

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF PEER COACHING THROUGH TEACHERS' TEACHING PRINCIPLES

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Abstract

The English language programme of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has a pressing need for a continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Peer coaching is identified as the type of CPD that is potentially suitable for the English programme. It also serves as a catalyst for building a learning community. The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a peer coaching programme on the teachers' beliefs and practice. To do so, I investigate the difference in teachers' teaching principles (please see Section 5 of Chapter 2 for details) in direct relation to their actual classroom practice before and after the peer coaching programme in one school term. By comparing how the teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the programme, this study can address the impact of the peer coaching programme on the teachers' theories-in-use and has important implications for understanding and improving teaching. This study also attempts to investigate to what extent peer coaching helps to build a learning community.

This study found that peer coaching could help to change the teachers' beliefs and perceptions in various extents, which led to changes in teachers' practice. Trust is found to be an important element in a successful peer coaching relationship. This study also found that peer coaching can help to promote an articulate, reflective, and collaborative work culture, which should facilitate and sustain teachers' professional development, promote teacher leadership and contribute to educational improvement.

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Chapter 1 Rationale

1. Introduction

The English language programme of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has a pressing need for a continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Peer coaching is identified as the type of CPD that is potentially suitable for the English programme. It also serves as a catalyst for building a learning community. The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a peer coaching programme on the teachers' beliefs and practices. To do so, I investigate the difference in teachers' teaching principles (please see Section 5 of Chapter 2 for details) in direct relation to their actual classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme in one school term. By comparing how the teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the programme, this study can address the impact of the peer coaching programme on the teachers' theories-in-use and has important implications for understanding and improving teaching.

This study also attempts to investigate to what extent peer coaching helps to build a learning community. This chapter will first provide a background reasoning why the English programme of MUST needs CPD and a learning community. It then discusses the notion of a learning community and what important elements are needed to create it. This is followed by an examination of CPD and the criteria that constitute effective CPD. There is an analysis explaining how peer coaching can help develop a learning community. I also discuss the purpose of this study and present my research questions.

2. The need for CPD and a learning community

The Macau University of Science and Technology was founded in 1999. The whole school including the English language programme is expanding very rapidly both in terms of the number of students and the number of teaching staff. We currently have over 3,000 students studying in the programme, which is a 40 percent increase in number compared to the number of students in 2007. The original aim of the programme was to help students to reach a certain English proficiency in reading, writing and speaking, and to be able to pass the CET 4 national English test in China. However, due to the fact that our university is relatively new and did not have a very high entrance requirement especially for the first few years, we had to compromise and lower our curriculum standards. The overall English proficiency of the students tends to be at a low level. Although we have been raising the entrance requirement gradually in the recent years, the passing rate of the CET 4 is still less than satisfactory.

The number of our full-time staff is currently 45. As the head of the programme, besides managing the operations of the programme, I am responsible for maintaining the quality of teaching so as to ensure that students are learning. Most of the English teachers are equipped with the subject knowledge given their academic backgrounds. However, quite a few of the new staff and even some of the more established staff are still relatively young and inexperienced in teaching. I am concerned whether they have the pedagogical expertise to facilitate students' learning. With over 250 classes of various types in the programme, it is also very important to maintain good teaching standards across-the-board. Implementing continuing professional development (CPD) has become a necessity.

2.1 Effective English language teaching

To identify what good language teaching is, I have done a literature review in the field of English language teaching. Traditionally, the structural method or Grammar-Translation approach (focusing on grammar teaching and translation practice) has been used in the teaching of English. The main role of the teacher has been to lecture about various aspects of the English language. The learner has been treated as the passive recipient of learning material. Structural competence has been given predominance over communicative competence. Nowadays, many scholars (for example, Benciu, 2012; Harmer, 2001; Harris & O Duibhir, 2011; Lee and Van Patten's, 2003; Merrill, 2009; Nunan, 1991; Nunan, 1997; OECD, 2009; Richards, 2006; Spada, 1990; Sreehari, 2012) support that “communicative language teaching” (CLT) is a more effective language teaching approach. Richards (2006) argues that

...learners learn a language through the process of communicating in it, and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than through a grammar-based approach.

CLT is a broad approach to teaching, rather than a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. It is most often defined as a list of general principles or features. Nunan's (1991) five features of CLT include:

- i. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- ii. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- iii. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but

also on the learning process itself.

iv. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

v. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

In general, teachers using this approach will give students comprehensible input, provide opportunities for students to do things with the language and to carry out communicative acts of various kinds, and have assessment that measures communicative ability. "Unlike the Audio-Lingual Method, its primary focus is on helping learners create meaning rather than helping them develop perfectly grammatical structures or acquire native-like pronunciation. This means that successfully learning a foreign language is assessed in terms of how well learners have developed their communicative competence" (Benciu, 2012).

Harmer (2001) lists some popular English language teaching methodology and points out the pros and cons of each of them and argues that culture differences may create mismatches between teachers' teaching approaches and students' expectation of teachers' behaviour. Therefore, it is difficult to establish universally effective teaching approaches that serve various cultures. However, he still supports that languages are best learned through communicative language teaching approaches and suggests that teachers can close these cultural gaps by gradually introducing the CLT approaches.

Having been involved in language teaching for the past 18 years, I have tried many different types of language teaching approaches and I agree with Harmer's point that

CLT is more effective than the traditional approaches and does offer some real learning benefits. Macau is an international city with a diverse mix of nationalities and cultures and the local people in general do have plenty of exposure to the western culture. Therefore, teachers should not experience strong student resistance or incomprehension when employing CLT.

In Macao, “responding to the social demand for communicative English skills in recent years, English language teaching approaches underwent a transformation from the Grammar-Translation Approach to a focus on the communication front” (Lee & Lok, 2010, p.452). However, I am not sure if all the teaching staff in the English programme can employ some effective language teaching approaches to facilitate students' learning. In the early years of the English programme, the teaching staff have been concentrating on improving the curriculum. Not much attention has been paid to the quality of teaching until more and more inexperienced teachers were hired and we actually received some complaints from students about the performance of a few teachers. This was when I realized the teachers still needed on-the-job training.

During the first year of my EdD programme, I was introduced to the concept of continuing professional development (CPD), which has the notion that, beyond the initial basic training required for the job, individuals continuously pursue improvement in their professional skills and knowledge throughout their career. I found that a CPD programme would be highly beneficial to the teaching staff and in turn promote students' learning. (Please see Section 2 of Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of CPD.) My learning of CPD also triggered my idea of conducting this research study.

In a study conducted by Eksi and Aydin (2013), they found that as the years of teaching experience increased, teachers' perceived needs for professional development decreased. Novice teachers were more open to new challenges in teaching than more experienced teachers. As teachers get older and accumulate more experience, they may not be in search of innovations and will stick to their old ways of teaching (Eksi and Aydin, 2013). Therefore, CPD should be introduced to teachers as early as possible in their teaching careers.

Each full-time teacher in the English programme carries 16 teaching hours weekly. Many of them have been teaching the same courses for over a year and preparing lessons is no longer as time-consuming as when they first taught the courses. Being a teacher in the English programme myself, I understand that a lot of the teachers do have time to engage in CPD activities. Trust building between me as the researcher and the research participants is also important as it is a precondition to obtaining accurate data. Luckily, I have never been a “top-down” type of leader and have been able to develop a sense of rapport with all the teachers which hopefully would lead to feelings of trust and confidence. However, choosing the right kind of CPD to adopt is very important because the staff in the programme have very different cultural and educational backgrounds. Apart from this, I also have to take into account the limited resources that the school can provide to support CPD.

3. Learning Community

Another potential problem that I notice about the program is that there is not much

communication amongst teachers, and many of them tend to work in isolation. Although all the teachers are required to work in their own subject teams, they meet only when it is necessary to discuss the course plans or exams, no more than once a month. There seems to be a widely accepted notion that university teachers are already well-trained and are experts of their own fields, and so there is not much sharing and support between each other.

What the English programme needs, based on my experience and my review of the CPD literature, is to develop the culture of a learning community. Teachers and school staff operating as a learning community has been a new model of school culture and organization that actively supported educational change and improvement (Dufour, 2004; Hord, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1999; Siguriardottir, 2010; Starkey et al., 2009; Stoll et al., 2006; Vescio V. et al., 2008). However, building a learning community is no easy task. According to what I learned from the literature, peer coaching can be a form of CPD that can serve as a catalyst in developing a learning community. (Please see section 4 of Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion.)

Hord (1997) defines a learning community (or *professional learning community* as some scholars call it) as a school in which teachers and administrative staff continuously seek and share learning to increase their effectiveness for students, and act on what they learn. One basic idea of a learning community is that everyone in a school is a learner, not only the students. Also, as Earley (2005) puts it,

the notion of a learning community is [...] not so much with structures and systems but rather with the people that operate them. Similarly, the term community – whether real or virtual – refers to the values, beliefs, feeling, motivation and aspirations of the people

who make up an organization (p.244).

Morgan (1986) suggests that schools traditionally are operated like a “machine”, which is an organizational metaphor introduced by him. Morgan defines an organizational metaphor as “a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally” (1986, p.12). When schools are seen as machines, they operate as impersonal and highly structured organizations, emphasizing efficiency, order, and predictability. Members in the school need to follow standards and are not encouraged to be creative. Leaders use power to control and manage people so that they can maintain order and smooth operation of the school. Schools that work like machines are unlikely to achieve self-improvement, and are not responsive to the changing needs of the internal and external environments. They are in danger of being obsolete, or failing.

Schools as learning communities move closer to the “organism” and “brain” metaphors (Morgan, 1986). When schools are seen as an organism, they are more humanized and adaptable to change. They encourage collaborative work and personal growth. Members in the school enjoy more individuality and develop mutual support among each other. Leaders, instead of being a “top-down manager”, distribute power, recognize individual needs and establish a shared goal that unites all school members. This type of school has stronger adaptability and can meet the changing needs of the internal and external environments (Morgan, 1986).

The brain metaphor refers to a thinking and learning organization. When schools are seen as a brain, they are holistic and reflect constantly to strive for better in students’ learning. Members are empowered and work collaboratively and interdependently.

They are more committed to the goals and mission of the school. Leaders are transformed with their central values of service, growth and development for self and others. These schools constitute true learning community.

Earley (2005) makes a very good summary of the characteristics of a learning community:

Leaders of such communities must engender an ethos that all in the organization – students, teachers, and administrative staff in a school – are seen as learners in their own right. They must also seek everyone’s views and involve all, in various ways, in decision-making processes, supporting, developing and empowering them to feel a sense of ownership in the future of their organization. An active participation by all in a collaborative culture means that everyone takes responsibility for learning. Teachers and others working in such communities will discuss their work openly and seek to improve and develop their pedagogy through collaborative enquiry and the sharing of good practice (p.245).

Vescio, et al. (2008) undertook a review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. The collective results of the 11 studies being reviewed suggest that well-developed professional learning communities have a positive impact on both teaching practice and student achievement.

4. How to Build a Learning Community?

According to Diggins (1997), the first element in building a learning community is effective leadership because school leaders play an essential role in shaping the school culture. He suggests that effective leaders should constantly question the status quo and search for ways for ongoing school improvement and staff development. They need to provide teachers with opportunities "to meet and share effective practices, develop interdependent teaching roles, and grow personally and professionally" (Madsen and Hipp, 1999, p.268). Louis and Kruse (1995) name this collaborative work "reflective dialogue", meaning staff conversations about issues and problems related to students, learning, and teaching. As collaboration develops, so does collegiality. Collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks for both individual and organizational development, and in turn, creating a learning community (Dufour, 2004). So, school leaders need to take the lead to initiate teacher-to-teacher dialogues in order to encourage collaboration.

Dufour (2003) stresses that all school members in a learning community must clearly develop a shared mission that they are going to accomplish. They must understand their weaknesses, and also support each other as they implement new strategies to address areas of concern. Dufour (2004) also argues that "the powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practices. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement" (p.9).

So, what exactly can be done to create a learning community, and what is needed to sustain it? In order to answer this question, another question should be asked: What elements must be in place to continually motivate and encourage teachers to engage in

learning activities and apply what they have learned for the benefit of students? This is where continuing professional development (CPD) comes in. One of the functions of CPD, according to Stoll et al. (2006), is to improve teachers themselves and turn their schools into learning communities.

5. CPD recommended for the MUST English Program – Peer Coaching

CPD takes many different forms. Smylie (1989) analyzed data collected on teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of the sources of learning for educators. The most frequent four sources rated by teachers are: direct experience as a teacher, consultation with other teachers, study and research pursued on one's own and observation of other teachers. Similarly but more systematically, Neil and Morgan (2003) identify a range of different sources of professional development: private reading, private group research, in-school activities, outside activities in school, off-site courses, and networking with other schools.

For the English programme, "in-school activities" may be the only source that will meet its needs. With the existing salary policy, it will be difficult to require teaching staff to engage in "private reading" and "private group research" because they can be time-consuming and involve a lot of extra work on top of the teaching staff's current workload. "Outside activities in school" refers to inviting outside experts, which, according to my past experience, didn't always turn out to be a very effective way of staff training since some outside experts did not have a good understanding of our

unique context. Furthermore, it is suggested that the “one-off” type of training without any follow-up support has limited impact on teachers’ teaching behaviour (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Day and Sachs, 2004). “Off-site courses” is not applicable because there is not any private or government owned CPD provider in Macau. As for “networking with other schools”, it is unlikely to happen due to the fact that all the other local universities are competitors in the market.

For “in-school activities”, a form of collaborative CPD - *Peer Coaching* should potentially be able to meet the needs of the English programme. Neubert and McAllister (1993) define peer coaching as two colleagues engaging in a mutually supportive relationship. It is a cost-effective professional development opportunity because the university basically does not have to spend any extra money on it. In the present uncertain funding climate in the university, this is one form of training that can play an important role in improving teachers’ practices. Showers and Joyce (1996) indicate that coaching facilitates the transfer of training in two forms: learning new skills and fine tuning of existing skills. Vermunt et al. (2005, cited in Vermunt and Endedijk, 2011) undertook a study on higher education teachers' work-related learning processes. They found that two-thirds of the learning experiences that the teachers reported were not planned beforehand. Least reported learning activities were learning by reading, and most learning experiences came from learning from others and learning by doing; meaning that in practice, teachers exchanged ideas with each other that they subsequently tried out in their own classes. This is exactly what teachers do in peer coaching. Kumaravadivelu (2008) points out one key for effective professional development that it is necessary to create your own environment because there is not a perfect-match model for the teachers in each context. Peer coaching allows teachers to create a learning environment that meets their own needs.

Also, the collegial and reflective process that teachers noted as being the most effective source of their learning has been embodied in the concept of *peer coaching* (Renyi, 1996). By engaging in professional sharing with their peers, teachers can build a collaborative culture and foster learning in professional learning communities (Siguriardottir, 2010; Starkey et al., 2009; Vescio et al., 2008). As suggested by Dufour (2004), a culture of collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks in creating a learning community. Peer coaching has the feature that creates just that culture. In Chapter 2, there is a more detailed discussion of peer coaching and its role in building a learning community.

5.1 Design of the peer coaching programme

For this study, I have adopted Tonkin and Baker's (2005) and Slater and Simmons' (2001) peer coaching guidelines. The teachers in each pair coached each other once every two to three weeks or at least five times in the term.

Each peer coaching episode consists of three stages: a planning conference, class observation, and a reflective conference. The planning conference is a structured meeting in which the teacher and the peer coach discuss their collaborative effort with a particular focus on the teacher's goals.

The second stage in a peer coaching episode is the actual class observation. During the observation, the peer coach sits at the back of the classroom as an observer and takes notes based on her observation of the class, using the specifics discussed in the planning

conference as a framework. After the observation, the peer coach will need to review and organize her notes to prepare for the reflective conference.

The final stage is the reflective or post-observation conference, which should take place soon after the lesson. In the conference, the teacher and peer coach debrief the observed lesson. The peer coach provides feedback in light of the focused areas discussed in the planning conference. Instead of giving direct advice, the peer coach should listen intently, ask clarifying questions, focus on the specific observations rather than give personal commentary, and seek to agree together as to the meaning of the observations. The main goal of the conference is for the peer coach using the observation data to help the teacher to develop an action plan for future improvement.

6. Purpose of this study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the peer coaching intervention initiated for the English programme of MUST. I investigate its impact by comparing participating teachers' teaching principles before and after the peer coaching programme. (The concept of *teaching principles* has been used by Bailey (1996), Richards (1996), and Breen et al. (2001) to refer to the underlying rationales that guide teachers' classroom practices, and it will be illustrated in detail in Section 6 of Chapter 2.)

I have always wondered why teachers teach the ways they do and why each is different from the others; some are more effective while some are less. After a critical review of

literature, I found that teachers' classroom practices are closely related to their beliefs and principles of teaching. My approach is that, at the beginning and the end of the peer coaching programme in a school-term period, I will observe what the teachers do in the classroom and then try to elicit the principles that guide their work by asking them to explain their actions in that particular observed lesson. The perspective that I take in this study is not, as many other studies on teacher beliefs have done (Breen et al., 2001; Burns, 1996; Gatbonton, 2000 & 2008; Ho et al, 2001; Johnson, 1992a; Mullock, 2006; Richards, 1996), focusing on the identification of the reasons teachers give for their overall instructional decisions and actions. It is even further from those studies that are only interested in teachers' beliefs – what they say they wish to achieve, without heeding what they actually do in the classroom. My approach is to see what the teachers do in the classroom and then seek the principles that guide their work from their explanations for what has happened. By asking the teachers to make sense of their actual classroom practices, this study can address the teachers' theories-in-use and has important implications for understanding and improving teaching. Then, by comparing how the teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme, this study also addresses the impact of peer coaching in terms of the teachers' theories-in-use and has important implications for improving the peer coaching programme implemented in the future.

The present study can contribute to the improvement of teachers' professional development. Teachers' own constructions or sense-making of their classroom practices can be seen as an experientially based professional know-how that may serve as a focus for both initial teacher education and professional development. de Vries, et al. (2013) point out that "teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching are the propositions about learning and teaching that a teacher holds to be true, which in turn

guide to her or his thought and behaviors.” (p.81). Because teachers construct their own understandings about teaching, the professional development of teachers needs to pay due attention to the teachers’ own constructions. Putnam and Borko (1997) argue for the professional development of university teachers that for “professional development experiences to be successful in supporting meaningful change, they must take into account and address teachers’ knowledge and beliefs” (p.1281).

Also, teachers’ beliefs play an important role in teaching efficacy (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Sibbald, 2008; Wolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Hoy, Wolfolk & Hoy, 1993). They can also be the obstacles to professional development because they have evolved through years of teachers’ own learning and teaching experience (Eksi and Aydin, 2013). This can be why professional development programmes often fall short of the expected outcome. Joyce and Showers (1996, 2002) find that fewer than 15% of teachers apply new ideas learned in traditional staff development settings such as workshops. Consider the English programme as an example. In every academic year, there are one to two one-off teacher training workshops. But from the class observation after the workshops, I did not see teachers applying much of what was taught in the workshop. Perhaps when the information or strategies presented in the training workshops do not align with or are not considered to be important according to the participating teachers’ beliefs, the teachers usually go back to their old ways of teaching.

Teachers’ beliefs are more likely to change in a culture in which teachers regard learning as a collective activity (Joyce & Showers, 2002). When teachers discuss teaching, learn together and help each other practice new skills or strategies, they should be able to grow and their students’ learning can improve as a result. This is

because social influence is a powerful way of changing beliefs, as suggested by some researchers (Bandura, 1995; Zimmerman & Ringle, 1981). Thompson's (1992) review of teachers' beliefs and conceptions noted that "thoughtful analyses of the nature of the relationship between beliefs and practice suggest that belief systems are dynamic, permeable mental structures, susceptible to change in light of experience" (p. 149). Peer coaching, and a sense of community that it creates, is necessary not only to bring about changes in beliefs but to help teachers develop and maintain a sense of efficacy regarding new teaching strategies (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987).

In reviewing the literature on peer coaching, many studies (Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004; Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Brouwer, 2009; Browne, 2006; Bruce, & Ross, 2008; Hasbrouck, 1997; LeBlanc & Zide, 1987; Mousavi, 2014; Parker et al., 2014; Ross, 1992; Scott & Miner, 2008; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Soisangwarn and Wongwanich, 2014; Sparks, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Zwart, R.C. et al. 2008) reveal evidence of the benefits of peer coaching to the improvement of teachers' teaching practices, their attitude toward teaching, the effects of peer coaching on teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' learning process of peer coaching (please see section 5 of Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). However, little or perhaps none has been written on the relationship between peer coaching and teachers' teaching principles (please see section 6 of Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). As pointed out by Opfer & Pedder (2011), research on CPD and teachers' beliefs has been done separately, and de Vries, et al. (2013) also found that empirical studies investigate the relationship between CPD and teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching has been rare. This study attempts to fill this gap. In this study, researching teachers' sense-making of their actual classroom practices can provide a detailed picture of the impact of the peer coaching programme.

The programme staff come from diverse disciplinary and educational backgrounds (for example, English literature, English studies, linguistics, communications, etc.) and have different kinds of previous work experience (teaching in secondary schools and other universities), there should be something they can share with and learn from each other. Also, newly appointed staff, although not necessarily experienced teachers, may have up-to-date industry experience to share with their coaches who may have some instructional experience to offer to the novice teacher in turn. A peer coaching relationship enables and encourages a co-learning approach, where each draws on the skills of the other (Browne, 2006). It is for the interest of the English programme to find out as a result of the peer coaching intervention whether teachers will change their teaching principles, which leads to practice change, or even come up with new teaching principles that do not exist at the beginning of the intervention in a peer coaching dyad. In addition, since collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks for creating a learning community, this study also investigates whether peer coaching facilitates greater collegiality in building a learning community.

6.1 Research Questions

Motivated by the potential benefits in understanding language teachers' constructions of their classroom work as discussed above, this study first aims at understanding the meanings the eight participating teachers give to their classroom practices, with a particular focus on identifying and understanding the principles that underpin their teaching and the ways their teaching principles influence their practices. Then, by comparing how the teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme, this study also addresses the impact of peer

coaching in terms of the teachers' theories-in-use. In addition, I investigate whether the peer coaching programme can help build a learning community by studying how the participants work together.

Addressing the aims of the study, I ask the following research questions:

1. How does each of the teachers make sense of their classroom work?
2. Are there any teaching principles that are at the heart of the teacher's classroom work?
3. Do the teachers change their teaching principles as a result of the one-term long peer coaching intervention?
4. Are any changes in the teachers' teaching principles related to changes in their practices?
5. Are there any new teaching principles that emerged in a peer coaching dyad as a result of the peer coaching intervention?
6. Does the peer coaching programme serve as the building block for a learning community?

7. Conclusion

The organizational culture of MUST very much falls into the category of a "machine" (Morgan, 1986). Many of the teachers in the English programme are afraid to take risks and not keen to face changes. In my opinion, they can potentially contribute a lot more than what they can currently offer being in their comfort zones. There is a strong need to build a learning community in the English programme. Leaders, in order to

create a learning community, need to distribute power, recognize individual needs and establish a shared goal that unites school members. A culture of collaboration and collegiality has to be established; CPD can help to do the job.

Given the current limitation of the school context, peer coaching is an ideal type of CPD for the English program. It encourages reflection and analysis of teaching practice and helps to create a collaboration and collegiality culture that provides ongoing professional and emotional support among teachers. As a result, teachers can experience positive changes in their teaching practices. Therefore, peer coaching and learning community have a reciprocal relationship that can enhance each other.

The aim of this research is to investigate the impact of the peer coaching intervention on teachers' change in practices and beliefs. Teachers' classroom practices are closely related to their beliefs and teaching principles. For teachers to learn and be able to apply new teaching strategies, they need to understand and internalize the principles behind such strategies. Peer coaching, which creates a collaborative and on-going learning atmosphere, is argued to be a form of CPD that can help to change teachers' beliefs. This study is in an attempt to examine the impact of the peer coaching intervention by comparing participating teachers' teaching principles before and after the peer coaching programme.

In Chapter 2, I provide a discussion of what constitutes effective CPD and present an overview of peer coaching as a form of CPD and its advantages of teaching and learning. I then illustrate its role in building a learning community. The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of peer coaching through studying teachers' teaching principles. To justify the need for this study, a literature review on the impact

of peer coaching on teachers' cognitive and affective learning is provided. What follows is an overview of literature on teacher beliefs.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my research approach and the methods used in this study. I first illustrate my stance towards this research study which is an interpretivist. My research is an impact evaluation undertaken through qualitative research methods and my research design is mainly informed by ethnography. There is a discussion on ethnography and how the various characteristics of ethnography associate with my study. I then discuss the research design issues including sampling, methods of data collection, peer coaching procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis process, the issues of generalisability, validity and reliability, and ethics in regard to this study.

In Chapter 4, I present findings of the study on the individual teachers' rationales for their classroom work. I use three cases as examples to illustrate how I arrive at the frameworks of the teachers' teaching principles.

In Chapter 5, I compare the teaching principles and the strategic intentions of each of the eight participants before and after their participation of the peer coaching programme in attempt to find out if there are any changes in their perceptions and beliefs in teaching. I also examine the relationships of the teaching principles of each peer coaching pair to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

In Chapter 6, I conclude this thesis. I analyse the main findings of this peer coaching programme with relation to my research questions and discuss their implications. Then I provide recommendations for future peer coaching programmes. I also

discuss the contributions to the existing knowledge which include understanding the teacher's conceptual framework for practice with the development of the framework of classroom work for the individual teacher; obtaining the teachers' theories-in-use, which actually determine their classroom actions, and not just their espoused theories; finding out the relationship between peer coaching and teachers' teaching principles; discovering that peer coaching can help to change teachers' teaching principles and perceptions of their practice; and identifying elements that can facilitate a peer coaching programme to be a more effective CPD programme. Lastly, I discuss the limitations of this research, and make suggestions for further research in related areas.

Chapter 2 Literature Review on Peer Coaching and Teaching Principles

1. Introduction

This chapter first provides a discussion of what constitutes effective CPD and presents an overview of peer coaching as a form of CPD and its advantages of teaching and learning. It then illustrates its role in building a learning community. The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of peer coaching through studying teachers' teaching principles. To justify the need for this study, a literature review on the impact of peer coaching on teachers' cognitive and affective learning is provided. What follows is an overview of literature on teacher beliefs. Within the teacher belief research, there is a strand of studies that examine the teachers' constructions of their classroom practices. These studies investigate teacher beliefs and principles in direct relation to their actual classroom behaviour. Based on the reviewed literature, research needs are discovered, which serve as justifications for the present study.

2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

This section first introduces the concept of CPD. It then discusses the two important features of continuing professional development (CPD) – an ongoing process and contribution to teachers' whole person development. Lastly, it examines the elements needed to design effective CPD.

The term CPD was coined by Richard Gardner in the mid-1970s. The term is now common to many professions. In teaching, such development used to be called 'in-service training', or INSET, which emphasizes the 'delivery' of the training rather than the outcome (Gray, 2005). CPD has the idea that, beyond the initial basic training required for the job, individuals continuously pursue improvement in their professional skills and knowledge throughout his career. Day provides an elaborate definition:

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which constitute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives (1999, cited in Day and Sachs, 2004, p.13).

Research literature has shown that professional development is essential to teachers' growth and well-being and successful school development (Hargreaves, 1995; Day, 1999). It also confirms that where teachers are able to reflect, employ new ideas, test and share experiences among peers and where leaders provide appropriate support, there is greater potential for school improvement. Improving schools attach much importance to staff development and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practice (Putnam and Borko, 1997; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001).

There are many different forms of CPD, but the overarching idea of CPD is that it should be an ongoing process; it is important to establish the concept of training as a development process rather than isolated events (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Day and Sachs, 2004).

2.1 The Need for Ongoing Training

It is important to emphasize “continuing” as a feature of CPD. The whole school needs to understand the concept of training as a developmental process, which does not stop after a teacher completes a training session but continues as the teacher tries to make sense of new ideas in the classroom. McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) discover the danger of skill training that is too specific and not continuous. Without training and support on how to adapt their newfound skills to any situation, the benefits are lost. Their research conclude that the emphasis should be placed on “ongoing program support” by an organization, rather than isolated training.

When new teachers begin their teaching career, they will encounter a plethora of problems to which they do not have the solutions. The Scottish Executive (2005) report of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) found that less than half of them felt well prepared to play a part in improving standards of attainment and to respond to learners with learning difficulties. In spite of their training, teachers can often be daunted by the everyday issues of educating students in this fast-changing world of education. They need to be kept up to date with their subject knowledge and the latest development of studies on teaching and learning styles, in order for them to be able to teach to their full potential. As Yurtsever (2013) points out, “there is general

agreement that learning to teach is a lifelong process. Therefore, in professional development of language teachers, there should be continuity” (p.667). In a word, teachers do need professional development throughout their career.

Over the past six years in the MUST English programme, the turnover of the teaching staff has been over 30% on average. This is partly due to the fact that the pay rate of MUST is relatively lower than that of other local universities, but there is research showing that young teachers who are new to their teaching jobs are more likely to leave the profession than older teachers. Smithers and Robinson (2003) highlight that a large number of those leaving the teaching profession were younger members of staff with fewer years of experience. They found that one third of teachers leaving full time education had been teaching for five years or less. For the English program in this study, the situation is similar - about 40% of the teachers who left had been teaching for three years or less.

Thus teachers must be supported and developed before long term commitment to the profession can be developed, and CPD should always be a priority for teachers as they continually seek to develop and build upon their knowledge and skills. A DfES (Department for Education and Skills of the UK government) report on school improvement and CPD suggests that effective CPD makes staff feel valued and is good for staff retention (2005).

2.2 Whole Person Development

Apart from providing the technical know-how to improve one’s practice, CPD should

also contribute to changes in one's self-awareness and the clarification of one's values as an educator. Hargreaves reminds us that "teaching is more than a set of technically learnable skills: It is given meaning by teachers' evolving selves, within the realistic contexts and contingencies of their work environments" (1995, p.11). He argues that oftentimes both initial teacher training and in-service professional development neglect the place of purpose and goals in teachers' work (Hargreaves, 1995). Kelchtermans (2004) also emphasizes that CPD is a learning process that not only leads to changes in teachers' professional practices but also in their "thinking about the how and why of that practice" (p.220). Day and Sachs (2004) suggest that CPD should also include, besides the knowledge for practice, the "knowledge of self: generated by teachers engaging regularly in reflection in, on and about their values, purpose, emotions and relationship"(p.9). This is echoed by Kelchtermans's (2004) "personal interpretive framework" of "professional self".

CPD, as Hargreaves (1995) argues, should focus on the emotional dimension of development, which is essential for good professional practice, because the emotional aspect of teachers' self is closely linked to their classroom practices and how they make professional judgments. He states that "understanding the emotional life of teachers, their feelings for and in their work, and attending to this emotional life in ways that positively cultivate it and avoid negatively damaging it should be absolutely central to teacher development" (Hargreaves, 1995, p.21). Emotional development is not only important in developing passion in teaching and handling emotional responses, but also in, as Tickle (1991) puts it, "learning how to conduct tasks, meet new experiences, make judgments, building relationships, or assimilate new knowledge" (p.320).

The clarification of a teacher's values as an educator is another aspect that CPD should

pay attention to. Hodgkinson (1983) defines values as expressions of personal desires or preferences that give “worth” to particular objects, situations, or condition. Values not only temper the knowledge and skills that an individual have learned, but also determine an individual’s aspiration, dreams, and visions (Levinson, 1986). An individual’s personal dream establishes direction and serves as a basis for decision making to his/her life and work. Values also influence a person’s sense of injustice, the nature of the problems they identify and seek to solve, and the direction that changes takes (Hodgkinson, 1983). For instance, if teachers hold fast to the traditional way of doing things, and base decisions mainly on past practices, they are inclined to stay in their comfort zones. On the contrary, if teachers have a strong sense of moral commitment in providing students with quality education, they are inclined to question the current practice and strive to achieve the condition that they envision. So, the degree to which teachers embody their values will influence the amount of effort they put in to fulfill their visions. As Hodgkinson (1983) puts it, values exist in a person’s inner world rather than in the outer world of reality, but they do shape the reality.

Although I try to write about these various aspects of CPD in different paragraphs, I still found it difficult to divide them because they are all interrelated. For instance, teachers with low self-esteem will be likely to be emotionally insecure and value safety, which means they are less likely to make any changes to improve practice.

2.3 What constitutes effective CPD?

After reviewing some large-scale reviews (Cordingley et al., 2015; Hawley and Valli, 1999; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis, 2005; Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb, 2012;

Timperley, 2008) on effective CPD that results in professional learning, I find some common themes from them: work-based learning sustained over time with opportunities to put the learning into practice and with follow-up support; consideration of participants' needs; focusing on student learning outcomes; and collaboration and peer learning.

