which included both vocabulary and grammar. As indicated by the parts underlined with wavy lines (Lines 7, 15, 22, 32, 34, and 36), Yao encouraged students to express their fear or panic with synonymous words such as terrible, terrifying, terrified, be afraid of, be scared of, frightening and horrible. It was his belief that words could be more easily remembered when students felt a need to use them, and that students’ vocabulary repertoire could be gradually and steadily expanded by creating semantic associations between words to be learned and words that had already been learned. In this short dialogue, there were two instances marked with straight lines (Line 13 and Line 28), when Yao attended to grammar. At Line 13, Yao was correcting the student’s error regarding the different grammatical meaning of present participles (-ing) and past participles (-ed). At Line 28, he raised students’ attention to the proper answer to a negative checking question.

Another example of making English learning close to students’ life experience was found in a class in which Yao was teaching a text entitled “What’s in the papers?” (Yao: O-11). He designed an ‘output’ activity in which students were to apply what they had just taken in from the passage. This activity consisted of three steps. It began with some brainstorming questions, such as “Do you often read newspapers? Why?” and “What is often reported in the newspapers?” In their answers, students talked about their opinions about newspapers and their reading habits. Answers to the first question included “I’m not interested in newspapers”, “I read newspapers because I want to know something about the world and I want to know what happened this day”, “I think reading newspaper can increase our knowledge”, and “reading newspaper can help me learn new vocabulary and expand my horizon”. To answer the second question, students also talked about what they had seen in newspapers, such as “local events, famous people, big sports, and also some information about TV programmes”. Next, Yao distributed some Chinese newspapers among students with the instruction that “You have one minute to read it and tell me what’s in the papers in English”. After a while,
Yao asked students to write down their answers on the blackboard. Soon the blackboard was full of students’ handwriting. For example, one group wrote:

① The name of the newspaper
② News about Beijing
③ Lost and found
④ Ads
⑤ Dates
⑥ weather

As a closing step, Yao asked a representative from each group to clarify and explain the answers their groups had produced. He provided support when students fell short of English words in speaking. Yao spent 14 minutes on this activity, which was almost one third of a class. He believed it was worthwhile to engage students in productive activities that had some connection to their life experience, and that students would become more motivated if English was presented as something around them and about them.

However, he was surprised to find that this belief in relevance was not shared by other EFL teachers, or at least not to the same degree of primacy as in his case. In the interview conducted shortly after he had returned to the school from a national teaching competition, he made some critical comments on the absence of real-life awareness in the showcase lessons given by contestant teachers:

> Most of the teachers in this competition failed to relate the textbook to real life. There was a class with the topic of earthquakes. The teacher’s goal was to let students know about earthquakes as a disaster. The text was about Tangshan Earthquake, and he mainly focused on earthquake-related words occurring in the text. But he did not even mention the Wenchuan Earthquake or the Haiti Earthquake, which happened in much more recent years. He should have asked students to use what they had learned to say something about more recent earthquakes. … If I had a chance to speak to this teacher, I would tell him that our teaching should not be entirely confined to the textbook. Without this text, would our students not know anything about earthquakes,

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32 The Tangshan Earthquake was a natural disaster that occurred on Wednesday, July 28, 1976. It is believed to be the largest earthquake of the 20th century by death toll.
33 The Wenchuan earthquake, also known as the Great Sichuan Earthquake, occurred on Monday, May 12, 2008 in Sichuan province, killing over 70,000 people, with about 20,000 more missing.
34 The Haiti Earthquake broke out on 12 January, 2010. According to reports of the Haitian Government, over 316,000 people were identified as dead, an estimated 300,000 injured, and an estimated 1,000,000 homeless.
tsunamis or hurricanes? Their knowledge does not come from English classes only. They already have lots of common knowledge in their mind. In our teaching, we should make use of their existing knowledge and help them talk about it in accurate English. (Yao: 4-2-2)

In bringing students’ world knowledge into his teaching, Yao was grappling with the principle of re-contextualizing English with local awareness. He believed his teaching should be primarily situated in local context and should remain close to the life to which both teachers and learners were familiar. In other words, the teaching of English should become a local practice with a strong sense of contextual nativeness.

7.2.3 English should be made a source of enjoyment.

English, as Yao saw it, was a foreign language that had made him become more open-minded and more informed of the modern world (Yao: 1-9-6). With a positive attitude, Yao had enjoyed learning English throughout his time at school. After he had become a teacher, he worked with the commitment of making English learning an enjoyable experience to his students as well, or in his words, “teachers have to think hard in teaching so that students find it easy and fun in learning” (Yao: 1-6-4).

This belief was strongly supported by data of Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence. He strived to maximize language-use opportunities in class with creativity, which he believed was the key to keeping students interested in learning English. By creativity, he meant experimenting with new ideas in all aspects of EFL teaching, as suggested in the quote:

You can’t create a language, but you can create new ways of using the language to help students learn better and more easily. (Yao: 1-5-1).

In one observed class (Yao: O-4), Yao was noticed turning the study of wordlists into an interesting game. Students were divided into two groups. Yao started the game by asking one student in one group to select one word from the wordlists and then select one counterpart in the other group. The selecting student gave semantic clues about the selected word and the selected student had to guess which word it was. After this round of guessing, the selected student took the selecting role and started a new round by selecting another word from the
lists and another student from the opposing group. This game lasted for about 10 minutes with frequent bursts of laughter when students were giving funny clues or making funny guesses.

Meanwhile, Yao intentionally avoided using methods which students may become easily bored with, such as word-dictation, recitation of texts, or grammar exercises without a focus on meaning. Not only did he think these mechanical drills were “a waste of time” (Yao: 2-5-1; 2-6-2), but also “a hazard to students’ learning interest” (Yao: 2-5-2). For instance, he tried very hard to keep his grammar teaching from falling into tedium. He seldom spent time on grammar exercises in class; instead, he often innovated on language-use situations where students would naturally feel the need to employ a particular grammatical structure. A supporting example occurred on a snowy day in the first week of my visit, when Yao was teaching the sea-adventure unit with the target structure of relative clauses. In an interview, Yao briefly recalled how he made use of the heavy snow to create a lively grammar lesson:

_The students got up at six o’clock in the morning, when it was snowing. They went to the playground, where they made a snowman or had a snowball fight. When you asked them to talk about the snow, they would naturally feel the need to use ‘when’ and ‘where’ to give information. They were reviewing relative clauses while having fun. (Yao: 4-6-4)_

With regard to the teaching of texts, Yao had established his own style with an emphasis on fun ways of using textual information. He would go over a passage at least twice. The focus of the first round was on the comprehension of texts, and in the second round the focus would shift to the implementation of post-reading tasks with some degree of novelty (Yao: 2-4-1). Yao recalled a successfully implemented task when he was teaching a passage in an older version of textbook at the key school:

_I was teaching a passage with the title ‘Walking in Space’. After the first round of reading, I let them do an interviewing task. I had prepared a hand-drawn picture of the astronaut. Students would ask questions to the person in front of whom the picture stood. If the picture was placed in front of me, they would also interview me. I still remember this class because the students asked really good questions, for example, “what kind of training had you received before this space-walk”, “how did you feel when you were walking in space”, etc. The students obviously enjoyed this activity, and their active participation also impressed me. (Yao: 3-2-2)_

According to Yao, English would be learned better if it was seen as a fun subject rather than a torment or burden. However, he was also aware that language teaching was not just about
making students happy. In other words, teaching should be neither too boring nor too shallow, and students as language learners should not be treated as if they did not have emotions or lack intelligence.

7.2.4 EFL pedagogy should be cognitively challenging.

Yao believed that students’ thinking ability should be taken into serious consideration in English teaching. More specifically, it was important to make students feel challenged so that they could develop cognitively while expanding their language knowledge. Again, data in support of this belief were frequently identified in multiple types of belief-action congruence, including Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence.

Because of this belief, Yao tried hard to keep his teaching cognitively challenging in his classroom practices. One of his criteria for selecting activities was that answers to be elicited should not be fixed or readily available in the book. In the quote below, he explained why he opted not to use the ready-made “ask and answer” activity to check students’ reading comprehension:

*I often see other teachers using the ready-made “ask and answer” activity to check students’ comprehension. I am not saying it is not useful at all; but it needs to be used with caution because it will produce lazy students. The teacher calls a student and the student finds the answer in the book, and then the teacher says “sit down please-yes-thank you”, and that’s all. I seldom do this in my class. The questions I ask often require my students to think before answering. If the answers are readily available in the book, they wouldn’t be thinking. That would be a waste of time. So, it’s not good and not effective. (Yao: 2-4-1)*

According to Yao, the ultimate goal of teaching was to empower students with freedom of expression, which meant teachers should use textbooks or other materials as a medium or springboard rather than an end product. Cognitively challenging tasks, which were often designed to deviate from routine pedagogy, allowed for free responses to a greater extent, pushing students to think harder and make active use of language samples that were being studied.
In one of the observed classes (Y: O-2), Yao was reviewing a sea story in Lesson Four, which was adapted from *A Descent into the Maelstrom* by Edgar Allan Poe. He did not use the five comprehension questions provided in the textbook because they could easily be answered with sentences in the passage and therefore were not challenging enough. Instead, he engaged students in an ask-and-answer conversation of an open-ended style. He began with questions about the result of the story, which could be extended in different directions according to students’ answers. The first student who answered this question mentioned the people in the story, and Yao continued with questions to elicit students’ responses describing these people. Then, Yao drew students’ attention on the key verbs of the stories by asking how the author saved himself. After students had hit on these verbs (e.g. *tie, float, dive*), they were asked to expand simple sentences into complex ones by adding relative clauses to the noun. As shown in Excerpt 7-2 below, Yao kept giving instruction to encourage students to increase the complexity of their oral production (see the underlined parts in Lines 2, 9-11, and 25-26).

**Excerpt 7-2**

1. T: Now, here, please pay more attention to sentences. (*writing on Bb “the boat” and “the barrel”*)
2. Now use your imagination, “the boat” and “the barrel”, go on please. According to what happened in the passage, the boat …
3. S3: The boat sank into the bottom of the sea.
4. T: Yes, the boat sank into the bottom of the sea. (*writing this sentence on Bb*). And the barrel?
5. S3: The barrel floated.
6. T: Just floated? The barrel floated on the sea? Or on the surface of the sea?
7. Ss: On the surface of the sea.
8. T: Can you just add more information to the sentence? Which boat sank into the bottom and which barrel floated on the surface? S4. Can you add another, another piece of information to the sentence according to the passage?
9. S4: The boat, which is so heavy …
10. T: (*putting a comma after “The boat”*) The boat which was so heavy -- it means waves covered the boat. Yes. In other words, there was a lot of water in the boat, so it was very heavy. Sit down please. S5?
11. S5: The boat, which his brothers are on …
12. T: The boat, which his brothers are on?
14. T: In. Or?
15. Ss: Stayed.
16. T: (*writing on Bb “his brother stayed”*) His brothers stayed … where?
17. Ss: In which.
floated on the surface of the sea”. Can you add something, some more information to the sentence? The barrel…The barrel… which barrel?

Ss: Tied himself to the barrel.

T: Yes, tied himself to the barrel. S6?

S6: The barrel in the boat which was made of wood.

T: Which was made of wood. Yes, anything else?

S6: The barrel, which the author tied himself to …

T: Very good. Which the author tied himself to. Yes, or you can use what? (writing on Bb “to which the author tied himself”) You can also say ‘the author was tied to’. Do you understand?

Ss: Yes.

Pushing students to produce output with some degree of deviation from the text was another often adopted method in Yao’s teaching. At times, he would ask open-ended questions which required a certain degree of imagination. He described this kind of instruction as 出浅入深 [chū qiǎn rù shēn, a Chinese idiom which means simple beginning arrives at profundity]. In 2007, Yao wrote an article on “how to ask good questions in the teaching of reading”, in which he gave examples of what he considered “good questions”. When teaching the short story of The Necklace, Yao reversed the plot and invited students to role-play their answers to two questions: (1) If you were Jeanne, would you tell Mathilde the truth that your necklace was not a real diamond one and was worth 500 francs at the most? and (2) If you were Mathilde, would you accept the real diamond necklace that Jeanne returned to you? In his article, Yao explained why he thought it was important to challenge students with this kind of question:

Innovative questions like these come from the text, but also extend beyond the text. They fulfil dual goals by helping students develop their cognitive capacity while acquiring linguistic knowledge. Also, open-ended activities draw students’ attention to textual information and therefore improve the effectiveness and efficiency of language teaching.

[Note: This quote is a translation of the original. Reference to this article is deliberately omitted to enhance anonymity.]

Yao had noticed that there was a general lack of cognitively challenging activities in others’ English classes. Nevertheless, being in the minority did not seem to bother him, as he persistently implemented cognitively demanding pedagogy with few compromises. Teaching at a low cognitive level, as he put it, was “a waste of time on both sides” and was “unfair to those students who were more motivated and more competent” (Yao: 4-8-1).
7.2.5 EFL pedagogy should focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’.

Yao’s commitment to enhancing students’ autonomy in English learning was apparent in both his discussion and practices, with supporting evidence coming from data of Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence. He hoped students could not only learn what, but also learn how through his teaching. In the following quote, he explained why the latter was more important than the former:

*What we want students to learn is essentially a kind of ability. When I am teaching, I am actually showing them how to learn. If this message gets across, when students are learning English by themselves, they will be doing so with good habits which, for example, include finding opportunities to use the language in their life and practising expanding information. I think this would be more effective than learning it in the manner of 走马观花 [zǒu mǎ guān huā, which literally means ‘viewing flowers from a horseback’ and metaphorically means ‘superficial understanding from cursory observation’]. (Yao: 4-6-5)*

Having seen the English language being objectified in other teachers’ classes, Yao argued that the language samples presented in the textbook were just “a source of information” and language teaching should aim at helping students develop the ability to “process the given information” and “search for new information” (Yao: 3-3-5).