Cordingley et al., (2015) conducted a review of the international research into what constitutes effective professional development for teachers. They examined nearly a thousand international reviews into effective professional development, and they suggest that professional development programmes should have a strong focus on pupil outcomes. They arrive at a series of design features in the delivery of a professional development programme that help to make a lasting impact on teaching practice and student outcomes. The main features include:

Duration – They found that, to produce profound lasting change, professional development interventions had to be prolonged. According to their review, the most effective professional development lasted at least 2 terms – more usually a year or longer.

Rhythm – Professional development programmes should create a “rhythm” of follow-up, consolidation and support activities. This process reinforces the learning so as to have an impact on practice.

Designing for participants' needs – They found from all the reviews that one essential element of successful professional development programmes is overt relevance of content to its participants and their day-to-day experiences and

aspirations for pupils. Also, it is important to provide opportunities for teachers to identify and discuss their beliefs, and to engage in peer learning and support.

Creating a shared sense of purpose - They point out that achieving a shared sense of purpose is an important factor for successful professional development. This suggests that CPD providers should focus on providing course content that can build a sense of purpose, which can be done in several ways including peer support, using evidence from experimenting with new approaches, and working on why things work as well as what does and does not work in different contexts.

Alignment across various activities – The review indicates that effective professional development programmes will feature a variety of activities to reinforce their messages and test ideas from different perspectives.

Encouraging effective collaboration – All reviews of this review find that peer support, in which teachers can work together to test and polish new teaching approaches, was a common feature in effective professional development. There is evidence indicating that access to some form of collegial support for problem solving is essential.

(Cordingley et al., 2015)

Timperley (2008) analysed 97 studies of professional development that led to improved students' outcomes. She identifies 10 key principles that teacher professional learning needs to take into account if it is to be effective for both

teachers' practices and students' outcomes. She also stresses that the ten principles do not operate individually; rather, they are combined to inform cycles of learning and action. These ten principles are:

- Professional learning experiences that focus on the links between particular teaching activities and valued student outcomes are associated with positive impacts on those outcomes.
- The knowledge and skills developed are those that have been established as effective in achieving valued student outcomes.
- The integration of essential teacher knowledge and skills promotes deep teacher learning and effective changes in practice.
- Information about what students need to know and do is used to identify what teachers need to know and do.
- To make significant changes to their practice, teachers need multiple opportunities to learn new information and understand its implications for practice. Furthermore, they need to encounter these opportunities in environments that offer both trust and challenge.
- The promotion of professional learning requires different approaches depending on whether or not new ideas are consistent with the assumptions that currently underpin practice.
- Collegial interaction that is focused on student outcomes can help teachers integrate new learning into existing practice.
- Expertise external to the group of participating teachers is necessary to challenge existing assumptions and develop the kinds of new knowledge and skills associated with positive outcomes for students.

- Designated educational leaders have a key role in developing expectations for improved student outcomes and organising and promoting engagement in professional learning opportunities.
- Sustained improvement in student outcomes requires that teachers have sound theoretical knowledge, evidence informed inquiry skills, and supportive organizational conditions.

(Timperley, 2008)

The international review done by Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb (2012) on what makes great professional learning has led to nine claims for effective professional development. Like Timperley's 10 principles, they suggest that although these claims are articulated separately, in reality they are often integrated and they are:

- Effective professional development starts with considering students' outcomes.
- Effective professional development challenges thinking as part of changing practice.
- Effective professional development is based on the assessment of individual and school needs.
- Effective professional development involves connecting work-based learning and external expertise.
- Effective professional learning opportunities are varied, rich and sustainable.
- Effective professional development uses action research and enquiry as key tools.
- Effective professional development is strongly enhanced through collaborative learning and joint practice development.
- Effective professional development is enhanced by creating professional

learning communities within and between schools.

- Effective professional development requires leadership to create the necessary conditions.

(Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb, 2012, p.3)

All these major CPD reviews suggest that teacher professional learning should be a continuous cycle in which schools first identify the educational outcomes they value for their students, and then identify the knowledge and skills that teachers need in order to help students to bridge the gap between students' current understandings and the valued outcomes. Educational leaders should have a good understand of students' and teachers' needs and provide teachers with professional development opportunities, which should be varied and consistent with teachers' needs. Building a learning community is also an effective way to enhance professional development.

One important feature that all these CPD reviews agree on is collaboration and peer learning, in which teachers can work together to test and polish new teaching approaches. In fact, this feature corresponds with the characteristics of peer coaching and the following section provides a discussion of it.

3. Peer Coaching

In the UK, the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE, 2001) consider the knowledge that teachers can give to each other as the major source of professional development. In one of the CPD Strategy Documents from DfEE (2001), it states:

For many teachers their image of CPD is still of one-off events or short courses, often away from the school, of variable quality and relevance, delivered by a range of external providers [...] but we believe there is real value in thinking first about creating opportunities within [...teachers'] own schools [...] to learn from and with other effective colleagues. Many teachers already know that learning with each other and from the evidence of best practice is the most effective way to build their professional skills (p.12).

In the Elton Report (Department of Education and Skills, 1989), emphasis is placed on the benefits of peer support:

teachers often learn more about classroom skills by talking to each other than by listening to visiting “experts”[...] Peer support groups can develop the kind of trust and confidence which leads to mutual observation and consultancy which involves watching and commenting on each other’s teaching. This is probably the most effective method of classroom skills available (p.76).

Neubert and McAllister (1993) define peer coaching as two colleagues engaging in a mutually supportive relationship. A review of research about the impact of collaborative CPD on teaching and learning also pulls together some very good evidence which shows that peer coaching affects both teaching and student learning in positive ways (Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, & Evans, 2003).

Building knowledge, and checking it against the concepts of others is a major part of learning (Joyce & Weil, 1996). Peer coaching is a strategy that can be used to support this learning process. Harwell-Kee (1999) defines coaching as,

talking and acting in a purposeful way, with the goal of continuously improving their teaching practice. A coach is a critical listener/observer who asks questions, makes observations and offers suggestions that help a teacher grow and reflect and produce different decisions (p. 28).

Showers and Joyce (1996), in their article examining the history of coaching, state that peer coaching began in the early 1980s as a strategy to improve the degree of implementation of new curriculum and instructional techniques. They write that “teachers who had a coaching relationship—that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experiences—practised new skills and strategies more frequently and applied them more appropriately than did their counterparts who worked alone to expand their repertoires” (Showers & Joyce, 1996, p14). Peer coaching has typically operated as a process of collaborative planning, observation, and feedback in order to increase the level of implementation of instructional techniques and curriculum (Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Peer observation of classroom teaching can benefit both the teacher being observed and the observer. The teacher benefits by another’s view of his or her behavior and by receiving helpful feedback from a colleague. The observer benefits by watching a colleague, preparing the feedback, and discussing the common experience. In Metcalfe’s (1999) description of developmental classroom observation, he points out that the process of observation can be extremely helpful for the observer: “those who observe teaching are likely to feel challenged about their own practice and to learn from the experience of seeing others in action, as well as having to articulate what they have

seen” (p.455). Thus, as Parker et al. (2014) put it, peer coaching has “the potential to enhance understanding of self and others in reciprocal learning processes” (p.127).

Showers (1985) contends that the three fundamental purposes of coaching are to: (a) build communities of teachers engaged in the ongoing study of teaching, (b) facilitate collegial study of new knowledge and skills through the development of a shared language and common understandings, and (c) to provide a support structure within which teachers can develop new teaching skills and strategies. LeBlanc and Zide (1987) assert that peer coaching results in: (a) the application of new knowledge and skill, (b) feedback on teaching application is provided allowing for the skill to be fine-tuned, (c) confidence is enhanced through the facilitation of the self-analysis process, and (d) commitment is enhanced via the emotional support and encouragement provided by peer coaching.

In a study by Ross (1992), student achievement was higher in classes where teachers had more contact with their coaches. Another study found that 70% of teachers with coaches felt that their new techniques led to marked improvements in students’ academic skills (Sparks & Bruder, 1987). Also, Soisangwarn and Wongwanich (2014) found in their study that peer coaching “can help teachers to better understand themselves and their students in order to make learning more meaningful. They became more focused on improving student outcomes and developing effective practices” (p.2510).

Yurtsever (2013) conducted a study aiming to learn about teachers' preferences among four models of professional development (tradition training, mentoring, peer-coaching, self-directed) and clarified which model they would like to adopt in their teaching

career. Of the 91 participants, 70.8% preferred peer coaching to traditional training and mentoring. The main reason was that in peer coaching, teachers could work with a partner with a close relationship and it was less formal than traditional training and mentoring. As Yurtsever (2013) points out, peer-coaching and self-directed study enable teachers to “construct their own context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge which in turn leads them to theorize from their practice and practise what they theorize” (p, 671).

Three basic models were identified in the peer coaching literature: technical coaching, challenge coaching and collegial (or reciprocal) coaching (Ackland, 1991; Garmston, 1987). Technical coaching or coaching by experts is built on the premise that certain teachers or individuals have expertise or experience from which others can learn. The most common examples of expert coaching would include literacy coaches, mentor teachers, or demonstration teachers (Ackland, 1991). Challenge coaching is used by teams of teachers to solve persistent problems in instructional design or delivery with the *challenge* referring to resolution of a current problematic state (Garmston, 1987). Collegial or reciprocal coaching is directed more to the context of teaching and to the processes of self-reflection. Professional dialogue among teachers is needed to improve practice and to alter the organizational context in such a way as to assist in teacher improvement. Reciprocal coaching implies a reciprocal relationship between two practitioners and most forms of reciprocal coaching involve teachers volunteering to learn or refine application of skills and knowledge simultaneously, to watch each other try the strategies out in the classroom, and then to give each other constructive feedback (Ackland, 1987). Reciprocal coaching fits into the context of the English programme in this study in which all the English teachers are considered peers, who will help each other to improve practice. Thus, the English programme will adopt the

reciprocal coaching model.

4. The Role of Peer Coaching in Building a Learning Community

“Perhaps the defining bench mark for identifying how deep community is emerging in a school is the presence of a community of practice...In a learning community, individual practices are not abandoned but are connected in such a way that they constitute a shared practice” (Sergiovanni, 1999, p.19). Peer coaching fits into this idea very well.

A culture of collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks in creating a learning community. “An active participation by all in a collaborative culture means that everyone takes responsibility for learning” (Earley, 2005, p.145). Peer coaching has the features that create just that culture. Through the coaching process, teachers work collaboratively to explore ideas, think through challenging situations, and develop supportive, collegial relationships.

4.1 Adult Learning Theory

Peer coaching and learning community both emphasize teachers’ learning. Thus adult learning theory, which gives us a clear picture of the needs that adults have in a learning experience, should serve as a theoretical foundation for both of them. If we compare the features peer coaching and learning community in terms of adult learning theory,

they appear to be highly compatible.

First of all, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) indicate that adults learn best when they can direct their own learning and decide on what they learn. Sergiovanni (1999) writes that “as community strengthens, more and more of action for individuals and groups is compelled from within and less and less of action is required from the outside” (p.16). In a learning community, teachers play an active role in their own learning and engage in matters important to them in order to achieve their shared goals, which is in line with teachers’ self-directed learning in peer coaching.

Second, adults also learn best when they can focus on problems relevant to practice and tap into their rich experience backgrounds (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). Teachers involved in both peer coaching and a learning community are actively engaged in dialogues to identify problems in their practice and learn by finding solutions to the problems. One advantage that teachers, as adult learners, have over school children is that they have a rich background of knowledge and experience. This is, in fact, the logic behind peer coaching in which teachers can share with each other their strengths so they can learn to improve their practice, which is also aligned with Sergiovanni’s concept of “shared practice” (1999, p.19) in a learning community.

Finally, establishing strong relationships with peers also helps adults to learn (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991). Adult learners need to grow and learn with others, to feel less isolated in their learning, and to count on others as resources in their learning. This is why both peer coaching and learning community attach much importance in work collaboration and collegiality.

Peer coaching also promotes teachers' ownership. The ability to develop goals of learning, influence the learning content and activities, participate in decision making all positively contribute to a sense of ownership and commitment to adults' learning (Barnett and Muse, 1993). When people have ownership of the systemic processes of an organization, they are more agreeable to changes that result from their involvement (Senge, 1990).

As Schommer (1998) points out, belief theory in adult learning posits that adults' working and learning efforts are influenced by the same underlying beliefs. Some researchers also suggest that there is a relation between how and what teachers learn and their beliefs about learning and teaching (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011). Therefore, it is also a reason why it is worthwhile to look into teachers' beliefs in the learning process of a professional development programme. Similarly, in this study, I explore the changes of teachers' teaching principles in a peer coaching programme.

4.2 Ongoing Mission

Growth and self-renewal are the cornerstones of a learning community and any form of CPD. Learning in a CPD program should not be only considered as accomplishment at a certain level of competency; rather it should be perceived as an attitude of lifelong growth and development. This attitude is developed through teachers' increasing self-awareness as an educator. This attitude will keep them ever searching for opportunities to grow, and in turn, helps sustain the ongoing learning culture of a learning community. On the other hand, if schools are seen as learning communities,

school leaders must be “responsible for building organizations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape future” (Senge, 1990, p.9). Wenger (1998) also emphasizes the “ongoing” nature in his definition of a community of practice:

...a group of people who share a concern, a set of problem, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (p.95).

Therefore, in a learning community, the “ongoing learning” concept of CPD can be further reinforced.

4.3 Values and Emotional Involvement

Individual values have a lot to do with personal background and experience, but can be influenced by what others value. So, social contact plays a major role in shaping one’s values. In other words, a learning community, in which social contact is encouraged, can help clarify a teacher’s values (Earley, 2005). In the collaborative culture of peer coaching, teachers “can develop, clarify, review, reflect on, and redefine their purposes, missions, and visions together...colleagues can serve as mirrors for teachers to view their own practice” (Hargreaves, 1995, p.16). On the other hand, individual values also shape the culture of an organization. Since values influence individual aspirations and actions, as teachers develop a deeper understanding of their moral responsibility through professional development, their actions can transform a school, for example, from a “machine” to an “organism” or a “brain”, using Morgan’s (1986) organization

metaphors. In a word, while a learning community shapes individual values, individual values also shape a learning community.

In a school with a culture of isolation, teachers are expected to handle all problems related to their own students independently and they may feel that asking for assistance or even admitting to having a problem is a sign of incompetence (Caccia, 1996). As they are not very willing to take the risks necessary for growth, teaching practice remains the same. Peer coaching has been shown to facilitate the collaboration necessary for positive change by breaking down the isolation of teachers and instilling a climate of trust and collegiality (Robbins, 1991; Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004). In a peer coaching process, teachers observe, listen, and share ideas between each other, and more importantly they serve as each other's emotional supporters developing a lasting and collegial relationship, in which teachers can feel more connected and not isolated. As this relationship grows, teachers can establish trust among each other and feel more emotionally secure (Nias et al., 1989). This mutual support atmosphere is actually the building block for a cohesive learning community. Teachers in this learning community will feel an identity and a sense of belonging that, in turn, foster teachers' commitment.

5. The Evidence Base on Peer Coaching

5.1 Cognitive Learning

In a study that contrasted different sources of coaching, Sparks (1986) compared three types of training: (a) workshop only, (b) workshop plus peer observation, and (c)

workshop plus feedback from the trainer. Her findings indicated that peer observation was most powerful in improving classroom performance. She also found that peer observation appeared to be more effective than trainer-provided coaching in boosting the workshop effectiveness. The research, then, provides reason to believe that teacher behaviors can be positively influenced by this form of staff development.

Researchers of the Eisenhower Professional Development Project (Porter et al, 2000) offer evidence of what constitutes effective professional development. They spent three years studying professional development efforts and measured consequential changes in teaching practice. Some characteristics were found to be more successful in improving teaching practices, and those characteristics matched up with aspects of peer coaching. These aspects included providing opportunities for active learning, being coherent and consistent with teachers' goals and other activities, and involving the participation of teachers from the same subject, grade, or school.

According to the Education Alliance (2005), one of the most reliable ways to increase the quality of the teaching force is to provide school-based professional development and programmes that are teacher-driven, ongoing and sustained, use adult learning strategies, focus on student needs, content-focused, and are job-embedded, learning strategies.

Peer coaching is shown to improve teachers' effectiveness by reinforcing positive practice, increasing skills, and finding ways to better less effective practices (Hasbrouck & Christen, 1997; Showers & Joyce, 1996). In a mixed method research

conducted by Bowman and McCormick (2000), they find that peer coaching can help teachers to develop skills that contribute to clarity of instruction and pedagogical reasoning and actions. Peer coaching is also shown to promote collaborative planning and implementation of effective classroom management strategies (Hasbrouck & Christen, 1997). Showers (1985) finds that peer coaching conferences that are focused on planning for appropriate use of new models of teaching, teachers' educational objectives for teaching specific subject matter, and discussion of strategies for achieving certain goals bring improvement to instructional effectiveness.

5.2 Affective Learning

LeBlanc and Zide (1987) assert in their report that peer coaching results in enhancing teachers' confidence through the facilitation of the self-analysis process, and teachers' commitment via the emotional support and encouragement provided by peer coaching. Similarly, in Browne's (2006) evaluation research for the Teaching and Learning National Transformation Programme undertaken in the United Kingdom, she finds that peer coaching is shown to encourage professional dialogue and practitioner confidence, which in turn impact on learner knowledge and skills.

Sparks (2002) writes about the benefits of distributing leadership amongst teachers, such as through appointing teachers as coaches. He found that shared responsibility leads to personal and professional satisfaction, a sense of instrumentality, investment and membership in school community and the opportunity for teachers to learn about schools and about themselves.

In a qualitative study done by Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp (2004), teachers in a voluntary peer coaching program reported that they received meaningful feedback, motivation to direct their learning, increased levels of trust and morale among themselves, and justification to do more work.

Besides, some researchers (Bruce, & Ross, 2008; Mousavi, 2014; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998) find that peer coaching can help to increase teachers' sense of efficacy. According to Bandura (1989), self-efficacy influences goal-setting, motivation and the effort a person expends on a task, even when facing difficulties or obstacles. It is an affective outcome that is very important in teaching and learning situations (Bruce, & Ross, 2008). Also, Mousavi (2014) did a study to test the relationships between peer coaching and teacher self-efficacy. He compared an experimental group of teachers involved in a peer coaching program and a control group in a traditional and conventional supervisor program. He found that the self-efficacy level of a control group's participants and their instructional skills had no change after participating in the program. In the experimental group, the observer teachers' self-efficacy was raised and the observees' instructional skills improved. Peer coaching is proven to have an effect on teachers' self-efficacy.

6. Teachers' Teaching Principles

Of all the literature that I found on peer coaching research, many studies (Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004; Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Brouwer, 2009; Browne, 2006; Bruce, & Ross, 2008; Hasbrouck, 1997; Hasbrouck & Christen, 1997; LeBlanc & Zide,

1987; Mousavi, 2014; Parker et al., 2014; Ross, 1992; Scott & Miner, 2008; Showers, 1985; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Soisangworn and Wongwanich, 2014; Sparks, 1986; Sparks, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Zwart, R.C. et al. 2008) reveal evidence of the benefits of peer coaching to the improvement of teachers' teaching practice, their attitude toward teaching, the effects of peer coaching on teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' learning process of peer coaching. However, I have not yet found any research that investigates the impact of peer coaching through looking into teachers' teaching principles. As pointed out by Opfer & Pedder (2011), research on CPD and teachers' beliefs has been done separately, and de Vries, et al. (2013) also found that empirical studies investigating the relationship between CPD and teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching has been rare. In this study, researching teachers' sense-making of their actual classroom practices can provide a detailed picture of the impact of the peer coaching programme.

6.1 Research on Teachers' Beliefs

Before discussing the concept of *teachers' teaching principles*, I first look at the *teachers' beliefs*, a more general concept which *teachers' teaching principles* is stemmed from. According to Freeman (2002), prior to the mid-1970s, researchers viewed a teacher “as a doer, as an implementer of other people's ideas” (Freeman, 2002, p. 5). Teaching content was considered preset; teaching methods and activities were seen as the packaging for content. Researchers did not pay much attention to teachers' thinking and their mental processes in their behaviours. Since the 1970s, many researchers started to question whether teaching could be understood from simply a behavioural viewpoint. A trend of more qualitative studies of teaching has begun;

these studies investigate how teachers' mental processes might determine their actions in teaching (Freeman, 2002). The assumption in this strand of research is that teachers' thoughts, judgments, and decisions guide their teaching behaviour, and that to understand and improve teaching, it is important to examine what teachers think, know, and believe and how the thinking, knowledge, and beliefs of teachers are shown in their teaching (Connelly et al., 1997). According to Pratt (1992), "for most people, beliefs informed their intentions, which in turn directed the process of teaching" (p. 208). This gradually widespread notion has become a turning point of how educators think about classroom practice (Connelly et al., 1997). There is now little disagreement that "teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81).

In language teaching, the research on teachers' beliefs only began in the 1990s and has gained momentum since the second half of the decade (Borg, 2003). There have been numerous definitions for belief. Rokeach (1972, p. 113, cited in Kane et al., 2002) defines a belief as "any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase 'I believe that...'. Kagan (1990) defines teachers' beliefs as "the highly personal ways in which a teacher understands classrooms, students, the nature of learning, the teacher's role in the classroom, and the goals of education" (1990, p.423). Borg's definition for belief is "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" (2001, p.186). de Vries, et al. (2013) hold a similar view and suggest that "teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching are the propositions about learning and teaching that a teacher holds to be true,

which in turn guide to her or his thought and behaviors.” (p.81). Although there are different ways to define teachers’ beliefs, in the literatures of both general education and language teaching, researchers seem to have some consensus that teachers’ beliefs are shaped by their previous learning experiences as students and teachers’ beliefs also guide teachers’ thought and behaviour and in turn influence their classroom practice (Al-Mekhlafi & Ramani, 2009; Borg, 2003; de Vries, et al., 2013; Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1990; Kane et al., 2002; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Valderrama & Cruz, 2009).

On the contrary, Guskey (1986) argues that teachers' classroom practice that brings successful student learning outcomes leads to teachers' change in teaching beliefs and attitudes. He states:

The changes in student learning result, of course, from specific changes teachers have made in their classroom practices, for example, a new instructional approach, the use of new materials or curricula, or simply some modification in teaching procedures or classroom format. Whatever the case, the model posits that significant change in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers is contingent on their gaining evidence of change in the learning outcomes of their students (Guskey, 1986, p. 7).

There are supporters (e.g. Bolster, 1983; Crandall, 1983) of Guskey's claim and I am one of them because I had similar experiences as a language teacher. When I tried some new teaching approaches and saw the positive effects on students, I would naturally have some change in my teaching beliefs. However, it does not mean that I disagree with the claim that teachers’ beliefs guide teachers’ thought and behaviour and in turn influence their classroom practice. I think both arguments hold truth and are

not mutually exclusive. I can illustrate with the following example: When I first became a language teacher many years ago, I employed the traditional teaching approach most of the time – lecturing, to give students input or help them understand certain concepts. After I was first introduced to the student-centred approaches in some workshops, I experienced some degree of change in my teaching beliefs. Then I applied those student-centred approaches to my practice and saw the positive results in student learning, my belief of the student-centred approaches being effective was further reinforced and I used those approaches even more and fine-tuned them continuously in my practice. In reality, I do not think that these two theories contradict each other; occasionally they can possibly work together as a cycle. In fact, I find support by Clarke (1988) who, while keeping the sequence of Guskey's elements, suggests that the model can be more practically viewed as cyclic with multiple entry points. While Guskey's model provides some useful understanding of teacher change, it can also be criticized for representing teacher change as a strictly linear process (Clarke & Peter, 1993 in Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). I agree that the change of teachers' beliefs and practices happens in a non-linear nature, which can be something that occurs in a peer coaching process.

6.2 Research on teachers' beliefs at tertiary level – focusing only on the espoused theories of action

Kane et al. (2002) review the research on teachers' beliefs and practices in tertiary education. They point out that, at the primary and secondary level, much research has been conducted on the relationship between teachers' beliefs, i.e. what teachers say they wish to achieve (their espoused theories of action) and teachers' practices, i.e. what

they do in the classroom (their theories in use). However, in much of the research on university teachers' beliefs, the espoused theories of action of academics have not been distinguished from their theories-in-use. Such research only examines what the teachers say about their practice and does not directly observe what they do. The participating teachers are typically asked questions like:

- What is your view of teaching?
- What are your aims in teaching?
- What do you mean by teaching in this subject?
- What does a good teacher teaching in this course do?
- What would you describe as your main role as a lecturer?, etc.

(Kane et al., 2002)

Argyris et al. (1985) argue that when teachers are asked about their behaviour in a certain situation, most of them respond with their espoused theory of action for that situation, which is the theory that includes their aims and intentions. However, it is the theories-in-use that actually determine their actions. In a study done by Mowlaie and Rahimi (2010), one hundred teachers of a famous language school in Tehran completed a questionnaire about their attitudes on different Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles and how often they thought they practised those principles. However, some discrepancies were observed between what they thought they would do in the classroom regarding those principles and what they actually did. Also, Meirink et al. (2009) point out that although teachers' beliefs are a strong determinant of teachers' behaviour, the relationship between beliefs and behaviour is not always as straightforward as one would think. Therefore, research that studies only teachers' espoused theories without observing the actual classroom practices is therefore at risk

of “telling half the story” (Kane et al., 2002). Thompson (1992) also echoes this view:

Any serious attempt to characterize a teacher’s conception of the discipline he or she teaches should not be limited to an analysis of the teacher’s professed views. It should also include an examination of the instruction setting, the practices characteristic of that teacher, and the relationship between the teacher’s professed views and actual practice. (p. 134)

Thus, a close attention to what really happens in the classroom is what I think an important feature of research on teachers’ belief. That is the reason why in this study I first observe teachers’ classroom practice. Then, according to their actions in class, I try to elicit their theories-in-use and, in turn, understand their teaching principles.

6.3 The concept of teaching principles

The concept of *teaching principles* has been used by Bailey (1996), Richards (1996), and Breen et al. (2001) to refer to the underlying rationales that guide teachers’ classroom practices. This construct, as it is used in language teaching, is one that I think reflects a best feature of the teacher belief research in language teaching, namely, a close relationship to what really happens in the classroom. Breen et al. (2001) explain how teachers’ teaching principles relate to their beliefs: teaching principles derive from underlying beliefs that the teachers hold regarding the nature of language, how it is learned, and how it should be taught. While a teacher’s beliefs tend to be deeply held and largely context-independent, principles which have been

shaped and generated by these more abstract and underlying beliefs serve to mediate between them and the teacher's on-going decision-making and actions with a particular class of learners in a particular teaching situation. We might believe, for example, that learning a language entails the engagement of the individual in an extension of his or her social identity. One [teaching] principle expressing this belief might be to seek any way of explicitly engaging learners, as they work, in the dynamic of the classroom group as a contributory support for communicative and social adaptability.

(Breen et al., 2001, p.472)

Richards (1996) suggests that teachers' belief systems are stable sources of reference for teachers and are built up gradually over time. This belief system relates to such dimensions of teaching as the teachers' theory of language, the nature of language teaching, the role of the teacher, effective teaching practices, and teacher-student relations (Johnson, 1992; Richards, 1996). Teachers' belief systems lead to the development of the teachers' rational teaching principles "which serve as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and implement their plans and which motivate teachers' interactive decisions during a lesson" (Richards, 1996, p.286). These teaching principles function like rules for best behaviour in that they inform teachers' approach to teaching, and guide many of the teachers' instructional decisions and actions (Richards, 1996).

The concept of teaching principles is not specific to language teaching. In the field of general education, for example, what Clark and Peterson (1986) refer to as *a principle of practice* is similar to the notion of teaching principle adopted in this study:

A principle of practice is...derived from personal experience, and embodying purpose in

a deliberate and reflective way, which can be drawn upon to guide a teacher's actions and explain the reasons for those actions. (p. 290)

Teachers' teaching principles reflect cultural factors and are developed from experience of teaching and learning and from teachers' own personal beliefs and value systems (Richards, 1996; Tsang, 2004). In common with other constructs used in the teacher belief research, the concept of teaching principles underlines the personal and the experiential nature of teacher thinking. Specifically, it is directly related to teachers' practices in the classroom, and at the same time finds its base in teachers' more general beliefs.

7. Justification for the Present Study

In reviewing the literature on peer coaching, many studies (Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004; Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Brouwer, 2009; Browne, 2006; Bruce, & Ross, 2008; Hasbrouck, 1997; LeBlanc & Zide, 1987; Mousavi, 2014; Parker et al., 2014; Ross, 1992; Scott & Miner, 2008; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Soisangwarn and Wongwanich, 2014; Sparks, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Zwart, R.C. et al. 2008) reveal evidence of the benefits of peer coaching to the improvement of teachers' teaching practice, their attitude toward teaching, the effects of peer coaching on teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' learning process of peer coaching. However, little or perhaps none has been written on the relationship between peer coaching and teachers' teaching principles. This study attempts to fill this gap. I believe that researching the changes of how teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices

before and after the peer coaching programme can provide a profound understanding of the impact of peer coaching. I find support from Freeman's (2002) argument that "while we might arrive at crudely accurate maps of teaching by studying it from the outside in, we will not grasp what is truly happening until the people who are doing it articulate what they understand about it" (2002, p11).

8. Significance of the Present Study

This study has particular value in contributing to the improvement of teachers' professional development. Since teachers construct their own understandings about teaching, teachers' professional development needs to pay attention to the teachers' own constructions of teaching practices. Kane et al. (2002) point out that "an understanding of university teaching is incomplete without a consideration of teachers' beliefs about teaching and a systematic examination of the relationship between those beliefs and teachers' practices" (p.182). Putnam and Borko (1997) argue for the professional development of university teachers that for "professional development experiences to be successful in supporting meaningful change, they must take into account and address teachers' knowledge and beliefs" (p.1281). This view is also echoed by Day's (1999) argument that "if teachers are to develop, then, attention must be paid to their thinking..." (p.20).

This study can find out whether peer coaching is a form of CPD that can help teachers develop from within – changing their beliefs and teaching principles. In other words, the degree of change in teachers' teaching principles can be an indicator to show if the

peer coaching programme is successful or not. If the peer coaching programme turns out to have limited impact on teachers' teaching principles, other measures need to be taken such as prolonging the peer coaching period or increasing the frequency of the peer coaching episodes or putting more emphasis on the element of teaching principles in the peer coaching programme. Also, teachers' own constructions or sense-making of their classroom practices can be seen as an experientially based professional know-how that may serve as a focus for other forms of professional development.

The present study also has significant implications for improving teachers' teaching practices. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of teachers' belief, there have been arguments for the shift in focus of the study of teaching from teacher behaviour to teacher thinking. Richardson and Placier (2001) clearly point out that "instructional changes require belief changes" (2001, p.938). McAlpine and Weston (2000) express similar views that "fundamental changes to the quality of university teaching and learning are unlikely to happen without changes to professors' conceptions of teaching" (p.377).

I believe that any improvement in classroom practice has to be accommodated within the teacher's own framework of understanding in classroom teaching. Identifying and understanding the teachers' constructions of their classroom practices is a prerequisite for improvement in teaching. The discovery and examination of the teachers' teaching principles that underpin their classroom work should have important implications for improvement efforts in teaching practice.

9. Conclusion

For CPD to be effective, it should be an ongoing process so that teachers can improve themselves continuously in this fast-changing world of education. CPD should also focus on the whole person development apart from the technical know-how. Gaining more awareness in terms of their own emotions and values, teachers can better prepare themselves as real educators who commit to their professions.

Peer coaching is a collaborative form of CPD and many researchers have found evidence showing that it affects both teaching and student learning in positive ways. There are three basic models identified in the peer coaching literature: technical coaching, challenge coaching and collegial (or reciprocal) coaching and each serves a different purpose. In this study, the English programme adopt the reciprocal coaching model.

All the features of peer coaching match the requirements for creating a learning community, especially in terms of adult learning theory. In fact, peer coaching becomes very effective when it occurs within a successful learning community. Within a learning community, teachers have a sense of security, don't feel isolated, and are more likely to renew themselves professionally. Therefore, peer coaching and learning communities have a reciprocal relationship that can enhance each other.

In the educational research literature there is a shift of focus from teacher behaviour to teacher cognition. Teacher cognition research, in contrast to the concern for teacher characteristics and teaching methods, holds that teachers' thoughts, judgments, and

decisions guide their teaching behaviour, and therefore it is important to investigate what teachers think, know, and believe and how the thinking, knowledge, and beliefs of teachers are expressed in their teaching. In the evidence base of peer coaching, much research shows positive impact of peer coaching on teachers' cognitive and affective learning. However, I have not yet found any research that investigates the impact of peer coaching through examining teachers' beliefs and teaching principles. I believe that researching teachers' sense-making of their actual classroom practices can provide a more detailed picture of the impact of the peer coaching programme.

In the next chapter, I discuss the approach and methods used to address the research questions.

Chapter 3 Research Approach and Methods

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my research approach and the methods used in this study. Since I try to understand the meanings a group of English language teachers give to their classroom practices, I am adopting an interpretivist stance towards my research. My research is an impact evaluation undertaken through qualitative research methods and my research design is mainly informed by ethnography. There is a discussion on ethnography and how the various characteristics of ethnography associate with my study. Following Cohen et al. (2011), I discuss the research design issues including sampling, methods of data collection, peer coaching procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis process, the issues of generalisability, validity and reliability, and ethics in regard to this study.

2. The role of the researcher

As my research is based in the English programme of the university where I work, I am taking an insider role of the researcher. Researching my own working situation has many advantages, for example: 1) for me, it is probably the best way to bring together research and professional practice – to have my professional practice benefit most from my research; 2) access can be guaranteed. As Mercer (2007) puts it, “insiders often enjoy freer access, stronger rapport and a deeper, more readily-available frame of

shared reference with which to interpret the data they collect” (p. 13).

This ‘knowledge’ of the research participants, however, might on the other hand affect the quality of the scientific knowledge to be sought. Busher (2002) states that ethical issues around the engaged role of the researcher often arise in qualitative approaches to research, and these can be especially serious when the researcher is an insider in an authoritative position. My role as an ‘insider’ in particular might have the following implications: 1) because of the fact that I know them, I might be in danger of assuming too much – having prejudgments and preconceptions about the participants could badly interfere with and affect the analysis of the data (Mercer, 2007); 2) albeit the assumed benefits of trust between myself and the participants – my colleagues, I might too easily identify with my research participants particularly because of this rapport between us so that I might not be able to maintain a professional distance but instead report and interpret everything from their perspectives. This is particularly the case when my main method of data collection is interviewing, which is featured by interpersonal interactions between the researcher and the researched; 3) relevant to the last point, compared with an ‘outsider’ researcher, I being an ‘insider’ might be prone to taking a less overt critical stance in the analysis of the data. Some researchers (Delamont, 2002 in Thomson and Gunter, 2011; Mercer, 2007) suggest that insiders with great familiarity of the research setting may take things for granted and develop myopia, and seemingly shared norms might not be articulated; 4) since I am the participants' immediate supervisor, my role as an ‘insider’ may cause some concerns among the participants as I see the data and the results and therefore what they think they should and should not say might affect the validity of the data.

These issues cannot all be combated. However, bracketing my own assumptions and

constant reflection and examination of the implications of the choice of research methods can help with the improvement of the quality of the research (Hanson, 2013). Being sensitive to the ethical issues especially the guarantee of and the adherence to confidentiality may help soothe the participants' concerns. Having discussed the potential drawbacks of my 'insider' role in the research, I do judge this role to have a very important merit: because my research participants and I work in the same department, we face the same teaching situation, use the same jargon, share the same culture – my access to the meanings which they genuinely attribute to their actions may be an advantage compared with an 'outsider' researcher. Labaree (2002) suggests that an insider with good knowledge of the organisation can obtain richer data because the insider position is “the key to delving into the hidden crevices of the organisation” (p. 98). This access is perhaps most valuable as it is these meanings they genuinely attribute to their actions that is mainly what this research is looking for.

After all, I think it is of utmost importance for me to be a virtuous researcher and act appropriately and responsibly in various circumstances. As Pring (2001) points out, researchers' moral integrity is paramount. Floyd and Arthur (2012) also remind us that “insider researchers need to accept the challenge of anticipating the moral and professional dilemmas they may face not just in the research design and implementation” (p. 178).

3. Epistemological Stance

My research involves mainly qualitative methods. As Bryman (2004) suggests,

there is no superior approach. The decision of employing whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods in research is for the purpose of answering different types of research questions. It depends on the needs and the resources available. Thus, I support the notion of “fitness for purpose” in research design.

Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that “research is concerned with understanding the world and that this is informed by how we view our world(s), what we take understanding to be, and what we see as the purposes of understanding” (p.3) – a researcher’s ontological assumptions should give rise to his/her epistemological assumptions, which, in turn, give rise to his/her methodological considerations. In my case, I have found myself first of all interested in language teachers’ classroom work and their conceptualisation of their work, which is natural as I, besides being an administrator, am also an English language teacher. This interest guided my literature search, which helped the formulation of my research questions regarding the change of teachers’ teaching principles in a peer coaching programme. It was the research questions that largely decided my approach to the research. Only then did I start to ask myself the question about my philosophical assumptions pertaining to my research. (Reflecting retrospectively on the research process, however, I suspect that the formulation of my research questions may have been sub-consciously influenced by my philosophical assumptions – only I had not consciously examined them until later.) In doing so, I am not without companions: Niglas (1999 in Greene and Caracelli, 2003) reviewed 46 empirical studies from the *British Educational Research Journal* and found that it was mainly the research question rather than the researcher’s philosophical position that appeared to shape the methodology of the study. But unlike some researchers especially of the mixed methods research who judge it unnecessary to worry about their ontological and epistemological positions at all, I felt it helpful and supportive to

examine my philosophical assumptions pertaining to my research (Greene and Caracelli (2003) and Rocco et al. (2003) share the view that researchers need to thoughtfully address their philosophical considerations). This may be particularly helpful towards the design of the research when I am adopting a qualitative approach. As Creswell (1998) argues, in designing a qualitative study, one uses a set of philosophical assumptions either explicitly or implicitly that guide the study.

I have found myself assuming these philosophical positions pertaining to my research: ontologically constructionist, which is, “social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena ‘out there’ and separate from those involved in its construction” (Bryman, 2004, p.266); epistemologically interpretivist, which is, the social world needs to be understood through the examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2011). In educational research, we are studying human beings’ “interacting understandings, belief and values”, and it “will be inappropriate for the kind of research, within the positivist framework, to treat [all these] as hard data for empirical enquiry” (Pring, 2000, p.111). I also agree with Beck’s view that:

The purpose of social science is to understand social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality. Since the social sciences cannot penetrate to what lies behind social reality, they must work directly with man’s definitions of reality and with the rules he devises for coping with it. While the social sciences do not reveal ultimate truth, they do help us to make sense of our world. (Beck, 1979, in Cohen et al, 2011)

More specifically, language teachers are thinking and reflective professionals who

actively construct their world of teaching. They are deliberate and creative in their actions in the classroom, and act intentionally and make meaning in and through their classroom practices. Their classroom practices need to be understood through an investigation of their own interpretation of the practices.

4. Locating the Research into a Particular Tradition

My research is an impact evaluation undertaken through qualitative research methods and my research design is mainly informed by ethnography. Ethnography is a research approach with more than 100 years of history, with its origin lying in nineteenth-century Western anthropology, where ethnography was a descriptive account of a culture, which was usually located outside the West (Gobo, 2008). Over the course of time, the sense of ethnography has been “reinterpreted and recontextualised in various ways” and influenced by a range of theoretical ideas, which explains why “ethnography” does not have a standard meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.2).

In spite of the lack of a standard meaning, ethnography is often associated with naturalism (Bloor and Wood, 2006; Creswell, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007). Naturalism draws on a wide range of philosophical ideas, especially on symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (these often being collectively labelled “interpretivism”), which all argue that “the social world cannot be understood in terms of simple causal relationships...because human actions are based upon, or infused by, social or cultural meanings: that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs,

rules, discourses, and values” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.7). In order to understand people’s behaviour we must use an approach that gives us access to the meanings that guide their behaviour (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007). Thus the researcher is required to become immersed within the social group being studied so that he or she can interpret their world in the same way as they do. While getting immersed into the culture, the researcher must maintain ‘sufficient cognitive distance’ so that he or she can perform his or her scientific work satisfactorily (Gobo, 2008, p.6). In other words, the researcher seeks to acquire a certain objectivity not available to culture members, thus can construct an account of the culture under investigation as a natural phenomenon – external to and independent of the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007). Even where the researcher is researching a familiar group or setting, he or she is required to treat it as “anthropologically strange” in an effort to make explicit the assumptions he or she takes for granted as a culture member (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007). In this way the culture is turned into an object available for study. Naturalism also proposes that the social world should be studied in its natural state, undisturbed by the researcher (Creswell, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007). This means that people are studied in everyday settings interacting as they would normally and naturally do.

But to define ethnography as a research approach is no easy task because, as afore-mentioned, the term is not used in an entirely standard fashion (Gobo, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; O’Reilly; 2005). Creswell (1998), for example, defines ethnography as an in-depth study of the meanings of behaviour, language, and interactions of a culture-sharing group. As explained by Creswell (1998), *culture* is “an amorphous term” – something that the researcher assigns to the group he or she studies; it is inferred from the words and actions of the members of the group as the

researcher looks for patterns of daily living; it “consists of looking for what people do (*behaviours*), what they say (*language*), and some tension between what they really do and what they ought to do as well as what they make and use (*artifacts*)” (Creswell, 1998: 59). For Creswell (1998), ethnography typically features participant observation of the day-to-day lives of the people studied, or, one-on-one interviews with members of the group. Its final product is a holistic portrait of the social group that includes both the views of the actors in the group and the researcher’s interpretation of views about this social life. Willis and Trondman (2000) define ethnography as a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with human agents, and richly writing up the encounter, respecting the irreducibility of human experience. For them, crucial elements of ethnography are: the understanding and representation of experience; presenting and explaining of the culture in which this experience is located. Gobo (2008) recognises that defining ethnography is difficult, with its meaning having been expanded to encompass diverse forms of research, but stresses that ethnographic methodology gives priority to observation as its primary source of information – “the over-riding concern is always to observe actions as they are performed in concrete settings” (2008, p.5).

In spite of the various ways in which researchers define ethnography, it is possible to outline a core definition – based on Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and O’Reilly (2005), ethnographic studies usually have most of the following features:

- People’s actions and accounts are studied within the context of their daily lives.
- Data are gathered from a range of sources, but participant observation and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main ones.
- Data collection is, for the most part, relatively unstructured.
- The focus is usually on a few cases, generally small-scale, perhaps a single

setting or group of people.

- The analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings of human actions and how these are implicated in local and also wider contexts.

My research bears most of these core ethnographic features outlined above. The ethnographic characteristics of my study can be summarised as follows:

- Focus: the focus of my research, which is on what language teachers do in the classroom, and what they say about why they do what they do, is typically the focus of an ethnographic study.
- Assumptions: the assumptions embedded in my research, i.e. language teachers construct their world of teaching and their teaching practices need to be understood through an investigation of their own interpretation of the practices, are typical assumptions in ethnography.
- Research setting and participants: my research is an in-depth small-scale study set in the English programme of a university, involving eight English language teachers. These teachers are studied in their everyday context – the classroom. In this study this group of teachers are treated as a “tribe”; their behaviours and understandings are regarded as operating within the larger set of understandings of language teachers in the programme.
- Researcher’s role: as a colleague to the subjects, I have what Woods (1996) calls “member’s competence”, i.e. an ability to interpret the teachers’ statements within the range of meanings normal to the language teaching profession and to the researched teaching situation in particular. Working in the same programme may well be the best “immersion” that an ethnographer can get. In the meantime, throughout the research process, I have strived to remain self-reflective in an attempt to set aside my own

prejudgments and biases for the purpose of “transcending objectivity” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 & 2007).

– Data collection, analysis and interpretation: data are collected through lesson observations and subsequent interviews. Because one of the purposes of my study is to understand how the teachers make sense of their normal classroom practices, a non-participating observer is an appropriate role for me to take – I mean to take a detached position to observe what typically happens in their classrooms rather than disturbing them in any way. In Bryman’s (2004) term, this is the *observer-as-participant* role of the ethnographer, wherein the ethnographer is mainly an interviewer; there is observation but very little of it involves any participation. Categories used in analysis are grounded in the data. Interpretation of the analysis is made in the light of the existing research and implications of the findings are discussed for the institution in terms of the impact of peer coaching on teacher development and change in practice.

Having characterised my research design is informed through ethnography, I now discuss in detail the design issues.

5. Sampling

The data generation period was in the first 15-week term of the 2010/2011 academic year. All of the 34 full-time teachers of the English programme at that time were encouraged to participate in the reciprocal peer coaching programme, but I recruited participants on a voluntary basis with an incentive of reducing their weekly office hours.

They had to be interested in the topic and willing to take part. For this research, I decided that eight teachers would be an appropriate sample size, considering the depth of the investigation, the amount of data likely to be generated from the chosen methods, and the time constraints for my research, especially in terms of the time required for data collection and data analysis. Hence, a non-probability sample is used in this study – a strategy often used in qualitative studies (Cohen et al., 2011), and recommended by most writers on sampling in qualitative research based on interviews (Bryman, 2004).

At the beginning of the peer coaching programme, the eight volunteering participants formed their peer coaching pairs by themselves. The six teachers who knew each other well paired up by themselves first. The two teachers of the last pair did not know much about each other at that time. In fact, one of them was a new teacher who just started to work in the English programme.

6. Methods of data collection

In this study, two main methods of data collection are employed – observation and interview in order to obtain more accurate data to identify teachers' teaching principles. In the research of teachers' beliefs and thinking, scholars support the use of multiple methods of data collection. Kagan (1990) argues that “the use of multimethod approaches appears to be superior, not simply because they allow triangulation of data but because they are more likely to capture the complex, multifaceted aspects of teaching and learning” (p.459). Pajares (1992) also posits that “additional measures...must be included if richer and more accurate inferences are to be made”

(p.327). In a study done by Mowlaie and Rahimi (2010), one hundred teachers of a famous language school in Tehran completed a questionnaire about their attitudes on different Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles and how often they thought they practised those principles. Some discrepancies were observed between what they thought they would do in the classroom regarding those principles and what they actually did. Also, Meirink et al. (2009) point out that although teachers' beliefs are a strong determinant of teachers' behaviour, the relationship between beliefs and behaviour is not always as straightforward as one would think. Therefore, research that examines only what university teachers say about their practice without directly observing what they actually do is at risk of 'telling half the story' (Kane et al., 2002, p.177). The perspective that I take in this study is not, as many other studies on teacher beliefs have done (Breen et al., 2001; Burns, 1996; Gatbonton, 2000 & 2008; Ho et al, 2001; Johnson, 1992a; Mullock, 2006; Richards, 1996), focusing on the identification of the reasons teachers give for their overall instructional decisions and actions. It is even further from those studies that are only interested in teachers' beliefs – what they say they wish to achieve, without heeding what they actually do in the classroom. My approach is to observe what the teachers do in the classroom and then, through interview, seek the principles that guide their work from their explanations for what has happened in the observed lessons. By asking the teachers to make sense of their actual classroom practices, this study can address the teachers' theories-in-use and has important implications for understanding and improving teaching.

6.1 Non-participant Observation

Data collection in my research started with classroom observations, which serve two

purposes: 1) Without anything tangible to draw upon, the participants may find it difficult to articulate their constructions of teaching. The information of the observations can provide a ground for the later interview dialogue. 2) Rather than only relying on the participants' illustration of their own practices and their related meanings, observations can function as a means of triangulation.

During the observations, I am a non-participant because I did not take part in the classroom activities. I followed Creswell's (1998) suggestion and took detailed field notes for the observations in the form of a running account of what took place in the classroom. In the literature, researchers studying language teachers' beliefs/thinking in relation to classroom practices seldom explicitly state what areas they note for their lesson observations except that it is "a running account" (Creswell, 1998). This may be because, for unstructured observations in qualitative studies, it is difficult to decide on what specific areas to note for a lesson; the idea is to be open to everything that could happen in the classroom. Later in the interview, teachers described what they had done in relation to the interview questions. The field notes from the observations were used for triangulation and provided the sources for the prompts to stimulate the participant's description and commentary when necessary. The collection of the data relied mainly on the participants' verbal interpretation because "their perspectives" are the real concerns of this study. If the collection of data relies on the interpretation of the observer who makes judgments about intentionality and motivation (Cohen et al., 2011), it raises an issue of validity and reliability for observation methods.

6.2 Semi-structured Interview

Interviews enable participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Kvale, 1996). As eliciting the personal meanings of the participants' actions from their perspectives is precisely the aim of my study, I regard the interview as an appropriate method for my research.

Bryman (2004) finds that compared with an extended period of participant observation, research based on interviews is highly attractive for the collection of qualitative data because of the flexibility of the interview. It is no surprise that the interview is probably the most widely used method in qualitative research (Bryman, 2004).

My interviews are semi-structured rather than unstructured. Bryman (2004) finds that in spite of the various terms used to describe types of interview in qualitative research, the two main types are the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview.

The unstructured interview is very similar in character to an informal conversation, with the interviewer having only a set of prompts to deal with a certain range of topics or issues. In the semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered (for example, an interview guide), "but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply" (Bryman, 2004, p.321); the researcher is able to vary the sequence of the questions and ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies.

The reason I chose to use the semi-structured interview is that I have a fairly clear focus for my investigation rather than a very general notion, so I need the semi-structured interview to ensure that the specific issues can be addressed.

6.3 The interview guide

For the semi-structured interview, the preparation of the interview guide is particularly important (Bryman, 2004).

The first ten questions on my interview guide concern the teachers' classroom practices and their reasoning, the teachers' experiences, and some teachers' general beliefs on language teaching and learning. The purpose of these questions is an attempt to elicit teachers' teaching principles in the form of anecdotes instead of eliciting the statements of teaching principles explicitly.

Woods (1996) suggests that, when investigating teachers' beliefs, direct questions such as “Do you believe...?” or “What is your approach...?” should be avoided because

beliefs (and their interrelationships) may not always be entirely consciously accessible, and teachers may, in responding to questions about generalized beliefs, answer according to what they would like to believe, or would like to show they believe in the interview context (Woods, 1996, p.27).

Instead, as Woods (1996) also suggests, interview questions should be designed in such a way that they elicit anecdotes about the teachers' previous language-learning/teaching related experiences, and the influence of these experiences on their current practices and views. “A belief articulated in the context of a 'story' about concrete events, behaviours and plans, is more likely to be grounded in actual behaviour” (Woods, 1996,

p27). This is echoed by Calderhead's (1998) view that teachers' professional knowledge is embedded in their action and this "knowledge in action" is not always directly accessible to them (p.3). Similarly, Breen *et al.* (2001) state in their study of teachers' teaching principles that teachers may find it difficult to articulate the principles underlying their practices, therefore the data collection of their study was based not only on participating teachers' own description of their practice, but also on class observation.

The main focus of my study is on discovering and understanding teachers' sense-making of their classroom practices and the teaching principles that guide these practices. The investigation partly relied upon how teachers described what they did in particular lessons and on the ways in which they explained why they did certain things. I tried to let the interviewees describe as much as possible their practices, and gave prompts when necessary based on the observation notes. If I only used what I observed to prompt their answers, I could be missing out on other class activities that I thought were unimportant and yet could be equally important to reflect their teaching principles. I think the essence of an interview is not just to obtain the type of information expected by the researcher, but to gain a well-rounded perspective of the interviewee's responses. Therefore, I used the observation notes as prompts only when the teacher left out any particular points that I recorded during the observation. In order to avoid the co-construction of data by teachers and researchers, I only gave the descriptions of the teacher's actions in class without including any of my own opinions.

The questions on the interview guide concerning the teachers' general beliefs and experiences are asked in order to help me understand the teachers' teaching principles that guide their classroom work. This is because, as discussed in the literature review

in Chapter Two, teaching principles are generated from the teachers' beliefs, and that the teachers' experiences, especially learning experience is a strong influence on their beliefs and principles.

Interview question 11 asks the interviewees explicitly their main teaching principles in order to find out whether their statements of teaching principles are in line with their teaching principles elicited from their anecdotes.

For the interviews at the end of the peer coaching period, three extra questions are added to inquire about the teachers' perceived impact of the peer coaching programme and whether this impact is beneficial to building a learning community.

A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

7. Peer Coaching Programme Procedure

Before I go into the discussion of data collection procedure, I first introduce the procedure that the participating teachers needed to follow in this peer coaching programme.

One week before the term began, all the teachers in the English programme attended a two training sessions:

The first training session, which was routinely held at the beginning of each academic year, focused on teaching skills exchange among teachers, and all the teachers of the English programme were required to attend. In the session, a number of volunteering teachers shared with others their own practices in the form of a presentation or a teaching demonstration. In the second session the next day, I provided a workshop introducing the peer coaching programme and gave the teachers guidelines of how they could do peer coaching in every step of the process.

I recruited participants on a voluntary basis with an incentive of reducing their weekly office hours. Eight teachers (all of them were female) expressed interest in participating in this study and they formed four peer coaching pairs. Regarding the length of this peer coaching study, many reviews on effective CPD (Cordingley et al., 2015; Hawley and Valli, 1999; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis, 2005; Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb, 2012; Timperley, 2008) find that, in order to produce profound lasting change in teachers' practice, professional development interventions had to be prolonged. Cordingley et al. (2015) even suggest that the most effective professional development should last for a year or longer. However, considering the depth of the investigation, the amount of data being generated and the time constraints for my research, the peer coaching period for this study can only be one semester-long. All of the eight teachers participated in this peer coaching programme for one term (15 weeks).

Cordingley et al. (2015) argue that professional development programmes should create a “rhythm” of follow-up, consolidation and support activities. Similarly, one of Timperley's (2008) ten principles of effective CPD states that, to make significant changes to their practice, teachers need multiple opportunities to learn new

information and understand its implications for practice. Therefore, it is ideal for the teachers in this peer coaching programme to meet as often as they can. However, considering their regular workload, it would be reasonable for them in each pair to coach each other once every two to three weeks. In other words, they had five peer coaching episodes throughout the term. The following section illustrates in detail what the teachers needed to do in each peer coaching episode.

7.1 Peer Coaching Guidelines

According to the reviews on effective CPD (Cordingley et al., 2015; Hawley and Valli, 1999; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis, 2005; Stoll, Harris, & Handscomb, 2012; Timperley, 2008), effective professional development should be work-based, design for participants' needs and encourage collaboration and collegial support. All these elements are in line with the features of peer coaching. After a critical review of peer coaching literature, I found that the guidelines for peer coaching programmes are more or less the same. For this study, I have adopted Tonkin and Baker's (2005) and Slater and Simmons' (2001) peer coaching guidelines, which provide thorough descriptions of what the participants should do when engaging in peer coaching. According to them, each peer coaching episode consists of three stages: a planning conference, class observation, and a reflective conference. The planning conference is a structured meeting in which the teacher and the peer coach discuss their collaborative effort with a particular focus on the teacher's goals. In the planning conference, the person performing the role of a teacher informs the peer coach on the specifics of the upcoming lesson including such factors as the objectives of the lesson, the planned teaching and learning activities, the pacing of the lesson, and formal and

informal assessments in the lesson. The teacher can then request the peer coach to observe specific aspects that she may have a problem with. For instance, the teacher may have difficulty motivating students' participation and would like the peer coach to offer suggestions for improvement. It is important that the teacher has a clear purpose for engaging in peer coaching and can communicate such requests to the peer coach during the planning conference so that the observation and feedback will support the teacher's goal and these requested areas will be the focus of their discussion in the reflective conference.

The second stage in a peer coaching episode is the actual class observation. During the observation, the peer coach sits at the back of the classroom as an observer and takes notes based on her observation of the class, using the specifics discussed in the planning conference as a framework. The teacher teaching the class will proceed as usual, treating the class as a typical lesson. The peer coach will not participate in the lesson in any way. In addition to the requested areas, there are many observations the peer coach can make, even if she doesn't directly communicate the findings to the teacher. For example, the teacher's placement and movement, students' reactions, questions posed to the class (e.g. type and frequency counts), interaction patterns, teacher's mannerisms, content knowledge, visual aids, and use of class time are all elements which the peer coach could use to help evaluate the teacher's requests. After the observation, the peer coach will need to review and organize her notes to prepare for the reflective conference.

The final stage is the reflective or post-observation conference, which should take place soon after the lesson. In the conference, the teacher and peer coach debrief the observed lesson. The teacher will guide the discussion. She will share her own

perception of the experience based on the predetermined areas of focus. The peer coach then provides feedback in light of the focused areas discussed in the planning conference. The feedback should be presented in a non-judgmental manner and it can include describing the relevant observations, analysing and interpreting the observations according to the questions posed during the planning conference and offering additional data which support the focused questions. The peer coach then elicits the teacher's inferences, opinions and feelings. This gives an opportunity for the pair to talk about the observations and not just have the peer coach debrief the teacher. Instead of giving direct advice, the peer coach should listen intently, ask clarifying questions, focus on the specific observations rather than give personal commentary, and seek to agree together as to the meaning of the observations. The main goal of the conference is for the peer coach using the observation data to help the teacher to develop an action plan for future improvement.

Besides the guidelines, Tonkin and Baker's (2005) also provide a checklist for the three stages in a peer coaching episode:

Planning Conference

- Identify the teacher's concern about teaching
- Translate the concerns into observation behaviour
- Identify procedures for improving the teacher's teaching and students' learning
- Setting goals and content, arranging time for observation, and choosing appropriate instruments

Classroom Observation

- Student-teacher interaction
- Student-student interaction
- Mastery of content

- Manner of presentation
- Media for presentation

Reflective Conference

- Provide the teacher with feedback
- Elicit teacher's inferences, opinions and feelings
- Close conference on a positive and productive note
- Evaluate the process

Similarly, Vidmar (2005) considers the planning and reflective conferences to be the two main elements of peer coaching and she provides a comprehensive outline of what the teachers should focus on during these meetings, which I think is a good complement to the above checklist:

1) Planning Conference

- Clarify intentions: What are the lesson goals and objectives?
- Teaching strategy and procedures: What will the teacher do?
- Student achievement: What will the students do to indicate success?
- Data to support self-assessment: What is important to the teacher?

2) Reflective Conference [debriefing session]

- Assessment of lesson: How did the lesson go?
- Recall data to support reflections
- Compare intentions with the actual lesson: What was different and why?
- Effect on future lessons: New learning, discoveries, insights
- Comment on the coaching process and refine as needed

(Vidmar 2005, p146)

Teachers were also asked to submit to me a learning journal in which they documented

key learning events, problems, challenges and questions for each peer coaching episode. It was also a resource to help provide some structure and material for teachers' discussions during peer coaching.

8. Data Collection

8.1 The Pilot Study

The pilot study took place near the end of July 2010 during the five-week summer English reading courses. It involved two of my colleagues at the English programme – one with over seven years of teaching experience and the other with one year. The main purpose of the pilot study was to test whether the interview questions in the interview guide plus using the observation notes as prompts in a semi-structured interview could elicit a teacher's teaching principles. Since both participants' classes took place at the same time every day, it was not possible for them to take part in a peer coaching programme, which required them to observe each other's' classes. In fact, they would not be able to find time to do so in a five-week intensive course, and even if they could do it, there might not be any major change in their teaching principles in such a short period of time. Therefore, in my pilot study, I was not able to examine the change of teachers' teaching principles before and after the peer coaching programme, but only to find out the effectiveness of the research methods in eliciting teachers' teaching principles.

Originally I had planned to schedule the interviews immediately after the observed lessons in order to ensure “fresh memory”. I had also planned to depend on the

teachers' initiating talks about what they did during the lesson and why they did it. It turned out that the teachers were not good at describing the more specific actions in the lesson although they were perfectly able to articulate their overall lesson plans. This made me realise that I could not totally depend on the teachers' descriptions of what had happened in the classroom but needed to use my observations to stimulate their remarks where necessary. This may be due to the possibility that "some elements of teaching have become so routinised that teachers might not be able to put their actions into words" (Schon, 1983 in Mullock, 2006, p.51). However, once prompted, the teachers were able to provide more detailed descriptions and able to express themselves very well. This required that I took detailed notes of the observations and allowed a short lapse of time between the observed lesson and the interview for me to go through the notes and sort out what I would want to seek from the participants. I had some concerns about whether the lapse of time could affect teachers' memories of the lessons, so I tried it out with a third colleague. I observed her lesson for 40 minutes in the morning, and interviewed her in the afternoon on the same day. It seemed that she remembered everything perfectly well. This short lapse of time between the interview and the observed lesson was later proved to be a good arrangement. The short lapse of time between the interview and the observation allowed me to dip into the observation notes – and at the same time it did not seem to affect the participants' memories.

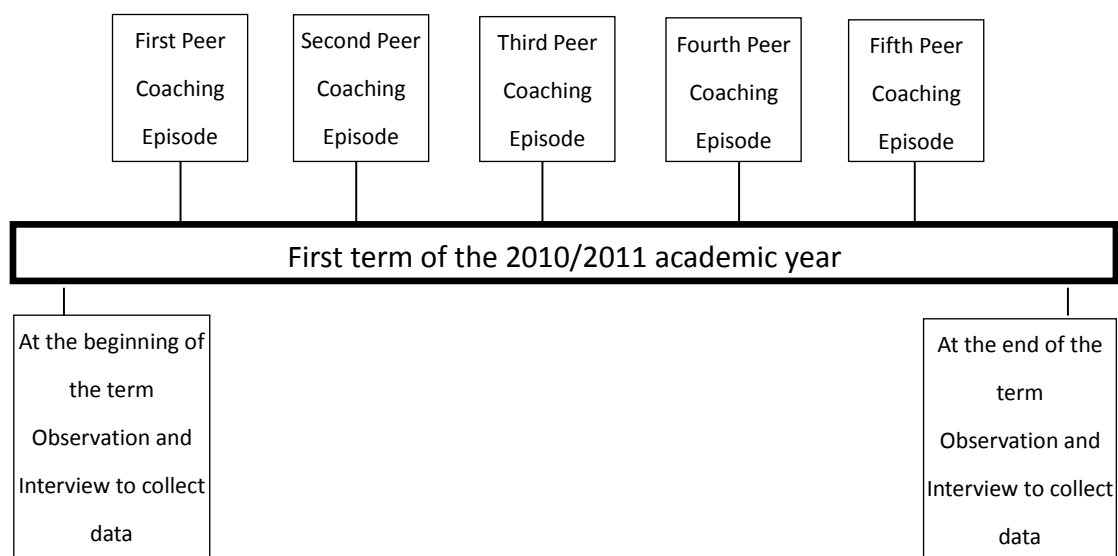
I modified the questions on my interview guide as I found from the pilots that some questions were overlapping and some needed to be expressed in clearer terms. The questions were put in good order on the interview guide. I particularly asked the piloted teachers whether they were comfortable with the way I asked the questions. While they were positive in their answers, I felt that I had been "groping" my way. Although I had prepared myself with the interview techniques suggested by methodology

scholars, and had learned from the pilot studies, I really feel that the later interviews were better than the earlier ones as my skills did develop as the research progressed.

8.2 Data collection Procedure

There were two data collection periods: one during the first week of the term and the other one during the last week of the term. In the first week of the term, I had a meeting with all the participating teachers explaining to them the purpose of the study. For each of the eight participants, I observed a complete 105-minute lesson. I took detailed notes of each observed lesson in the form of a running account. While taking descriptive notes of the lesson, I wrote down on the right hand side of the page my immediate reflective notes. Immediately after the lesson, I went over the notes more carefully, marking the descriptive notes and writing down more reflective notes so as to make them more complete in meaning. This procedure of recording the observation is based on Creswell's (1998) suggestion and I took detailed field notes for the observations in the form of a running account of what took place in the classroom. On the same day I also interviewed the teacher using the questions in the interview guide. The observation notes served as possible prompts to elicit the participants' remarks. All the transcriptions of the interviews were reviewed and confirmed or modified by the participating teachers in order to improve the accuracy of the data. In the last week of the term, I repeated the same observation and interview procedure.

Figure 1 Timeline of this peer coaching study



In this study, I did not participate in any of the planning and reflective conferences in the peer coaching programme for the sake of collecting additional data because, as many researchers point out, peer coaching should be a confidential process for the participants. For example, Slater and Simmons (2001) state that peer coaching is "a *confidential* process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace" (p. 66). Dalton and Moir (1991) also describe peer coaching as a *confidential* process through which teachers share their expertise and provide one another with feedback, support, and assistance for the purpose of refining present skills, learning new skills, and/or solving classroom-related problems.

I also asked one of the participants, Amy, for her opinion if I was to be present at their peer coaching meetings and she had the following answer:

...I did peer coaching because I began with a good faith and a good wish. I had faith in my peer coach, believing that she would be, if not the only one, at least one among the very few with whom I felt comfortable and in whom I was willing to confide. I also started the project with a good wish, hoping and believing with my peer's help, I could be a better teacher. In this sense, this relationship, however short it was, was actually very personal. To have trust and not to hide could only come from someone who was considered trustworthy and intimate. That is why I think it might not be a good idea to have a supervisor in the peer coach meetings. My question is, why should there be supervising in every stage of a peer coaching project? Sometimes, non-action is the best action.