As for information-processing ability, his data suggested that he emphasized both the expanding ability and the summarizing ability. There were many occasions in his teaching when he asked students to produce sentences of a higher degree of complexity by adding relative clauses or adverbials. As shown in Excerpt 7-3, he used the question “can you give more information” in Line 5 to suggest a relative clause be added after ‘fishermen’. When students responded correctly, he quickly increased the complexity level by turning their response into an adverbial clause beginning with ‘although’ (Line 7). Meanwhile, he drew students’ attention on the misuse of ‘but’ by inviting students to correct the error he had deliberately made (Lines 7-9). After students had successfully completed the complex sentence, he asked a student to expand it further by adding another adverbial clause giving reasons (Line 11). Then, he revised the student’s fragmented sentence into a complex one using the ‘so…that’ structure, and he also confirmed the ‘too…to’ structure as an acceptable alternative (Lines 14-15).
Excerpt 7-3

1 T: So the weather became better. Next?
2 S7: There came the other fishermen, and they picked up the author, so the author survived.
3 T: He was very lucky. He was saved by other …
4 Ss: Fishermen.
5 T: Can you give more information about fishermen?
6 Ss: Fishermen, who were the author’s friends.
7 T: Although the author was saved by other fishermen, who were his friends, but?
8 Ss: No.
9 T: (nodding) No “but”.
10 S7: They didn’t recognize him.
11 T: They didn’t, they didn’t recognize him. Sit down please. S8, can you tell us the reason why?
12 S8: Because he was, he was so frightened, so that his hair was changed from black to white, so
13 the fishermen can’t recognize him.
14 T: He changed so much. He changed so much that the other fishermen, even his friends, couldn’t
15 recognize him. (nodding to a student) Yes, too…to. Good. Sit down please. That is all about
16 the sea story.

Yao was also observed triggering students’ summarizing skills quite often. Supporting
evidence included assignments of summary writing and story-retelling. In-class evidence was
spotted in a reviewing activity (Yao: O-8), where Yao asked students to summarize the
passage in words or phrases. First, he began with the question: What’s the most important
word in this unit? Students unanimously produced the answer – “Adventure!” Then Yao
wrote this word on the blackboard and drew a circle around it. Next, he gave chalk to
students who then came to the front to write around the circled word what they found the
most important information about ‘adventure’ according to the passage. Finally, when the
blackboard was full of students’ handwriting, Yao asked one student to try reorganizing these
thematically associated words and phrases into coherent oral production.

Having benefitted from extra-curricular materials in his own learning experience, Yao firmly
believed it was essential for students to learn where and how to search for new materials they
needed. He used to lend college-level English textbooks to his students and recommend that
they watch some English teaching programmes, read English newspapers or listen to English
radio or speeches. However, he felt today’s challenge was no longer a shortage of materials,
but how to be selective in “an overwhelming sea of learning resources” (Yao: 3-3-6).

Yao held a strong belief in teaching students how to learn, which has its root in Chinese
culture. As a Chinese proverb goes, “授人以鱼，不如授之以渔”, which literally means
“It’s better to teach a man to fish than to give him a fish.” Yao’s data showed that this pedagogic principle in traditional Chinese education was vigorously functioning as one of his core beliefs about English teaching. He mentioned many times in the interviews that the ultimate goal of his teaching was to empower students to become autonomous, lifelong learners.

7.3 The *Yin-Yang* nature of Yao’s beliefs about English

It seems that the tension between English as linguistic knowledge and as a tool is not a problem for Yao. He grapples with what he believes to be best for students’ long-term development, and is more concerned with what students can do (as shown in the beliefs regarding students’ ability to socialize with English, to think in English, and to learn English independently), and how they feel (as shown in beliefs regarding students’ feeling of involvement and happiness). His teaching is impressively consistent. It is not uncommon to observe him engaging students in an activity which is meaning-focused, contextualized, interesting, and cognitively challenging all at once.

His beliefs also indicate his attachment to the local reality. They are all about making use of local EFL resources, attending to local needs of language use, catering for local students’ life experiences, and weaving in a vision of the future for the local context. By encouraging students to talk about things around them and in a way that makes them feel more ‘at home’, Yao is actually localizing the English language to fit the EFL context in which he and his students are situated.

Moreover, Yao’s understanding of English is deeply rooted in the Chinese culture. He used a variety of Chinese proverbs, sayings and idioms during the interviews when explaining his beliefs and practices. With “a Chinese eye” on EFL education, Yao has successfully established his own way of integrating the two cultures into the classroom, which clearly presents itself as a good model of *Yin-Yang* harmony.

Table 7.1 summarizes the *Yin-Yang* nature of Yao’s core beliefs about English at the levels of context, content and pedagogy respectively.
Table 7.1 A Yin-Yang analysis of Yao’s beliefs about English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Data code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
<th>Yin-Yang code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English should be learned by use and for use. (English to be taught by use and for use)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{211}; Y_{111}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English should be used with relevance to students’ real life. (Relevance to real life)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{211}; Y_{111}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>English should be made a source of enjoyment. (A source of enjoyment)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y_{221}; Y_{211}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should be cognitively challenging. (Cognitive development)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{221}; Y_{211}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{121}; Y_{111}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EFL pedagogy should focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’. (A focus on ‘how’)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>Y_{221}; Y_{211}</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
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<td>YES</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1) English should be learned by use and for use.

**Context:** It is evident that Yao is not obsessed with teaching English for tests. Although he does not negate the fact that English is a compulsory subject and weighs heavily in students’ academic achievements, he refuses to take it as an excuse for ignoring the functional aspects of English. He believes it is more correct to view English as a communicative tool than to view it simply as subject matter, given that the local context is obviously becoming more globalized. As suggested in his data, Yao is aware that the testing culture will remain strong in China’s education system; however, he is also sensitive to the growing communicative needs of English around him, such as his immersive experience in English-speaking countries, his son’s participation in international events, and his nephew’s career development in joint-
venture business. Thus, the contextual meaning of Yao’s belief in “teaching English by use and for use” primarily pertains to \textit{Yang} and secondarily pertains to \textit{Yin}.

\textbf{Content:} Yao strongly objects to the \textit{language-as-object} view, arguing that language is learned to be used not only for daily-life communication, but also for intellectual engagement. He is selective in his use of what is provided in the textbook and only highlights what he believes to be useful and usable content, or what students are likely to use in their oral or written production. He is also keen to bring extracurricular materials into his classroom as long as they are relevant and useful. Therefore, the content aspect of this belief falls into the \textit{Yang} category.

\textbf{Pedagogy:} Placing communicative competence above linguistic knowledge, Yao implements what is essentially a task-based approach with efforts to maximize students’ experience in language use. In his teaching, he strives to provide situations where students naturally feel the need to use the target language, and to facilitate the process of task performance. Obviously, the pedagogical aspect of this use-oriented belief is characteristic of \textit{Yang}.

\textit{Yin-Yang code:} Yao’s belief in the language-as-tool view has remained strong even in the early years of his career, when China was largely a closed EFL context with little international contact. More than three decades later, when China is more open to the Western world, this belief has become even stronger. When selecting content for his teaching, Yao gives priority to words and grammatical structures that can be used in interpersonal communication. He also employs pedagogical methods with an emphasis on meaning negotiation to fulfil the goal of developing students’ communicative competence. Since Yao’s content selection and pedagogical approach remains the same in both \textit{Yin} and \textit{Yang} contexts, his belief fits into two categories: Y211 (\textit{Yin} context, \textit{Yang} content, \textit{Yang} pedagogy) and Y111 (\textit{Yang} context, \textit{Yang} content, \textit{Yang} pedagogy).

\textit{(2) English should be used with relevance to students’ real life.}

\textbf{Context:} When designing language-use tasks, Yao makes it clear that those tasks should be situated in a context with which students feel close and familiar. This belief has been held by Yao very persistently in changing contexts from closed ones (\textit{Yin}), where English is not playing a functional role, to more open ones (\textit{Yang}), where English is used extensively in
various aspects of life. Such an open view of the context for his teaching is categorized as pertaining to both *Yin* and *Yang*.

**Content:** When relating EFL teaching to students’ real life, Yao often chooses topics about which students have had some knowledge so that students would find it easy to talk in class, such as weather, news, and hobbies. Yao is quite selective with the topics provided in the textbook. He would not spend time on topics that were too distant or too foreign to students, and only uses what he thinks useful. He also brings in up-to-date topics he picks from supplementary sources to keep his teaching ‘fresh’. Without a definite boundary or a focus on linguistic forms, his choice of content in this belief shows *Yang* qualities.

**Pedagogy:** Yao intentionally avoids teaching in transmission manners when incorporating real-life topics into classroom practices. The pedagogical manifestation of this belief is situated in meaning-focused interaction. With a given topic, Yao would initiate casual talks with students or engage them in communicative tasks. Occasionally Yao does attend to the linguistic form of students’ utterances, but he does so to facilitate their meaning-oriented production. Therefore, the pedagogical aspect of this belief is also characteristic of *Yang*.

**Yin-Yang code:** It seems that Yao’s belief in bringing real-life English into the classroom is maintained by his vision of a more globalized future, in which English as a communicative tool outweighs English as a school subject. To prepare students for that future, he selects content which reflects the rationale of using English in real life and implements pedagogical methods that stress the process of meaning negotiation. With *Yang* elements recognized at all the three levels, this belief is justifiably categorized as *Y_{111}*. 

(3) *English should be made a source of enjoyment.*

**Context:** In a context where English is made a compulsory subject and is often taught and tested as an object, Yao believes that teachers should not kill students’ interest in English learning by focusing on test scores only. More importantly, teachers should aim to help students in the long term by making English learning enjoyable to them. This *English-is-fun* belief reflects Yao’s concern about the current test-oriented context of EFL education, which is *Yin* in nature.
Content: Fun elements, according to Yao, come from deliberate deviation from routine. Linguistic knowledge, if handled with creativity, is not necessarily boring for students. For instance, words can be learned through expanding exercises or guessing games; grammatical structures can be acquired through knowing their meaning in real communicative situations. Yao also believes that the EFL classroom can be filled with joy if students are given a chance to talk about what they are interested in. Thus, the content base of this belief is manifested in both Yin and Yang.

Pedagogy: At the level of pedagogy, this belief is mainly manifested in the meaning-focused speaking and writing activities that Yao creates and varies to keep students from falling into boredom. In principle, Yao encourages students to feel the freedom of production to some extent. He regards mechanical drills (such as repetition and imitation) as fun-killers, and he intentionally avoids form-focused activities which lay a primary emphasis on accuracy. Therefore, the pedagogical base of this belief is dominantly Yang.

Yin-Yang code: To sum up, this English-is-fun belief is developed and held in institutional contexts in which English is taught as a compulsory subject (Yin), based on both the linguistic form and pragmatic function (both Yin and Yang), and implemented in meaning-focused pedagogy (Yang). Such a Yin-Yang pattern generates two trigrams, Y_{221} (Yin context, Yin content, Yang pedagogy) and Y_{211} (Yin context, Yang content, Yang pedagogy).

(4) EFL pedagogy should be cognitively challenging.

Context: Yao believes that school-based English learning should be concordant with students’ cognitive development no matter what they study it for, and that cognitively challenging pedagogy can help students become sufficiently adept to fit into different contexts. This is based on his understanding of what a good education can do for students. A good education, according to him, should produce intellectually developed students for the future, in which there will be abundant cross-cultural exchange as a result of the process of globalization. Therefore, this belief not only applies to institutional contexts where students are required to learn English as a curricular subject (Yin), but also to social contexts where they opt to use English for communicative purposes (Yang).

Content: The content base of Yao’s cognitively challenging activities includes but is not confined to linguistic knowledge specified in the curriculum. Most of the time, he teaches
what is in the textbook and in the test. At the same time, he brings in extracurricular materials when he feels it necessary. He is confident that students who learn English thoroughly in class will not have problems in tests. What to teach is not an issue here; both Yin content and Yang content can be made conducive to students’ cognitive development.

**Pedagogy:** Yao grapples with the idea that how he teaches is more important than what he teaches, and he persists in implementing ‘smart’ teaching to set students on fire. With the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, he is careful not to downgrade it to mechanical drills with low-level thinking. When engaging students in topical discussion, he also makes sure it is not too flowery or too shallow. Yao believes that students’ cognitive involvement is best manifested in open-ended discussion which seeks meaning at a deeper level. Thus, this belief is pedagogically Yang.

**Yin-Yang code:** With the experience of different contexts (both Yin and Yang) and the selection of different domains of content (both Yin and Yang), Yao persistently implements Yang-dominant pedagogy. Thus, this belief falls into multiple trigrams: $Y_{221}$ (Yin context, Yin content, Yang pedagogy), $Y_{211}$ (Yin context, Yang content, Yang pedagogy), $Y_{121}$ (Yang context, Yin content, Yang pedagogy), and $Y_{111}$ (Yang context, Yang content, Yang pedagogy). All the four trigrams are supported by evidence in his data set.

(5) *EFL pedagogy should focus on ‘how’ rather than ‘what’.*

**Context:** Yao believes it would benefit students in the long run to teach them how to learn rather than what to learn. It is his job to help students develop the habit of using English in classroom settings so that they can continue learning by themselves after leaving school. As Yao points out, this goal cannot be achieved within a short period of time, so it has to be carried out from the very beginning. Once students have successfully become autonomous learners, they would have no problem in scoring highly in college entrance examinations. What is more, they would also do well in the study of college English or in their future jobs which may need English. Therefore, Yao’s belief in teaching how reflects his concern for both Yin context (where English is learned for accuracy-oriented tests) and Yang context (where English is used for practical purposes).

**Content:** In the selection of content for his teaching-how, Yao makes use of both the textbook and extracurricular materials. With a clear focus on linguistic forms in his teaching.
(Yin), Yao presents vocabulary and grammar as something related and relevant to language use (Yang). As he sees it, teaching-*how* entails, rather than preclude, teaching-*what*, because effective communication is not possible without a solid mastery of linguistic knowledge. By sticking to the principle of teaching-*how*, he intends to empower students to achieve more than scoring highly in tests (Yin), such as functioning in English (Yang). Thus, the content of his teaching-*how* belief pertains to both Yin and Yang.

**Pedagogy:** The pedagogy in relation to Yao’s teaching-*how* belief clearly shows Yang qualities, since he consciously avoids methods that involve rote-learning or mechanical drills and insistently employs methods that engage students in language-use tasks as much as possible. He believes that those tasks can help students develop information-processing abilities, which will ensure learning will happen more easily and naturally.