I also approached Nicole, another participant, with the same question and she said if I were at those meetings, she might not be able to communicate with her partner freely. Therefore, my presence as an observer in those peer coaching meetings would affect the way they communicated and the results of the whole programme would have been different. This provides the reasons why I decided it was not appropriate for me to participate in those peer coaching meetings in order to collect data. For methodological and theoretical reasons, I judged that the data that I obtained from the class observations and interviews at the beginning and the end of the peer coaching programme and their journals after each peer coaching episode should provide me with sufficient data for this study. Of course my non-attendance at the peer meetings might pose problems for validation of my data. However on the balance of it I decided it was more advantageous for me to seek to strengthen validity in other ways since (as participants testified) my attendance might have threatened the developmental process itself.

9. Data Analysis Procedure

Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that data analysis in qualitative research usually begins during the data collection process because qualitative research tends to quickly accumulate a large amount of data and early analysis reduces the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus. Therefore, each interview in this study was transcribed as soon as possible, so I could review the interview transcript together with the observation notes and write reflections for each case including, for example, the overall and distinctive features of the lesson, the participant's emphasised notions and repeated remarks or expressions. In addition to these reflective notes, I also kept memos that recorded the development of some analytic ideas and the emergent ideas that I identified along the way. As these notes accumulated, they constituted preliminary analyses.

Miles and Huberman (1994) offer a valuable guide to qualitative data analysis, breaking down the business of analysing data into three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Drawing on this, Wellington (2000) suggests a qualitative data analysis process which I find very logical and helpful:

Immersion: getting an overall feel for the data.

Reflecting: standing back from the data.

Analysing: taking apart; selecting and filtering; classifying or categorising.

Synthesising: searching for patterns, themes, and regularities in the data; looking for contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities.

Relating and locating: relating to existing research.

Presenting: presenting the qualitative data.

My data analysis largely followed this six-stage process. First of all, I repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts and observation notes to get myself immersed into the data. This was for the purpose of getting a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts. Reflective notes and memos had been kept throughout the process of data collection and analysis, which, as also mentioned above, functioned as preliminary analyses. Formal analysis of data began when fieldwork was completed.

In analysing the data, I followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion of using displays (i.e. visual formats) to present information. For each teacher's case, I used a matrix to display the teacher's classroom practices associated with the teacher's sense-making of the practices. The sense-making part on the matrix summarises the participant's verbalisations using their original expressions as much as possible. In categorising the participants' verbalisations, I followed Wellington's (2000) suggestion of using a mixture of *a priori* and *a posteriori* (i.e. pre-established categories derived from the literature and categories derived from the data).

Repeated review of the data suggested that among all of sense-making of each teacher, there seemed to be a set of emphasised rationales which explained much of the teacher's classroom work. These rationales formed the focus of this study. The sources for the identification of the rationales for each case included: the teachers' own summaries of their most important teaching principles which each teacher made at the end of the interview, their emphasised or repeated statements during the interview, and what was emphatically reflected in their teaching actions that I observed. Sets of data used for this analysis included interview transcripts, observation notes, and the

reflective notes and memos that I kept in my diary. The rationales and their inter-relationship were displayed with a framework of the teacher's classroom work.

After I completed analyzing the data from the two periods of observations and interviews (before and after the peer coaching programme), I compared the data of each peer coaching pair obtained from the two periods. The results should be able to address the research questions.

10. Generalisability, reliability and validity

In social science the concepts of generalisability, reliability, and validity have reached the status of a “scientific holy trinity”, or indeed, the “positivist trinity” (Kvale, 1996), and have been used by some to criticise the basis of qualitative research. Kvale (1996) summarises the criticisms as including: 1) the results are not reliable; they are produced by leading interview questions; 2) the findings cannot be generalised; there are too few interview subjects; and 3) the results are not valid; they are based on subjective interpretations. Qualitative researchers have responded differently to the positivist notions of generalisability, reliability, and validity. Some have simply ignored or dismissed them as positivist concepts are irrelevant to qualitative research; others have invented new terms. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1998) propose *trustworthiness* as a set of criteria for assessing the quality of a qualitative study. *Trustworthiness* is made up of four criteria, each of which has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research: *credibility*, which parallels internal validity; *transferability*, which parallels external validity; *dependability*, which parallels reliability; and *confirmability*, which

parallels objectivity.

Here, I stick to the conventional concepts of generalisability, reliability, and validity, but in discussing these issues in relation to my study, I conceive them in the light of qualitative enquiry.

10.1 Generalisability

My sample consists of a small group of teachers who volunteered to participate in my study, which entails that my findings cannot be statistically generalised to the population at large. While I make no attempt to generalise in the traditional quantitative sense of that word, it is worth pointing out that generalisation can be interpreted differently. Statistical generalisation represents only one form of generalisability. As Hammersley (1996) argues, “it is important to distinguish between generalising from a sample to a finite population, on the one hand, and making inferences about the truth of a theory, on the other”(p.169).

Even if the notion of statistical generalisation must be insisted, that is, generalisability must be taken to mean generalising from samples to finite populations, my study cannot be said to be totally devoid of a hint of it. I find support from Pring’s (2000) argument:

The refining of the generalisations comes from the more detailed studies of the different social realities.....But the uniqueness of each context does not entail uniqueness in every respect. There are similarities between different social contexts as each is part of a wider society in which certain understandings and customs prevail.....One can

exaggerate the differences between people and how their behaviour might be explained.
(Pring, 2000, p.119)

In my study, the characteristics of the research setting are described to allow comparisons with other cases and contexts. The findings of my study are connected to prior theory. These, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), help to address the issue of ‘generalisability’ in a qualitative study.

Bassey (2001) proposes the idea of fuzzy generalisation for educational research, especially case studies. He argues that by invoking the principle of fuzziness, “there is a class of statements which are imprecisely probable” (Bassey, 2001, p.20), and that whereas in the natural sciences predictions are expected to be absolute, in the social sciences predictions can be fuzzy. Although the very idea of fuzzy generalisation is questioned by other scholars – for example, Hammersley (2001) doubts whether it actually refers to a distinct kind of generalisation by pointing out that “once one accepts that scientific generalisations are conditional, the distinctive character of fuzzy generalisations disappears” (p.223), it has some value. Its value lies in the encouragement of the kind of prediction or conclusion that qualitative research can make – using tentative statements. This is, indeed, what qualitative researchers have been doing.

10.2 Reliability

Cohen et al. (2011) posit that criteria of reliability in qualitative methodologies differ from those in quantitative methodologies. Quantitative research assumes the

possibility of replication, that is, if the same methods are used with the same sample then the results should be the same. Therefore typically quantitative methods can require a degree of control and manipulation of phenomena. However, the premises of qualitative studies include the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of situations so that the study cannot be replicated. This, however, may be seen as a strength rather than a weakness of qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that, in qualitative research, reliability can be regarded as a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. But this is not to strive for uniformity – two researchers studying the same setting may come up with different findings yet both findings might be reliable. Kvale (1996) points out that in interviewing, there might be as many different interpretations of the qualitative data as there are researchers. Cohen et al. (2011) conclude that in qualitative methodologies reliability includes fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents.

My study, while striving for the above standards, pays particular attention to: 1) clear specification of basic paradigms; 2) explicit description of the researcher's role; 3) careful piloting of the interview schedule; 4) avoiding leading questions; 5) awareness of transcriber selectivity – it is to be acknowledged that transcripts of interviews, however detailed and full they may be, remain selective (Kvale, 1996); in summarising responses, the researcher might unconsciously emphasise responses that agree with his expectations and fail to note those that do not. My checking transcripts with the participants provides a check against this.

Creswell (1998) suggests external audits as a means of increasing reliability. In my study, although external audits are not made in the strict sense due to time and cost,

throughout the whole process of my research I have been consulting my supervisors, who have examined the process and product of this research.

10.3 Validity

In language dictionaries, *validity* refers to the truth and correctness of a statement. In a positivist approach, scientific validity is restricted to measurements, and is often defined by asking the question: are you measuring what you think you are measuring (Cohen et al, 2011; Kvale, 1996)? In this sense, qualitative research may be seen by some as less valid because it often does not result in numbers. In a broader sense, validity “pertains to the degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate” (Kvale, 1996, p.238), for example, to the extent to which the observations reflect the phenomena. In this broader concept of validity, qualitative research can, in principle, lead to valid knowledge about social processes and phenomena. Kane et al. (2002) maintain that triangulation is the heart of qualitative research’s validity. In my study, observations are used as a means of triangulation. In the interviews, the participants sometimes extended their verbalisations to their practices in general. But the identified teaching principles and strategic intentions for each case are those that are directly related to the observed practices. Cohen et al. (2011) point out that the presence of the observer might bring about different behaviours. In my study, the reactivity from the teacher and the students is lessened by not using audio-visual recording. Concerns over validity also relate to the interview. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that the most practical way of achieving greater validity in interviews is to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible. There are not any preconceived ideas and bias presented in the interview questions. Meanwhile, in the process of

research, attentions have been given to careful formulation of questions and careful questioning. Two rounds of respondent validation have been made through asking the participating teachers to check the research data and analyses. These efforts are for the purpose of improving the validity of this research.

11. Research Ethics

For this study I have abided by the British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) as required by the School of Education, Nottingham University, and gained approval from the School Research Ethics Committee of my Research Ethics Proposal. I have also consulted the research methodology literature for the issue of ethics. I discuss the following ethical concerns in particular.

Bryman (2004) points out that ethical concerns in social research tend to revolve around four main areas: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. In order not to harm the participants in my research, particular care was taken in maintaining confidentiality, and participants' real names were withheld – the names that appear in this thesis are pseudonyms. However, the issues of identifiability and traceability (Cohen et al., 2011) seem difficult to be completely avoided; for instance, information about the participants' learning and work experiences may render their identity identifiable. One dilemma I have about my research is that all the participants in the research are considered my subordinates, and I am in a position to evaluate their performance every academic year. This certainly constitutes difficulty in collecting valid data from them as they would be concerned

about the information they provided for the research might do harm to themselves. Therefore, I might not be able to obtain the “truth” from them. To try to avoid this problem, I carried out the following: I recruited participants on a voluntary basis; participants were ensured that the data and the results would not be linked in any way to institutional or departmental use; and I assured them that I would not be the person to evaluate their performance during the research period. Trust building between me as the researcher and the research participants is also important as it is a precondition to obtaining accurate data. Luckily, I have never been a “top-down” type of leader and have been able to develop a sense of rapport with all the teachers which hopefully would lead to feelings of trust and confidence. There is in the literature a powerful argument for informed consent. However, the more participants know about the research the less naturally they may behave (Cohen et al., 2011). On the one hand, I would like my participants to be both sufficiently clear of the purpose of my study and sufficiently willing to participate (it is against my ethical codes to ‘lure’ people into it before they realise it is something they do not want; at the same time their willingness and commitment throughout the whole process of the research are very important as they directly affect the validity of the data); on the other hand, I would want them to behave in the classroom as they would do on an average day when I observe their practices because their naturalness is important to my obtaining valid data. Compromise had to be made and my judgment went for informed consent. That is, detailed information regarding the nature and purpose of the study was provided to each participant in the form of an Information Sheet; participants made an informed decision about whether or not they wished to participate and were free to withdraw at any time. Each participant was requested to sign a Consent Form before the commencement of data collection, and to review and confirm or modify the interview transcript and the analyses. Throughout the research process, two rounds of respondent validation have

been made. The informed consent at the same time indicates that the willing participant in a sense acknowledged that “the right to privacy has been surrendered for that limited domain” (Bryman, 2004, p.483). As to deception, my pledge is that I have been open about my research aims and methods and have not sought to represent my research as something other than what it is. But, most importantly, I think it is important for me to be a virtuous researcher and act appropriately and responsibly in various circumstances.

12. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my approach to the research and the methods used. My research is a qualitative study and I support the notion of *fitness for purpose* in research design. My epistemological position is an interpretivist because I believe that quantifying human behaviours, values and beliefs is inappropriate.

My research is an impact evaluation undertaken through qualitative research methods and my research design is mainly informed by ethnography. My research bears the core ethnographic features in terms of the focus and assumptions of my research, research setting and participants, researcher’s role, and data collection, analysis and interpretation.

In this chapter, I have also discussed in detail the research design issues including non-probability sampling, the unstructured observation and the semi-structured interview as methods of data collection, peer coaching procedure, data collection

procedure, data analysis process. I have also discussed the issue of generalisability, validity and reliability in the light of qualitative research – or, in the word of some qualitative researchers, the trustworthiness of the study. In order to find out each participant's teaching principle(s), I seek to produce a trustworthy account of each teacher's sense-making of their classroom work. I have discussed at the end the ethics in relation to this study.

Chapter 4 The Analytical Approach to Identifying the Teachers' Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions

1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings of the study on the individual teachers' rationales for their classroom work. As afore-mentioned, the perspective that I take in this study is not, as many other studies on teacher beliefs have done (Breen et al., 2001; Burns, 1996; Gatbonton, 2000 & 2008; Ho et al, 2001; Johnson, 1992a; Mullock, 2006; Richards, 1996), focusing on the identification of the reasons teachers give for their overall instructional decisions and actions. It is even further from those studies that are only interested in teachers' beliefs – what they say they wish to achieve, without heeding what they actually do in the classroom. In other words, this study is not searching for the teachers' espoused theories of practice, but to obtain their theories-in-use, which actually determine their classroom actions. My approach is to observe what the teachers do in the classroom and then, through interview, seek the principles that guide their work from their explanations for what has happened in the observed lessons. By asking the teachers to make sense of their actual classroom practices, this study can address the teachers' theories-in-use.

Each individual case analysis aimed at identifying and understanding the teacher's

sense-making of her classroom practices. Kane et al. (2002) maintain that triangulation is the heart of the validity of qualitative research. In my study, observations are used as a means of triangulation. In the interviews, the participants sometimes extended their verbalisations to their practices in general. But the identified sense-makings for each case are those that are directly related to the observed practices.

My repeated review of the data suggested that among all the explanations that each teacher gave for her practices, there seemed to be a set of rationales that were strongly emphasised by the teacher and appeared to influence much of the teacher's classroom work. This set of rationales was captured with a framework made up of teaching principles and strategic intentions. In this chapter, I have chosen three cases as examples to illustrate how I arrive at the frameworks of the teachers' teaching principles. The teaching principles of these three cases are all different from each other. Because analysing these qualitative data and identifying the individual teachers' teaching principles and strategic intentions, and their association with the teachers' classroom practices is a complicated task, I believe using three cases of different teaching principles can provide a good understanding of how I conducted this analytical work.

2. The Framework of Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions

It is found that each teacher in this group has a framework of *teaching principles* and

strategic intentions which seem to be most influential in informing their classroom practices. This is in agreement with Richards' (1996) argument that some principle(s) is/are central in a teacher's approach to teaching. The present study also provides evidence to support Breen et al.'s (2001) hypothesis that an experienced teacher may over time evolve a framework for practice made up of core principles. Table 1 shows the eight participants' teaching principles identified before the peer coaching programme.

Table 1 Participants' Teaching Principles Before the Peer Coaching Programme

	Teaching Principle Before the Peer Coaching Programme
Amy	Seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves.
Phoebe	Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.
Wendy	Diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs.
	Play the role of a mother.
Nicole	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
Emma	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
	Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.
Joey	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
May	Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.
Sandra	Seek ways to help students learn reading skills.
	Seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence.

This study uses the *teaching principle(s)*, and the *strategic intentions* to represent the teacher's conceptual framework for classroom practice. It would seem that each teacher's classroom work is guided by a primary concern or objective in teaching – the

teaching principle(s). The notion within each teaching principle appears to be implemented or embodied by a set of strategic intentions, which result in the teacher's specific actions in the classroom. This framework of teaching principles and strategic intentions appears to explain the teacher's main classroom practices.

In their case study of a Chinese teacher, Connelly et al. (1997) suggest that the teacher's *rules* are entailed to her *practical principles*, which were in turn embedded in her *personal philosophy*. The present study has similar findings to this. In Breen et al. (2001) study of the relationships between experienced language teachers' teaching principles and classroom practices, they predicted in the end:

.....teachers may frame their work in terms of a hierarchy of principles – perhaps in terms of core, superordinate, or more resilient principles in relation to peripheral, entailed, or context-adaptable principles. (Breen et al., 2001, p.498)

The present study has provided evidence to support Breen et al.'s (2001) hypothesis with the identification of the teaching principles and strategic intentions (the term *strategic intentions* used in the present study appear to have similar meanings to Breen et al.'s lower-level principles), and may be one of the first investigations into the framework of teaching principles held by individual teachers.

3. Amy's Case as an Illustration

Amy, who teaches College English Reading, is a lecturer in her early thirties. She had

5 years of teaching experience before she participated in this peer coaching study.

3.1. Making sense of classroom work: classroom practices and her explanations

Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise the importance of understanding the dynamics of each case before proceeding to cross-case examinations. In this study, individual case analysis of the teachers was carefully made also for another purpose – to ensure the integrity of the data as representing the voices of each individual teacher (Johnson, 1994). For the purpose of understanding how each teacher makes sense of her classroom practices, it is considered appropriate and convenient to use a matrix to present data linking the teacher’s classroom practices with the reasons she gives to the practices. Data sets used for the matrices included observation field notes and interview transcripts. Table 2 presents such a matrix for Amy’s case:

Table 2 Amy's classroom practices and her sense-making of the practices

Classroom practices	Sense-making of the practices (quotations or summaries of participant's statements)	Sense-making (analytic categories)
Went over the objectives of the lesson.	Clear instruction and direction result in effective teaching and training.	Clear instruction results in effective teaching.
Sat in the middle of the classroom when students doing presentation to go over the reading text.	<p>My students were doing most of the talking and I withdrew and observed them. If I can reduce teacher talking time, the students would have more time to talk.</p> <p>To be an observer as a role of a teacher.</p>	<p>Teacher being observer.</p> <p>Teacher talks less and students talk more.</p>
Let students take the role of a teacher to teach the reading text with the class.	<p>If I just gave keys to the questions, the students were absent-minded because they were passive learners.</p> <p>Instead of my doing the exercises for the students, the students were now doing what they should do and learning what would be useful to them.</p> <p>What is important, I have come to believe, is that the students have as much involvement in the class as possible.</p> <p>English should be taught in the way which there is a lot of repetition and practice, in an environment that emphasizes the importance of the language and that encourages the use of it.</p> <p>It might be better if there is less control on the class and more space and time for the students to find out what the material is trying to say and how to approach it. Reading is discovering.</p> <p>My role as a teacher is an observer, one has read but must resist the temptation to tell my students the end of the story before they get there.</p> <p>The role of the students is one on the hunt for treasure. I point out what is in the direction without telling them exactly what it is. They have to see for themselves.</p> <p>The process of discovery leads to improvement of reading skills.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Involve all students into class activities.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language.</p> <p>Let students discover and learn by themselves.</p>
Spotted some errors in students' presentations and corrected them in Chinese.	To help the activity to unfold itself	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.

Selected important words from the exercise and illustrated them after each of the students' presentations.	Teacher must have a clearer understanding of what to do in class and know better how to control each activity.	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
Asked students to slow down and relax when they were rushing; asked students to calm down and just have fun doing the presentation when they are nervous.	To offer comments on public speaking and presentation	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
Corrected some of the students' mistakes after their presentations.	Teacher must have a clearer understanding of what to do in class and know better how to control each activity. To help the activity to unfold itself	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
When students made major mistakes during their presentations, teacher would interrupt and correct them.	Teacher must have a clearer understanding of what to do in class and know better how to control each activity. To help the activity to unfold itself	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
When students gave unclear or insufficient explanation during their presentations, teacher would interrupt and add some explanation.	Teacher must have a clearer understanding of what to do in class and know better how to control each activity. To help the activity to unfold itself	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
After all the presentations, teacher came back to the dais and gave some wrap-up comments on all the previous presentations.	I observed the students, raised questions concerning the contents, and offered comments on public speaking and presentation.	Give guidance or make correction when necessary.
Assigned each group a written task and asked each group to discuss among group members and reach a consensus.	To let students think on their own and discuss among themselves. What is important, I have come to believe, is that the students have as much involvement in the class as possible. English should be taught in the way which there is a lot of repetition and practice, in an environment that emphasizes the importance of the language and that encourages the use of it.	Make students take responsibility for their own learning. Encourage students' active involvement. Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language. Let students discover and learn by themselves.

As shown in Table 2, there are three columns in the matrix. The first column - “Classroom practices” - are my summaries of Amy’s classroom actions, which are drawn from the observation field notes I produced during my observation of her class. In the interview, Amy was asked to describe her practices then provide explanations for them. The second column - “Sense-making of the practices” - presents

quotations or summaries of her statements from the interview describing the reasons for the corresponding actions in the first column. For example, Amy said in the interview:

My students were doing most of the talking and I withdrew and observed them. If I can reduce teacher talking time, the students would have more time to talk...

The above quotation is used as sense-making that explains why she sat in the middle of the classroom when students were doing presentations in the observed lesson. Also when I asked her in the interview that “How do you describe your role as a teacher?”, she answered:

My role as a teacher? That is a tough question. An observer, and one has read but must resist the temptation to tell my students the end of the story before they get there.

This quotation was summarized as “to be an observer as a role of a teacher”, which is also associated with her practice of sitting in the middle of the classroom watching students doing their presentations.

Another example is that in the observed lesson I saw that student-led activities were the major feature. Related to this point, Amy had the following statements in the interview:

Part One [of the lesson] was finishing attached exercises [...] Students were grouped and each group had to prepare a PPT presentation for his part of exercises. I had discovered, due to former experiences of dealing with the exercise section, that if I just

gave keys to the questions, the students were absent-minded because they were passive learners. Exercises were boring and torturing. Instead of my doing the exercises for the students, the students were now doing what they should do and learning what would be useful to them.

What is important, I have come to believe, is that the students have as much involvement in the class as possible.

[English] should be taught in the way which there is a lot of repetition and practice, in an environment that emphasizes the importance of the language and that encourages the use of it.

Statements such as the three above provide reasons why the student-led activities took place in her classroom. These statements were used as her sense-making that is associated with her classroom practice of letting students take the role of the teacher to go over the reading text with the class. Thus, the linking of the classroom practices and their sense-making was made. Basically, my approach is to see what the teachers do in the classroom and then seek the principles that guide their work from their explanations for what has happened.

Kane et al. (2002) suggest that triangulation is the heart of the validity of qualitative research. In my study, observations are used as a means of triangulation. In the interviews, the participants sometimes extended their verbalisations to their practices in general. But the identified sense-makings for each case are those that are directly related to the observed practices.

The third column shows the analytic categories of the teacher's sense-making, which are a result of bringing the participant's own statements to a more analytic and abstract level (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). These analytic categories are in a shortened form that keeps my interpretation of the essence of the teacher's own statements. For example, an analytic category of Amy's sense-making "involve all students in class activities" comes from the summary of her own statement "What is important, I have come to believe, is that the students have as much involvement in the class as possible."

The identification of the teacher's sense-making of her practices and the linking of the sense-making to the classroom practices were reviewed and approved by all participants.

3.2 The emergence of teaching principles and strategic intentions

Among all the sense-makings identified from each case, there are some that were emphasised by the teacher in the interview. Besides, the sense-makings identified for each teacher seem to be at different levels – some explain the teacher's general approach to the lesson while others are associated with more specific actions in the lesson. Those that explain the teacher's approach to the lesson, the overall plan of the lesson, or main features of the lesson are often the teacher's most emphasised verbalisations. In Amy's interview, she expressed explicitly and repeatedly that her classroom work is oriented towards "seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves", which serves as an overall objective for her classroom practices. For example, when I asked her how she thought an English Reading class should be

taught, she answered:

Reading happens when the reader takes delight in reading and naturally he or she learns in the process. I guess that it might be better if there is less control on the class and more space and time for the students to find out what the material is trying to say and how to approach it. Reading is discovering.

Also, when asked to describe her role as a teacher, the role of the students and how she understood her relationship with the students, Amy said the following:

My role as a teacher? That is a tough question. An observer, and one has read but must resist the temptation to tell my students the end of the story before they get there.

The role of the students is one on the hunt for treasure. I point out what is in the direction without telling them exactly what it is. They have to see for themselves.

While this “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves” is at the centre of Amy’s approach to her lesson, a set of other verbalisations which were also emphasised in the interview appear to be entailed to this notion, which explain more specific actions in her classroom. Amy’s sense-makings (the analytic categories) of “teacher being observer”, “teacher talks less and students talk more”, “make students take responsibility for their own learning”, “encourage students' active involvement”, “provide students opportunities to practise using the English language”, and “give guidance or make correction when necessary” that explain the main actions in her lesson as shown in the third column of Table 2 appear to embody her notion of “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”.

These emphasised statements make up Amy’s key rationales for her classroom work, which explain and underpin Amy’s main instructional decisions and actions. Figure 2 is an attempt to capture Amy’s emphasised rationales with a framework:

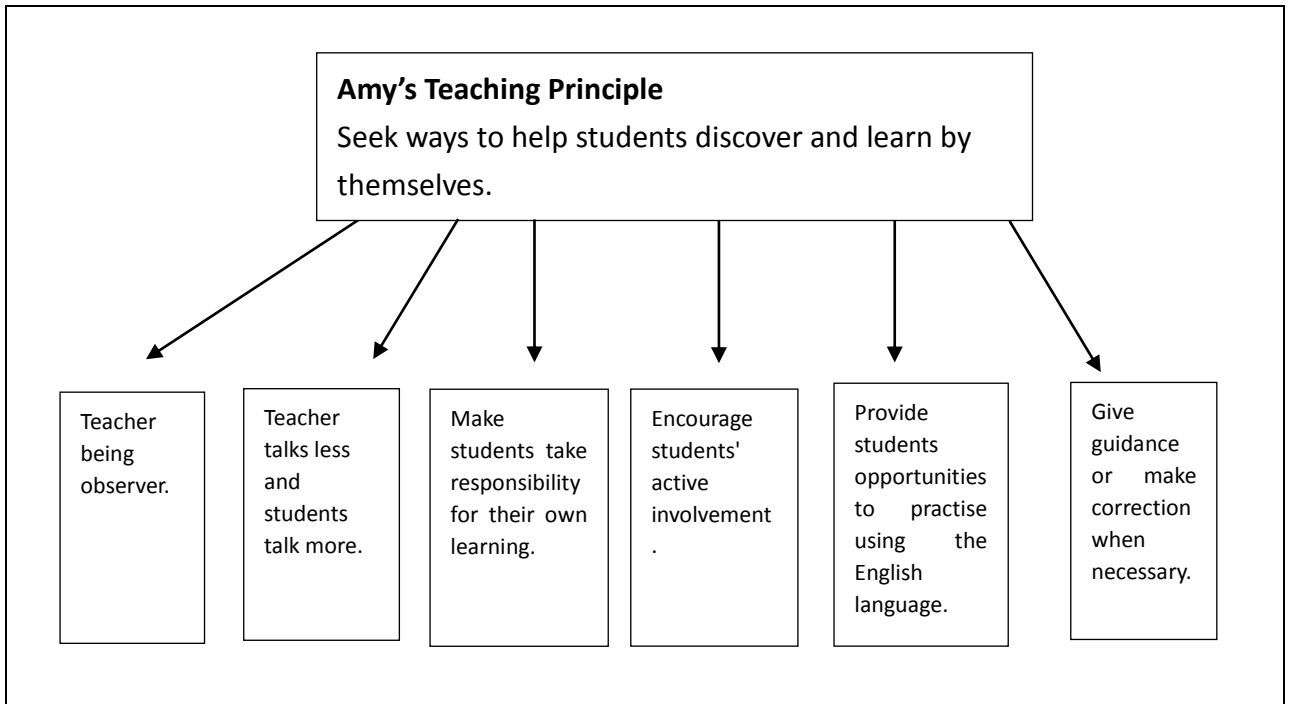


Figure 2 The framework of Amy's classroom work: teaching principle and strategic intentions

As shown in Figure 2, Amy’s primary objective in teaching is “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”, and her work in the classroom is guided by this primary objective. I label this “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves” the **teaching principle** for Amy. The set of reasonings that appear to collectively implement the notion of creating opportunities to let students learn and discover by themselves include “teacher being observer”,

“teacher talks less and students talk more”, “make students take responsibility for their own learning”, “encourage students' active involvement”, “provide students opportunities to practise using the English language”, and “give guidance or make correction when necessary”. This set of reasonings, as discussed above, explain the more specific actions in Amy’s class. While the teaching principle appears to underpin Amy’s approach to the lesson, this set of reasonings seems to carry out the notion of the teaching principle in the specific actions of Amy within the classroom. They are how specifically Amy intends to behave in the class. I label this set of reasonings Amy’s **strategic intentions**. Amy’s teaching principle is mediated through these strategic intentions to be actualised in the classroom. (In this thesis I use the term **strategic intentions** to refer to teachers’ explanations for their specific actions and keep the term **principle** for the higher level of thinking within the teacher’s framework of classroom work).

The strategic intentions relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”, i.e. the overall work objective. The teaching principle underpins Amy’s general approach to the lesson; the strategic intentions explain her specific actions in the lesson; guiding Amy’s approach and actions in relation to the lesson is the objective of creating opportunities to let students learn and discover by themselves. Resulting from this framework are Amy’s main practices in the classroom. For example, she spent most of the 105-minute lesson letting students be the teachers to teach the reading text. By doing so, students were provided opportunities to take responsibility to solve language and comprehension problems by themselves in order to prepare for the class presentations, and when doing the presentations, students could have opportunities to practise using the English language. To

encourage students' active involvement, Amy assigned all the students to work in groups, and praised every student for their speaking efforts. She only gave guidance or corrected the students' mistakes when necessary during the process.

The teaching principle and the strategic intentions together are the emphasised rationales for Amy's classroom practices – they make up the framework for much of Amy's classroom work. Within this framework, the teaching principle, which is Amy's essential idea on how to address her work objective and the notion that is embedded in her set of intentions to behave, appears to be at the heart of Amy's classroom teaching.

4. Wendy's Case – Another Example

Wendy's case is another example to illustrate how I identified the teachers' teaching principles and strategic intentions.

Wendy, who teaches College English Reading, is a lecturer in her early thirties. She has a teaching experience of 3 years before she participated in this peer coaching study.

4.1 Making sense of classroom work: classroom practices and her explanations

The way Wendy made sense of her classroom work is presented in Table 3:

Table 3 Wendy’s classroom practices and her sense-making of the practices

Classroom practices	Sense-making of the practices (quotations or summaries of participant’s statements)	Sense-making (analytic categories)
<p>Asked six students to share their stories on the assigned topic and gave comments on their stories.</p>	<p>To naturally lead the students to the learning of the text.</p> <p>Students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class.</p>	<p>Help students to build interest in the learning material.</p> <p>Provide equal opportunities for students with different needs to use the language.</p>
<p>Showed a PPT slide with some common adjectives to describe a father and went over each of the adjectives one by one.</p>	<p>To diversify my teaching methods so that students won’t get bored by our teaching.</p> <p>To adjust teaching according to your students’ differences and demands</p>	<p>Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest.</p> <p>Adjust teaching strategies according to students’ differences and demands.</p>
<p>Asked students text-related questions while explaining the text.</p>	<p>To ask a lot of questions, which helps me to get a clearer vision about how the students are accepting the lecture and what needs to be emphasized or repeated.</p> <p>Students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class.</p>	<p>Ask questions to learn more about students' needs.</p> <p>Provide equal opportunities for students with different needs to use the language.</p>
<p>Asked a student who was talking to answer the question, but he was not able to answer it. Teacher reminded him to be prepared in the future.</p> <p>Asked a seemingly inattentive student for the answer. The student couldn't answer the question. Teacher reminded him to pay attention.</p>	<p>To ask certain students to answer questions when I found they were getting distracted or absent-minded to give them a message of “I’m watching them” so that I could keep the whole class in discipline.</p> <p>Very often playing the role of a mother to correct the students’ behaviours ...</p> <p>Students are most of the time babies. You have to feed them with knowledge; you have to instruct them to behave; you have to correct their mistakes.</p>	<p>Keep discipline.</p> <p>Play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes.</p>
<p>Awarded students a bonus point when they give right answers to the questions being asked.</p>	<p>I learned from the first week that all of the students in that class are local students who very much would like to earn some bonus points by participating in class activities but are greatly challenged in expressing themselves in English.</p> <p>One thing I’ve learned from my past experiences of working with local students is that they tend to respond much better to bonus points.</p>	<p>Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest.</p> <p>Adjust teaching strategies according to students’ differences and demands.</p>

	To adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands	
Gave positive comments when students answered the questions correctly.	Very often playing the role of a mother to correct the students' behaviours and to praise them for their hard work.	Play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes and praise them for their hard work.
Introduced some key vocabulary from the text.	If I find the text is full of new terms and expressions that can cause difficulty in students' understanding, I will usually spend some time teaching vocabulary first.	Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest. Adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands.
Occasionally asked a student to read aloud part of the text or asked the whole class to read aloud the vocabulary after her.	To diversify my teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching. To adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands	Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest. Adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands.
Joked with the students and asks a student to sing a song. Laughed with the students when a student said something funny.	It's fine for a teacher to have fun and show her emotions in class.	Show students teacher being a person with emotions.
Asked students the meaning of the vocabulary or to translate sentences in the text into Chinese from time to time.	Students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class. To diversify my teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching. To adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands	Provide equal opportunities for students with different needs to use the language. Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest. Adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands.
Showed the Chinese meaning of the vocabulary on the same PPT slide and explained those words. Showed another PPT slide of the third paragraph and asked students to listen when she reads aloud. Read out some Chinese translation of the vocabulary and asks students to translate those words into English.	To diversify my teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching. To adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands	Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest. Adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands.
Varied the teaching strategies constantly and made good use of the PPT slides throughout the lesson.	To constantly change my way of enforcing lecture so that the students would not get bored or immune to what I do. To diversify my teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching. To adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands	Vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest. Adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands.