**Yin-Yang code:** Yao maintains Yang-pedagogy regardless of the context or the content. Thus, the Yin-Yang pattern for this belief falls into four categories: Y_{221} (Yin context, Yin content, Yang pedagogy), Y_{211} (Yin context, Yang content, Yang pedagogy), Y_{121} (Yang context, Yin content, Yang pedagogy), and Y_{111} (Yang context, Yang content, Yang pedagogy).

(6) **Summary**

![Figure 7.1 Yao’s beliefs about English within the eight-trigram model](image-url)
The Yin-Yang nature of Yao’s beliefs about English is graphically presented in Figure 7.1. A number of findings are summarized below:

1. Yao’s beliefs about English exclusively consist of trigrams whose final digit indicates *Yang-*pedagogy (*Y*₂₂₁, *Y*₂₁₁, *Y*₁₂₁ and *Y*₁₁₁). Such a pattern suggests a high level of consistency in *Yang-*pedagogy in Yao’s case, which means he tends to adopt meaning-focused instruction and his pedagogical decisions are not likely to be influenced by factors pertaining to context or content. The absence of trigrams ending with 2 also serves as evidence of Yao’s objection to pedagogy in which language is treated as an object. In other words, he prioritizes the use of meaning-focused pedagogy regardless of the types of context or content.

2. In a nice symmetry, the four trigrams are paired up with variance in context and content, which indicates Yao’s awareness of the complexity of local contexts and the multiplicity of teaching materials. If examined at context level, the four trigrams form two pairs (*Y*₂₂₁-*Y*₁₂₁ and *Y*₂₁₁-*Y*₁₁₁) which vary in the initial digit indicating context. The co-existence of *Y*₂₂₁ and *Y*₁₂₁ suggests his position that both *Yin*-context and *Yang*-context justify the teaching of *Yin*-content using a *Yang*-loaded approach. Yao believes it is essential for students to acquire a solid linguistic base no matter what they study English for and how communicative they need to become. Similarly, the co-existence of *Y*₂₁₁ and *Y*₁₁₁ implies another position that the teaching of *Yang*-content in a *Yang*-loaded approach can fit both *Yin*-context and *Yang*-context. Even if there were few communicative needs in the local context, Yao has felt it necessary for students to learn English as a tool in preparation for a more globalized world. If examined at content level, the four trigrams can be paired up as *Y*₂₂₁-*Y*₂₁₁ and *Y*₁₂₁-*Y*₁₁₁, which vary in the middle digit indicating content. The co-existence of *Y*₂₂₁ and *Y*₂₁₁ indicates an inclusive position that both *Yin*-content and *Yang*-content are necessary to fulfil curricular goals of EFL teaching (*Yin*-context) and are both compatible with meaning-focused activities (*Yang-*pedagogy). In the same way, the co-existence of *Y*₁₁₁ and *Y*₁₂₁ also implies his inclusive position in the selection of language-learning materials for purposes of developing communicative competence. Such a symmetric pattern is indicative of a well-balanced *Yin-Yang* structure, which has the potential to deliver empowering and sustainable education.
3. The varied frequency of the four trigrams suggests that beliefs in those categories may be held with different strength. The two most frequent trigrams are Y_{211} and Y_{111}. Both end with -11, which stands for correspondence between content and pedagogy, and indicate Yao’s strong belief that Yang-content naturally corresponds to Yang-pedagogy. The two less frequent trigrams are Y_{221} and Y_{121}, both of which end with -21, meaning Yin-content taught using a Yang approach. Evidence of beliefs of this kind suggests another position, which may not be held as strongly as the previous one, that Yin-content is well suited to Yang-pedagogy.

In summary, Yao’s beliefs about English are held in a coherent system with few tensions at pedagogical level. His pedagogical consistency is based on an integrated view at both context and the content levels. He has perceived EFL context and ESL context as different, but not necessarily dissociative. Also, he believes that both linguistic knowledge and communicative opportunities are important for language learning and incorporates elements from both orientations into his classroom teaching. Even though different contexts have different definitions of legitimate content, he holds that pedagogy should address the humanistic and social aspects of language education in stable and appropriate manners.
8. Ping’s beliefs about English in the Chinese EFL context

Learning a new language entails some kind of talent. For those gifted learners, the learning process is full of joy, and they can make progress naturally and rapidly. But for many others, it is nothing but torture, 100% torture. (Ping: 1-8-5)

8.1 Ping’s profile

Growing up in a rural area of Beijing, Ping started learning English from her first year in junior secondary school. She had always aspired to become a teacher since she was very young, because she thought a teaching job was “safe, easy and free” (Ping: 1-3-4). Her decision to become an English teacher was made while she was a senior secondary student. She recalled that her English grades were not good at first, but one day her interest in English was ignited like a spark by some encouraging words her teacher had said to her:

At that time, we were often asked to recite the texts – there were not many texts in the textbook anyway – and the teacher would ask us to come to his office and recite texts in front of him. He would use a tape-recorder to record our recitation. I remember the teacher once said to me that my pronunciation and intonation were very good. I was so inspired by his words that after that I would often read English texts aloud at home after finishing my homework. There was little entertainment at that time, so I entertained myself with reading-aloud. Soon I became very interested in English. (Ping: 1-2-2)

Ping majored in English at Beijing Teachers’ College and became a secondary school teacher upon graduation as she had wished. Her teaching career started in 1989 at a junior secondary school in a mountainous area near her hometown. She started teaching with ease, as she was very familiar with the textbook, the students and the local area. In 1994, the school was closed due to a declining number of enrolling students, and Ping was transferred to School B, where she taught English to senior secondary students. In the first nine years there, she taught three rounds of students from Grade One to Grade Three. Since 2004, her teaching had been fixed at Grade Three, which means each year she would be teaching different students with the unchanging goal of preparing them for the university entrance examination. After five running years’ teaching for tests, she returned to teaching Grade One again. This time, she had to do so with a new series of textbooks.
She felt greatly challenged by the recent upgrade of English textbooks, which took a big step closer to an international standard. With the content being too distant from the local reality and the promoted pedagogy being too impractical for students’ needs, Ping discovered that her previous experience could no longer easily fit the teaching of new textbooks. To make it worse, the teacher-training workshop which aimed to help local teachers with this round of textbook-upgrade was cancelled due to a sudden breakout of H1N1 flu in the summer of 2009. Without proper training, Ping admitted that she constantly felt at a loss at work and was suffering great confusion and frustration from teaching new themes in the textbook with new pedagogical ideas such as student-centredness or task-based teaching (Ping: 2-6-3). Her self-negation was evident in her interview data, in which she said that she regretted having entered the teaching profession (Ping: 1-4-1) and wondered how she should carry on (Ping: 2-6-3). Behavioural manifestation of such negative emotions included rejection of new things, reluctance to take risks and insensitivity to emergent changes.

8.2 Ping’s core beliefs about English

No matter which language teaching approach was being promoted, Ping always adopted the traditional knowledge-transmission model in her teaching with a clear focus on language knowledge (i.e. vocabulary and grammar). She believed such a knowledge-centred approach could guarantee students’ success in the high-stake university entrance examination, which was largely a knowledge-oriented test in itself. If the test remained unchanged in the Chinese educational system at macro level, she did not see the point of revolutionizing pedagogy, and she would intuitively avoid any big innovation that would bring about risks. Such a conservative stance was clearly manifested in both her verbal data and the observation of her classes, from which four core beliefs were identified. A summary of her beliefs and data codes can be found in Table 4.7 and Table 8.1.

8.2.1 English is a linguistic system.

Evidence regarding this belief included data from the categories of Manifest Congruence (MC) and Latent Congruence (LC). Holding on to the language-as-object view, Ping
believed that English was fundamentally a linguistic system and EFL teaching was essentially about transmitting samples of linguistic knowledge to students. In her understanding, the ultimate goal of EFL teaching was “to enable students to understand texts, generate personal opinions, and write grammatically correct sentences to express ideas” (Ping: 1-7-2), but the prerequisite to the achievement of this goal was that students must have a good mastery of linguistic knowledge, such as words and grammar. Therefore, it made great sense for her to focus exclusively on smaller units of the target language (e.g. a single word or a grammatical rule) and adopt the traditional 3P model (i.e. presentation-practice-production) as the most suitable methodology for gradual growth of students’ knowledge repertoire. She articulated this idea with a metaphor that the knowledge of English was like an assortment of dishes and the teacher’s responsibility was to feed these dishes to students:

An English teacher who knows a lot about the language but does not know how to teach it will find himself in a situation like 茶壶煮饺 子 [chá hú zhú jiǎo zi, its literal meaning is “to boil dumplings in a teapot”; metaphorically, it means “to experience difficulty in orally delivering good ideas”]. If you work as a school teacher, the most important part of your job responsibilities is to deliver what you know to your students. (Ping: 1-5-3)

For efficient and effective delivery of linguistic knowledge, Ping felt it logical to start a lesson with a presentation of what was to be mastered and to end with confirmative production of the expected mastery. She preferred presenting what was to be mastered in small units, such as isolated lexicon. Such a preference may be because small units of language were ideal for language drills and it was easier to test whether they had been mastered. At the production end, she defined mastery of a word or phrase in three aspects: (1) students should know its meaning, either in English or in their first language; (2) they should know its spelling in English; and (3) they should be able to produce correct answers in tests.

Her belief about English as a system of linguist knowledge was evident in Excerpt 8-1, taken from the first lesson observed (Ping: O-1).

Excerpt 8-1

(Note: Target words and phrases are marked in bold.)

1 T: Good afternoon, class!
2 Ss: (standing up) Good afternoon, teacher!
3 T: (bowing) Sit down, please. OK now first let’s have a dictation. OK? Ready?
4 Ss: Yes.
5 T: Now close your books. I’ll ask one of you to come here and write on the blackboard.
(calling one student to the front) OK, now number one, 启航. Number two, 被迫做某事.
Number three, 陷入麻烦, 出事儿. Number four, 说服某人做某事. Number five, make it to.
Number six, be known as. Number seven, sailor. Number eight, apologize to somebody.
Number nine, according to. Number ten, eventually. Eleven, in search of. And now
next, we will dictate a sentence. He discovered that, people could live in the place
where he landed. (with a lower speed) He discovered that, people could live in the
place where he landed. (resuming the normal speed) He discovered that, people could
live in the place where he landed.

T: (talking to the student) Ok, thank you, stop at here. (to the whole class)
The other students, please close your book and let’s see how well he has done. (pointing to the
blackboard) Now the first one is set sail, is he right?
Ss: Yes.
T: (putting a tick after the phrase) Now what’s the meaning?
Ss: 启航.
T: Now the second one, 被迫做. (pointing to the blank space and asking the class)
How to say 被迫做某事?
Ss: Be forced to.
T: How to spell forced?
Ss: F-o-r-c-e-d
T: Be forced to do. To do or to doing?
Ss: To do.
T: Yes. And number three is…
Ss: Get into trouble.
T: Get into trouble. Yes, (putting a tick after the phrase) this is right. And next one, 劝某人
去做. Persuade somebody to do something. Yes, (putting a tick after the phrase) this is
right. And next one, make it to.
Ss: According to. 少一个
{T: 少一个水手, sailor.  {The word 'sailor' is missing.}
Ss: Sailor.
T: How to spell sailor?
Ss: S-a-i-l-o-r.
T: (writing 'sailor' on the blackboard) Yes, s-a-i-l-o-r, and next one is, according to, 根据,
依照. Yes. And next one is inutually or eventually?
Ss: Eventually.
T: Eventually. How to spell it?
Ss: E-v-e-n-t-u-a-l-l-y.
T: (writing 'eventually' on the blackboard) Yes, eventually. Ok, remember this. (crossing
out the misspelt word) Now, the next one is …
This episode consisted of two parts, signalled by two sentences with wavy underlines in line 3 and 15 respectively. The first sentence, “let’s have a dictation”, indicated that this part was to be filled with the teacher’s speaking and students’ writing. The second sentence, “let’s see how well he has done”, marked a teacher-led discussion centred on the accuracy of dictated words and phrases.

According to Ping, the basic level of mastering a word was the ability to know its meaning either in the first language or in the target language. For this purpose, she varied the dictation by inserting a translation task. As shown in her monologue (Lines 5-13), the first four items were not really to be dictated, but to be translated from Chinese to English. Other evidence included her frequent use of questions requesting translation, such as “what’s the meaning?” in Line 18, “how to say (a Chinese phrase)?” in Line 20, and “what does it mean?” in Line 50. In Lines 33-36, she explicitly emphasized the importance of knowing the Chinese meaning of English words by saying “please remember you must give the Chinese meaning of the phrases if I speak English” (underlined with double lines).

Apart from knowing the meaning of a word, Ping also made it clear to students that she expected them to know its spelling as well. In this short episode, there were four places (Lines 23, 40, 43, and 45) where Ping raised students’ attention to the spelling of a particular word. Her emphasis on spelling was also evident in her instruction. For example, she asked students to “pay attention to the handwriting” (Line 36) and to “remember the spelling” (Line 47).

During the checking part, Ping strictly followed the sequence of the list, using sequential phrases like “the first one”, “the second one”, “number three”, and “(the) next one” for the
remaining items. The order was followed so strictly that not a single case of sequential jump or lexical association across the list was observed in her instruction. In addition, she narrowly focused on the accuracy of meaning-matching and word-spelling by affirmative comments, like “yes” (occurring 10 times) and “right” (occurring 5 times), or closed questions to which students were expected to give a definite answer (see examples in Lines 25, 43, and 58).

This dictation activity was clearly shaped by Ping’s belief in enhancing students’ mastery of small units of linguistic knowledge. Her understanding of linguistic knowledge was limited to lexical meaning and form, which was often contextually isolated as she did not relate these words to the context provided in the text or to students’ real-life experiences.

Ping believed that the linguistic system of English mainly consisted of vocabulary and grammar. Apart from the substantial time spent on vocabulary, grammar also took a big part in her classroom teaching. She adopted the traditional presentation-practice-production pattern, in which she would first explain the target structure in Chinese to students and then let them do grammar exercises, such as translation of sentences or multiple choice exercises. Ping laid an exclusive emphasis on the accuracy of grammatical structures; not a single case of communicative activity was observed in her teaching.