As is with the case of Amy, the first column from the left in Table 3 under the heading of “Classroom practices” are my summaries of Wendy's classroom actions, which are drawn from the observation field notes I produced during my observation of her class. The second column are summaries or quotations of Wendy’s sense-making of her actions in her own statements and the third column are analytic categories of her sense-makings. The second column presents quotations or summaries of the teacher’s statements from the interview describing the reasons for the corresponding actions in the first column. For example, one thing I saw during the observation of Wendy's lesson is that she constantly asked students questions, which seems to be one of her main teaching approaches in that class. In her interview, she provided her reasons for doing so:

During the lesson, I asked a lot of questions, which helped me to get a clearer vision about how the students were accepting the lecture and what needed to be emphasized or repeated.

This reasoning of hers is analysed as the analytic category (the third column of Table 3) of “ask questions to learn more about students' needs”.

Another example is that, in the observed lesson, I saw Wendy award students bonus points when they gave right answers to her questions. In her interview, she had the following statements that are associated with her practice of awarding students bonus points when they gave right answers:

...I learned from the first week that all of the students in that class are local students who very much would like to earn some bonus points by participating in class

activities but are greatly challenged in expressing themselves in English. So I gave an assignment on the discussion topic in advance so that they could get some time to prepare for it before the class. As you've observed that day, they came prepared with at least some broken sentences written on their homework sheets, and when I asked them to present their ideas they all had something to offer. They still spoke mostly broken English, but compared to what they did in the first week, which was mostly a mixture of embarrassment and silence, they felt more confident this time.

Also one thing I've learned from my past experiences of working with local students is that they tend to respond much better to bonus points and test-oriented language points. That's why I highlighted a lot of words and expressions in the text and provided a simple Chinese explanation for them to take notes because I've told them that those will be tested in exams. I wasn't necessarily telling the truth but I've found that they did take more notes when I did that.

Also, when I asked her how an English Reading class should be taught, she mentioned:

I think teaching should be based on the learning demands of students. Before we decide what kind of teaching method we should adopt, we should go and see what kind of students we are given and get to know what kind of learning stage they are at, or even what kind of personality they have got.

This teaching strategy of awarding students bonus points can demonstrate Wendy's sense-making of changing her teaching based on students' English language proficiency and personality. This reasoning of hers is analysed as “vary teaching

strategies to maintain students' interest” and “adjust teaching strategies according to students’ differences and demands”.

One other example is that a feature I noticed about Wendy's observed lesson is that she constantly varied her teaching strategies - besides repeatedly asking students different kinds of questions, she asked students to tell stories; she occasionally asked individual students to read aloud part of the text or asked the whole class to read aloud the vocabulary after her; she asked a student to sing a song and joked with the students; she asked students the meaning of the vocabulary or to translate sentences in the text into Chinese from time to time; she asked students to listen when she read aloud part of the text; she read aloud some Chinese translation of the vocabulary and asked students to translate those words into English. Apart from these teaching strategies, she made good use of the various functions of the PowerPoint slides to assist her teaching strategies throughout the lesson. In her interview, when I asked her to summarize her main teaching principles with regard to her lesson, she answered:

My first principle would have to be to diversify our teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching, and students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class. Another principle of mine is to adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands.

She also mentioned in her interview:

...I was constantly changing my way of enforcing lecture so that the students would

not get bored or immune to what I do.

Statements such as the two above provide reasons why she varied her teaching strategies constantly, which is also the major feature of her lesson. Some of these statements were used as her sense-making that is associated with her classroom practice of constantly changing her teaching strategies. Thus, the linking of the classroom practices and their sense-making was made. These statements also produced two of the important teaching rationales held by Wendy, including “vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest” and “adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands”.

4.2 The emergence of teaching principles and strategic intentions

Among all the participants in the study, Wendy seems to be most concerned with students' needs. Related expressions occurred repeatedly in her interview. As shown in the first quotation in Section 4.1, Wendy would ask students lots of questions which she explained as “to get a clearer vision about how the students were accepting the lecture and what needed to be emphasized or repeated”. Also, when summarising her main teaching principles at the end of the interview, she said that her first principle was to diversify her teaching methods so that “students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class”, and she also said that her other principle was “to adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands”. In her interview, she mentioned that she would get to know more about the students by making small talk with them:

To help teachers remember their students as quickly as possible, I just find that making small talks with each of them can be very useful. The talk doesn't have to be very long or formal. I feel that by conversing with them I am able to have a general idea about their personalities. I will know who needs a little encouragement to speak and who needs a little push to act, and things like this.

Also, when I asked her how an English Reading class should be taught, she emphasised again the importance of varying teaching methods to meet students' learning demands:

I don't think there should be a unanimous pattern of teaching English reading for all teachers. Neither do I think there should be a fixed teaching pattern for the same teacher. I think teaching should be based on the learning demands of students. Before we decide what kind of teaching method we should adopt, we should go and see what kind of students we are given and get to know what kind of learning stage they are at, or even what kind of personality they have got.

This objective of diversifying teaching methods to meet students' needs was expressed explicitly and repeatedly by Wendy. Related to this notion are her intentions to “vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest”, “adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands”, “ask questions to learn more about students' needs”, and “provide opportunities for students with different needs to use the language”. These are her specific plans to work for the notion of meeting students' needs and explain her classroom actions in the observed lesson of, for example, making small talks with students to get to know them better,

asking students many questions, asking individual students to read aloud part of the text, asking students the meaning of the vocabulary or translating sentences in the text into Chinese, and asking students to translate Chinese words into English. All these teaching strategies can help a teacher to learn more about the students' English language proficiency and their learning needs.

What appears to be also important to Wendy, apart from meeting students' needs, is her intention to play the role of a mother of her students. When asked in her interview about how she described her role as a teacher, one of the roles she mentioned was a mother: "I'm very often a mother to correct the students' behaviours and to praise them for their hard work". This quotation corresponds with Wendy's actions in the observed lesson. In the observed lesson, I saw that when she noticed students who were chatting with others or seemingly inattentive, she would ask them questions. The students usually couldn't answer the questions, and she would remind them to pay more attention. In her interview, she had the following statements that are associated with her practice of asking inattentive students questions:

I also intended to ask certain students to answer questions when I found they were getting distracted or absent-minded to give them a message of "I'm watching them" so that I could keep the whole class in discipline.

Besides correcting students' behaviours, I saw in the observed lesson that she would give positive comments when the students answered the questions correctly.

When asked about how she described the role of the students, she said the following:

I think students are most of the time babies. You have to feed them with knowledge; you have to instruct them to behave; you have to correct their mistakes; and you have to balance between what nutrition they should absorb and what taste they like.

This quotation seems to show that Wendy treated her students as her babies and she had to carry the responsibility as a mother to take care of her babies. According to Chinese tradition, in the relationship between teachers and their students, there is often a view that the teacher to his/her students is like a parent to his/her children (Watkins, 2000). This Chinese tradition can be found in Wendy's case. She refers to her students as babies, which seems to signify an almost parental emotion of love she has for her students. The fact that literally she used the word *babies* to address her students is indicative of her acceptance of the Chinese traditional view of the nature of the teacher-student relationship.

This playing the role of a mother appears to be an essential part of Wendy's thinking. This notion is implemented by a set of intentions such as "play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes and praise them for their hard work." and "keep discipline". This notion, together with the notion of "diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs", underpins Wendy's main instructional decisions and actions.

Figure 3 summaries Wendy's emphasised rationales with a framework:

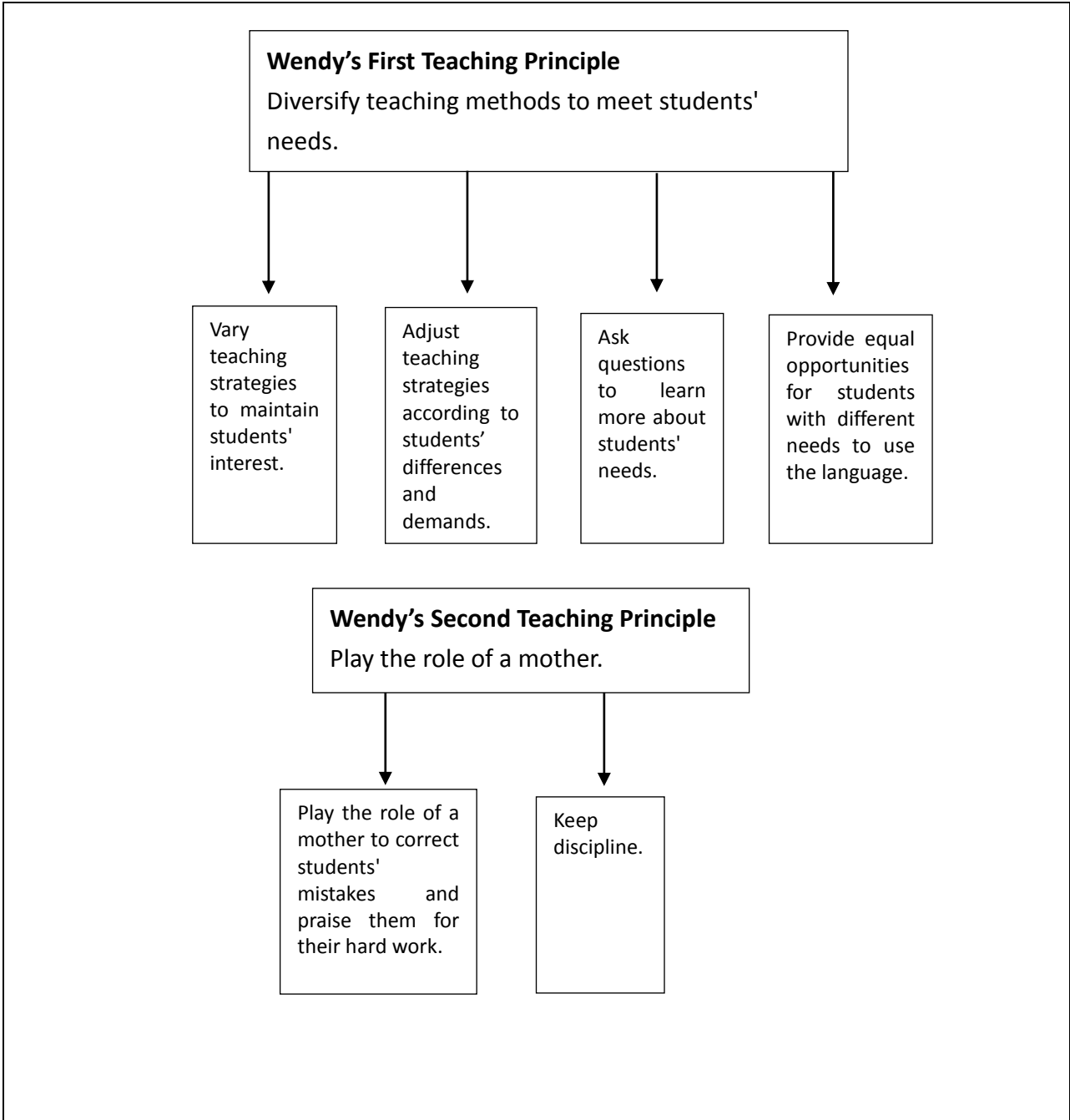


Figure 3 The framework of Wendy’s classroom work: teaching principles and strategic intentions

As shown in Figure 3, Wendy’s primary objectives in teaching are “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother”, which appear to be the notions that underpin Wendy’s approach to teaching. These ideas

are labeled as the **teaching principles** for Wendy. Two sets of reasonings respectively embody Wendy's two teaching principles in her practices; they explain the specific actions in her classroom work. These sets of reasonings are labeled as the **strategic intentions** for Wendy – they are how Wendy intends to behave in the classroom. Her notion of “diversifying teaching methods to meet students' needs” is more obviously reflected in her intentions to “vary teaching strategies to maintain students' interest”, “adjust teaching strategies according to students' differences and demands”, “ask questions to learn more about students' needs”, and “provide opportunities for students with different needs to use the language”. Meanwhile, underpinning her intentions to “play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes and praise them for their hard work” and “keep discipline” is the notion of “playing the role of a mother”. It appears that existent in every strategic intention is a notion that Wendy holds for her teaching – the notions that are expressed in her teaching principles.

The teaching principle and the strategic intentions together make up Wendy's framework of classroom work, which inform many of her practices in the classroom exemplified above in this section as well as in Table 3.

5. May's Case – A Further Illustration

I use May's case as a further illustration for the identification of the teacher's teaching principles and strategic intentions.

May, who teaches College English Reading, is a lecturer in her early thirties. She has a teaching experience of 6 years before she participated in this peer coaching study.

5.1 Making sense of classroom work: classroom practices and their explanations

The way May made sense of her classroom work is presented in Table 4:

Table 4 May's classroom practices and her sense-making of the practices

Classroom practices	Sense-making of the practices (quotations or summaries of participant's statements)	Sense-making (analytic categories)
Took time to explain the grammar and vocabulary.	Important to teach grammar and vocabulary to improve students' English proficiency so that they can better understand the teaching material.	Emphasise grammar and vocabulary learning as the priority to improve students' English proficiency.
Asked students if they understand the meaning of a sentence from the text.	To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Maintain students' concentration by asking them questions. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Started the pre-reading task and asked students to discuss two text related questions shown on a PPT slide.	Questions were raised to help the students to grasp the clue of the story.	Help students understand the teaching material through asking them to reflect on the questions.
Asked one student to share his ideas about one of the given questions.	To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Maintain students' concentration by asking them questions. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Moved around the room and asked another student to answer the question.	To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Maintain students' concentration by asking them questions. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Gave more explanation in Chinese when the student couldn't give a satisfactory answer to the question.	Translation of some important sentences is done to promote students' understanding.	Help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language.
Asked another student to answer the question and started to move around more in the room and check on students' attentiveness.	To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Maintain students' concentration by asking them questions. Check on students' understanding

		of the teaching material.
Asked students to read paragraph 1 to 6 of the text and answered the questions shown on the PPT slide.	Because this text is a little bit longer than others, I gave the students more time to read it. To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material. Maintain student concentration by asking them questions. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Waited for students to come up with their answers and continued to walk around the room to see if students had any questions.	Considering the students' low reading speed, more time was given to them to read the text.	Allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material. Help students understand the teaching material.
Asked one student after another to answer the questions.	To arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Maintain students' concentration. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Spoke Chinese half of the time to supplement her explanation.	Translation of some important sentences is done to promote students' understanding. The students had a low level of English proficiency. So, I translated a lot of English sentences into Chinese.	Help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language.
Asked one student to read out a word and translate it into Chinese and then asked the whole class to read out loud another word from the vocabulary.	Some important verbs were picked out for the students to write down their past forms, because some really don't know the changes of some irregular verbs. I asked one or two students to help read and translate those words to make sure those words wouldn't block their understanding of the paragraphs.	Emphasise grammar and vocabulary learning as the priority to improve students' English proficiency. Ensure students understand the teaching material.
Asked students to read the second half of the text and then to rearrange the order of the given statements shown on the PPT slide. Then she walked around and waited for students to do the job.	To give the students more time to read the text. Different styles of exercises were designed to avoid dullness.	Allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material. Vary the exercises to avoid dullness.
Divided the text into two parts according to the construction of the text and asked the students to read one part at a time.	To help the students understand the text more easily.	Help students understand the teaching material.
Walked around the room and checked on students individually and answered their questions.	I tried to make myself a helper. To get to know if the students had understood the text and what was taught.	Give students individual help. Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.
Spent quite a lot of time illustrate the text.	Reading comprehension of the text was the main task of the class. The students were led to get as much information as possible and know the main idea of the text.	Ensure students understand the teaching material.

Getting the students to have a clear idea about what happened in the story was the part that I wanted to particularly emphasize.
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Table 4 presents May's sense-makings associated with her classroom practices. May's sense-makings were summarised from her own statements which were the explanations she provided for her classroom practices; these summaries were then given an analytic label or category which represents the essence of the summarised statement. For example, throughout the observed lesson, I noticed that May spent a large amount of time focusing on teaching students the vocabulary and grammar points in the reading text. In the interview, when asked how she thought English should be learned, May said:

Students should do a lot of reading based on sound understanding of grammar and a large vocabulary. So they should be taught more typical examples and structures to have a better understanding of grammar points. If they have no idea about grammar, they have no rules to make their own sentences. And effective ways can be introduced to assist them in remembering the spelling and meaning of words. For example, syllable division is effective in memorizing the spelling of a word.

This quotation produced the summary of the sense-making of her focus of teaching students the vocabulary and grammar points in the reading text as shown in Table 4. The analytic category given to it is "emphasise grammar and vocabulary learning as the priority to improve students' English proficiency".

Another example is that when May was teaching the reading text, oftentimes she would show some text related questions on a PowerPoint slide and ask students to discuss them. In the interview, when asked to describe her particular actions during her lesson, one of the things she said was:

During the reading, questions were raised to help the students to grasp the clue of the story.

The above quotation was used as her sense-making that is associated with her classroom practice of asking students to discuss the text related questions. Thus, the linking of the classroom practices and their sense-making was made. This quotation is summarised as the analytic category of “help students understand the teaching material through asking them to reflect on the questions”.

5.2 The emergence of teaching principles and strategic intentions

May stressed repeatedly in the interview that her primary work objective was to help students understand the teaching material. When asked to describe how she conducted/arranged this lesson and explain the reasons for the way she approached it, she said: “...reading comprehension of the text was the main task of the class. The students were led to get as much information as possible and know the main idea of the text”. When asked if there was anything about the lesson that she would want to particularly emphasize, she answered: “getting the students to have a clear idea about what happened in the story was the part that I wanted to particularly emphasize”. Also, when asked to describe her particular actions during her lesson,

she had the following statement:

In order to help the students understand the text more easily, I divided the text into two parts according to the construction of the text and asked the students to read one part at a time.

This quotation corresponds with May's actions in the observed lesson. She did divide the text into two halves and spent about half of the lesson to go over each one of them with the students, which was intended to help the students to understand better the construction of text. Apart from this, almost all her other actions in the observed lesson were in an attempt to work toward the objective of helping students to understand the teaching material.

One feature I observed in May's lesson was that she constantly asked students to answer questions. When asked what the purpose of doing so was, she answered:

This was to arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what I had taught them.

Another feature of May's lesson was that she spoke Chinese approximately half of the time in the lesson to supplement her explanation especially when the students could not give satisfactory answers to her questions. In the interview, she had the following statements:

Translation of some important sentences is done to promote students' understanding.

...the students had a low level of English proficiency. Thus, I translated a lot of English sentences into our native language.

This objective of ensuring students' understanding of the teaching material was expressed explicitly and repeatedly by May. Related to this notion are her intentions to “emphasise grammar and vocabulary learning as the priority to improve students' English proficiency”, “maintain students' concentration by asking them questions”, “check on students' understanding of the teaching material”, “help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language”, “allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material”, and “give students individual help”. These are her specific plans to work for the notion of ensuring students' understanding of the teaching material and explain her classroom actions that I observed, for example, spending a large amount of time to teach grammar and vocabulary, constantly asking students many questions, walking around the classroom to check on students and answer their questions, speaking Chinese for a large part of the lesson, and giving students time to read the text during the lesson. All these teaching strategies are intended to help students to obtain a better understanding of the teaching material.

Figure 4 summarises May's emphasised rationales for her teaching:

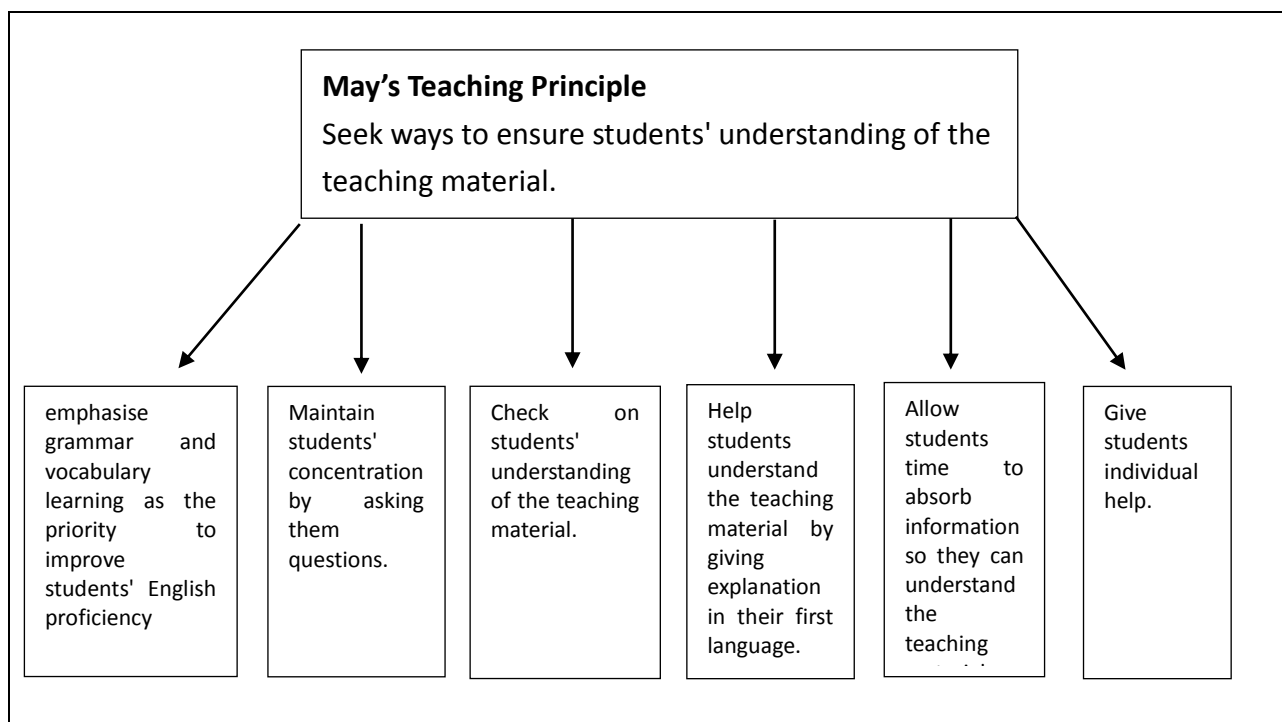


Figure 4 The framework of Wendy's classroom work: teaching principles and strategic intentions

As shown in Figure 4, May's primary work objective is to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material, which serves as an objective or goal for her classroom work. This is labeled as the **teaching principle** for May. The teaching principle is mediated through a set of **strategic intentions**. The strategic intentions are the specific plans to work for the achievement of the objective in the teaching principle. A set of reasonings respectively embodies May's teaching principles in her practices; they explain the specific actions in her classroom work. Her teaching principle of "ensuring students' understanding of the teaching material" is reflected in her intentions to "emphasise grammar and vocabulary learning as the priority to improve students' English proficiency", "maintain students' concentration by asking them questions", "check on students' understanding of the teaching material", "help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first

language”, “allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material”, and “give students individual help”. It appears that existent in every strategic intention is a notion that May holds for her teaching – the notions that are expressed in her teaching principles.

The teaching principle and the strategic intentions together make up May’s framework of classroom work, which explains the major part of her classroom practices discussed in this section as well as shown in Table 4.

6. The Identification of Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions – Criteria and Verifications

In the process of data analyses, two rounds of respondent validation were made. The first took place after the matrix was developed to present the teacher’s sense-makings associated with her classroom practices. All participants confirmed the analyses. Repeated review of the matrices and the original data gave rise to the identification of a set of teaching principles and strategic intentions that explained the major part of the teacher’s work. The identification of this set of teaching principles and strategic intentions for each case was based on: 1) the teachers’ own summaries of their most important teaching principles which each teacher made at the end of the interview, 2) their emphasised and/or repeated statements during the interview, and 3) what was emphatically reflected in their teaching actions that I observed. The matrices together with the interview transcripts, the observation notes, and the reflective notes were all referred to in the process of identifying the teaching principles and strategic intentions.

The results were brought back to the participants for their comments. In most cases, the identification of the set of teaching principles and strategic intentions was agreed and accepted by the participants. In some cases modifications were made based on the negotiation with the participants such as the changing of wording of some strategic intentions.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used three cases as examples to illustrate the identification of the set of teaching principles and strategic intentions for the individual teacher. From each interview transcript and observation notes, a matrix was made linking the teacher's classroom practices to her sense-making of the practices. Emerging from this analysis were a set of rationales that were emphasised by the teacher and appeared to be most influential in informing the teacher's classroom work. A framework was developed to capture the set of rationales for the individual teacher, which is composed of the teaching principle and the strategic intentions. In the next chapter, I compare the teaching principles and the strategic intentions of each of the eight participants before and after their participation of the peer coaching programme for one academic term in an attempt to find out if there are any changes in their perceptions and beliefs in teaching. I also examine the relationships of the teaching principles of each peer coaching pair to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

Chapter 5 The Examination of the Impact of Peer Coaching on Teachers' Teaching Beliefs

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of the one-semester-long peer coaching programme on the participants' teaching beliefs. I compare the teaching principles and the strategic intentions of each of the eight participants before and after their participation of the peer coaching programme for one academic term in an attempt to find out if there are any changes in their perceptions and beliefs in teaching. I also examine the relationships of the teaching principles of each peer coaching pair to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

2. Dyad 1 - Amy and Phoebe

In the peer coaching programme, Amy and Phoebe formed a peer coaching pair. In this section, I first examine the impact of the peer coaching programme on each of their teaching principles and strategic intentions and then I investigate the relationships of their teaching principles to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

2.1. Amy's Case

In order to examine the impact of the peer coaching programme on Amy's teaching principle, I created a table to show Amy's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme alongside each other so that the differences may be identified easily.

Table 5 Amy's Teaching Principle and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Amy's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves.	Amy's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Teacher being observer.	Teacher being observer
Make students take responsibility for their own learning.	Make students take responsibility for their own learning.
Encourage students' active involvement.	Encourage students' active involvement.
Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language.	Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language.
Give guidance or make correction when necessary.	Provide guidance when necessary.
Teacher talks less and students talk more.	Provide opportunity for students to think and express their own ideas.
	Provide opportunity for students to learn team work.

The left-side column of Table 5 shows Amy's teaching principle and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Amy's primary objective in teaching or her teaching principle was to "seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves", and her work in the classroom is guided by this teaching principle. The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of "seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves"

include “teacher being observer”, “make students take responsibility for their own learning”, “encourage students' active involvement”, “provide students opportunities to practise using the English language”, “give guidance or make correction when necessary”, and “teacher talks less and students talk more”. This set of strategic intentions explains the more specific actions in Amy’s class. While the teaching principle appears to underpin Amy’s approach to the lesson, this set of strategic intentions seems to be the ways she carried out her teaching principle in specific actions within the classroom. They are how specifically Amy intended to behave in the class. Amy’s teaching principle is mediated through these strategic intentions to be actualised in the classroom.

The right-side column of Table 5 shows Amy's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Amy’s teaching principle did not change after the peer coaching programme and remained to be “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”. Her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme are similar to those before the programme. Five of them are identical and they include “teacher being observer”, “make students take responsibility for their own learning”, “encourage students' active involvement”, “provide students opportunities to practise using the English language”, and “give guidance or make correction when necessary”. Apart from them, two new strategic intentions were identified and they are “provide opportunities for students to learn team work” and “provide opportunities for students to think and express their own ideas”. These two new strategic intentions also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”. In the observed lesson, I saw that Amy assigned all the students to work in groups. By doing so, students could practise using

the English language by thinking and expressing their ideas with the language, and in turn, they could learn by themselves. In her second interview, she had the following statements which are associated with her strategic intentions of “provide opportunities for students to learn team work” and “provide opportunities for students to think and express their own ideas”:

[Students] need to talk and reach a final agreement [among their group members] and then report to the rest of the class. It gives them time to think, share and talk in front of others. I wish they can learn the importance of team work. Group work provides such a space for them.

[Group work provides] a suitable environment in which the language is used a lot and the learner has to think and express his ideas with the language.

To sum up, Amy's teaching principle remains unchanged after the one-semester-long peer coaching programme and her strategic intentions stay more or less the same – five were identical and even for those two that did not appear before, they were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principle of “seek ways to help students learn and discover by themselves”. I discuss this point further in Section 3.3 in Chapter 6.

2.2. Phoebe's Case

The following table shows Phoebe's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 6 Phoebe's Teaching Principle and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Phoebe's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.	Phoebe's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Provide opportunities for students to use English.	Provide opportunities for students to use English.
Help students build confidence in using English.	Help students build confidence in using English.
Provide students chances to practise public speaking.	Provide students chances to practise public speaking.
Create a relaxed atmosphere so that students can express themselves in English freely.	Create interesting activities to encourage students' participation and stimulate their motivation in learning English.
Create opportunities for students to learn from their peers.	Help students to understand better the teaching material through translation exercises.
Arouse students' interest in using English.	Give students the central role in class.
Vary teaching methods to maintain students' interest and stimulate their motivation in learning English.	

The left-side column of Table 6 shows Phoebe's teaching principle and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. This set of strategic intentions carry out the notion of the teaching principle in the specific actions of Phoebe within the classroom.

The right-side column of Table 6 shows Phoebe's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-semester-long peer coaching programme. Phoebe's teaching principle did not change after the peer coaching

programme and remained to be “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. With regard to her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme, three of them stayed the same and they include “provide opportunities for students to use English”, “help students build confidence in using English”, and “provide students chances to practise public speaking”. The ones that are different include “create interesting activities to encourage students' participation and stimulate their motivation in learning English”, “help students to understand better the teaching material through translation exercises”, and “give students the central role in class”. Although they are different, they also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”.

Generally speaking, Phoebe's teaching principle remains unchanged after the one-semester-long peer coaching programme and although half of her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme are different from those before the programme. The different ones were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principle of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. I discuss this point further in Section 3.3 in Chapter 6.

2.3. The Influence on Each Other – Amy and Phoebe

Both Amy's and Phoebe's teaching principle seem to remain unchanged after the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Perhaps one term is not a long enough period of time for teachers to make any significant impact on each other's teaching principle. As pointed out by Cordingley et al. (2015), for a CPD programme to be effective, it should last for a year or longer. Also, as suggested by Millis (1992), peer

coaching is more effective when it occurs over an extended period of time. However, the peer coaching period for this study can only be one term-long, considering the depth of the investigation, the amount of data being generated and the time constraints for my research.

One important point should be noted is that both of the teachers' teaching principles are similar to each other before they participated in the peer coaching programme. Amy's teaching principle before the programme was “seek ways to help students to discover and learn by themselves” while Phoebe's was “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. Both of their principles seem to attempt to achieve the same goal of helping students to be independent learners. This could be the reason why their teaching principles remain the same after the peer coaching programme. According to many scholars (e.g. Benciu, 2012; Lee and Van Patten's, 2003; Merrill, 2009; Nunan, 1997; Richards 2006), their teaching principles are considered student-centred and in line with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. Benciu (2012) suggests that

Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning. In communicative classrooms teachers will find themselves talking less and listening more, becoming active facilitators of their students' learning. (p97)

Although their teaching principles did not change, there is evidence showing that they do influence each other's teaching practice to a certain extent. As Phoebe mentioned in her second interview:

During the discussions [in the peer coaching meetings], we often came up with some odd and funny ideas but these ideas couldn't be called teaching theory or teaching skills, just some methods to deal with individual problem.

As seen in the journals they produced after each peer coaching episode, there are quite a few instances showing that they learned from each other and worked together to solve teaching problems they had in their classes. For example, Phoebe mentioned a number of times both in her second interview and journals that she learned from Amy how to improve her management of group work in class. In her second interview, she stated:

I think it's really good to participate in this kind of program, for this gives me a chance to let me feel free to learn from other experienced teachers. Generally speaking, my partner helped me use pair work and group discussion better. I was not good at group work before.

In Amy's Journal of her second peer coaching episode, she wrote about her suggestion for Phoebe to better manage pair work:

I told [Phoebe] that she got a great idea for practising translation through pair work and that the sample sentences she chose were of great interest to the students. However, it would be better if she could get the attention of the students when she was analyzing the mistakes they made and possible solutions. The students were a bit too concerned about marks and their major concern was who would get the next chance to translate. Her voice was kind of overwhelmed. It might be better if she asked some students to analyze. What worried me at that time was the students cared too much about their marks, but not

the practice itself. I suggested better management of class atmosphere and clearer instruction of grades.