When asked why communicative-based teaching was absent in her classes, Ping gave a number of reasons. First, she believed it was for the benefit of both the teacher and the students because “teachers are evaluated by nothing else but students’ test scores” (Ping: 2-1-6) and “not all students are interested in speaking activities” (Ping: 2-1-2). Secondly, she felt her teaching was greatly constrained by the limited time allocated to English in the school’s curriculum. Apart from the time spent on the teaching of language knowledge, “there would be very little time left for oral practices” (Ping: 2-2-2). Finally, she admitted that the exclusion of communicative-based teaching in her class was caused, to some extent, by her “unfamiliarity with those given topics” and her “low self-efficacy in terms of communicative competence” (Ping: 2-8-3).

8.2.2 EFL teaching should make use of L1.

With language knowledge being the sole focus in her teaching, Ping conducted her classroom practices in pursuit of accuracy and efficiency, which made it natural for her to legitimize
substantial use of L1 (the Chinese language) in classroom practices. The belief in L1 use was evident in her observation data but absent in verbal data, and thus identified as Subconscious Congruence (SC). In her classes, she was observed speaking Chinese when providing translation or giving explicit explanation of grammatical structures. She also used Chinese in her interaction with students and classroom management. If students failed to follow her English-mediated instruction, she would switch to Chinese so that students could follow.

Ping relied heavily on repetition and translation in her teaching. She believed that knowing an English word or phrase implied a correct match with its Chinese meaning. Therefore, she expected students to be able to switch between Chinese and English at lexical level. There were fewer cases of translation observed at sentence level. Excerpt 8-2, taken from the third lesson observed (Ping: O-3), showed how she used L1 to teach a new phrase:

**Excerpt 8-2**

1 T: This one, turn up.
2 Ss: *(in chorus)* Turn up.
3 T: Turn up.
4 Ss: *(in chorus)* Turn up.
5 T: It means 出现, to be present at some place, right? Do you know other meanings?
6 Ss: *(uttering different answers)* 关掉; 调小; 调大.  
   {Turn off; turn down; turn up.}
7 T: 调大还是调小?  
   *(Turn up or turn down?)*
8 Ss: *(uttering different answers)* 调大; 调小.  
   {Turn up; turn down.}
9 T: *(pointing her forefinger upward)* Up, up, 往上是吧? 那 turn up 应该是?  
   {Going up, right? Then ‘turn up’ means …?}
10 Ss: 调大.  
   *(Turn up.)*
11 T: 那“调小”应该是?  
   *(How do you say “调小” in English?)*
12 Ss: Turn down.
13 T: 那“关掉”是?  
   *(How do you say “关掉” in English?)*
14 Ss: Turn off.
15 T: OK. Let’s see the next phrase.

Ping presented the English phrase (“turn up”) by leading students in reading it aloud twice (Lines 1-4). Here, the principle of “frequency helps with memory” may have been applied. She did not linger on its spelling or its pronunciation, probably because she thought students
had no problem in spelling or saying this phrase. Next, she directly offered a Chinese translation of this phrase along with an English definition (Line 5), which may imply her principle of “a precise Chinese translation helps with memorizing English words”. Immediately after providing a definition match between L1 and L2, she directed students’ attention to two facts about “turn up” in the following interaction with students. First, she asked for its “other meanings” (Line 5), hinting students that “turn up” had more than one meaning. Then, she elicited two other phrases, “turn down” and “turn off”, hinting to students that “turn up” could be semantically associated with them. When hearing different responses from students, she felt it necessary to reduce students’ confusion by clarifying her pedagogical intentions. She quickly switched to Chinese in the four subsequent questions (Lines 7, 9, 11, and 13). When students’ answers became unanimous, she switched back to English (Line 15).

Ping was also observed using L1 to assist grammar teaching. Her grammar lessons were exclusively knowledge-focused and typically given in Chinese. L1-aided instruction was used in a number of circumstances: (1) to provide translation of sentences which highlight the target structure; (2) to give a detailed analysis or explanation of the target structure; (3) to ask questions for a correct understanding of the structure; and (4) to make comments or give feedback on students’ responses. As the use of L1 was in line with Ping’s pedagogical principles regarding accuracy and efficiency, it was held with strong conviction in her belief system.

8.2.3 EFL teaching is test-oriented.

Another salient belief emergent in Ping’s data set was in “teaching for tests”. Supporting data could be found in the categories of Manifest Congruence, Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence. Her concern about students’ test performance was repeatedly manifested in her interview, and in her teaching she was frequently observed focusing on linguistic knowledge in the way it was likely to be tested.

Her interview data suggested that this belief was driven both internally and externally. Three internal factors were identified in Ping’s data. The first was her positive attitude towards the test-oriented system. It was under this testing system that she had fulfilled her aspiration to
become a teacher. Her own success story made her firmly believe in the value of tests in the education system. The fact that all students had to take the same exam led her to the belief that all students should be entitled to fair opportunities to become successful regardless of their family background and that it was teachers’ responsibilities to help them achieve that. To put it another way, she would consider it wrong and irresponsible to be teaching things irrelevant to tests.

The second internal factor driving her test-focused teaching behaviour was related to her personality. Not a sociable person herself, she included very little casual talk in her class. For instance, she was rarely observed chatting about the weather, life topics or current affairs with her students. Apart from her shyness and introversion, she had another personality trait that contributed to her test-focused teaching style. She revealed in an interview that she was suffering from stress from the necessity of “excelling in the job and not wanting to fall behind others” (Ping: 1-4-3). She would constantly compare the test scores between her students and those of other teachers, and would feel frustrated if her students had failed to outperform.

The third internal factor lay in her lack of confidence in her communicative competence. She admitted that she was afraid of changing her pedagogical style because doing so would require a very different genre of English, for which she was far from ready:

As an English teacher at this school, I can only use English for teaching purposes. If students ask me about a word or a sentence used in the daily life, I would not know the answer. I speak what they call bookish English, grammatically correct but unnatural. It’s so different from the kind of English spoken in real life. (Ping: 1-6-5)

Two external factors, or contextual constraints, were also identified in support of her belief in “teaching for tests”. Ping admitted that her teaching was largely shaped by the way teachers were evaluated in the local culture. Not wanting to fall behind, she decided to play safe and avoided teaching differently from the mainstream. Given that teachers’ work was only recognized in students’ test sheets in the school where she was employed, she would not get herself into trouble by challenging the conventional practices. As she saw it, such a traditional orientation was actually of interest to various stake-holders, including teachers, students, parents and schools:

To be honest, I have no other choice [but to focus on test scores], because it not only reflects the needs of students, but also fits the expectations of the school and students’
parents. After all, our teaching job is narrowly evaluated using students’ test scores. They [the school administrative] don't care about other things. (Ping: 2-1-3)

Another rationale behind Ping’s belief in teaching for tests as a safer approach than teaching for communication was that the latter was constrained by the shortage of communicative incentives in the local context. In her opinion, the communicative goals in the curriculum seemed unrealistic and impossible:

It’s not realistic for our students to be taught communicatively. First of all, they don’t have an ideal language environment, where they can speak English all the time. I sometimes encourage them to try their best to speak English in class, and they may do so only for a few minutes before falling back to speaking in Chinese again. I agree with the concept of learning English through communicative use, but it is simply too difficult for our students. (Ping: 1-3-1)

Ping’s belief in “teaching for tests” was shaped by both internal factors and external constraints and remained quite strong in her teaching. However, there was a brief moment when she did endeavour to try new ways of teaching. Ping recalled that, the moment the new textbook arrived, she “was immediately attracted by its new and fashionable look” and “was very tempted to teach as instructed by the new textbook” (Ping: 2-4-2). When other teachers who had taught this new textbook told her that it was impossible to teach in the new way, she was at first suspicious but soon agreed that they were right. While trying to teach new materials with new pedagogy, she experienced several barriers which prevented her from achieving effective teaching. The first problem was the tension between the limited teaching hours and the huge quantity of language samples to be learned. She had to be very selective about what to teach. Speaking activities were among the first to be cut, and reading was often reduced to the study of words and grammar (Ping: 1-8-9). The second barrier was the mismatch between the high difficulty level of the textbook’s contents and the students’ low proficiency. She found it more difficult to control the pace of teaching, as she often ended up spending twice as much time as she had planned, or even more, with no better comprehension on the students’ part (Ping: 2-4-2). This trial did not last long before Ping resumed old-fashioned teaching, which made her feel safer and more comfortable.
8.2.4 EFL teaching should cater for the interest of the majority.

This fairness-based belief was identified with evidence of Latent Congruence and Embedded Congruence. It seemed that Ping’s rejection of teaching for communication was rooted in her suspicion that it may become a threat to the fairness of public education. During her trial of communicative language teaching, she noticed that some students were disadvantaged by this new approach. For instance, the widened coverage of curricular content made language learning even harder to those who were not interested or talented in this subject. Ping questioned the rationale for making it compulsory for all students to learn English for communication, and showed sympathy for poorly motivated or less gifted students for the “torture” that was imposed on them:

*I understand that the new curriculum encourages students to learn to use English for communication purposes. But it is too difficult for most of our students, especially the weak ones. No matter how hard you teach, they just don’t get it. For those disadvantaged students, memorizing words is nothing but a torture which endures for years. (Ping: 1-8-5).*

Ping felt that teaching English for communicative purposes would put rural students at a disadvantage to their urban counterparts because there were fewer needs or opportunities for communicative use of English in the local area and rural students were generally less motivated in English learning (Ping: 1-7-4). Given that English was a compulsory subject in the curriculum and weighed as much as Chinese and Mathematics in the college entrance examination, Ping believed knowledge-oriented and paper-and-pen tests would make a fairer arena for all students to compete for their future. She also expressed her personal opinion that it was even fairer to remove English from the compulsory subjects:

*I think English should not be made so important in our curriculum. It’s better to make it optional. For example, if students are interested in English, they can choose to attend an elective course. If they are not interested, thinking they would not need it in the future, they can choose not to learn it. The time they have saved can be spent on other subjects that they are genuinely interested in. This is also what is intended in the new curriculum – to maximally develop students’ ability. Why should we ask everyone to learn English? I don’t think it is as essential as maths. (Ping: 1-8-2)*

Ping also noticed that speaking activities would exclude the participation of the majority of students because “it was always a few talkative ones who took an active part in speaking” (Ping: 2-3-5). She thought it was unfair to implement teaching only to the advantage of some
students who were more motivated and extroverted, and therefore she would rather teach using a non-communicative approach so as to “cater for the interests of the majority” (Ping: 2-3-6).

8.3 The Yin-Yang nature of Ping’s beliefs about English

Ping’s core beliefs are internally consistent in that they do not conflict with each other and are often observed co-occurring in one pedagogical episode. These beliefs are also held at a high level of external consistency, as her practices have very few variations across different classes or under different circumstances. For instance, she teaches in a similar style in both public demo classes and her routine classes. Her beliefs about English are accordant with her understanding of education in general, in which the two most important principles are practicality and fairness.

As shown in Table 8.1, Ping’s beliefs are dominantly of Yin quality in terms of where she teaches (context), what she teaches (content) and how she teaches (pedagogy).

The Yin-Yang analysis of Ping’s beliefs is quite straightforward, as all beliefs pertain to Yin at all the three levels without any exception. At the contextual level, Ping does not see English functioning for communication purposes in the local community; rather, it is only important in tests in the form of linguistic knowledge. Although there is evidence of growing communicative needs around her, she chooses to ignore them and refuses to bring them into classroom. The insulated and conservative context, in which Ping’s beliefs are developed and held, is obviously Yin.

At content level, Ping sees English as a linguistic structure which consists of numerous small units of knowledge (i.e. words and grammar), and she narrowly confines the range of English knowledge to what is specified in the proficiency tests, which do not have a speaking section. To help students perform well in tests, Ping devotes all her class time to the teaching of words and grammar which she believes to be of relevance to tests. It seems that the recent textbook change has had little impact on her selection of content, which still remains very non-communicative. As the textbook content becomes overwhelming with various themes and longer passages, she has had to become even more selective about what to teach. To
ensure time for the study of words and grammar, she cuts off all speaking activities and avoids open-ended discussions on real-life topics or themes in the textbook. Her understanding of what is to be taught in the English curriculum is unmistakably *Yin*.

At pedagogy level, Ping implements form-focused instruction throughout her classroom teaching. All observed classes are about the teaching of discrete points of the target language with absolute absence of communicative activities. Ping’s teaching fits the traditional knowledge-transmission model, in which she expects students to master what she presents through rote-learning. When teaching grammar, she heavily resorts to structural analysis and translation. As her teaching only attends to linguistic forms and is carried out in a top-down manner, it is described as *Yin*.

Table 8.1 A *Yin-Yang* analysis of Ping’s beliefs about English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Data code</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
<th>Yin-Yang code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English is a linguistic system. (English as a linguistic system)</td>
<td>MC LC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EFL teaching should make use of L1. (Support for L1 use)</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EFL teaching is test-oriented. (Conviction in favour of teaching for tests)</td>
<td>MC LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EFL teaching should cater for the interest of the majority. (Faith in a fair education)</td>
<td>LC EC</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Y222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To put the three levels together, Ping’s beliefs about English are all found in the trigram of Y222. Such a pattern is graphically described in Figure 8.1.
Compared to other participating teachers, whose beliefs suggest a dynamic confrontation between Yin and Yang, Ping is an extreme case with her beliefs being all-Yin, which can be interpreted both positively and negatively. In a positive understanding, her beliefs are systematically consistent, which means she selects EFL content according to her perception of the local EFL context and implements EFL pedagogy directly addressing the selected content. Advantages of such systematic consistency include reduced cost of human resources, lowered requirements for teachers’ oral proficiency, and efficient achievement of short-term goals. However, in a negative understanding, a lack of variation in trigrams implies obvious deficiency of Yang elements. Such an imbalanced Yin-Yang pattern suggests her insensitivity to the changes taking place in the local context and her inability to adapt to the emerging changes in the curricular content. In other words, she instinctively refuses to acknowledge the growing needs for using English communicatively and intentionally trims the textbook in a way that makes her feel secure and comfortable. Thus, her consistent pedagogy, which is based on such biased views of context and content, is hardly effective or empowering.
9. Discussion

In the previous chapters, I have discussed four cases of individual teachers with a focus on what beliefs they hold about English as subject matter and what Yin-Yang qualities their beliefs are loaded with. In this chapter, I will first take a glance across the four cases to discover how Yin-Yang trigrams are patterned on a more general basis. Then, I will draw on the findings to readdress the three research questions asked at the beginning of the thesis.