Also, in Amy's Journal of her fourth peer coaching episode, she wrote about her suggestion for Phoebe to make use of group work to teach grammar:

...The other aspect concerns how to organize the students on the whole. Grammar might be their least favourite subject. I suggested more pair work and group work in class instead of asking students one by one to answer questions, or asking one student to answer several questions in a row.

Providing students with opportunities to do group work is consistent with the student-centred and communicative language teaching approach. Richards (2006) suggests that the dynamics of classrooms today has changed from a predominance of teacher-centred teaching to student-centred. Teachers are encouraged to make greater use of small-group work. Pair and group activities offer learners greater opportunities to use the language and to develop fluency. Benciu (2012) also comments that “communicative language teaching often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners” (p.97).

Another example of Amy and Phoebe working together to improve their teaching is that they established that giving students clearer instructions can help students to better participate in class activities..

In Phoebe's Journal of her fourth peer coaching episode, she wrote about having a discussion with Amy about how clearer instructions can help students to actively

engage in the role play activity.

After the class session, discussion was about how to make students more actively engaged in role play. We believe that clearer instructions from teachers may be of great help.

In Phoebe's second interview, when asked if she and her partner had come up with any new ideas in teaching, one of the ideas she mentioned was the importance to communicate the teacher's points clearly to students, which is associated with the idea of giving clear instructions:

Teachers, using good communicating skills, should tell students clearly what to do and how to do to make them do better... we teachers need to do more to find more different ways to make ourselves and our teaching understood... as long as students can enjoy the process and know what the teacher hopes them to learn, this is good communication.

In Amy's Journal of her fifth peer coaching episode, she gave an example of how clearer instruction can help to improve class management and also wrote about her reflection of the importance of giving clearer instructions in class:

I have found that the clearer the instruction, the better. For example, when [Phoebe] mentioned that a lot of students were not attentive in my class, I took her advice and showed one question on the screen to my students in another class: What do you expect your audience to do when you are performing? They whispered among themselves that they would like the rest of the class to be quiet and listen to them. I sat at the back row, instead of sitting in the front as I did in the last class, so I could observe the whole class.

They were much better listeners this time.

Giving clear instructions is a necessity. Never before have I been more aware of that. When we teach, we do not only impart knowledge, we also train them to be cooperative and considerate of others. To a certain degree, the latter is more important than the former. They might forget the language points, but the positive things they have learnt through education might influence them for the rest of their life.

Interestingly, I believe the idea of “giving clearer instructions” actually came from Amy's first interview before they commenced the peer coaching programme. One main feature in her first observed lesson was to have various groups of students take the role of a teacher going over the taught material in the form of PowerPoint presentations. To follow this up, I asked her in the first interview whether the students understood why they were doing the teaching instead of the teacher and she answered:

Thank you for bringing up the question. I have never thought about it before. On second thoughts, I think it is necessary to tell my students why they are supposed to do it. Clear instruction and direction result in effective teaching and training. I will keep it in mind.

It seems that she had been keeping this idea in mind and had explored it further with Phoebe during the peer coaching process and turned it into a concept that was both significant and beneficial to their teaching. In a sense, they had a shared reciprocal relationship and served as each other's teaching consultant. This is in line with Munro and Elliott's (1987) point that one essential function of peer coaching is to provide a forum in which teachers can experiment with and discuss teaching with an interested

partner.

2.4. Collaboration and Collegiality Between Amy and Phoebe

One question this study tries to answer is whether the peer coaching programme serves as the building block for a learning community. Since collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks for creating a learning community (Dufour, 2004), I investigate whether this peer coaching programme facilitates greater collaboration and collegiality among the participants.

According to their journals and answers in the second interview, Amy and Phoebe seemed to be able to work in harmony with each other. They had a lot of exchange of ideas and were able to help each other to improve teaching. When Phoebe was asked if this peer coaching programme served the purpose of facilitating her professional development, she answered:

I think this program does help me improve my methods of dealing with students. In the past, I did not use many activities and I was very nervous about using new methods because I didn't know how to deal with them. After observing another teacher, I often want to try new ways in my class and I do try them. And I feel good about this.

For Amy, she said:

Yes. It helps me to see where I need to improve. I have been teaching for some time.

There is some danger in it. Sometimes I am too confident, falsely believing that my

teaching is perfect...There is, as the old saying goes, a bystander is always clear-minded while a person involved is likely to get muddle-headed.

As their collaboration developed, so did their collegiality. Amy and Phoebe knew each other for a few years before the peer coaching programme and they were friends. However, they had never had a chance to work together to improve their teaching. This peer coaching programme provided them an opportunity to develop a constructive working relationship to solve their teaching problems and come up with new teaching strategies. When asked to describe the relationship with the coaching partner after the peer coaching programme in the second interview, Phoebe said:

We are colleagues and friends. This program gives us a chance to learn from each other. Observing and being observed make us think more about ways of communicating with students and of dealing with the materials.

For Amy, she said:

We get to know each other better, and there is more trust. When I asked someone to be my peer coach, I thought of someone I trusted and felt comfortable with. During the semester, we talked about our classes and teaching.

Throughout the peer coaching programme, Amy and Phoebe seemed to be able to build a working relationship that was based on trust, which I find is a very important element in a peer coaching relationship. For instance, during the peer coaching process, Amy pointed out some of Phoebe's shortcomings, but Phoebe did not seem to have any negative feelings and accepted her advice sincerely. When asked what she learned

from her partner during that one semester of peer coaching program, she mentioned:

I got to know some of my pronunciations should be corrected, like key, /i:/ was not good. She also helped me to notice my bad habits when I was standing in front of students, like saying too many “yes” and waving hands too many times. I think it’s good to have someone to tell me the bad habits I hadn’t noticed before.

In Amy's second interview, she provided an insightful reflection about her peer coaching experience:

It was a new, warm and valuable experience. I guess, at the beginning, it was not an easy task to invite someone into your class and observe you. There must be a basis of trust, of feeling comfortable to have a peer right on the spot when everything is happening in your class, which used to be only you and your students. A classroom, in a sense, is a private place, open only to the legitimate few. To open it up to someone else means that there is letting go of that false sense of security and that strong sense of self-centeredness. A classroom is not a fortress besieged. It was in that process of inviting your peer coach and having her in your place and sharing and accepting your own shortcomings and discovering that you were far from being perfect, that there was new hope of becoming a better teacher.

Yet, she also pointed out a drawback of the peer coaching programme. When asked whether this peer coaching program helped her to build confidence as a teacher, she answered:

Yes and no. I said yes because it did help me to see my shortcomings and also point out

ways for improvement. And “no” because there are still times when I am not quite sure whether I should be a teacher or not. This is probably one drawback of the program - reduce teachers' confidence by knowing more about one's own shortcoming. I was wondering whether it happens to other teachers, and whether they ask themselves the same question. Knowing one's career is more difficult than I imagine.

All in all, there is evidence showing that this peer coaching programme did facilitate a high degree of collaboration and collegiality between Amy and Phoebe. One possible reason for their successful cooperation is that they both are like-minded people and felt comfortable working with each other. Hu (2006), in her study of teacher collaboration in two Taiwanese schools, found that teachers who are like-minded tend to work better in collaboration because people are more likely to open up to others with whom they are socially at ease. This can be a factor to be considered when future peer coaching participants choose their own partners. I will discuss this point further in the Discussion Section in Chapter 6.

3. Dyad 2 – Wendy and Nicole

In the peer coaching programme, Wendy and Nicole formed a peer coaching pair. In this section, I first examine the impact of the peer coaching programme on each of their teaching principles and strategic intentions and then I investigate the relationships of their teaching principles to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

3.1. Wendy's Case

The following table shows Wendy's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 7 Wendy's Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Wendy's First Teaching Principle - Diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs.	Wendy's Teaching Principle - Give students the central role in learning.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Provide equal opportunities for students with different needs to use the language.	Create an environment where students can get language input and practise using the language.
Ask questions to learn more about students' needs.	Provide opportunities for interactions between students.
Adjust teaching methods according to students' differences and demands.	Take measures to urge students to take responsibility of their own learning.
Vary teaching methods to maintain students' interest.	Engage students in the class activities as much as possible.
Wendy's Second Teaching Principle - Play the role of a mother.	Establish acquaintance with students so as to develop good working relationships with them.
Strategic Intentions	Provide guidance.
Keep discipline.	
Play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes and praise them for their hard work.	

The left-side column of Table 7 shows Wendy's teaching principles and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Wendy had two teaching principles and they were to “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother”, and her work in the classroom is guided by these two teaching principles.

The strategic intentions corresponding to her first principle are her specific plans to

work for the notion of meeting students' needs and explain her classroom actions in the observed lesson of, for example, making small talk with students to get to know them better, asking students many questions, asking individual students to read aloud part of the text, asking students the meaning of the vocabulary or translating sentences in the text into Chinese, and asking students to translate Chinese words into English. All these teaching strategies can help a teacher to learn more about the students' English language proficiency and their learning needs.

The other set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “play the role of a mother” include “keep discipline”, and “play the role of a mother to correct students' mistakes and praise them for their hard work”. When asked in her interview about how she described her role as a teacher, one of the roles she mentioned was a mother: “I’m very often a mother to correct the students’ behaviours and to praise them for their hard work”. This quotation corresponds with Wendy's actions in the observed lesson. In the observed lesson, when she saw students who were chatting with others or seemingly inattentive, she would ask them questions. The students usually couldn't answer the questions, and she would remind them to pay more attention. She would give positive comments when the students answered the questions correctly. Also, when asked about how she described the role of the students, she refers to her students as babies, which seems to signify an almost parental emotion of love she has for her students. According to Chinese tradition, in the relationship between teachers and their students, there is often a view that the teacher to his/her students is like a parent to his/her children (Watkins, 2000). This Chinese tradition can be found in Wendy’s case.

While the teaching principle appears to underpin Wendy's approach to the lesson, these

two sets of strategic intentions seem to carry out the notion of the teaching principle in the specific actions of Wendy within the classroom.

The right-side column of Table 7 shows Wendy's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Wendy had a different teaching principle after the peer coaching programme and it was “give students the central role in learning”. [In this thesis, the term ‘central role’ refers to the role the teacher or the students play in classroom activities – where the teacher is the focal point of the classroom work, he/she is taking the central role in the classroom; where the students are taking the central role, they do tasks by interacting in pairs or groups, or give presentations with the teacher not playing a centrally participatory role (Garrett and Shortall, 2002)]. The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “give students the central role in learning” include “create an environment where students can get language input and practise using the language”, “provide opportunities for interactions between students”, “take measures to urge students to take responsibility of their own learning”, “engage students in the class activities as much as possible”, “establish acquaintance with students so as to develop good working relationship with them”, and “provide guidance”. All these strategic intentions correspond to the features of student-centred learning pointed out by many scholars (e.g. Benciu, 2012; Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006; Sreehari, 2012).

These strategic intentions relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “give students the central role in learning”. For example, throughout Wendy's observed lesson, I saw that she used many different types of teaching strategies to engage students in class activities. By doing so, students could learn the

teaching material and practise using the English language, and in turn, they could learn by themselves. In her second interview, when asked how she thought English was learned and how it should be taught, she answered:

English language is learned in the process of constant accumulation of knowledge of the language and constant practice of the learned knowledge. Therefore, it should be taught by creating such an environment where students can accumulate and practise knowledge of the English language.

When asked what had been her most effective method to teach reading, she had the following statements:

...as long as the methods are meant to guide students to “do” things, they tend to be more effective. In other words, students are more motivated to learn when they are asked to do things.

What Wendy was doing was in line with the task-based teaching approach, which is an extension of the communicative language teaching approach (Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006). The characteristics of task-based teaching, according to Richards (2006), are that learners do or carry out the assigned tasks using their existing language resources and language acquisition may occur as the learners carry out the tasks. Also, the tasks usually involve two or more learners, they call upon the learners’ use of communication strategies and interactional skills. According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985), a task is “any activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language” (p. 289). Nunan (1991a) suggests that the value of tasks is that they provide a purpose for the activity

which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.

Also, I saw in her lesson that she frequently walked up to the students to communicate with them personally and guide them to answer questions throughout the lesson. In her second interview, she had the following statements that are associated with this practice:

I spent a lot of time trying to interact with each of them as much as possible to, on the one hand, be more impressed with their personality and to, on another, establish acquaintance with them so that gradually they would be more willing to be involved in my class activities.

To sum up, after the one-semester-long peer coaching programme, Wendy's teaching principles seemed to have changed from “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother” to “give students the central role in learning” and her strategic intentions that carried out the notion of the teaching principle were also different from those before the peer coaching programme.

3.2. Nicole's Case

The following table shows Nicole's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 8 Nicole's Teaching Principle and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Nicole's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Nicole's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Interact with students.	Interact with students.
Sustain students' involvement with questions and activities.	Encourage students' active involvement in class.
Provide guidance.	Provide guidance when necessary.
Help the students get into the habit of thinking and finding answers on their own.	Train students to be independent learners.
Arouse students' interest.	Create an interesting and friendly learning environment.
Provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned.	Ensure that every student participates in class.
Avoid long lecture.	

The left-side column of Table 8 shows Nicole's teaching principle and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Nicole's teaching principle was to “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”, and her work in the classroom is guided by this teaching principles.

This set of strategic intentions carried out the notion of the teaching principle in the specific actions of Nicole within the classroom. For example, one main feature I observed in Nicole's lesson was that she constantly asked students questions throughout the whole lesson. When a student did not know how to answer a question, she would continue to ask other students one after another until one student could give a good answer. If no students were able to answer a question, she would give prompts to guide students to answer it instead of giving students the answer. By doing so, she was urging students to exercise their minds to think of the answers. In a way, the students

were taking responsibility for their learning. In her first interview, she had the following statements which are associated with her strategic intentions:

I seldom directly gave the correct answers to the students but had them find out the answers on their own. For example, there was a question that no one gave a satisfying answer. Instead of telling them the answer, I required the students to read the passage one more time, and specifically pointed out the key terms for them.

Students are the learners and teachers are the guides. They should take responsibility of their own study.

It's important for the teachers to engage the students in the class.

Teachers should design questions and activities to involve the students in the learning and guide them to find out the answers on their own.

Teacher should help the students get into the habit of thinking and finding answers on their own.

The strategic intentions are how specifically Nicole intended to behave in the class. Her teaching principle is mediated through these strategic intentions to be actualised in the classroom. Her teaching principle and strategic intentions match the features of a CLT approach. Richards (2006) states that in CLT

[Students] were expected to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning. And teachers now had to assume the role of facilitator and monitor. Rather than

being a model for correct speech and writing and one with the primary responsibility of making students produce plenty of error-free sentences, the teacher had to develop a different view of learners' errors and of her/his own role in facilitating language learning.
(p.5)

The right-side column of Table 8 shows Nicole's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Nicole's teaching principle did not change after the peer coaching programme and remains to be “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”.

The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning” include “interact with students”, “encourage students' active involvement in class”, “provide guidance when necessary”, “train students to be independent learners”, “create an interesting and friendly learning environment”, and “ensure that every student participates in class”. Although they are different, they also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”. In her second observed lesson, I found that constantly asking students questions was still the main feature of her teaching approach. As before, when students did not know how to answer her questions, she would not give them the answers. Instead she would give guidance to help them answer the questions. Besides, she had various activities to engage students in doing class work. In her second interview, she had the following statements which are associated with her strategic intentions:

The class should be interactive and chances should be provided for the students to use

English in the class so that they can be involved in the learning.

Teachers should avoid doing everything for the students.

The students have to understand that they can't depend on the teacher all the time but learn how to be independent learners.

Students need to take responsibility of their own study instead of relying on the teachers all the time.

When they failed to do that, I would change the questions or give tips to make them easier instead of revealing the answers directly.

Generally speaking, Nicole's teaching principle remained unchanged after the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Although her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme were different from those before the programme, they were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principle of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”.

3.3. The Influence on Each Other – Wendy and Nicole

After the one-semester-long peer coaching programme, Wendy seemed to have changed her teaching principle. At the beginning of the peer coaching programme, Wendy's teaching principles were to “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother”. In her observed lesson at that time, I saw that

she employed a variety of activities throughout the lesson. As she stated repeatedly in her first interview, her objective for using many teaching methods in class was to try to maintain students' interest and to cater students with different needs. She had the following statements in her first interview that are associated with this principle:

...to diversify my teaching methods so that students won't get bored by our teaching.

I was constantly changing my way of enforcing lecture so that the students would not get bored or immune to what I do.

...to adjust teaching according to your students' differences and demands.

Students with different personalities and learning habits can get equal trying and experiencing practices in class.

At the end of the peer coaching programme, her teaching principle had become "give students the central role in learning". In her second observed lesson, I saw that she still employed various types of activities throughout the lesson. However, her focus was no longer just trying to maintain students' interest and meet their different needs, but to encourage students to think and learn by themselves through participating in the activities. In her second interview, she had the following statements:

The reason why I did so was to provoke thinking from students so that they could really understand the meaning of the words.

As long as the methods are meant to guide students to "do" things, they tend to be more effective. In other words, students are more motivated to learn when they are asked to do

things.

They were working in pairs so they got to discuss with each other, which was proved to be helpful for students' learning...

Wendy's new teaching principle of "give students the central role in learning" is very similar to Nicole's teaching principle of "seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning". The goal of both of these principles is basically to achieve student-centred learning, which requires students to take on a greater degree of responsibility in their learning. They need to do meaningful learning tasks and think about what they are doing, learn to communicate through interaction in English, and in turn learn by themselves (Collins & O'Brien, 2003; Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006; Prince, 2004). It seems that the change of Wendy's teaching principle was perhaps influenced by Nicole.

Also, there is evidence showing that they were adopting each other's teaching practice. Nicole said in her second interview that "by observing my partner's classes, I learn many excellent ways to approach different lessons. I've tried some of them in my class and they worked quite well". One example of Nicole learning from Wendy is illustrated by Wendy in her journal of the third peer coaching:

To guide students to read and comprehend the text, I tried something new this term. What I do is that I make up a question paper for each unit. To answer the questions, students will have to go and really get into the text. The questions I make are not only about the comprehension but also very often about vocabulary. I hope that students will force themselves to read the text and learn the language in a context. [Nicole] observed one of

my classes when I was using this approach, and she wondered whether she could do the same in her class.

What I saw in Nicole's second observed lesson proved this claim. Nicole did come up with a series of questions related to the text she was teaching and asked the students to find the answers. The only difference was that she showed those questions on some PowerPoint slides instead of giving them to the students on paper. Wendy also wrote down what she observed about Nicole using this teaching strategy in her journal:

The students were found to be interested in this kind of text learning. The questions were well answered. [Nicole] mentioned that the learning seemed to be much more effective than when they were not given questions as guides.

Nicole also learned from Wendy how to design quiz paper and make use of it to engage students. She mentioned it repeatedly in her journals and second interview and she had the following statements:

[Wendy] did a good job in designing and making the vocabulary quiz paper, which included all the key words and expressions from the unit. It tested not only the meaning of each word, but also the use by showing sentences as examples. This is another thing I've learned from [Wendy].

[Wendy] prepared test papers for the students to work in groups in the class after the learning of the text in the textbook. It worked well as most students were engaged. In addition, the teacher would know how much the students had learned in the class.

In Wendy's journal of the fifth peer coaching episode, she wrote about Nicole employing this teaching strategy:

After the explanation of the last unit quiz, [Nicole] distributed the quiz papers of the current unit for the students to finish; and later she swapped their papers and asked them to grade each other's papers. I'm not sure whether it was because it was the last class or it was that they were given more responsibility to grade someone else's paper, they did show unusual attention to the questions.

Equally, there is also evidence showing that Wendy was learning from Nicole. Wendy mentioned repeatedly and explicitly in her second interview and three of her journals that she learned from Nicole about her student-friendly approach when teaching. She noticed Nicole's student-friendly approach early in the peer coaching programme and she wrote in her journal of the first peer coaching episode that:

In the observation, I've noticed that the charm of this teaching formula doesn't completely lie in the formula itself; it also has a lot to do with the way it is conducted. Nikko managed to conduct the teaching in a way that was student-friendly so that they were very happy to participate. For example, one thing that she did in the session and I was amazed by was the way she picked the students to answer the questions: sometimes she picked according to the colors of their outfits, and then she picked by asking them to do a very easy task like raising a pen, and she would pick the one that finished the task first. By adding this playful element in this formula, she made it far more interesting than it could have been.

In her subsequent journals, she had the following statements:

I have learned that a teacher doesn't have to present a tough face in order to engage

students in class activities; instead if he/she smiles, students may be more willing to participate in his/her class arrangements.

Nicole was very kind and tolerant for her students; she was always putting on a smile even when some of the students were misbehaving;

In her second interview, she had the following reflection that is associated with Nicole's student-friendly teaching approach:

When a student misbehaves in class, talking when he is supposed to be quiet, sleeping when he is supposed to be awake, playing with his cellphone when he is supposed to get into a discussion, my former initial response was to put on a tough face to reproach him/her, the result of which is I am not happy and the student isn't happy, either, which in a long run might form a chemistry of mutual hatred; after discussion with my partner, I have learned that to approach the student with a kind smile and a kind reminder might lead to an even better effect because the student receives the message that his/her teacher cares about him/her, which might nurture a chemistry of trust and respect;

These recurring remarks about the student-friendly teaching approach seem to indicate that Wendy attached much importance to this new idea that she learned from Nicole. Interestingly, Nicole also noticed Wendy's adoption of this approach. Nicole said the following in her second interview:

[Wendy's] nice smile and casual talk with the students at the beginning of the class impressed me. It helped to create a friendly and relaxing atmosphere, which is significant because I think only in this kind of class can the students easily follow the teacher's guide.

In addition, there is some evidence revealing that Nicole and Wendy would work together to improve their teaching practice. In Wendy's journal of her first peer coaching episode, she wrote about the discussion she had with Nicole to evaluate the impact of a class activity:

After the observation, we reflected and we both had a concern: it is true that the students had more fun doing this and they were more engaged; but in terms of learning effect, has it been improved? Most of the students were so active to raise hands or do whatever it took to get the chance to answer the questions that sometimes they ignored the purpose of doing this which was to learn and practise, which was why sometimes they got the chance but they could not offer an answer. We agreed that maybe we could wait until Test 1 to see whether they have really improved in terms of learning outcome.

In Wendy's second interview, she also talked about their realization of the problem of long lectures and how they tackled the problem:

We have come to realize through our observation of each other's classes that the longer we lecture, the fewer students our lecture reaches: students nowadays have a very short attention span, so it might not be wise to give long lectures; we have also discussed what we should do if we do have a lot to lecture and we have reached agreement that one solution can be to divide a long lecture into smaller sections, with interaction activities assigned at the intervals of two sections of the long lecture.

Their idea of shortening the lecturing time is supported by Harmer (2001):

We do need to be aware of how much we ourselves are speaking. If we talk all the time, however 'comprehensive' our language is, the students are denied their own chance to practice production, or get exposure through other means ... They may also

become bored by listening to the teacher all the time.

A more specific example of them working together to improve their teaching practice is revealed when they both tried to actualise one of their teaching beliefs – students can learn better when they interact with the teacher and interact among themselves. As mentioned above, learning through interaction is one of the characteristics of CLT methodology (Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006), which is a strategic intention that Nicole has before and after the peer coaching programme. Therefore, she had had this belief all along. For Wendy, before the peer coaching programme, her teaching focus was on meeting students' needs and everything she did in the classroom was guided by this teaching principle. Since she started to work with Nicole in the peer coaching programme, her focus had shifted to student-centred learning and CLT approach, and all her actions in class were oriented toward encouraging students to think and learn by themselves through doing the tasks. She seemed to pay more attention to interaction between the teacher and the students and among students themselves. After the peer coaching programme, one of Wendy's strategic intentions is “provide opportunities for interactions between students”. In her second interview, she had the following statements:

A teacher should always remember to have interaction with his/her students because teaching can only be effective when it involves students in it. My partner was very keen on having interactions with her students.

In the several discussions we have had through the semester, we both agreed on the importance of interaction in engaging students: I have witnessed that my partner was making more attempts in stimulating interactions with her students at the end of the semester; actually to make interactions with students is not a difficult thing; all it takes

sometimes is to call their names, to relate the lecture content to students' real life, to ask students to role play.

In fact, Nicole was not the only one who was making more attempts in stimulating interactions with her students. There is evidence showing that Wendy was doing the same. Nicole wrote down in her journals that she observed that Wendy was using more group work as her teaching strategy in order to stimulate interactions among the students:

In order to test whether the students understood the text after the teacher's explanation, they worked in groups to finish a quiz paper together. There were lots of interaction between the teacher and the students.

(Nicole's journal of the second peer coaching episode)

The students were required to form groups with eight students in each and prepare a role play (an interview) basing on the story of Unit 2...

(Nicole's journal of the third peer coaching episode)

In the class observation at the end of the peer coaching programme, I also saw that Wendy arranged group work for the students in her lesson as compared to having no group work in the first observation at the beginning of the peer coaching programme.

In the case of Wendy and Nicole as a peer coaching dyad, after the one-term-long peer coaching programme, Wendy had changed her teaching principle which had become similar to Nicole's. There is sufficient evidence indicating that this change was influenced by Nicole. Besides, they learned from each other in terms of teaching strategies and they also worked together to solve problems they encountered in their

classrooms and improve practice in order to actualise their teaching beliefs.

3.4. Collaboration and Collegiality Between Wendy and Nicole

According to their journals and answers in the second interview, Wendy and Nicole seemed to have a supportive scholarly relationship. They had a lot of exchange of ideas and were able to help each other to improve teaching. When Nicole was asked if this peer coaching programme served the purpose of facilitating her professional development, she answered:

Yes. First of all, by observing my partner's classes, I learn many excellent ways to approach different lessons. I've tried some of them in my class and they work quite well. And by discussing our lessons before and after each observation with my partner, I am able to reflect on my own way of teaching and find out the mistakes I make. We also discuss the effects of different teaching methods. I'm sure these valuable experiences will help me to be a better teacher.

For Wendy, she said:

Yes, I think it does. Seeing how other teachers tackle the same teaching content really puts a different perspective on my understanding of teaching.

When Nicole was asked, having participated in this peer coaching program for one semester, what was the biggest change that has occurred to her as a teacher, she said:

Thanks to the peer coaching program, I am able to learn different teaching methods from my colleague. And I also find that there isn't any best method but only suitable one to different classes. Besides, I fall into the habit of discussing my teaching, especially when I want to try something new in the class, with my partner. The discussion is meaningful and helpful, from which I benefit a lot.

Throughout the peer coaching programme, Wendy and Nicole seemed to be able to establish a collegial relationship. In the relationship, they felt more and more comfortable being observed by each other and had increasingly more professional communication, which I find is a very important element in a peer coaching relationship. When asked to describe the relationship with the coaching partner after the peer coaching programme in the second interview, Nicole said:

We spend more time together in discussing our lessons now as compared to the beginning of the peer coaching programme. And when I have any problem in teaching or if I want to try some new activities in the class, I'll ask my partner for suggestions, and vice versa. In other words, we used to tend to work individually, but now there is more cooperation and sharing.

For Wendy, she said:

I think at first subconsciously I felt I was judged by a peer. But as time went by, we exchanged ideas more often before and after the observations, I realized that this thing we were doing was more about professional communication than being judged by peers. So gradually I got comfortable to have [Nicole] in my classroom.

Therefore, there is evidence showing that this peer coaching programme did facilitate a high degree of collaboration and collegiality between Wendy and Nicole.

4. Dyad 3 – Emma and Joey

In the peer coaching programme, Emma and Joey formed a peer coaching pair. In this section, I first examine the impact of the peer coaching programme on each of their teaching principles and strategic intentions and then I investigate the relationships of their teaching principles to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

4.1. Emma's Case

The following table shows Emma's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 9 Emma’s Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Emma's First Teaching Principle Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Emma’s Teaching Principle Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language.	Provide students opportunities to practise using the English language.
Create opportunities for students to learn from their peers.	Encourage group work.
Design activities to get students actively involved.	Encourage students' active involvement.
Help students learn by identifying their own mistakes.	Cultivate students' learning abilities.
Make learning fun.	Arouse students' interest.
Vary teaching methods according to students' learning styles.	Provide opportunity for students to apply what they have learned.
Emma's Second Teaching Principle Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.	Provide guidance or make correction when necessary.
Strategic Intentions	
Review what is taught to ensure correct understanding.	
Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.	
Help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language.	
Allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material.	

The left-side column of Table 9 shows Emma's teaching principles and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Emma had two teaching principles and they were to “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning” and “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material”, and her work in the classroom was guided by these two teaching principles.

The corresponding set of strategic intentions (shown in Table 9) collectively implements the notion of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”. When asked in her first interview to summarise her teaching principle, she said: “The best teaching effect is achieved when students are actively involved. Students should be the owners of their learning. Teachers should not do the job for them”. This quotation corresponds with Emma's actions in her first observed lesson. For example, I saw in that observed lesson that she returned to students the photocopies of their unmarked test papers and asked students to find their own mistakes in the papers; she arranged group work for students to discuss the teaching material; and she organized vocabulary competitions which require students to do preparation work. All these teaching strategies, which can help students to learn by themselves through doing the assigned tasks, are in line with the features of task-based learning approach (Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006).

The other set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material” include “review what is taught to ensure correct understanding”, “check on students' understanding of the teaching material”, “help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language”, and “allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material”. In other words, these are her specific plans to work for the notion of finding ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material and explain her classroom actions in the observed lesson of, for example, speaking Chinese most of the time in class, asking students who got their answers wrong to explain why they were wrong, occasionally asking students what certain words meant and what part of speech should be used in the answers, and walking around the room to check up on the students. All these actions are teaching

strategies that try to ensure students understand the teaching material.

The right-side column of Table 9 shows Emma's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Emma's teaching principle did not change after the peer coaching programme and remained to be “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”.

The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning” include “provide students opportunities to practise using the English language”, “encourage group work”, “cultivate students' learning abilities”, “arouse students' interest”, “provide opportunity for students to apply what they have learned”, and “provide guidance or make correction when necessary”. Although these strategic intentions are different from those at the beginning of the peer coaching programme, they also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”. In her second observed lesson, I saw that she still arranged students to do group work; asked students to go over the text in the handout and asked them to look up the dictionary if necessary and find synonyms; and asked students to do group presentations. All these teaching strategies can help students to learn by themselves through doing the assigned tasks. In her second interview, she had the following statements which are associated with her strategic intentions:

Self-learning was encouraged and sharing was promoted. I want students to learn how to learn. More importantly, I want them to use the language.

Many questions are designed to encourage students to really think about something.

While reading, students were encouraged to look up the new words in their dictionaries.

The purpose here was to cultivate their habit of self-learning.

I want students to learn how to learn. More importantly, I want them to use the language.

Generally speaking, Emma's teaching principle remained unchanged after the one-term-long peer coaching programme and although some of her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme are different from those before the programme. The different ones were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principle of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”.

4.2. Joey's Case

The following table shows Joey's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 10 Joey's Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Joey's Teaching Principle Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Joey's Teaching Principle Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Arouse students' interest.	Arouse students' interest.
Cultivate their team-work spirit.	Provide opportunity for students to learn team work.
Motivate students to participate.	Motivate students' participation through interesting class activities.
Maintain students' involvement.	Maintain students' participation.
Encourage students' efforts in using English.	Motivate students to think and solve problems by themselves.
Provide opportunities for students to learn by themselves.	Create a relaxed learning atmosphere.
Provide students opportunities to practise using English.	Reinforce what students have learned through various activities.

The left-side column of Table 10 shows Joey's teaching principle and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Joey's teaching principle was to “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”, and her work in the classroom is guided by this teaching principles.

The corresponding set of strategic intentions carried out the notion of the teaching principle in the specific actions of Joey within the classroom. For example, one main feature I observed in Joey's lesson was that she constantly gave students some tasks that required them to practise using the English language such as asking students opinions of a picture shown on a PowerPoint slide, asking students to write down the definition of a concept, asking students to discuss in groups and use the vocabulary from the text to complete the exercise in the handout, etc. The purpose of all these activities was to arouse the students' interest, urge students to exercise their minds and interact with each

other to practise using the English language. In a way, the students were taking responsibility for their learning, and her teaching approach was aligned with task-based learning (Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006). In her first interview, she had the following statements which are associated with the activities in her lesson:

I presented a picture of two little kids being happily together and asked students to talk about whatever came to their minds, so that I made them think of and talk about the related topic—friendship.

I asked the students to form groups to cooperate in finishing the vocabulary exercises, to cultivate their team-work spirit as well as the habit of learning by themselves.

... let students find out their problems and difficulties in learning and to try to solve them in various ways.

...make the students think by themselves and sometimes work together with their classmates in solving problems, so that they can learn by themselves.