9.1 A cross-case glance

When Yin-Yang representations of the four teachers’ beliefs about English are put together, as shown in Figure 9.1, several findings emerge from cross-case comparisons regarding how they perceive the context in which English fulfils its social function, the content in which linguistic samples of English are defined, and the pedagogy through which English is applied to the classroom setting.

The first impression from the cases in general is that each teacher seems to possess a belief system that is distinct from that of the others. There are no identical cases among the four in terms of the distribution of Yin-Yang trigrams. There are six trigrams identified in Jing’s case, six in Yun’s case, four in Yao’s case and only one in Ping’s case. The variance of distribution is so big that a belief that is dominant in one case may be absent in another. For instance, all the four teachers have some beliefs related to the teaching of vocabulary, but these vocabulary-related beliefs seem to be idiosyncratic. Jing emphasizes the importance of rote-learning in vocabulary learning, which is not accepted by Yun, and Yun’s conviction about the importance of letting students discover lexical rules is not found in other cases. Yao is the only one who insists on the importance of providing a situation for words to be used in, while Ping defines knowing a word as being able to spell it correctly and translate it into L1 properly, which is not shared by others. An extreme example of the distribution variance is found in the comparison between Yao’s beliefs and Ping’s beliefs. There are no overlapping trigrams between them at all; what Yao believes is totally absent in Ping’s case, and what Ping believes is also seriously missing in Yao’s case.
Despite the uniqueness of each teacher’s belief system, beliefs in the four cases are not totally dissociative either. Overlapping of trigrams or beliefs is found across and/or within cases, although to varied extent. There are three types of overlap apparent from the comparison. The first type is the overlapping of trigrams across cases, which roughly shows the degree of similarity between different teachers’ beliefs. For instance, a comparison between Jing’s belief model and Yun’s belief model results in five overlapped areas of trigrams: Y_{222}, Y_{212}, Y_{122}, Y_{112} and Y_{111}. A comparison between Jing’s belief model and Yao’s belief model produces only two overlapping areas: Y_{211} and Y_{111}. A comparison between Yun’s belief
model and Yao’s belief model produces a different pair of overlapped trigrams: \( Y_{221} \) and \( Y_{111} \). This may suggest that Jing’s beliefs and Yun’s beliefs are held on a more similar basis, and neither of them have so much in common with Yao’s.

It should be noted that, in the event of an overlapped trigram across cases, the frequency and variety of beliefs in this particular trigram may give clues about how strong it acts as a component of the whole belief system. For instance, the trigram \( Y_{111} \) is identified in the belief system of three teachers (Jing, Yun and Yao), which shows they all agree with the communicative role of English in the local context, the inclusion of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy. However, the degree of conviction seems to vary across the three cases. Four beliefs are found in Yao’s trigram of \( Y_{111} \), while two such beliefs are found in Jing’s and only one belief in Yun’s. This may indicate that Yao is a more determined practitioner of \( Y_{111} \) beliefs than Jing and Yun, and that Jing is relatively more determined than Yun in this regard.

The second type of overlapping is identified in the repeating existence of single beliefs across cases, which means the same belief is held by different teachers. For instance, Jing shares a belief in the relevance of English content to real life with Yun and Yao, and he also shares a belief in teaching for tests with Yun and Ping. Another shared belief, EFL teaching methods should be contextually appropriate, is well expressed by both Jing and Yun. The sharing of a single belief, however, is not as indicative of the similarity of the whole belief system as the sharing of a trigram which consists of a group of associated beliefs. It is hard to judge whether Jing’s beliefs are more similar to Yun’s or Yao’s just from the fact that he shares some beliefs with both of them.

The more divergent a belief system is, the more likely its component beliefs are to overlap with those in a different belief system. Jing and Yun, with their beliefs dispersed among a greater number of trigrams, share more overlapping beliefs with each other than with either Yao or Ping. There is no overlapping of single beliefs between Yao and Ping, whose beliefs are identified in a smaller number of trigrams.

It also seems that single beliefs that are shared by multiple teachers reflect the influence of social and cultural factors specific to a given context. For example, the belief in the relevance of English content to real life reflects the rise in the communicative need of English, which Jing, Yun and Yao have perceived in their local setting. The belief in teaching for tests...
reflects the traditional testing culture, in which Jing, Yun and Ping became EFL teachers. The faith in the contextual appropriateness of teaching, shared by Jing and Yun, can be traced back to the traditional Chinese ideology about the harmony between man and nature, and it is possibly triggered by the growing needs of English for non-academic purposes as signals of contextual change.

The third type of overlap takes place within a case, when a single belief is found in different trigrams. The reoccurrence of a single belief in different trigrams indicates the flexibility with which the holder manifests the same belief in different manners. Such flexibility can be interpreted as a form of strength, or in other words, a belief has to be held strongly enough to be manifested flexibly. Evidence is found in all cases, except Ping’s. With a belief about the importance of vocabulary occurring in four different trigrams (Y222, Y212, Y122 and Y112), Jing insistently focuses on the teaching of vocabulary regardless of the envisioned purposes or the selected content. Similarly, Yun maintains the practice of rule-discovery with both communicative and non-communicative content, which falls into three trigrams (Y222, Y212 and Y221). In Yao’s case, the within-case overlapping of his beliefs is found to occur in greater number and with a higher frequency, which suggests that his beliefs are held with relatively strong flexibility and consistency.

Another feature that these teachers have in common is the mixed Yin-Yang qualities of their belief systems. Except Ping, all teachers seem to hold beliefs in a self-conflicting system which contains both Yin and Yang elements at the context, content and/or pedagogy level(s). For instance, the coexistence of Y111 and Y211 is found in Jing’s and Yao’s beliefs, and the coexistence of Y122 and Y222 is found in Jing’s and Yun’s beliefs. The juxtaposition of trigrams with variance in the initial digit (which stands for context, with 1 being Yang-context and 2 being Yin-context) suggests that teachers have perceived a mixture of EFL and ESL contexts, in which English is seen as both an object to be studied for academic purposes (a Yin orientation) and a tool to be used for communicative purposes (a Yang orientation). Also, juxtaposition of trigrams with variance in the middle digit (which stands for content, with 1 being Yang-content and 2 being Yin-content) is found in the cases of Jing, Yun and Yao. Both Jing and Yun have two pairs of beliefs indicating the mixed use of Yin-Yang content: (1) Y112 and Y122; and (2) Y122 and Y222. A different pair occurs in Yao’s case: Y121 and Y111. This indicates that teachers have an open attitude towards content of different Yin-Yang nature.
They place an emphasis on both the linguistic forms (a *Yin* orientation) and the communicative functions of the target language (a *Yang* orientation).

However, a mixed *Yin-Yang* pattern at pedagogy level appears to be less common than that at the other two levels. Mixed pedagogy is found in Jing’s and Yun’s cases, but is absent in Yao’s and Ping’s cases. In Jing’s case, there are two pairs of trigrams regarding pedagogical contrast: (1) *Y*112 and *Y*111; and (2) *Y*211 and *Y*212. Likewise, Yun’s beliefs also contain two pairs of pedagogically contrastive trigrams: (1) *Y*112 and *Y*111; and (2) *Y*221 and *Y*222. Such a pattern suggests that both Jing and Yun are willing to try out communicative-based methods (a *Yang* orientation), but they are also inclined to cling to the traditional way of teaching (a *Yin* orientation) for a sense of security and self-efficacy. Such pedagogical dilemmas are not evident in Yao’s case or in Ping’s case, where consistent pedagogy has been observed. Yao persistently sticks to *Yang*-pedagogy while Ping clings to *Yin*-pedagogy throughout her teaching.

One final thing to say about the cross-case examination is that trigrams which contain a multiplicity of associated beliefs seem to be held with more conviction than those which consist of fewer beliefs. For instance, the trigram of *Y*222, which stands for negative beliefs about the communicative role of English in context, the inclusion of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy, is found to have the strongest presence in the cases of Jing, Yun and Ping. Typical beliefs in this all-*Yin* trigram include a focus on accuracy, an emphasis on teaching for tests, and a view of English as an object, which are closely related to each other. As an exception, Yao has most beliefs in the trigram *Y*211, which stands for negative beliefs about the communicative nature of the local context yet positive beliefs about the selection of communicative content and the adoption of communicative pedagogy. All five identified beliefs in this trigram (namely a focus on language use, relevance to real life, a source of fun, an emphasis on cognitive development, and a focus on how to learn) are related to a central theme of “use”, which suggests Yao’s strong conviction in favour of the functional aspect of English, which is not necessarily confined to real-life communication. In other words, Yao does not see English just as a linguistic object or a communicative tool; rather, he sees English as an educational tool which can be used to enrich students’ life and help them grow happily and intellectually.
9.2 A re-examination of research questions

This section summarizes the findings in relation to the three research questions asked in the Introduction chapter:

(1) What are Chinese EFL teachers’ beliefs about English in terms of tool-vs-object tensions?
(2) How are their tension-loaded beliefs about English manifest in their classroom practices?
(3) How are their tension-loaded beliefs interpreted within the Yin-Yang framework?

9.2.1 Beliefs about English held by Chinese EFL teachers

Although opposing orientations of language, such as the language-as-object view in contrast with the language-as-tool view, have been distinguished in the field of ESL/EFL teaching (Ellis, 2012), there is a huge research gap in the understanding of how beliefs reflecting different orientations coexist within an individual teacher’s perceptions and how they are configured to function in tension.

This study provides positive results in support of the view of belief as being ‘inherently conflictual’, which affirms the possibility for an individual teacher to hold beliefs which reflect opposing orientations of language at the same time (Ellis, 2012; Green, 1971; Li-Jiali, 2009; Rokeach, 1968; Yi-Lingyun & Pang-Lijuan, 2004). The juxtaposition of conflicting beliefs is more commonly found in teachers working in a context with a higher degree of mixture of communicative needs and non-communicative needs, as in the cases of Jing and Yun, both of whom work at a secondary school located in the urban areas of Beijing. Their beliefs reflecting the language-as-object view include a focus on accuracy, an emphasis on linguistic knowledge, and a conviction in favour of test-oriented teaching. These object-oriented beliefs are often acquired from personal experiences, and reinforced by the current test-oriented education system, are held as core beliefs which are agreed to be difficult to change (Borg, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Wang-Gongzhi, 2000). While Jing and Yun find it difficult to discard the traditionally ingrained language-as-object view, they demonstrate a positive attitude towards the rapid growth of English-mediated communication in the local context. Beliefs reflecting the language-as-tool view, such as relevance of curricular content to real life, are held with growing conviction in teachers’ belief systems. Although still weaker than object-oriented beliefs, tool-oriented beliefs are becoming central
in Jing and Yun’s cases. With a split belief system, both Jing and Yun accentuate the importance of conducting contextually appropriate pedagogy and try to balance their opposing beliefs to fit the surrounding context, which is splitting in itself.

It is also found that the tool-vs-object tension can be asynchronous along the levels of context, content and pedagogy. It seems that contextual tensions are the easiest to resolve, as both Jing and Yun have expressed little difficulty in accepting opposing beliefs regarding their local EFL context. Tensions at content level are less easy to resolve. Although Jing and Yun have expressed their fondness for the new textbook which contains many real-life themes and communicative tasks, they admit that they mainly use it as a resource for linguistic input and often skip the communicative content. Tensions at pedagogy level turn out to be the most difficult to resolve. Even if Jing and Yun are mentally ready to turn to a communicative approach, they are prohibited by insufficient professional training and lack of experiential support. Both of them are still sceptical about the contextual appropriateness of communicative pedagogy, and their doubts are becoming stronger as they encounter implementation difficulties. Thus, the asynchronous patterns of tensions indicate a transitional state of beliefs, where teachers practise inconsistent pedagogy in order to reduce mental disturbance that is caused by conflict and restore a comfortable zone with a new level of belief-practice balance (Peng-Gang, 2002). Unless tensions are pedagogically resolved, it would be difficult for teachers, like Jing and Yun, to make consistent decisions in classroom teaching.

While inconsistent pedagogy in Jing’s and Yun’s cases provides supporting evidence for Rokeach’s (1968) claim that changes happening to a central belief are likely to cause disturbance to the whole belief system, this study also finds that pedagogical consistency occurs in two circumstances: (1) if object-oriented beliefs are held with utmost faith, as is shown in Ping’s case; and (2) if it is tool-oriented beliefs that are held with greater conviction, as is shown in Yao’s case.

Ping’s data show no signs of conflicting beliefs in her belief system; all the core beliefs she holds about English and English teaching are unquestionably object-oriented, such as viewing English as a linguistic system, support for L1 use and compliance with the test-oriented system, which entail what she believes it is essential to ensure a fair education. As her data show, she is aware of the on-going changes in the local setting, but she opts to set up “an anti-fire wall” against those changes and tries very hard to prevent her beliefs from becoming
split. Instead of having a direct impact on her efforts to maintain consistent pedagogy, contextually-driven tensions are manifested in her intensified psychological stress, such as an increased level of anxiety, lowered self-efficacy and more frustration.

In contrast, Yao seems to be more skilful at handling tensions. Without rejecting the tradition of teaching for testing purposes, he refuses to let beliefs in this strand take the upper hand in his understanding of English. Unlike the other cases, where beliefs are clustered around either the object theme or the tool theme, Yao’s beliefs are rarely purely object-oriented or purely tool-oriented. He manages to accommodate both orientations by attending to the human aspects of language rather than the pragmatic aspects. The two orientations are integrated into his commitment to students’ personal development, which is displayed in his concerns about how they live, feel, and think. More specifically, his central beliefs include a focus on language use, relevance to real life, English being a source of fun, an emphasis on cognitive development, and a focus on how to learn, which all involve active use of knowledge. In this way, Yao is able to resolve the tool-vs-object tension at a higher-order level and to implement his own style of teaching with strong consistency.