...provide students with opportunities for practicing their speaking and writing abilities.

The strategic intentions corresponding to these class activities are how specifically Joey intended to behave in the class. Her teaching principle is mediated through these strategic intentions to be actualised in the classroom.

The right column of Table 10 shows Joey's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme.

Joey's teaching principle did not change after the peer coaching programme and remained to be “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”.

The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning” include “arouse students' interest”, “provide opportunity for students to learn team work”, “motivate students' participation through interesting class activities”, “maintain students' participation”, “motivate students to think and solve problems by themselves”, “create a relaxed learning atmosphere”, and “reinforce what students have learned through various activities”. Although they are different, they also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”. In her second observed lesson, I found that constantly asking students questions, assigning group work and organising competition were the main features of her teaching approach. The aim of all these activities still tried to arouse the students' interest, urge students to exercise their minds and interact with each other to practise using the English language. In her second interview, she had the following statements which are associated with her strategic intentions:

After reading the text, some of the students may think they can understand it very well or at least some of the sentences. But actually, they may have some misunderstandings. So I will raise some questions to check whether they have really understood thoroughly. The questions will highlight the language points. In this way, they will form the habit of thinking.

The purpose of group work is to ensure high participation of the students, to make them listen and learn. Group competition will motivate the students. And it can cultivate the

students' team work spirit.

Working in groups, students will either learn something from the others or use the opportunity to organize their thought and practise their oral English in order to persuade the others.

I prefer the way of group competition in conducting a lesson, for this will highly motivate students.

Students enjoy having a lesson arranged in the way of group competition.

I hope they feel at ease in my class so that they can learn in a relaxing atmosphere.

Generally speaking, Joey's teaching principle remains unchanged after the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Although her strategic intentions after the peer coaching programme are slightly different from those before the programme, they were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principle of "seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning".

4.3. The Influence on Each Other – Emma and Joey

Both Emma and Joey had the same teaching principle of "seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning". After the one-term-long peer coaching programme, their teaching principle remained unchanged. Both of them had always been trying to achieve the same goal of helping students to learn by themselves and there is no new element coming in to influence their teaching principle. This could be the reason why

their teaching principles remained the same after the peer coaching programme. Nevertheless, there is evidence showing that they do influence each other's teaching practice to certain extent. One example of Joey learning from Emma is stated by Joey in her second interview:

I learned from Emma's lectures that teachers still need to squeeze some time to review what they have learned, which is absolutely necessary and worthwhile. College students can also be absent-minded in class. They need something to refresh them once for a while.

In Joey's journal of her second peer coaching episode, she wrote about observing Emma doing reviewing activities in her lesson:

At the very beginning of the class, the teacher led her students to review what they had learned in the last unit by asking them to translate words or phrases either from Chinese to English or from English to Chinese. That was a very good way of helping consolidate learned knowledge as well as cultivate the habit of reviewing among students. I suggest the reviewing process appear in various other forms. The teacher can also ask students to make up sentences or complete sentences by given some alternatives, and the like.

According to the above statement, while learning from Emma the benefit of reviewing the taught material, Joey at the same time was giving Emma suggestions to improve her teaching practice.

What Emma wrote in her journals of the observation of Joey's lessons proves that Joey had adopted this teaching practice of reviewing the taught material and Emma had the following two statements in her third and fifth journals respectively:

A brief review of the language points from the text was a very good idea. It refreshed students' memory.

This session started with a review of prior-learned language points, strengthening students' knowledge input.

In my second observation of Joey's lesson at the end of the peer coaching programme, I also noticed that the first activity in that lesson was to review the teaching material taught in the previous week. But the activity was in the form of group work, which was different from the Emma's strategies of reviewing material.

There is also evidence that Emma was learning from Joey in the peer coaching process. One example is the reduction of the use of the Chinese language as a teaching medium in Emma's class. At the beginning of the peer coaching programme when I first observed Emma's lesson, one feature I noticed was that she spoke Chinese most of the time in class. She explained in her first interview the reason for using Chinese as the major teaching medium was to ensure that the students understand the teaching material and she also said the following:

Even I have said what I wanted to say in English, I would repeat in Chinese again, for fear that some students might fail to follow.

In Joey's journal of her second peer coaching episode, she wrote about her observation of this feature of Emma as well as her view on it.

The teacher is so careful and considerate that she uses both English and Chinese in class, in order for the students to follow her instructions and understand her well. But the proportion of Chinese used by the teacher is a little bit large to me. As some of the instructions are familiar to the students, it is not necessary for the teacher to repeat them in Chinese. Although the students are relatively low in their English proficiency, as long as the teacher trains them, that is, uses more English, they will get used to it. At least, this will create a better English learning atmosphere for them.

This view of Joey was communicated to Emma in the post-observation conference. In Emma's second interview, when asked what she had learned from her peer coaching partner, she had the following statement:

Before the peer coaching program, I thought that using Chinese to teach English has a better teaching effect than using English as the instruction medium for basic level students. Students could understand better, especially when grammar was involved. Plus, it could be fun and students didn't get frustrated because they couldn't understand me, thus creating an active learning environment. That's why I spoke a lot of Chinese in my English classes and I never thought that was a problem. When we started observing each other's classes, my partner pointed it out to me that I used way too much Chinese, of course, in a very polite and respectful manner. She suggested that I should use more English, so that students could be emerged in an English atmosphere. I tried,

and it was not easy at first. Everything went slowly, and I had to repeat several times before students could understand. But gradually, students and I got used to it and we had much better teaching effects. Now, even for very basic level students, I insist on using English for most of the time. I do use Chinese, but only when I have no other options.

In my second observation of Emma's lesson at the end of the peer coaching programme, I noted the change in her use of teaching medium; she still spoke Chinese in class but it was no longer the major teaching medium and she was speaking English most of the time.

Harmer (2001) suggests that if teachers use students' native language frequently in class, the students will feel comfortable using it too. Then when the students are doing speaking activities, they may be unwilling to use English. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the kind of example they themselves are providing. In fact, Krashen (1985) argues that the best kind of language that students could be exposed to as "comprehensible input", that is language which students understand the meaning of, but which is yet slightly above their own production level. In other words, teachers can use English as the teaching medium as long as teachers can provide the English language which has been tuned to be comprehensible to students. Harbord (1992) also points out that the giving of instructions and teacher-students interactions are the ideal sources of language for student acquisition.

Another example of Emma learning from Joey was illustrated by Emma in her second interview, she said:

There are other activities I learned from my partner as well, for example, to create a personal profile for each student at the beginning of each semester. In this way, students can list their expectations of this course, special things about themselves, etc. In this way, students feel that the teacher really cares about them. They might have a higher motivation.

During the peer coaching process, apart from learning from each other and giving each other suggestions to improve teaching practice, Emma and Joey would also point out each other's weaknesses in their teaching strategies. Below are some extracts from their journals that show their exchange of ideas about group work in class:

The main activities used are group discussion. Most of the students are involved. But the discussion mainly took place in the warm-up section. When it comes to textual analysis, students didn't have that many opportunities. Maybe it is better to hand some time over to students.

(Emma's journal of the second peer coaching episode)

The teacher didn't have too much control on how the students have prepared. Maybe give more detailed instructions and requirements, or demonstrate with specific examples would help.

(Emma's journal of the third peer coaching episode)

There were few students who actively asked the teacher any question. It seemed that the teacher did not quite achieve a lot in terms of facilitating. Actually, I have the same problem in my own teaching and to be honest, I haven't found the satisfying solution yet...I think the fundamental question lies in students' learning style and their motivation. Some students are so used to be passive learners that they don't know what to do if they are not told to. While some students are simply not interested, maybe we should give them more time to adjust to the new way of learning while providing some necessary guidance, and more trust to them, too.

(Emma's journal of the fourth peer coaching episode)

The teacher divided the whole class into two groups and asked the students to do the dictation on the white board one by one with two from different groups respectively at once. When the dictation finished, the teacher checked whether every word on the board was correct. That provided another chance for the students to review what they have learned... But many students postponed coming to the board until the teacher had read the word. This made the process not so smooth and desired effects not achieved since the students had got time to check from their books before the dictation.

(Joey's journal of the second peer coaching episode)

[In the group activity] students had some problems with both the pronunciations and meanings. So, I guess it might be better if the teacher lead them to read or help them to recall the meanings first.

(Joey's journal of the fifth peer coaching episode)

Being able to point out each other's weaknesses, Emma and Joey seemed to have established a certain level of trust and a sense of security between themselves. This is echoed by Nias et al. (1989) that a sense of security means that people are able to share their difficulties, and show their vulnerable sides, which is a characteristic of a genuine collaborative culture. I will discuss this point further in the Discussion Section in Chapter 6.

There are still other examples of them working together to improve practice. In Emma's second interview, when asked whether she and her partner had come up with any new ideas in teaching, she answered:

...we divided [the students] into groups instead of their forming into groups themselves. The result was generally good. There were less chatting and daydreaming. Another thing was how we managed to use tests and quizzes as an encouragement, not just merely assessment. For example, for the reading course, there were usually 6 small unit-tests throughout the whole semester. But we made a deal with students—if they took all of the 6 tests, we would use the 4 highest scores. In this way, students had more chances to get higher average score. This worked really well.

In the case of Emma and Joey as a peer coaching dyad, although both of their teaching principles did not change after the one-term-long peer coaching programme, there is sufficient evidence indicating that they did influence each other. Joey and Emma had learned from each other in terms of teaching practice – for Joey, she learned from Emma the importance of providing students opportunities to review the taught material; for Emma, she learned from Joey the necessity of using English as the teaching medium. To a certain extent, her change of practice also indicates the occurrence of the change of

her teaching beliefs. Besides, they would also point out each other's weaknesses in their practice and work together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and improve practice. Therefore, they had a shared reciprocal relationship and served as each other's teaching consultant. This is again in line with Munro and Elliott's (1987) point that one essential function of peer coaching is to provide a forum in which teachers can experiment with and discuss teaching with an interested partner.

4.4. Collaboration and Collegiality Between Emma and Joey

According to their journals and answers in the second interview, Emma and Joey seemed to be able to work in harmony with each other. During the peer coaching process, they had a lot of exchange of ideas and were able to take each other's advice to improve practice. When Joey was asked what she had learned in this peer coaching process, she had the following statement:

Discuss-practise-discuss is a good way for teachers to learn from each other and promote themselves. Teachers are always busy teaching. Sometimes, we need to stop to learn from others as well.

For Emma, she said:

Having someone I can turn to for advice and suggestion is really helpful, especially someone I can trust completely. I can show my shortcomings and blind spots, without worrying that I might be laughed at. My partner can see more objectively than I see myself. It's easier to find a solution if we can objectively identify the problem...

breaking my usual pattern and old habits.

As they were developing collaboration, they were also building collegiality. Emma and Joey started to work at the university at the same time. They sat next to each other in the office and seemed to get along quite well. They had a year of close friendship before the peer coaching programme. However, they had never had a chance to work together to improve their teaching. This peer coaching programme provided them an opportunity to develop a constructive working relationship to solve their teaching problems and come up with new teaching strategies. When asked to describe the relationship with the coaching partner after the peer coaching programme in the second interview, Emma said:

Actually I don't think there were any big changes. [Joey] (pseudonym) and I were good friends and we still are. But now that I recall, I do notice that we talk more about our teaching than we did before.

For Joey, she said:

We were good friends at the beginning. Now, we are closer. Because we are not only good friends in life, but also good friends at work, we can really provide good suggestions to each other in promoting teaching skills.

Throughout the peer coaching programme, Emma and Joey seemed to be able to build a collegial relationship that was based on trust, which I find is a very important element in a peer coaching relationship. Similarly, Eraut and Fielding (2004) also found "trust" to be an important factor in teachers' collaboration. During the peer coaching process,

Emma and Joey would both point out each other's shortcomings in their teaching practice, but they did not seem to mind and accepted each other's comments and advice sincerely. When asked what was the biggest change that had occurred to her as a teacher after this peer coaching program, Emma answered:

Knowing how to improve my shortcomings pointed out by my partner, I felt more confident and I am more willing to try new teaching practices.

They also understand that when commenting on each other's teaching practice, they needed to do it in a friendly and respectful manner, which is essential to the smooth running of a peer coaching relationship. This point was stressed by Emma when she talked about Joey commenting on her use of Chinese as a teaching medium:

When we started observing each other's classes, my partner pointed it out to me that I used way too much Chinese, of course, in a very polite and respectful manner.

In Emma's second interview, she also provided an insightful reflection about her peer coaching experience:

The whole sharing and commenting process was interesting and beneficial. It was like I had a learning buddy. And to be honest, knowing what happens in other classrooms makes me feel reassured (I hope this was not abnormal) because sometimes I can't help ask myself "Am I doing it right?" I think I am more confident after the program than I was before. When I observed my partner's class, I also asked myself, "did I make the same mistake? or "would it be better if this is done in another way?" At last, I think I

have the habit of reflecting my own teaching practice now.

All in all, there is evidence indicating that this peer coaching programme did facilitate a high degree of collaboration and collegiality between Emma and Joey. It also seems to show that having a friend or someone you know well as a peer coaching partner is an advantage to build a productive peer coaching relationship because it is easier to establish trust, which is an important element to develop collegiality. This can be a factor to be considered when future peer coaching participants choose their own partners.

5. Dyad 4 – May and Sandra

In the peer coaching programme, May and Sandra formed a peer coaching pair. In this section, I first examine the impact of the peer coaching programme on each of their teaching principles and strategic intentions and then I investigate the relationships of their teaching principles to find out if they had any influence on each other throughout the peer coaching process.

5.1. May's Case

The following table shows May's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 11 May's Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
May's First Teaching Principle - Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.	May's Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Be important to learn grammar and vocabulary.	Create a relaxed atmosphere for learning.
Maintain students' concentration by asking them questions.	Motivate students' participation through various activities.
Check on students' understanding of the teaching material.	Expose students to the English language as much as possible.
Help students understand the teaching material by giving explanation in their first language.	Encourage students to learn through team work.
Allow students time to absorb information so they can understand the teaching material.	Provide students opportunity to establish understanding of the teaching material by themselves.
Give students individual help.	Provide guidance and help when necessary.

The left-side column of Table 11 shows May's teaching principle and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, May's primary objective in teaching or her teaching principle was to “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material”, and her work in the classroom is guided by this teaching principle. The corresponding set of strategic intentions are her specific plans to work for the notion of ensuring students' understanding of the teaching material and explain her classroom actions that I observed, for example, spending a large amount of time to teach grammar and vocabulary, constantly asking students many questions, walking around the classroom to check on students and answer their questions, speaking Chinese for a large part of the lesson, and giving students time to read the text during the lesson. All these teaching strategies are intended to help students to obtain a better understanding of the teaching material.

May's teaching principle at that time was similar to Emma's second teaching principle before the peer coaching programme. Both were "seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material". However, May's principle was closer to the traditional methods of language teaching, in which the learning of grammar rules and vocabulary is emphasized (Nunan, 1991b). Richards (2006) states that

while grammatical competence is an important dimension of language learning, it is clearly not all that is involved in learning a language since one can master the rules of sentence formation in a language and still not be very successful at being able to use the language for meaningful communication.

Walia (2012) argues that traditional methods regarded language learning as transfer of knowledge with the help of the board and rules rather than considering it as a skill, where learning of rules and vocabulary items in isolation could not yield the desired learning output.

The right-side column of Table 11 shows May's teaching principle and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-term-long peer coaching programme. May had a different teaching principle after the peer coaching programme and it was "seek ways to help students learn by themselves". The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement this teaching principle include "create a relaxed atmosphere for learning", "motivate students' participation through various activities", "expose students to the English language as much as possible", "encourage students to learn through team work", "provide students opportunity to establish understanding of the teaching material by themselves", and "provide guidance and help when necessary". These strategic intentions relate to the teaching principle in

that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. For example, to create a relaxed atmosphere, I saw in her second observed lesson that she smiled very often, sang along to the song being played and asked the students to sing together; to motivate students' participation, she arranged various activities such as playing an English song and asking students to fill in the missing lyrics, showing pictures and questions on PPT slides to help students understand better the taught material, playing the audio of the reading text for the students to practise reading and listening at the same time; to encourage students to learn through team work and by themselves, she assigned group work. According to these teaching strategies, her teaching approach was moving toward student-centred learning, in which the students learn by doing various tasks and team work (Nunan 1991a; Richards, 2006).

To sum up, after the one-term-long peer coaching programme, May's teaching principle had changed from “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material” to “seek ways to help students learn by themselves” and her strategic intentions that carried out the notion of the teaching principle were also different from those before the peer coaching programme.

5.2. Sandra's Case

The following table shows Sandra's teaching principle and strategic intentions before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 12 Sandra’s Teaching Principles and Strategic Intentions before and after the Peer Coaching programme

Before the Peer Coaching programme	After the Peer Coaching programme
Sandra’s First Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students learn reading skills.	Sandra’s Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students learn reading skills.
Strategic Intentions	Strategic Intentions
Provide students opportunities to practise their reading skills.	Provide students opportunities to practise their reading skills.
Provide guidance.	Provide guidance.
Emphasise reading skills learning.	Emphasise reading skills learning.
Give advice on how to read effectively and efficiently.	Emphasise text analysis.
Encourage students to think independently.	Motivate students to figure out the meaning of vocabulary.
Sandra’s Second Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence.	Sandra’s Second Teaching Principle - Seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence.
Strategic Intentions	
Associate the teaching material with daily life.	Associate the teaching material with daily life.
Arouse students' interest.	Arouse students' interest.
Provide students opportunities to learn actively.	Provide students opportunities to learn actively.
Provide students opportunities to practise what they have learned.	Encourage students to apply what they have learned in daily communications.
Emphasise memorising new words and learning their usages.	Provide students opportunities to practise the language by reading aloud and help them memorize the new words.
Help students to reinforce what they have learned by playing the word games.	

The left-side column of Table 12 shows Sandra's teaching principles and strategic intentions right before she participated in the peer coaching programme. At that time, Sandra had two teaching principles and they were “seek ways to help students learn reading skills” and “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”, and her work in the classroom is guided by these two teaching principles.

The corresponding set of strategic intentions are her specific plans to work for the

notion of seeking ways to help students learn reading skills and explain her classroom actions that I observed, for example, she repeatedly advised students on how to read effectively and efficiently and during the lesson she allowed students time to read by themselves and asked them to apply these reading methods in the global reading exercises which required students to grasp the main ideas of the text; she would also walk around the classroom to give students individual help when they were doing the exercises.

The other set of strategic intentions appears to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”. They explain her classroom actions in the observed lesson. For example, to arouse students' interest, she tried to associate the teaching material with subject matters that the students could identify with in their everyday life. In the observed lesson, she used some real-life examples to explain some of the vocabulary and; in the word guessing game, she provided relevant situations to explain the new words that the students should write in the game, which may help the students to understand better how to use and where to use these words and phrases, and help students to reinforce what they have learned; to provide students opportunities to practise what they have learned, she constantly asked students the meaning of the vocabulary and asked them to translate some expressions into English.

Sandra's use of real-life material is in line with one of the characteristics of CLT approach, which is to make use of authentic materials in classroom learning. The use of authentic materials serves as a main support to create an authentic context in which learners can develop their communicative competence (Nunan, 1991a; Sreehari, 2012).

Benciu (2012) suggests that in a CLT approach

The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life ... the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. (p. 95)

The right-side column of Table 12 shows Sandra's teaching principles and strategic intentions immediately after her participation in the one-semester-long peer coaching programme. Sandra's teaching principles did not change after the peer coaching programme and remained to be “seek ways to help students learn reading skills” and “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”.

The set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to help students learn reading skills” are similar to those before the programme. Three of them are identical and they include “provide students opportunities to practise their reading skills”, “provide guidance”, “emphasise reading skills learning”. Apart from them, two new strategic intentions were identified and they are “motivate students to figure out the meaning of vocabulary”, and “emphasise text analysis”. These two new strategic intentions also relate to the teaching principle in that they carry with them the purpose of “seek ways to help students learn reading skills”. According to Sandra in her second interview, one of the reading skills she would like the students to learn was to figure out the meaning of new words or expressions in the context by themselves. In the observed lesson, Sandra often asked the students to guess the meaning of the vocabulary or certain expressions using context clues. Sandra also emphasised the learning of text analysis. She spent about 20 minutes in the observed lesson to go over

the structure of the text content and showed the structure on a PowerPoint slide. She also asked students the main ideas of some parts of the text.

The other set of strategic intentions that appear to collectively implement the notion of “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence” are similar to those before the programme. Three of them are identical and they include “associate the teaching material with daily life”, “arouse students' interest”, and “provide opportunities for students to learn actively”. Apart from them, two new strategic intentions were identified and they are “encourage students to apply what they have learned in daily communications” and “provide students opportunities to practice the language by reading aloud and help them memorize the new words”. These two new strategic intentions are similar to the two previous ones of “provide students opportunities to practise what they have learned” and “emphasise memorising new words and learning their usages” in terms of purpose.

To sum up, Sandra's teaching principles remain unchanged after the one-semester-long peer coaching programme and the strategic intentions that belong to each of the two teaching principles stay more or less the same – some were identical and even for those that did not appear before, they were also her specific plans to work for the notion of her teaching principles and some of them were similar to the ones before the peer coaching programme in terms of purpose.

5.3. The Influence on Each Other – May and Sandra

After the one-term-long peer coaching programme, May had changed her teaching

principle. At the beginning of the peer coaching programme, May's teaching principles were to “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material”. In her first interview, she stressed repeatedly that her primary work objective was to help students understand the teaching material. In the first observed lesson, I saw that almost all her other actions were in an attempt to work toward the objective of helping students to understand the teaching material. For example, one feature I observed in May's lesson was that she constantly asked students to answer questions. When asked what the purpose of doing so was, she answered:

This was to arouse the students' attention and to get to know if the students had understood the text and what I had taught them.

Another feature of May's lesson was that she spoke Chinese approximately half of the time in the lesson to supplement her explanation especially when the students could not give satisfactory answers to her questions. In the interview, she had the following statements:

Translation of some important sentences is done to promote students' understanding.

...the students had a low level of English proficiency. Thus, I translated a lot of English sentences into our native language.

This objective of ensuring students' understanding of the teaching material was expressed explicitly and repeatedly by May.

At the end of the peer coaching programme, her teaching principle had become “seek

ways to help students learn by themselves”. In her second interview, when asked to summarize her teaching principle, she said she tried to achieve student-centered learning and as a teacher, she tried to lead the students, serve the students, and help the students. Her classroom practice at the end of the peer coaching programme corresponded with this claim. Her teaching strategies no longer emphasised helping students understand the teaching material but helping students learn by themselves.

May's new teaching principle of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”, to a certain extent, is similar to Sandra's teaching principle of “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”. The goal of both of these principles is basically to achieve student-centred learning. The students needed to do meaningful learning tasks and think about what they are doing, learn to communicate through interaction in English, and in turn learn by themselves (Collins & O'Brien, 2003; Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006; Prince, 2004).

Sandra had been trying to seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence and “communicative competence may be defined as the ability to function in a truly communicative setting – that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors” (Savignon, 1972, p.8). In order to achieve communicative competence, teachers employ a communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT) which is student-centred and social (Magnan, 2008). This means the teachers play the roles of facilitators and monitors. The students must take part actively in the classroom activities which are designed to make the students interact and communicate with each other (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001 as cited in Magnan, 2008). Using the communicative approach in language teaching

should help to increase students' communicative competence. In Sandra's observed lessons, for instance, she played the word guessing game with the students and she constantly asked students to explain the meaning of the vocabulary. These were CLT activities that required students' active participation and interacted with the teacher and each other. It seems that the shift of May's teaching principle toward student-centred learning was perhaps influenced by Sandra. Some evidence can be found in their journals, interviews and what I saw in the observed lessons to support this.

In Sandra's journal of the second peer coaching episode at the early stage of the peer coaching programme, she wrote about May spending too much time lecturing trying to help students understand the complex sentence structures instead of letting students do the analysis by themselves. In a word, May's teaching strategies at that time tended to be teacher-centred. In the journal, Sandra put down:

[May] analyzed each sentence in terms of subject, predicate and object. It is helpful for students to get a better understanding towards long and complex sentences, and very useful for these weak students to know rules in making sentences. But the teacher did too much work, actually, some explanations could be switched to questions for students and then instructed them to analyze the sentences themselves and to find out the problems in their wrong answers.

This corresponded with what I saw in her first observed lesson; May was lecturing most of the time and students were only listening passively.

Sreehari (2012) states that, in traditional methods of language teaching, the major role of the teacher has been to lecture about various aspects of the English language. The students have been treated as the passive recipient of doses of language learning. In this case, as pointed out by Harmer (2001), the students are denied their opportunities to

practise production of the language and they may become bored by constantly listening to the teacher.

In Sandra's journal of the third peer coaching episode, she also wrote about the way May reviewed the quiz paper with the students was teacher-centred and she suggested that May give student opportunities to figure out the answers on their own:

The teacher talked about the quiz paper in the beginning of the lecture, but just went over these correct answers. I suggest the teacher ask students to tell why the given answer is correct and why some of theirs are wrong, and it's better for the teacher to make use of this opportunity to review all the words learned before.

Apparently, Sandra had been offering May suggestions of how to conduct her lessons using a more student-centred approach. May, through observing Sandra's lessons, also learned about the effectiveness of student-centred teaching strategies and she wrote in her journals:

In Sandra's class, the main activities used were sentence substitution and translation. After each sentence structure was taught, the students were involved in putting more Chinese sentences into English according to the patterns in the example sentences. To some extent, the students were given opportunities to practise English and consolidate what they had been taught. Also through this kind of practice, the students could get to know the difference between the ways of expression in Chinese and English.

(May's journal of the first peer coaching episode)

During the process of reading, the students were motivated through the competition. According to the content of the text, the lecturer raised several questions and involved

the students in a competition to answer these questions. Anyone who answered the questions correctly was given a bonus of 5 points. The students were encouraged to answer the questions in complete sentences, which was a very good way to train them with excellent oral English. The students very actively took part in the activity. They enjoyed the class and also were active in learning and searching the text for correct answers.

(May's journal of the third peer coaching episode)

Sandra discovered in the later stage of the peer coaching programme that May adopted some student-centred teaching strategies that required students to be active participants instead of passive learners. In Sandra's journal of the fourth peer coaching episode, she wrote:

...Pair work followed; students asked their partners questions about the text, and after that, some questions were raised for the teacher. Later, the teacher also raised questions to the whole class, and then led students to check their answers for comprehension exercises.

In Sandra's journal of the fourth peer coaching episode, she recorded seeing May play a word game with the students even though it was not entirely successful; Sandra also provided some suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the activity:

The result of the word game is not as good as the teacher's expectation. I believe there are two reasons. One is because the words that should be guessed are too easy, and the other one is the instructions are not clear enough. The teacher should do one with the students, showing them how to describe a picture and how to give effective hints to their

team members.

In May's second interview, when asked how she thought an English Reading class should be taught, her answer was in line with the student-centred teaching approach:

I used to dominate the class as a teacher and it didn't work. In this way, the students got few chances to practise. So I made some change. Various exercises were arranged to prompt students to read, to discuss and to report.

In May's second observed lesson, I saw that most of the class activities were done in the form of group work, which was an obvious change compared to her predominantly one-way lecturing approach at the beginning of the peer coaching programme. Therefore, the evidence seems to show that the shift of May's teaching principle toward student-centred learning was influenced by Sandra.

Also, there is evidence showing that they were adopting each other's teaching practice. One example is that May had learned to give her students more time to work on their own in order to prepare for the class activities. In May's first observed lesson, I saw that when May started the pre-reading task and asked students to discuss two text related questions shown on a PowerPoint slide, she told the students that they had one minute for their discussion. I had some doubt at that time whether one minute was enough for the discussion. It seems that Sandra also noticed this problem. She wrote in her second journal that some students in May's class did not know how to give answers to the questions in the text-related exercises and she suggested:

...it's better to give students time to do these exercises in the class, especially for these weak students, and then ask them to give their answers one by one.

Sandra also wrote in her third journal about her opinion on the word game in May's class and offered her suggestions:

The process [of the game] was not so smooth and desired effect was not achieved since the students didn't understand the game rules well and didn't have enough time to digest these new words. My suggestion is to give students some time to remember these words and think about how to describe each word in English, and then make them practise the game in groups, being familiar with the meaning of the words and how to describe them further, finally play the game in the whole class.

According to Sandra's journals in the later stage of the peer coaching programme, it seems that May had changed her practice and allowed students more time to do their class work. In Sandra's fourth and fifth journal she wrote down the following statements:

This is a well-designed lecture. The students did discussions on the topic related to the lecture at first, and then enough time was given to them for reading the text and finding much more information about the topic.

The pace of the class is fine. Students had enough time to read, and because they are familiar with the teaching procedure, they followed the teacher well.

In May's second interview, when asked how she described her role as a teacher, giving students more time to prepare for the class work was one of the points she stressed:

I'm striving to switch my role of dominator in class to the role of guide or helper. For example, I used to ask the students a lot of questions, which the students found boring and difficult. Now the students are given time to prepare their questions about the paragraphs they have read. Then they may raise these questions to their partners or the teacher to get better understanding of the text.

In May's second observed lesson, I did notice that more time was provided to the students to skim the text in order to find certain information. This practice of giving students more time to do class work, to a certain extent, corresponds with the concept of student-centred learning, which requires students to be active participants in their own learning.

Besides, there is also evidence that May was influencing Sandra. One example is the reduction of the use of the Chinese language as a teaching medium in Sandra's class. At the beginning of the peer coaching programme when I first observed Sandra's lesson, one feature I noticed was that she spoke mostly in Chinese in class, especially when she explained the meaning of the vocabulary. May wrote in her first journal about the similar matter and the suggestions she gave Sandra:

[Sandra] has to use much Chinese to ensure the explanation of the reading material would be fully understood by the students. Some long and difficult sentences have to be translated into Chinese to help the students understand their meaning. Thus, a full-English class seems impossible. In this way, I think the lecturer may try to use very simple English sentences with much simpler structures and easy words to paraphrase those sentences to transfer the meaning so as to create a more natural and full-English environment in class for students to follow.

Then in May's third journal, she noted a change in Sandra's use of teaching medium:

Worth to be mentioned is that the lecturer used more English in class than before, which was a courageous try and proved very successful. The students seemed to gradually get used to think and respond in English.

Interestingly, in Sandra's first interview right after this first observed lesson at the beginning of the peer coaching programme, she mentioned that:

if the teacher only gives the Chinese meanings and students just write down these words accordingly, the students will just learn the new words by rote rather than by understanding them. So the teacher should try to use English to explain words and phrases in order to teach the students to think in English.

This means that she supported using English as the medium of teaching at the beginning of the programme, but according to what May and I saw, she was not doing it at that time. In a study by Bateman (2008) on the use of target language (the language being learned), one teacher participant reported that students tended to be more motivated to speak the target language when they saw the teacher use the target language. Therefore, using target language as the medium of teaching corresponds with the communicative competence approach, which was what Sandra tried to achieve. Perhaps May's suggestions served as reinforcements to motivate Sandra to make the change.

What is also worth pointing out is that May was also using Chinese about half of the

time as her teaching medium at the beginning of the peer coaching programme according to what I saw in her first observed lesson. However, at the end of the programme when I observed her lesson again, she spoke English most of the time. It could be the case that May was not aware of herself speaking a lot of Chinese in class as a problem until she saw Sandra doing the same in her lesson and realized that it was a problem. In fact, I once had a similar experience when observing a teacher's lesson; the teacher divided the class into groups and asked each group a question one after another from the front to the back of the classroom. The intention was to make sure every group could participate; however, I saw that, those groups who had already answered a question were no longer paying attention and started doing irrelevant activities, knowing that they would not be asked again. I had the same kind of practice in the past and it did not occur to me that it was a problem until I saw what happened in that teacher's lesson. The reason was probably that I was concentrating on the communication with the group that was giving their answer and neglected the rest of the class. Metcalfe (1999) points out that, in a peer coaching relationship, the process of observation can be extremely helpful for the observer: "those who observe teaching are likely to feel challenged about their own practice and to learn from the experience of seeing others in action, as well as having to articulate what they have seen" (p.455). In this case, to be more specific, it seems that a teacher can identify his/her own overlooked mistakes through observing another teacher who makes similar mistakes. One statement by Amy in her second interview summarised it well:

...a bystander is always clear-minded while a person involved is likely to get muddle-headed.

In the case of May and Sandra as a peer coaching dyad, there is evidence indicating that

they did influence each other to a certain extent. After the one-term-long peer coaching programme, Sandra's two teaching principles remained unchanged while May's teaching principle had changed from “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material” to “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”, which was similar to Sandra's teaching principle of “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence” in a way that they both are related to student-centred learning approaches. There was evidence supporting that the change of May's teaching principle was influenced by Sandra. Also, during the peer coaching process, they gave each other suggestions to improve practice - for May, she learned from Sandra the importance of providing students enough time to do their class work; for Sandra, she learned from May the necessity of using English as the teaching medium and reduced the use of the Chinese language in class. In fact, May was able to realise that she had the same problem of speaking too much Chinese in class herself through observing Sandra's lessons and increased her use of English in class later in the peer coaching programme. However, apart from these findings mentioned above, there was no other solid evidence found to show that they had any other influences on each other.