To sum up, this study suggests the following findings with regard to the first research question, which asks about Chinese EFL teachers’ beliefs in terms of the tool-vs-object tension. First, there is evidence of both orientations coexisting in local teachers’ belief systems, which is in line with those who view ELT classroom as a wrestling site for multiple paradigms (e.g. Allwright, 1998; Canagarajah, 2002; Deng & Carless, 2010; Mak, 2011; Pennycook, 2012; Widdowson, 2012; Zhang-Zhengdong, 2006). Since conflicting beliefs are the product of a conflicting context, it is more common for tool-vs-object tensions to be identified in a context that has a clear mixture of both EFL and ESL elements. Object-oriented beliefs feature a focus on accuracy, attention to linguistic forms, compliance with the testing system and use of L1. Tool-oriented beliefs include a focus on language use, relevance to real life and the importance of student participation. There are also some beliefs that fit both orientations, such as rule discovery, the fun of learning English, English learning as an intellectual activity, and a focus on how to learn.

Secondly, the object-oriented beliefs seem to be held with stronger conviction than the tool-oriented ones in most circumstances. Although there is evidence of teachers’ perceptions of the growing contextual incentives for a more communicative approach, beliefs in this strand are most facilitated by material support (e.g. new textbooks and popular media) and
technology support (e.g. the internet), and yet often lack support from positive experiences, which is argued by many as one of the most influential factors in belief reinforcement (see Chen-Yangli, 2004; Pajares, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Woods & Çakir, 2011). This explains why teachers report implementing traditional methods for a sense of comfort and security when they have sensed a severe belief conflict, for example, at the presence of an approaching test.

Thirdly, the increase in tool-oriented beliefs, if strong enough to disturb the old, dominant language-as-object orientation, is found to be dispersed unevenly among teachers of different regions. Teachers of economically advantaged areas seem to be more likely to accept the communicative aspects of English and are more concerned with the relevance of school-based English to real life. The increase in tool-oriented beliefs in their cases is often accompanied by the weakening of object-oriented beliefs.

Finally, the intensity of tensions between these two orientations seems to be subject to teachers’ individual differences in contextual sensitivity (or their willingness to adapt) and professional competence (or the ability to change). In other words, the extent to which teachers absorb and resolve tensions has an impact on their pedagogical consistency. More specifically, teachers who are contextually sensitive and professionally competent (e.g. Yao) are able to maintain a compatible mode for opposing beliefs at both the context level and the content level, and resolve belief tensions at the pedagogical level. With tensions absorbed and resolved, they are capable of implementing their teaching with consistency and flexibility. Teachers who are contextually sensitive but not quite competent in the teaching profession (e.g. Jing and Yun) have little difficulty in absorbing belief tensions at the context and content level, but cannot resolve them at the pedagogical level. Their teaching may appear flexible but inconsistent. There are still teachers who are not so contextually sensitive or pedagogically strong (e.g. Ping). They are inclined to reject belief tensions at the conceptual level in order to protect their teaching from falling into chaos.

### 9.2.2 Relationship between teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices

As I have discussed in the Literature Review, beliefs provide a basis for action by definition (Ajzen, 1991; Borg, 2011), but research findings regarding the relationship between beliefs
and practices are inconclusive, varying from very consistent to very inconsistent (Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996). The existing literature attributes the belief-action inconsistency to conflicting beliefs which compete for influence on action (Deng & Carless, 2010; Mak, 2011; Phipps, 2009), absence of belief data which are implicit and thus difficult to elicit (Basturkmen 2012; Ellis, 2012), and the strong influence of contextual constraints (e.g. Erkmen, 2010; Han-Lihong, 2011; Kuzborska, 2010; Sun-Laiqin, 2008; Xing, 2009).

This study addresses the above concerns in the following ways: (1) it understands teachers’ beliefs as naturally situated in a self-conflicting system (see 2.1.5); (2) it devises a coding scheme that includes stated beliefs as well as unstated beliefs (see 4.4); and (3) it incorporates contextual considerations (such as the goals of EFL teaching) into the operational definition of teachers’ beliefs (see 3.2.2.1). Therefore, a conceptual understanding of teachers’ beliefs in this study involves three assumptions regarding belief-practice correspondence. The first assumption is that beliefs, as the psychological basis for action, are naturally congruent with practices. The second assumption is that the congruence between beliefs and practices is contextually constrained, because beliefs are the psychological reflection of the surrounding reality and may accommodate contextual factors which are conducive to different approaches. The last assumption is that the belief-practice congruence may exist in different forms, which can be identified through synthesized consideration of various sources of data.

Therefore, the main concern of this study is not about whether teachers’ beliefs are congruent with their practices, but in what way the belief-practice congruence is manifested. I propose a coding scheme which recognizes four types of belief-practice congruence (see Table 4.6 for a review): (1) Manifest Congruence (MC) marks a clear correspondence between teachers’ verbal data and their practices, when teachers are observed doing what they claim they will do; (2) Latent Congruence (LC) highlights the correspondence between a negatively stated belief and intentional avoidance in practices; (3) Subconscious Congruence (SC) takes account of those instinctively derived beliefs, which are found in teachers’ behavioural data but not in their verbal data; and (4) Embedded Congruence (EC) is usually spotted in teachers’ episodic accounts of a past event, which provides evidence of an asynchronous match between what teachers say and what they do.

The coding scheme not only helps identify what beliefs are centrally held by teachers, but also reveals how these beliefs are related to teachers’ practices (see Table 4.7 for a cross-case summary of teachers’ beliefs and the various code patterns from which they emerge).
regard to the correspondence between teachers’ beliefs and their practices, this study identifies a number of features. First of all, it is aligned with other studies which have discovered stronger belief-practice consistency in cases of experienced teachers than novice teachers (e.g. Farrell & Lim, 2005; Yang & Gao, 2013). The four participants in this study are all experienced teachers and they all show a high degree of agreement between what they say and what they do, as 15 out of the 19 belief statements are recognized on the basis of Manifest-Congruence.

Secondly, teachers’ beliefs are rarely based on Manifest Congruence alone, but are often experientially enhanced with the presence of Embedded-Congruence data. More than two thirds of the beliefs (13 out of 19) are identified based on data of both Manifest Congruence and Embedded Congruence data. Such an “MC + EC” combination gives supporting evidence to other studies which claim that teachers’ practices are strongly shaped by their experientially-derived beliefs (Chen-Yangli, 2004; Woods & Çakir, 2011).

Thirdly, teachers’ practices are not only experientially enhanced, but also reflectively derived, which confirms the view that teachers are reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983). The presence of Latent-Congruence data along with Manifest-Congruence data can be regarded as an indicator of enhanced reflection, as it indicates that a belief is held with clear boundaries of what to do and what not to do. Such an “MC + LC” combination can serve as evidence of teachers’ reflective thinking that shapes a particular belief and usually involves instructional practices of intentional choice.

Fourthly, beliefs which are held with both experiential and reflective enhancement, as shown in the “MC + LC + EC” combination, are likely to have a stronger impact on practices. There seems to be some connection between the number of enhanced beliefs and the level of consistency between beliefs and practices. For example, all the five beliefs in Yao’s case are both experientially and reflective enhanced, and his instructional practices turn out to be strongly consistent.

Finally, teachers who are less reflective tend to allow their practices to be driven by instinct, or subconscious beliefs which have not yet been made explicit through reflection. Compared to Yao, Jing, Yun and Ping are less reflective, as there are fewer instances of “MC + LC + EC” combinations in their beliefs. However, there is evidence of Subconscious Congruence
in each of their cases, such as a focus on accuracy in Jing’s case, a rule-discovery approach in Yun’s case and the use of L1 in Ping’s case.

In addition to findings emergent from the code-derived patterns of belief-practice congruence, the eight-trigram model also suggests some findings with regard to how teachers’ beliefs are related to their classroom practices. To being with, this study agrees with the claim that the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices is complex (Breen et al., 2001; Hao-Deyong, 1997; Peng-Gang, 2002). As shown in Figure 9.1, the same belief can be manifested in the practices of different orientations. For example, Jing’s vocabulary teaching is found in both topical discussions and test-preparation lessons, and Yun’s rule-based method is applied to different genres of curricular content. On the other hand, there is also abundant evidence showing a practice guided by diverse beliefs; for instance, many of Yao’s pedagogical acts are shaped by the multiple concerns of his EFL teaching: to make it “use-based, relevant, interesting, challenging and autonomous”.

This study has also discovered that the correspondence between beliefs and practices is dynamic, which means congruence or incongruence between teachers’ beliefs and practices can be temporary and subject to continuous change. For instance, Jing and Yun both demonstrate inconsistent pedagogy, which is revealed in the variety of trigrams with mixed context and content. This pedagogical inconsistency could be temporary as adjustment will be made to resume harmony. Once they become more prepared at pedagogy level, they are likely to achieve a higher level of consistency in their updated beliefs. It is also possible for consistent pedagogy to be temporary. For example, although Ping’s teaching appears consistent and her beliefs are exclusively located in an all-Yin trigram (Y222), it is reasonable to expect change to happen in the reverse direction to allow more Yang elements to come in, according to the principle that “solitary Yin or Yang cannot grow”. In Yin-Yang thinking, it is possible to predict that, as contextual tensions become more intense, she will experience a belief crisis, which will lead the current consistency into inconsistency. Such a dynamic view of the belief-practice relationship reflects the underpinning paradigm of Yin-Yang ideology, which is to be understood as “not just a state of being, but also the trend of becoming” (Mou, 2003).
9.2.3 The *Yin-Yang* nature of teachers’ beliefs about English

This study adopts *Yin-Yang* theory to understand Chinese EFL teachers’ belief about English and proposes an eight-trigram model to analyse their belief tensions at three levels, namely *context, content* and *pedagogy* (see Figure 3.4 for a review). A number of important findings emerge from this approach.

First of all, this study shows that it is common for teachers to hold beliefs of both *Yin* elements (related to the *language-as-object* view) and *Yang* elements (related to the *language-as-tool* view), especially those who have experience of living and teaching in economically developed areas, where English is assumed to play a more functional role. As Figure 9.1 shows, all teachers, except Ping, have beliefs in a variety of trigrams with mixed codes of 1 (standing for *Yang*) and 2 (standing for *Yin*). Such a blended pattern of trigrams indicates the coexistence of *Yin* and *Yang* at context, content and/or pedagogy level within the belief system. More specially, teachers find that the *language-as-object* view and the *language-as-tool* view are both justified in the local context; they believe in the value of tests and at the same time they have become more aware of the communicative content around them; they see traditional methods as contextually appropriate and they are also open to the alternative communicative-based pedagogy. For example, they (Jing, Yun and Yao) all value the relevance of teaching content to students’ real lives (*Yang*), and at the same time they still believe in the importance of attending to linguistic forms (*Yin*). The coexistence of *Yin* and *Yang* echoes previous studies (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Deng & Carless, 2010; Zheng, 2005), which also portray Chinese EFL teachers who embrace conflicting beliefs in their efforts to make sense of the changing context in which they practise teaching.

It is also noted that *Yin* and *Yang* can be well reconciled in some beliefs and not so well reconciled in others. If a belief has *Yin-Yang* tension internally resolved, it is more likely to display external consistency in action. For example, Yao believes in *the value of language use*, which is internally resolved in that it remains unchanged in different contexts or with different teaching materials. His practices in relation to this belief turn out to be consistently use-based. In contrast, if *Yin* and *Yang* are not resolved internally in a belief, inconsistent practices are likely to occur. For example, Jing’s belief in *the importance of vocabulary* is not coherently defined because the connotation of this belief can vary in different circumstances. Sometimes he stresses the importance of learning words as objectified knowledge, and sometimes he emphasizes the importance of using words in speaking. A belief with
unresolved *Yin-Yang* tension is likely to display itself in inconsistent pedagogy, where the holder shifts back and forth between *Yin*-pedagogy and *Yang*-pedagogy alternatively.

The study also provides evidence for the waxing-waning balance between *Yin* and *Yang*. In other words, the rise of *Yang* often happens along with the decline of *Yin*, and vice versa. This phenomenon is found applicable at all the three levels. At context level, the emergence of *Yang*-context beliefs is accompanied by the weakening of *Yin*-context beliefs. In their interviews, teachers showed a positive attitude towards the growth of international contact (signs of *Yang*) taking place in the local EFL context, which used to be a *Yin*-dominant context. Meanwhile, they also revealed their weakened conviction in favour of the current test-oriented system for not taking the changed context into consideration. At the content level, teachers expressed their preference for the new textbook which looked “quite international”, but they admitted that they had to cut most of the speaking activities (*Yang*) in order to save time for the teaching of linguistic knowledge (*Yin*). At pedagogy level, teachers expressed more willingness to try out communicative tasks (*Yang*), and they soon realized that inclusion of communicative teaching would cause a reduction in their attention on linguistic forms. When sensing test pressure or time constraints, teachers would naturally drop *Yang*-pedagogy in order to guarantee the implementation of *Yin*-pedagogy. Except Yao, teachers all expressed their difficulty in balancing *Yin-Yang* tensions well, and this turns out to be the area in which they need the most help.

Another important finding is based on the hierarchical feature of *Yin* and *Yang*, which refers to the reproduction of *Yin-Yang* generations. This study suggests a further division of the dichotomous views between *language-as-object* and *language-as-tool*. For instance, both Jing and Yun see English as a linguistic system, which is a *Yin*-loaded perception, but the two teachers perceive the same belief in a different way. Jing emphasizes the discrete nature of linguistic knowledge and would spend a lot of time teaching single words. On the other hand, Yun emphasizes the generative nature of language and would invest classroom time helping students use what they know about the language to make discoveries about linguistic rules. Relatively speaking, there is more *Yang* in Yun’s perception than in Jing’s. Therefore, under the category of *language-as-object* (a *Yin* position), a new pair of opposing positions can be identified: “an object to be studied” (as in Jing’s belief in teaching words), which relatively pertains to *Yin*, and “an object to be used” (as in Yun’s belief in discovering rules), which relatively pertains to *Yang*. Another example can be found in the belief that “English should
be relevant to students’ real life”, which is a Yang-loaded perception and is shared by Jing, Yun and Yao. Different approaches are found among the three teachers. Jing and Yun tend to conservatively select what is available in the textbook, while Yao enjoys improvising conversation topics from contextual cues. Although they all lay emphasis on the functional use of English, Jing and Yun are passive followers of the textbook while Yao is an active innovator. Therefore, under the category of language-as-tool (a Yang position), a new pair of opposing positions can be identified as “a tool to be studied” (as in Jing and Yun’s belief in copying tasks), which relatively pertains to Yin, and “a tool to be used” (as in Yao’s belief in inventing tasks), which relatively pertains to Yang. With the two new pairs of Yin and Yang, a four-emblem model (see Figure 9.2) is generated from the original tool-vs-object dichotomy to allow for a more in-depth understanding of teachers’ beliefs about English.

![Figure 9.2 A four-emblem model of the tool-vs-object tension](image)

Finally, this study argues that an optimal balance of Yin and Yang is essential for the development and maintenance of a belief system. A good sample of Yin-Yang balance is found in Yao’s case, where he adopts both Yin elements and Yang elements at context and content level and successfully integrates the two opposing forces at pedagogy level. His teaching is consistent, healthy and empowering. Some kind of Yin-Yang imbalance is diagnosed in the other participants’ cases. Deficient Yang (阳虚) is found in Jing’s and Yun’s cases, where their beliefs are not well resolved to enact Yang-pedagogy to the correspondent level of their perceptions of Yang-context and Yang-content. A more serious Yin-Yang imbalance is found in Ping’s case, where there is hardly any evidence of Yang elements. Because her teaching is dominated by Yin and seriously lacking in Yang, it can be diagnosed as Excessive Yin (阴盛). The understanding of Yin-Yang balance is important. Teachers who show Deficient Yang or Excessive Yin require different treatment. The former can be fixed with enhancement of Yang elements, while the latter is better solved by a reduction of Yin elements.
10. Conclusion

In this chapter I draw a conclusion from this study by outlining the main contributions it makes to the understanding of EFL teachers’ beliefs about the subject matter and the implications they have on research on teacher cognition, language policy, teacher education, curriculum development, and school-based EFL teaching. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this study and suggest areas for future research.

10.1 Contributions of the study

Indigenous research, which recognizes a local perspective to reflect the location-specific context, makes a valuable input to global knowledge (Li, 2012; Tsui, 2004). This study has taken context-specific considerations with regard to the conceptualization as well as the operationalization of the research queries, and has made some original contributions to the theorization and methodological approaches of research related to teacher beliefs.

This study makes three major theoretical contributions. The first, based on a comparative literature review between Western and Chinese scholarship, involves a contextualized definition of the concept of belief within the traditional Chinese philosophical theories. It proposes that an understanding of teacher beliefs in a given context should highlight the following premises: (1) teacher beliefs are inherently loaded with tensions; (2) they can be consciously or subconsciously held; (3) they are the psychological product of context (i.e. context ‘mothers’ beliefs); (4) they are the psychological engine of practices (i.e. beliefs ‘mother’ practices); and (5) they are held in a complex and dynamic system which is striving for harmony, or an optimal balance between opposing forces. These five premises of an indigenous understanding of teacher beliefs are partly, but not entirely, shared in Western academia. They constitute an appropriate paradigm for context-specific research on this topic, which will enhance the knowledge base of teacher belief studies in general.

The second theoretical contribution, epistemologically driven by Yin-Yang theory, is the exploratory attempts to describe the internal structure of teachers’ beliefs about English with an eight-trigram model. In this study, teachers’ beliefs about English are understood as collective perceptions about where it is taught and learned (context), what samples are used in the teaching and learning (content) and how it is delivered in classroom settings.
(pedagogy). An eight-trigram model is constructed when each of the three aspects is assigned to Yin and/or Yang. This model provides a novel theoretical solution for analyzing and interpreting data.

The last theoretical contribution, which is data-driven to some extent, proposes a further development of the conventionally recognized tension between the language-as-object view and the language-as-tool view in English language teaching. With Yin assigned to the former and Yang assigned to the latter, this study reveals strong evidence of Yin-Yang interplay within each view, and argues for a hierarchical understanding of the tool-vs-object tension. It also suggests a shift of theoretical discussions from whether one view should be replaced with the other to how the two views can be optimally harmonized within and between.

This study also contributes to discussions on methodological issues of teacher belief studies in three ways. The first contribution is the adoption of Yin-Yang thinking in the selection of cases, which follows the principle of “one generates two, and two generates four”. Such a case selection method not only fully takes advantage of conventional multiple contrastive case study, but also adds more possibilities for case comparison. The definition of unit in the Yin-Yang guided case selection can be so flexible that the research focus can be laid on any or all of the following: the region, the school or the teacher. Meanwhile, the fixed pattern of generating pairs also enhances the reliability of replication studies.

The second contribution lies in the creation of a coding scheme to distinguish core beliefs from peripheral beliefs. With the assumption that core beliefs are usually accompanied by behavioural manifestation, this scheme sets four criteria for the selection of core beliefs from the data, each of which recognizes a type of belief-practice congruence. Drawing on the conceptual understanding of belief, this scheme justifies conscious beliefs as well as subconscious beliefs, validates evidence of both presence and absence of behavioural manifestation, and acknowledges both synchronous and asynchronous congruence. This coding scheme has the potential to provide valuable input into research on teacher beliefs, because it not only helps identify what beliefs are centrally held by teachers, but also reveals how these beliefs are related to teachers’ practices.

Finally, this study innovates on processing techniques for qualitative data. It combines a descriptive analysis with a categorical analysis for each participant’s data set, which is then graphically represented in an eight-trigram model. By bringing words, numbers and pictures
together, this technique provides a promising solution for the conversion of qualitative data into categorical data and for the integration of multiple paradigms in data interpretation.

10.2 Implications

From this study, I have drawn five implications for EFL education in the Chinese context, which include the need to construct contextually appropriate theories for EFL-related research in China, to incorporate an indigenous understanding of teachers’ beliefs in teacher education programmes, to build a professional community in support of their reflective practices, to develop a curriculum that caters for the divergent needs of the EFL learning population, and to emphasize the educational value of school-based English.

To begin with, the findings of this study suggest that there is an urgent need to construct contextualized theories for educational research on EFL teaching in the Chinese context. Theories with a disregard to the differences between EFL contexts and ESL contexts are often ignored or challenged by practising teachers, and there is a serious lack of EFL-related theories that have sufficiently addressed the characteristics of the Chinese context. The four teachers in this study have many years’ of EFL teaching experience, and three of them have had overseas travelling or training experiences, in which they briefly encountered ESL settings. They have come to the same conclusion that what works well there may not be as effective here. However, they have to follow their instinct when practising EFL teaching to fit their own understanding of contextual appropriateness. Educational researchers and teacher educators should be aware of the needs of teachers and support them with sound theories that are derived from local epistemology and are grounded in the local practice.

Secondly, it is suggested that an indigenous understanding of teachers’ beliefs should be incorporated into teacher education programmes. Given the powerful influence of teachers’ beliefs on their classroom practices, it is important to make teachers explicitly aware of what they believe about EFL education and how these beliefs help them achieve effective teaching. An indigenous understanding is essential in this respect, and this means teachers should locally situate their personal theory of what their beliefs are and how they function. As the Chinese way of thinking typically features notions such as tension, balance and change, it
would be useful to make them an integral part of teacher education. It is recommended that teacher educators employ tasks and activities to help teachers make discoveries about the underlying reasons behind their pedagogical decisions and about the existence of conflicting beliefs that compete for influence on their practices. It is also useful to engage teachers in the discussion of balanced pedagogy, or how tensions can be solved to achieve pedagogical harmony. To help teachers understand the dynamics of belief change, teacher educators can also try out tasks and activities to sharpen their sensitivity to the surrounding context and help them develop an introspective mindset regarding the adaptive mobility of their beliefs.

This study also has implications for school-based teacher development, in which teachers take the initiative to fulfil their professional development. As this study shows, beliefs are often reinforced by positive feelings and reflective thinking. It is suggested that teachers construct a professional community to facilitate experiential and reflective enhancement for their beliefs. For instance, regular, casual meetings would provide a relaxing environment for interpersonal exchange and personal reflection. Peer observation is also a good way to trigger reflective thinking.

The next implication involves the need to revise the current one-size-fits-all curriculum for EFL teaching in China. As the needs of EFL learning are becoming more divergent, policies related to EFL education should be updated to take account of contextual changes. In the midst of modernization and globalization, the EFL context in today’s China features an unevenly distributed accumulation of Yang elements across regions. Measures should be taken to reduce Yin aspects in order to keep the context from becoming Excessive Yin. More dialogues are needed between policy makers and practising teachers on potential policy changes. As is shown in the data, teachers suggest that English should be learned on an optional basis, rather than as a compulsory subject, and that it should be removed from the high-stake tests. Meanwhile, measures to boost Yang aspects are also expected. For example, the purposes of EFL learning can be locally defined and specifically addressed in the school-based curriculum, based on which local practices can be developed. This should offer a wider variety of English courses that are all highly relevant to the real lives of teachers and students alike. Students should be able to make their own choices about what English to learn and have a voice in how it is learned and tested.

Last but not least, a balanced understanding of English in terms of its context, content and pedagogy has significant implications for EFL teaching. While studying English for academic
purposes largely pertains to *Yin* activities, learning it for communicative purposes is often manifested in *Yang* activities. A choice of either orientation is likely to fall into some kind of *Yin-Yang* imbalance, in which *Yin* or *Yang* is found to be insufficient or excessive. The findings of this study highlight the need to emphasize the educational value of English in a given context, which is more likely to bring about *Yin-Yang* harmony. Yao provides a good example of how a focus on the educational gains of EFL learning helps resolve tensions brought about by a narrow focus on the linguistic gains of EFL learning, and facilitates the construction of *Yin-Yang* harmony in the classroom setting.

### 10.3 Limitations of the study

As with all qualitative studies, this study has limitations in terms of the methodological design and implementation. The first limitation is the selection of two schools to represent contrasting cases for EFL contexts. With easy access to the centre of Beijing and a well-developed tourism economy, the rural school (School B) is not as representative of a typical rural context as the urban school (School A) of an urban context. Although the two schools do constitute contrasting cases in terms of the role of English in their local setting, the contrast is not sharp enough to represent full tension between an exposure-rich EFL context and an exposure-poor one.

The second limitation has to do with the small number of participants, which makes it difficult to claim their representativeness of teachers in general. It turns out that the two participants from School A make typical cases while the other two participants of School B present extreme cases. In other words, the two teachers from School B are not as representative as their counterparts from School A. Although the inclusion of extreme cases has the potential to offer “highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 1990), it restrains the possibility of pair-based comparison of teachers between the two schools. The small number of cases also means that caution should be taken in claiming generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

Another shortcoming of this study is the relatively short duration of the visit to each school. With longer duration, teachers would have become more used to my presence and felt more
relaxed about revealing themselves, and their lessons would have taken on a more diverse appearance in the teaching of a wider range of themes as well as different skills. If conditions permit, it would be ideal for the visit to last for a whole semester, which would result in a better understanding of how teachers’ tension-loaded beliefs fluctuate in terms of intensity at various stages, such as shortly after a long break and immediately prior to the end-of-semester test. A longer stay would possibly add more subtlety and variety to the database.

Finally, this study is not immune to the researcher effect or the observer effect that is inherently attached to qualitative research, which relies heavily on researchers’ subjective perception. The extent to which teachers are affected by the observation method has a direct impact on the quantity and quality of the data they produce. Some teachers are more outspoken than others in the interview, and some are more sensitive to what is expected in the observation. Individual differences in teachers’ personalities have resulted in data of varied volume in each case. This is a factor to consider when seeking findings from comparing cases.

10.4 Suggestions for future research

The findings and limitations of this study provide some suggestions for future research. First, as this study provides an example of utilising local knowing to understand what local people think and do, similar attempts can be carried out in other contexts (especially non-Western ones) to ‘globalize’ the knowledge of the research topic.

Secondly, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study with a sharper contrast between cases by deliberately selecting participants from disparate contexts. Data from this study suggest some examples of contrasting contexts, which include (1) an urban school versus a mountainous school (as mentioned by Jing), (2) a top-ranking school versus a lower-ranking school (as mentioned by Yao), and (3) a Being-based school versus a Boston-based school (as mentioned by Yun). This will enrich the understanding of the contextual influence on teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Thirdly, it may be worthwhile to insert an in-between context as a referent for contrastive analysis. For instance, a suburban school may be inserted between an urban school and a rural school, an average-ranking school could be added to the contrast between a top-ranking
school and a lower-ranking school, and an ethnically mixed school may broaden the scope of comparison between a Chinese school and a foreign school.

It is also recommended that future reach include novice teachers as participants. Given that they are relatively inexperienced in teaching, it would be interesting to see how differently they respond to the changing context in contrast to their experienced counterparts in the same school and what kind of experience or reflection is involved in the process of strengthening core beliefs in their cases.

Another suggestion for future research is to replicate the study with a prolonged visit to the research site. A longer stay allows the researcher to gain a better understanding of the local context and also allows the participants to become accustomed to the presence of the researcher. Visits of longer duration, say throughout a whole semester, are likely to improve the depth as well as the breath of the data, which may yield a more subtle and in-depth understanding of teachers’ beliefs.

Finally, it is suggested that the findings revealed by the eight-trigram model be applied more extensively. The eight-trigram model, based on *Yin-Yang* theory, has the potential for interpretations of multiple perspectives, but due to the limited space in this thesis, discussions of the findings are not fully developed. Potential areas for further discussion include contrastive analysis of beliefs held by teachers who teach English for different purposes, beliefs held by teachers with or without overseas experience, and beliefs held by teachers who are native to the local context and those who are not, just to name a few. Another potential area for further analysis is a more intensive study of each trigram in terms of what beliefs are typically found in it and how appropriate it is to the surrounding context. An understanding in this regard will enhance the knowledge of a context-specific pattern of what local teachers think and do, and thus facilitate their efforts in maintaining or restoring harmony in their professional lives.
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Appendices

Appendix I: A sample content page of the textbook used by participating teachers (1)


A sample content page of the textbook used by participating teachers (2)
Appendix II: Participant information sheets and consent forms

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

My name is Juan Tian. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. I am doing research to investigate how Chinese secondary EFL teachers understand the subject they teach (i.e. English) in the Chinese context and how their beliefs about English are related to their classroom practices.

I would like to seek your permission to allow me to conduct research (from ___/___/___ to ____/____/____) at your school. I would be very grateful if you could also help me recruit interested teachers by kindly providing their contact details.

This study involves interviews with the participating teachers and observation of their classes. The total time each participating teacher will need to give the study is about 10 hours, including 2 focus interviews and a number of post-lesson interviews.

All the interviews will be recorded with a digital voice recorder and the resulting digital files will be kept on my personal computer. Those observed classes will only be subject to both teachers’ and students’ consent and will be recorded either with a digital voice recorder or a video camera out of each teacher’s own preference. They have an option to have the observation entirely video-taped (which means all the observed classes will be video-taped) or partially video-taped (which means a minimum of one third of the observed classes will be video-taped and the rest will be recorded with a digital voice recorder). The video data will be transferred to digital files and stored on my personal computer or, if the size is too big, on separate discs. I will be fully responsible for the transcription and translation of those digital recordings. All the data (including the digital file of the interview, the video file of the observed class, transcripts, and written texts) will be carefully stored and only accessible by myself.

The interview transcript will not be offered to you; however, a copy of the observed class video will be offered on an optional basis. Data will be stored in a safe place with secured access for up to six years as of the conclusion of the study. You will be invited to read the research reports on the analysis and interpretation of the results after the completion of the study.

Data will only be used for the doctoral dissertation, conference presentation, related publication and teacher education purposes. Please be advised that your name or the name of your school will not be used in the report and you will not be identifiable.
I hope participating in this study will lead to a deeper understanding of what “teaching English as a foreign language” means in the local Chinese context. I believe such an understanding will prove to be essential for in-service EFL teachers’ professional development. I would be grateful if you could agree to let your school to participate in this study. I would also like to have your assurance that participation or non-participation of the teachers and students will not affect their relationship with the school and their performance or evaluation in any way.

Thank you for your time to consider this request. Every assistance that you can offer will be greatly appreciated. You are free to withdraw yourself at any time without giving a reason. You have the right to withdraw any data related to your school up to a period of two months after the date on which consent is given (Date: ___/___/____). If you agree to participate, please kindly sign the Consent Form and return it to me. If you have any queries or wish to have more information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you very much for making this study possible.

Juan Tian
PhD candidate
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
New Zealand

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142

Phone: 64 9 3737599 Ext. 87830

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2009 FOR THREE YEARS. [REF NO. 2009/256]
CONSENT FORM FOR THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

- I have been told about this research project and I understand the nature of the research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent up to a period of two months after the date on which consent is given (Date ___/___/____).
- I assure that whether teachers and students take part in the study or not will not affect their relationship with the school and their grades.
- I understand that each participating teacher will need to give about 10 hours to the study.
- I understand that teachers will take part in interviews and the interviews will be digitally recorded.
- I understand that teachers and students will be observed about 8 times during routine class time and that the observation is only subject to both the teacher’s and the students’ consent. I understand that the teacher has been offered the option of having their classroom interaction either audio-taped or video-taped.
- I understand that data will be safely stored by the researcher for up to six years and will only be used for thesis writing, conference presentation, related publication and teacher education purposes.
- I understand that part of the data (such as the observed class videos) will be offered to participating teachers on an optional basis and that all digital data will be thoroughly destroyed after six years as of the conclusion of the study.
- I understand that the name of the school and the participants’ names will not be used and they will not be identifiable.

- I agree to let my school to participate in the study. YES / NO
- I agree to provide contact details of interested teachers. YES / NO
- I wish to receive the summary of the findings. YES / NO

Signed: ____________________________________
Name: _____________________________________ Date: ___ / ___ / ____
(Please print clearly)

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2009 FOR THREE YEARS. [REF NO. 2009/256]
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

My name is Juan Tian. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. I am doing research to investigate how Chinese secondary EFL teachers understand the subject they teach (i.e. English) in the Chinese context and how their beliefs about English are related to their classroom practices.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research (from ___/___/____ to ___/___/____). The Head of School has kindly given permission for this study to be conducted at your school and has also assured that your participation or non-participation will not affect your relationship with the school in any way.

As a participant, the total time you will need to give to the study is about 10 hours. More specifically, you will take part in 2 interviews about your understanding of English as an international language as well as a curricular subject. Each interview will last 0.5~1 hour. You will also be observed several times during your normal teaching hours. These observed classes will be recorded either with a digital voice recorder or a video camera. You have an option to have the observation entirely video-taped (which means all the observed classes will be video-taped) or partially video-taped (which means a minimum of one third of the observed classes will be video-taped and the rest will be recorded with a digital voice recorder). A brief post-lesson interview will be conducted after each observed class.

You may choose to use English or Chinese or both during the interview. The interview will be recorded by a digital voice recorder and the resulting digital files will be kept on my personal computer. The video data will be transferred to digital files and stored on my personal computer or, if the size is too big, on separate discs. I will be fully responsible for the transcription and translation of those digital recordings. All the data (including the digital file of the interview, the video file of the observed class, transcripts, and written texts) will be carefully stored with secured access.

The interview transcript will not be offered to you; however, a copy of the observed class video will be offered on an optional basis. Data will be stored for up to six years as of the conclusion of the study. You will be invited to read the research reports on the analysis and interpretation of the results after the completion of the study.

Data will only be used for the doctoral dissertation, conference presentation, related publication and teacher education purposes. Please be advised that your name or the name of your school will not be used in the report and you will not be identifiable.

I hope participating in this study will help both of us gain a deeper understanding of what “teaching
English as a foreign language” means in the local Chinese context. I believe such an understanding will prove to be essential in your professional development as a language teacher in China. I would be grateful if you could agree to participate in this study.

Observation is only subject to both your consent and your students’ consent. You are free to have the video recording stopped at any time during the class without giving reasons. You are also free to withdraw yourself at any time during the interview without giving reasons. You have the right to withdraw your data up to a period of two months after the date on which consent is given (Date ____/____/____).

If you agree to participate, please kindly sign the Consent Form and return it to me. If you have any queries or wish to have more information please feel free to contact me.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Juan Tian
PhD candidate
Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics
The University of Auckland
New Zealand

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142

Phone: 64 9 3737599 Ext. 87830

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2009 FOR THREE YEARS. [REF NO. 2009/256]
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

- I have been told about this research project and I understand the nature of the research. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my data up to a period of two months after the date consent is given (Date ____ / ____ / ____).
- I understand the Head of School has given permission for this study and whether I take part in the study or not will not affect my relationship with the school.
- I understand that the total time I need to give to the study is about 10 hours.
- I understand that I will take part in 2 interviews and a number of post-lesson interviews. All the interviews will be digitally recorded. I understand that my class will be observed at least 8 times and that the classroom interaction will be fully or partially video-recorded. I understand that the frequency of video-taped classes is negotiable with the researchers with the minimum being one third of the total observed classes.
- I understand that observation is subject to my student’s consent as well. I assure that students’ non-participation will not affect their relationship with me and their grades. I assure that students who are sensitive to cameras will not be included in the recording.
- I understand that data will be safely stored by the researcher for up to six years and will only be used for thesis writing, conference presentation, related publication and teacher education purposes. I understand that the digital data will be thoroughly destroyed after six years as of the conclusion of the study.
- I understand that part of the data (such as the observed class videos) will be offered to participating teachers on an optional basis.
- I understand that my real name will not be used and I will not be identifiable in the report.

- I agree to participate in the study. YES / NO
- I agree to be audio-taped for the interviews. YES / NO
- I agree to be video-taped for my classes. YES / NO; (if yes) FULLY/PARTIALLY
- I wish to be offered video tapes of my classes. YES / NO
- I wish to receive the summary of the findings. YES / NO

Signed: ____________________________________________
Name: _____________________________________________ Date: ____ / ____ / ____
(Please print clearly)

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 19 JUNE 2009 FOR THREE YEARS. [REF NO. 2009/256]
Appendix III: Interview guide of the initial interview

Interview guide of the initial interview (the Chinese version)

第一部分：与英语教学有关的个人经历
1. 你是什么时候开始学习英语的？你喜欢学习英语吗？为什么？
2. 什么时候开始教英语的？你喜欢教英语吗？为什么？
3. 在你的英语学习过程中，有没有什么人或者什么事对你产生了重要的影响？
4. 你如何评价自己的英语水平？
5. 作为英语教师，你有成就感吗？
6. 随着教龄的增加，你是否察觉到你英语水平的变化？如果有，产生变化的原因是什么？

第二部分：英语作为交际工具
1. 你心目中的“英语”是一个什么样的概念？它对你来说有什么样的含义？
2. 除了课堂教学，你在日常生活中还有没有其它接触英语的机会？请举例说明。
3. 你觉得英语在实际生活中有用吗？
4. 你认为自己的英语交际能力怎么样？你的交际能力是如何培养的？
5. 你如何看待英语在世界上的作用和地位？
6. 你如何看待英语在中国的作用和地位？
7. 你如何看待英语在你这个地区中的作用和地位？

第三部分：英语作为学习科目
1. 在你任教的当地，英语学科和其他学科相比起来，有什么特殊之处吗？
2. 英语作为一门学科，你认为它最重要的内容是什么？是知识体系，还是交际功能？
3. 有人认为英语口语和英语知识是两种截然不同的系统，需要截然不同的学习途径。你同意这种看法吗？你认为你现在的教学思想比较倾向于哪一边？这两种知识和能力在中国式的大课堂上有可能同时获得吗？
4. 你的学生重视英语学习吗？他们重视（或者不重视）的原因可能是什么？
5. 你认为国家新课程对于英语的教学要求符合实际吗？为什么？
6. 你现在的教学路子跟你最开始教英语时有很大变化吗？表现在哪些方面？你的这种变化可能与什么原因有关？对你来说，这种转变容易吗？
7. 你的教学目标和学生的学习目标契合吗？如果不契合，你一般怎么做？
8. 假如你在下面两个培训机会中只能选择一个，你会怎么选择？为什么？
   A. 去英语国家访学一个月
   B. 去国内外语教育机构进修教学理论
Interview guide of the initial interview (the English version)

Part One: Personal experience related to EFL learning and teaching

1. When did you start learning English? Did you enjoy learning English? Why?
2. When did you start teaching English? Did you enjoy teaching English? Why?
3. Is there any person or event that has had an important impact on your English learning experience?
4. How do you evaluate your English proficiency?
5. Have you felt any sense of achievement as an English teacher? Why?
6. As your teaching experience is growing, have you experienced any change on your English proficiency? If yes, what might be the cause(s)?

Part Two: Perceptions of English as a communicative tool

1. What a concept is “English” as you see it? What does it mean to you?
2. Apart from classroom teaching, is there much English contact in your daily life? In what way?
3. Is English playing an important role in your personal life?
4. How do you evaluate your communicative ability in English? How was it developed in your case?
5. What’s your opinion on the role and status of English in the world?
6. What’s your opinion on the role and status of English in China?
7. What’s your opinion on the role and status of English in the local setting where you teach?

Part Three: Perceptions of English as a curricular subject

1. Is the English subject distinctive from other subjects in any way?
2. As a subject in the school curriculum, what do you think is the most essential part of English, its knowledge or its function?
3. It is believed that English use and English knowledge are dissociative and require different approaches to learn. Do you agree? On which side are you standing in your teaching? Do you think it is possible to acquire both knowledge and ability through classroom teaching in Chinese contexts?
4. Do your students find English important? What might be the reasons for the “yes” or “no” answer?
5. Do you think New English Curriculum is in concord with your classroom teaching reality? Why?
6. Compared to how you taught English at first, is there any big change in how you are teaching English now? In what ways? What might be the reason(s)? Is the change easy for you?
7. Are your teaching goals and students’ learning goals the same? If not, how would you make necessary adjustment?
8. If you were given the chance to receive ONLY one of the following two teacher development programmes, which one would you choose? Why?
   A. To visit an English-speaking country for a month
   B. To take courses in pedagogic theories at a domestic education institute
Appendix IV: Interview guide of the final interview

Interview guide of the final interview (the Chinese version)

第一部分：英语环境与英语教学

1. 下列方面的国际化/中国特色的程度有多高？请选择相应数字，并说明理由。

   中国特色 ← 1 2 3 4 5 国际化 →
   - 你所在的地区
   - 你所在的学校
   - 你自己
   - 你现在所教的学生
   - 英语（课堂以外）
   - 英语（课堂以内）
   - 国内中学英语教学
   - 你现在使用的教材
   - 你的教学风格

2. 下列这些方面在你的教学中难度如何？请选择相应数字，并说明理由。

   非常难 ← 1 2 3 4 5 非常容易 →
   - 掌握教材内容
   - 使用教学方法
   - 实施教学评价
   - 利用教学资源
   - 确立教学目标
   - 了解教育规律
   - 谋求自身发展

第二部分：教学理念与教学实践

1. 当你的英语达到什么样的水平时，就能够让你对课堂教学充满信心？
2. 你认为，纯英文教学对现在的学生适用吗？
3. 你认为外语教学理论对于你的教学实践有用吗？
4. 你现在的教学受到什么理论的影响？
5. 你认为，你的教学中哪个部分最需要理论的支持？
6. 你们学校的教研活动主要有哪些形式？校本教研中哪些活动对你的帮助最大？
Interview guide of the final interview (the English version)

Part One: EFL context and EFL teaching

1. Choose a number to rate the degree of Chineseness as opposed to internationalization in the following aspects. Please explain your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chineseness</th>
<th>Internationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The region where you live</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school where you teach</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yourself</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students whom you are teaching</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (outside of classroom)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (in classroom settings)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary EFL teaching in China</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook you are now using</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your teaching style</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How difficult you feel in the following aspects? Choose a number to indicate and explain your answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very difficult</th>
<th>Very easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastering curricular content</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying teaching methods</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using teaching resources</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up teaching goals</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding education</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking professional development</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part Two: EFL beliefs and EFL practices

1. Is there any connection between teachers’ EFL proficiency level and their confidence in classroom teaching?

2. Do you think all-English teaching is applicable to you and your students?

3. Do you find EFL theories helpful in your teaching practices?

4. What particular EFL theories have influenced your teaching?

5. Which part of your teaching do you find in need of theoretical support?

6. Have you been involved in any school-based teacher development activities? Which activities do you find the most useful?