5.4. Collaboration and Collegiality Between May and Sandra

According to data from their journals, my observations of their lessons, and answers in the second interview, there is evidence supporting that May and Sandra, to a certain extent, had a supportive scholarly relationship and collaborated with each other to improve practice. May's new teaching principle was influenced by Sandra, and she changed some of her teaching practices according to the new teaching principle. Evidence also showed that they gave each other suggestions to improve practice - May

learned from Sandra the importance of providing students enough time to do their class work; Sandra learned from May the necessity of using English as the teaching medium and reduced the use of the Chinese language in class. However, apart from these learning exchanges, I could not find any other evidence of mutual influences, which can be cross-checked with my observation data. In their journals, they also wrote about other deficiencies of each other's teaching practice and provided suggestions for improvement, but, in my second observation, I did not see any changes of their practice that were related to those suggestions.

When May was asked if this peer coaching programme served the purpose of facilitating her professional development, she answered:

the program pushed me to study from my colleagues about the good ways of organizing the class and the different attitude toward students. I began to reflect on my own defects in teaching through discussion with my partner and got some sound advice.

For Sandra, she said:

it facilitates my teaching to some extent by observing others' class and getting feedback from my partner. But I don't think it achieves the original expectation. First the difference in students is a barrier to carry out some class activities, so even we learn some good teaching methods or ideas from others, it's still difficult to receive good results in our own class. Second actually most teachers don't know so much about teaching principles, the suggestions given are just from teaching experience and own teaching ideas, so the significance is limited.

It seems that Sandra considered that this peer coaching programme had limited impact on the improvement of her teaching practice. In fact, except for the increased use of English as the teaching medium, there was no other evidence supporting that Sandra was learning from May, influenced by May, or working together with May to improve practice.

With regard to whether May and Sandra were able to establish a collegial relationship throughout the peer coaching programme, it is uncertain. When asked to describe the relationship with the coaching partner after the peer coaching programme in the second interview, May said:

Through the coaching program, we got to know each other better. We learned from each other ways to teach, methods to motivate students. We discussed about problems and figured out solutions. We talked about students, about the funny things that happened in our classes. We became friends both in and out of the office.

For Sandra, she said:

At first, we concerned more about the advantages of each other's class, and later, we try to together solve more problems we met in teaching.

Unlike other peer coaching pairs who were able to provide a lot of details about their relationships, May and Sandra's descriptions were relatively brief. According to May's answer, she seemed to be satisfied with the peer coaching relationship with Sandra, and she made many changes in her practice including her teaching principle. However, for Sandra, the only change of her practice shown by the evidence was the

increased use of the English language as the teaching medium. She also mentioned in the second interview that she did not think this peer coaching programme met her original expectation in terms of improving practice. In fact, when asked if she would like to continue to participate in this peer coaching programme, she said:

Yes, sure. If more people could be involved in this program, maybe better. I mean, not fixed pairs, but change partners after a while, for example, the observing episode could be cut down to 2 weeks, and after 3 times, exchange another partner. But this is only my suggestion from work experience, I know such change will disturb and increase the difficulty in your academic research, so it's just a suggestion.

It seems that Sandra believed that she could benefit more by having more peer coaching partners and perhaps she thought what she could learn from May was limited.

All in all, there was not enough evidence to support that this peer coaching programme facilitated a high degree of collaboration and collegiality between May and Sandra. I will discuss this point further in the Discussion Section in Chapter 6.

6. Conclusion

After the one-term-long peer coaching programme, two participants' teaching principles had changed while six remained unchanged. Although most of their teaching principles stayed the same, the teachers in each of the peer coaching pairs had various degrees of influence on each other, which in turn led to changes in their

teaching practice. For Amy and Phoebe, both of their teaching principles did not change after the programme; however, they had a shared reciprocal relationship and served as each other's teaching consultant to help each other to improve practice. There is also evidence showing that there was a high degree of collegiality between them. For Nicole and Wendy's pair, Wendy had changed her teaching principle after the one-term-long peer coaching programme. There is evidence supporting that the change of Wendy's teaching principle was influenced by Nicole. Although their teaching principles at the start of the peer coaching were different, they had a relatively large influence on each other in terms of their teaching practice – they were able to learn each other's teaching strategies and applied them in their own lessons; they also worked together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and to improve practice according to their teaching beliefs. There is evidence showing that this peer coaching programme facilitated collegiality between them. For Joey and Emma, although both of their teaching principles did not change after the peer coaching programme, they did influence each other. They learned from each other in terms of teaching practice and they would also point out each other's weaknesses in their practice and work together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and improve practice. Therefore, they also had a shared reciprocal relationship. For May and Sandra, after the peer coaching programme, Sandra's two teaching principles remained unchanged while May's teaching principle had changed. There is evidence supporting that the change of May's teaching principle was influenced by Sandra. However, besides Sandra's increased use of English as the teaching medium, there is no other evidence supporting that Sandra was influenced by May in any other aspects. It seems that Sandra considered this peer coaching programme had limited impact on the improvement of her teaching practice, and there is not enough evidence supporting that this peer coaching programme facilitated a high degree of collegiality between May

and Sandra.

In the next chapter, I conclude this thesis by summarising the main findings and discuss their implications.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

1. Introduction

I conclude my thesis in this chapter. I analyse the main findings of this peer coaching programme with relation to my research questions, and discuss their implications. I also provide recommendations for future peer coaching programmes, discuss the contributions to the existing knowledge and the limitations of this research, and make suggestions for further research in related areas.

2. Summary of Main Findings

This study aims at finding out the impact of a peer coaching programme, and to do so, I look at the difference of a group of English teachers' sense-making of their classroom work before and after the peer coaching programme. To understand how the teachers make sense of their classroom practices, I focus on identifying and understanding the teaching principles that underlie their classroom work and the ways their principles influence their classroom practices. Underpinning this research is my assumption that teachers are thinking professionals who actively construct their world of teaching. They act intentionally and make meaning in and through their classroom practices. Their classroom practices need to be understood through an investigation of the meanings they give to the practices. My position towards this research is interpretivist, interpreting the teachers' own interpretations (i.e. sense-making) of their classroom work (Bryman, 2001). The findings of this study suggest that peer coaching can help

to change teachers' teaching principles and perceptions of their practice. The findings in relation to the research questions are summarised as follows.

There are six research questions in this study and they are:

1. How does each of the teachers make sense of their classroom work?
2. Are there any teaching principles that are at the heart of the teacher's classroom work?
3. Do the teachers change their teaching principles as a result of the peer coaching intervention?
4. Are there any new teaching principles that emerged in a peer coaching dyad as a result of the peer coaching intervention?
5. Are any changes in teachers' teaching principles related to changes in their practice?
6. Does the peer coaching programme serve as the building block for a learning community?

2.1. Answer to the first two research questions

The first two research questions ask how each teacher makes sense of their classroom work and if there are any teaching principles that are at the heart of the teacher's classroom work.

Addressing the first two research questions, I have used a matrix to present summaries of each teacher's classroom practices associated with her sense-making of the practices,

using data from the interview transcript and the observation field notes. Emerging from this analysis and repeated review of the data and the reflective notes kept during data collection is the identification of a set of rationales for each teacher, which appears to be most emphasised by the teacher and explains much of the teacher's classroom work. The research reveals that each teacher has a primary objective for her classroom work, which is labeled as the teaching principle in this study (for example, "Seek ways to help students learn by themselves"). In implementing the teaching principle, each teacher operates a set of strategic intentions (for example, "provide opportunities for student to use English", "provide students chances to practise public speaking", "create a relaxed atmosphere so that students can express themselves in English freely", "create opportunities for students to learn from their peers"), which explain the teacher's specific actions in the classroom. The strategic intentions relate to the teaching principle in that they are how the teacher specifically intends to work towards the achievement of her primary objective. Chapter Four shows how the rationales can be interpreted and explained within a framework which comprises teaching principles and strategic intentions.

The frameworks developed for the eight teachers in this study show the teaching principles at the heart of each teacher's classroom work. It is found that for the individual teacher, the teaching principle reflects her most strongly held beliefs in language teaching and her perceptions of the teaching context, and that the teacher's own learning and teaching experiences are an important influence on her teaching principle.

2.2. Answer to the third research question

The third research question asks if the teachers change their teaching principles as a result of the peer coaching intervention.

Eight sense-making frameworks were formed at the beginning of the peer coaching programme for the eight participating teachers, illustrating each of their teaching principles and strategic intentions that illuminate their practices in the observed lesson. At the end of the peer coaching programme, the same process was repeated to construct such frameworks for the eight teachers. Then I compared the frameworks derived at the beginning of the peer coaching programme with the ones at the end of the peer coaching programme for each of the participating teachers. I found that, after the one-term-long peer coaching programme, two participants' teaching principles had changed while six remained unchanged. The following table shows their teaching principles before and after the peer coaching programme.

Table 13 Eight Participating Teachers' Teaching Principles before and after the Peer Coaching programme

	Teaching Principle Before the Peer Coaching Programme	Teaching Principle After the Peer Coaching Programme
Amy	Seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves.	Seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves.
Phoebe	Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.	Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.
Wendy	Diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs.	Give students the central role in learning.
	Play the role of a mother.	
Nicole	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
Emma	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.

	Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.	
Joey	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.	Seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning.
May	Seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material.	Seek ways to help students learn by themselves.
Sandra	Seek ways to help students learn reading skills.	Seek ways to help students learn reading skills.
	Seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence.	Seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence.

Among the eight teachers, two teachers, Wendy and May, had changed their teaching principles after the peer coaching programme. For Wendy, her teaching principles had changed from “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother” to “give students the central role in learning”; for May, her teaching principle had changed from “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material” to “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”.

2.3. Answer to the fourth research question

The fourth research question asks if there are any new teaching principles that emerged in a peer coaching dyad as a result of the peer coaching intervention.

As mentioned above, only Wendy and May's teaching principles had changed. However, their new principles cannot be considered new in their own peer coaching dyads because they resemble their partners' teaching principles to a certain extent. In a way, their change of teaching principles was influenced by their partners. Wendy's new teaching principle of “give students the central role in learning” is very similar to

Nicole's teaching principle of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”. The goal of both of these principles is basically to achieve student-centred learning, which requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing, and in turn learn by themselves (Collins & O'Brien, 2003; Prince, 2004). May's new teaching principle of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”, to a certain extent, is similar to Sandra's teaching principle of “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”. As illustrated in Section 5.3 in Chapter 5, the communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT) is student-centred and social (Magnan, 2008). Thus, both May and Sandra's principles are also related to student-centred learning, and there is evidence indicating that the shift of May's teaching principle to student-centred learning was influenced by Sandra.

Interestingly, all the participating teachers' teaching principles at the end of the peer coaching programme were related to student-centred learning. Amy's teaching principle was “seek ways to help students discover and learn by themselves”; Phoebe and May shared the same teaching principle of “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”; Wendy's teaching principle was “give students the central role in learning”; Nicole, Emma and Joey shared the same teaching principle of “seek ways to make students take responsibility for learning”; and Sandra's teaching principle was “seek ways to help students achieve communicative competence”. All of these principles aim to encourage students to be active participants in their own learning. This might have some relation to the training session for all the English language teachers in the university prior to the start of the peer coaching programme. In that training session, the volunteering teachers shared with others their own practices in the form of a presentation or a teaching demonstration. Quite a few teachers talked about teaching strategies that aimed at getting students involved in the lesson and stimulating

interactions among students and teachers so that students could learn in the process of involvement. Perhaps since that training session, many teachers might have had in mind that student-centred learning and communicative language teaching approaches were appropriate in English language teaching and learning. This could be the reason why most participating teachers in the peer coaching programme had student-centred learning related principles at the beginning of the peer coaching programme and throughout the peer coaching programme they continued to move toward that direction. There is also another possibility that those teachers did have those principles even before the training session. I will have further investigation into this point in the Discussion Section in this chapter.

2.4. Answer to the fifth research question

The fifth question asks if there are any changes in teachers' teaching principles related to changes in their practice.

As mentioned above, only Wendy and May's teaching principles had changed. There were major changes in their teaching practice.

For Wendy, her teaching principle at the beginning of the peer coaching programme was “diversify teaching methods to meet students' needs” and “play the role of a mother”. As I saw in Wendy's first observed lesson, she would, for example, make small talk with students to get to know them better, ask students many questions, ask individual students to read aloud part of the text, and ask students the meaning of the vocabulary. All these teaching strategies can help a teacher to learn more about the

students' English language proficiency and their learning needs. At the end of the peer coaching programme, her teaching principle had become “give students the central role in learning”. In her second observed lesson, I saw that she used many different types of teaching strategies that aimed at engaging students in class activities such as providing students a translation task, giving a listening quiz related to the reading text, and having students to mark each other's quiz papers in order to identify their own mistakes, etc. By doing so, students could learn the teaching material and practice using the English language, and in a way, they could learn by themselves.

For May, her teaching principle at the beginning of the peer coaching programme was “seek ways to ensure students' understanding of the teaching material”. As I saw in May's first observed lesson, she would, for example, spend a large amount of time to teach grammar and vocabulary, constantly ask students many questions about the reading text, walk around the classroom to check on students and answer their questions, speak Chinese for a large part of the lesson to ensure their understand of the teaching material, and give students time to read the text during the lesson. All these teaching strategies are intended to help students to obtain a better understanding of the teaching material. At the end of the peer coaching programme, her teaching principle had become “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. In her second observed lesson, I saw that, for example, to motivate students' participation, she arranged various activities such as playing an English song and asking students to fill in the missing lyrics, showing pictures and questions on PPT slides to help students understand better the taught material, playing the audio of the reading text for the students to practise reading and listening at the same time; to encourage students to learn through team work and by themselves, she assigned group work. All these actions are teaching strategies that try to help students learn by themselves and are very different from her

teaching strategies at the beginning of the peer coaching programme.

It is evident that both Wendy and May had major changes in their teaching practice as a result of the changes of their teaching principles.

Although all the other teachers' teaching principles stayed the same, the teachers in each of the peer coaching pairs had various degrees of influence on each other, which in turn led to changes in their teaching practice. For Amy and Phoebe, both of their teaching principles did not change after the programme; however, they had a shared reciprocal relationship and served as each other's teaching consultant to help each other to improve practice.

For Nicole and Wendy's pair, Wendy had changed her teaching principle after the one-term-long peer coaching programme. Although their teaching principles at the start of the peer coaching were different, they had a relatively large influence on each other in terms of their teaching practice – they were able to learn each other's teaching strategies and applied them in their own lessons; they also worked together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and to improve practice according to their teaching beliefs.

For Joey and Emma, although both of their teaching principles did not change after the peer coaching programme, they did influence each other. They adopted each other's teaching practice and they would also point out each other's weaknesses in their practice and work together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and improve practice.

For May and Sandra, after the peer coaching programme, Sandra's two teaching principles remained unchanged while May's teaching principle had changed. There was evidence supporting that the change of May's teaching principle was influenced by Sandra. However, besides Sandra's increased use of English as the teaching medium, there was no other evidence supporting that Sandra was influenced by May.

All in all, although only two teachers had changed their teaching principles, all of the eight participating teachers had various degrees of influence on each other which led to changes in their practice.

2.5. Answer to the sixth research question

The sixth question asks if the peer coaching programme serves as the building block for a learning community.

Since collaboration and collegiality are considered as the building blocks for creating a learning community (Dufour, 2004), I investigate whether this peer coaching programme facilitates greater collaboration and collegiality among the participants. For Amy and Phoebe, they had been friends for some years before the peer coaching programme. However, they had never had a chance to work together to improve their teaching. This peer coaching programme provided them an opportunity to develop a constructive working relationship to solve their teaching problems and come up with new teaching strategies. They were also able to point out each other's shortcomings. There is sufficient evidence showing that there was a high degree of collaboration and collegiality between them.

For Nicole and Wendy, they seemed to have a supportive scholarly relationship. They were able to learn each other's teaching strategies and applied them to their own lessons. According to them, they felt increasingly more comfortable being observed by each other throughout the peer coaching programme and had a lot of professional communication. They also worked together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and to improve practice according to their teaching beliefs. There is evidence showing that this peer coaching programme facilitated collaboration and collegiality between them.

For Joey and Emma, they had a lot of exchange of ideas and they learned from each other in terms of teaching practice. They seemed to be able to build a collegial relationship that was based on trust. For instance, during the peer coaching process, Emma and Joey would both point out each other's shortcomings in their teaching practice, but they did not seem to mind and accepted each other's comments and advice sincerely. They would also work together to solve problems they encountered in their classrooms and improve practice. Therefore, they also had a shared reciprocal relationship. There is also evidence showing that this peer coaching programme facilitated collaboration and collegiality between them.

For May and Sandra, there is evidence supporting that May and Sandra, to a certain extent, had a supportive scholarly relationship and collaborated with each other to improve practice. May's new teaching principle was influenced by Sandra. However, besides Sandra's increased use of English as the teaching medium, there was no other evidence supporting that Sandra was influenced by May. It seems that Sandra considered that this peer coaching programme had limited impact on the improvement

of her teaching practice, and there is not enough evidence supporting that this peer coaching programme facilitated a high degree of collegiality between May and Sandra.

To conclude, this peer coaching programme did facilitate collaboration and collegiality for all the dyads except that not enough evidence was found for May and Sandra's pair. In a large-scale survey by Kocabas (2009), teacher motivation to learn and teach is mostly influenced by a few factors and one of which is positive relationships among teachers. It seems that peer coaching, which can help teachers to establish positive relationship, is an ideal form of CPD to construct a learning community. To build a good working relationship, trust is also an important factor. I discuss this point further in the following Discussion Section.

3. Discussion

In this section, I argue for the importance of teachers' articulation and reflection, the possibility of changing teachers' teaching principles and their underlying beliefs, and the effectiveness of peer coaching in changing teachers' beliefs and principles. I also discuss the implications of this study for teachers' professional development and teacher leadership for educational improvement.

3.1. The importance of articulating the teaching principles and reflection for teachers' professional development

One notion that this study has established is that teachers' classroom practices can be

explained by their frameworks of teaching principles and strategic intentions, which are an interwoven system of their beliefs in language teaching and learning. This suggests the need to address practices through a focus on teacher conceptualisations. As teachers' beliefs, perceptions, principles and intentions are often tacit, personal, and experiential, the making explicit of teachers' beliefs, perceptions, principles and intentions should be a focus of teacher development and education, and will help teachers to obtain a better understanding of themselves. For example, a teacher can understand better why they have certain actions in class and what needs to improve. Teachers' beliefs, perceptions, principles and intentions have to be articulated by the teachers themselves to become known. This articulation process is in fact a reflection process as when one uses words to talk about what one does, one can understand what one does more clearly.

Freeman (1996) argues that teachers' renaming experience or reconstructing practice

is not simply a technical substitution of terms in which teachers rename what they already know, through local-language explanations of practice, in professional language. The process is instead a dialectical one in which renaming allows for the attachment of new meanings to familiar perceptions so that tacit knowledge interacts with, and is reshaped by, newly explicit understandings from the professional discourse. (p.237)

Teachers' experiences – or indeed, expertise, are gained through the development of their conceptualisations of their classroom work rather than accumulated by their years in the classroom. Teachers' classroom practices filter through the process of their reflective conceptualisation to enrich their professional experiences. However, the depth of teachers' reflective thinking may vary from individual to individual and they

do not necessarily learn and become an expert as they grow older in the profession (Day and Gu, 2007). As Day and Gu (2007, p.426) argue, “whilst learning through experience of practice may lead to proficiency, it will not necessarily lead to expertise.” Similarly, Brookfield (1995) argues that the quantity or length of experience is not necessarily connected to its richness or intensity. I share Brookfield’s (1995) constructivist view of teacher experience and means to illuminate that the richness and intensity of teacher experience is gained through the development of teacher conceptualisations of their classroom work as a result of on-going reflective thinking.

Teachers’ articulation of conceptions of their practices is by no means only for their individual reflections. As professionals, teachers need first to discover and understand their practices, and second, to increase their professionalism through sharing their insights and understanding (Bailey, 1996).

3.2. Changing teaching beliefs or principles – is it difficult to happen?

This study has shown that how teachers intend to behave in the classroom is guided by their teaching principles. Important change in practices would entail a shift in principles (it is possible that an effort to change a strategic intention might be less difficult as it is more operational and is not underpinned by the teacher’s strongest belief; however, significant change to the overall classroom work of the teacher may not easily happen unless his/her teaching principles shift). In this study, only Wendy and May's teaching principles had changed after the peer coaching programme. The rest of the participants' teaching principles stayed the same. As teachers’ teaching principles are shaped in an important way by their most strongly held beliefs, it is

natural to ask whether it is difficult to change them.

Woods (1996) suggests that the initiation and the readiness for change in teaching beliefs is both internal and external. The internal element includes both an interest in change and a conceptual readiness for change. At the same time, there needs to be a social system or teaching culture which motivates change. For all the participants in this study, both elements may be present. All of them participated in this study on a voluntary basis, which could indicate that they were open to new ideas and changes that could help them improve their teaching work. At the same time, this peer coaching programme served as an external motivator that provided them with an opportunity to explore new ideas, which might lead to changes in their practices.

Although a number of studies indicate the difficulty in changing tacit beliefs and understandings, some researchers do suggest that long-term development programmes can be quite successful (for example, Richardson and Placier, 2001; Mattheoudakis, 2007). There is also evidence found in the research literature indicating that short-term development programmes can bring about changes in teachers' teaching beliefs. Ho et al.'s (2001) empirical study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of a relatively short-course staff development programme based on a conceptual change approach shows encouraging results. Their evaluation investigated the short-course programme (four 3-hour sessions scheduled in four consecutive weeks) conducted to 12 teachers in a Hong Kong university at three levels: the impact on the conceptions of teaching of the participants, the resultant impact on teaching practices, and the consequential effect on student learning. In the literature, there are indications of the difficulties of changing conceptions and the doubts about the causal relationship between changes in conception and changes in practice (Munro, 1993; Tillema and

Knol, 1997). Nonetheless, Ho et al. (2001) have provided evidence to suggest that 1) it is feasible to bring about conceptual change by means of a staff development short-course with appropriate programme design; 2) a change in conceptions of teaching is likely to lead to improvement in teaching practice promptly and in student learning eventually; 3) advancement in conceptions of teaching is a basis for improvement in teaching practices. The possibility thus exists that teachers' teaching principles and their underpinning beliefs can develop and change even in a relatively short-term development programme.

3.3. The role of peer coaching in teachers' change of beliefs and principles

If teachers' teaching principles and their underpinning beliefs can develop and change in a relatively short-term development programme, it is natural to ask why there were only two participants changing their teaching principles after this 15-week peer coaching programme and whether this programme actually can help teachers to change their beliefs or principles in a way that they can improve their teaching practice.

As mentioned in Section 2.3 above, all the participating teachers' teaching principles at the end of the peer coaching programme were related to student-centred learning. This may be related to the training session prior to the start of the peer coaching programme, in which quite a few teachers talked about teaching strategies that aimed at getting students involved in the lesson and stimulating interactions among students and teachers so that students could learn in the process of involvement. Perhaps since that training session, many teachers might have had in mind that student-centred learning and communicative language teaching approaches were appropriate in English

language teaching and learning. In fact, these language teaching approaches are supported by many scholars (for example, Lee and Van Patten, 2003; Merrill, 2009; Nunan, 1991a; Richards, 2006; OECD, 2009) - for students to acquire a second language effectively, teacher and students need to work together for a common goal, which is communication. Teachers should give students comprehensible input, provide opportunities for students to use the language, and have assessment that measures communicative ability accurately (Lee and Van Patten, 2003). Namely, what the teachers discussed in the training session was indeed effective approaches for language teaching. This could be the reason why most participating teachers in the peer coaching programme had student-centred related principles at the beginning of the peer coaching programme and throughout the peer coaching programme they continued to move toward that direction.

However, it is suggested that the “one-off” type of training without any follow-up support has limited impact on teachers’ teaching behaviour (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Day and Sachs, 2004). This is why CPD emphasises the notion of “continuing”. It should be an ongoing process; it is important to establish the concept of training as a development process rather than isolated events. In a way, this “one-off” training session prior to the start of the peer coaching programme served as an initiator that helped to plant the idea of student-centred learning approaches into the teachers' minds and this peer coaching programme served as the follow-up support providing them opportunities to actualise and further improve their student-centred learning approaches. At the beginning of the peer coaching programme, some teachers such as May and Wendy still followed their original teaching principles, and the rest of the teachers had already had their student-centred learning related principles. It could also be the case that some of these teachers had these principles even before the training

session. However, throughout the peer coaching programme, most of the peer coaching pairs were able to work with and influence each other's teaching practice and become more effective in applying these student-centred learning approaches.

Take Amy and Phoebe's peer coaching dyad as an example, both of the teachers' teaching principles are similar to each other before they participated in the peer coaching programme. Amy's teaching principle before the programme was “seek ways to help students to discover and learn by themselves” while Phoebe's was “seek ways to help students learn by themselves”. Their teaching principles remained unchanged after the programme. However, there is evidence indicating that, throughout the peer coaching programme, they learned from each other and worked together to solve teaching problems they had in their classes so as to better realise their student-centred oriented teaching principles. For instance, Phoebe mentioned a number of times both in her second interview and journals that she learned from Amy how to improve her management of group work in class. Amy also wrote in her journals about her suggestion for Phoebe to better manage pair work and make use of group work to teach grammar. Then Phoebe wrote in her fourth journal about having a discussion with Amy about how clearer instructions could help students to actively engage in the role play activity. (Please see Section 2.3 in Chapter 5 for their own quotes and details.) All these changes of practice geared toward improving their student-centred approaches. In my observation of their classes at the end of the peer coaching programme, I was able to see improvement in those mentioned aspects.

In Ho et al.'s (2001) study that was mentioned earlier, the elements of the development programme which brought about the conceptual change include: 1) a self-awareness process where self-reflections on teaching conceptions and actual practices were made;

2) an exposure to alternative conceptions and practices through facilitator's presentations and interaction with peers; 3) a confrontation process whereby the participants realised inadequacies in their existing conceptions and practices and created an awareness for the need to change; 4) a commitment building process to encourage the participants to engage in changes and development. The peer coaching programme basically possesses all these elements. In the peer coaching process, teachers have the opportunities to articulate and reflect on their own teaching; they can share insights and expertise; they are exposed to alternative ideas and practices; and they may become aware of possible limitations in their work and consider change. A relatively long-term exposure can enhance the impact and may shift teachers' beliefs and deep-set conceptions. I believe that peer coaching, which emphasises collaboration and reflection, is a useful development programme to facilitate teachers' professional growth and bring about teacher change.

Although the training session prior to the start of the peer coaching programme became an unexpected variable that somewhat altered the results of this study, it is still evident that this peer coaching programme could help to change the teachers' beliefs and perceptions. May and Wendy's teaching principles had changed by the influence from their partners; for the rest of the teachers, even though their teaching principles remained unchanged, there were also various degrees of change in their practice and perceptions because of the mutual influences within each peer coaching pair.

3.4. The importance of trust in a peer coaching relationship

Among the four peer coaching pairs in this study, three pairs (Amy and Pheobe; Wendy

and Nicole; Emma and Joey) could develop a high degree of collegiality. They seemed to be able to work in harmony with each other. They had a lot of exchange of ideas and were able to help each other to improve teaching. What these three pairs have in common is that each pair had been colleagues or friends with each other for 1 to 4 years, and, interestingly, they all sat next to each other in the same office. Therefore they had good relationship and got along quite well even before they participated in this study. Throughout the peer coaching programme, they seemed to be able to further build a working relationship that was based on trust, which proves to be a very important element in a peer coaching relationship. This is echoed by some researchers (Eraut and Fielding, 2004; Robbins, 1991) that “trust” is an important factor in teachers’ collaboration.

In Amy's second interview, she provided an insightful reflection about the importance of establishing trust in a peer coaching relationship:

It was a new, warm and valuable experience. I guess, at the beginning, it was not an easy task to invite someone into your class and observe you. There must be a basis of trust, of feeling comfortable to have a peer right on the spot when everything is happening in your class, which used to be only you and your students. A classroom, in a sense, is a private place, open only to the legitimate few. To open it up to someone else means that there is letting go of that false sense of security and that strong sense of self-centeredness. A classroom is not a fortress besieged. It was in that process of inviting your peer coach and having her in your place and sharing and accepting your own shortcomings and discovering that you were far from being perfect, that there was new hope of becoming a better teacher.

With trust being established, they felt comfortable being observed by each other and had more professional communication. For example, when Wendy and Nicole were asked to describe the relationship with the coaching partner after the peer coaching programme in the second interview, Nicole said:

We spend more time together in discussing our lessons now as compared to the beginning of the peer coaching programme. And when I have any problem in teaching or if I want to try some new activities in the class, I'll ask my partner for suggestions, and vice versa. In other words, we used to tend to work individually, but now there is more cooperation and sharing.

For Wendy, she said:

I think at first subconsciously I felt I was judged by a peer. But as time went by, we exchanged ideas more often before and after the observations, I realized that this thing we were doing was more about professional communication than being judged by peers. So gradually I got comfortable to have [Nicole] (pseudonym) in my classroom.

With trust being established, they could also point out each other's shortcomings and the ones receiving critiques did not seem to have any negative feelings and accepted the advice. Nias et al. (1989) suggest that when teachers establish trust and a sense of security between each other, they are able to show their vulnerable sides. During the peer coaching process, Amy pointed out some of Phoebe's shortcomings. When Phoebe was asked what she learned from her partner during that one semester of peer coaching program, she mentioned:

I got to know some of my pronunciations should be corrected, like key, /i:/ was not good. She also helped me to notice my bad habits when I was standing in front of students, like saying too many “yes” and waving hands too many times. I think it’s good to have someone to tell me the bad habits I hadn’t noticed before.

Emma also mentioned in her second interview that if she was observed by someone she could trust, she would not worry about showing her weaknesses:

Having someone I can turn to for advice and suggestion is really helpful, especially someone I can trust completely. I can show my shortcomings and blind spots, without worrying that I might be laughed at.

Also, in a trusting relationship, they could communicate as friends during the peer coaching meetings. The originally formal meetings had been transformed into a less formal format. Hu (2006) suggests that, in the formal meetings, there are institutionalized ways and contents of talking. It is a constraining situation, where most people find it difficult to be open about what they feel, whereas, in an informal situation, things tend to flow more naturally and easily. “Informal meetings can enhance openness because they give people a sense of security. [...] informal contacts can increase mutual understanding and enhance like-mindedness. People are more likely to open up to someone with whom they are socially at ease” (Hu, 2006, p.36). This is in line with Yurtsever's (2013) study to learn about teachers' preferences among various models of professional development. Yurtsever (2013) found that, of the 91 participants, 70.8% preferred peer coaching to traditional training and mentoring because, in peer coaching, teachers could work with a partner with close relationship and it was less formal than traditional training and mentoring. Nias et al. (1989) point

out that when teachers establish a sense of security between each other, they are able to share their difficulties, and show their vulnerable sides, which is a characteristic of a genuine collaborative culture.

For May and Sandra's pair, it is a special case. There is evidence supporting that the change of May's teaching principle was influenced by Sandra. However, besides Sandra's increased use of English as the teaching medium, there is no other evidence supporting that Sandra was influenced by May. Unlike other peer coaching pairs who were able to provide a lot of details about their relationship in the interviews, May and Sandra's descriptions were relatively brief. According to May's answer in her second interview, she seemed to be satisfied with the peer coaching relationship with Sandra. However, according to Sandra's answer in her second interview, she considered that this peer coaching programme had limited impact on the improvement of her teaching practice and did not think this peer coaching programme met her original expectation in terms of improving practice. In fact, when asked if she would like to continue to participate in this peer coaching programme, she said:

Yes, sure. If more people could be involved in this program, maybe better. I mean, not fixed pairs, but change partners after a while, for example, the observing episode could be cut down to 2 weeks, and after 3 times, exchange another partner.

It seems that Sandra believed that she could benefit more by having more peer coaching partners and perhaps she thought what she could learn from May was limited.

The difference between this peer coaching pair and the other three pairs is that May and Sandra were not friends and had not worked together before this peer coaching

programme. At the beginning of this study, eight teachers volunteered to participate in the peer coaching programme. The six teachers who knew each other well paired up by themselves first, leaving May and Sandra no other choice but to form a pair. At that time, Sandra was also a new teacher who just started to work in the English programme; therefore, May and Sandra did not know much about each other. It could be the reason why they could not establish the same level of trust developed in the other three pairs. Without trust being well established, it might not be easy for them to exercise influence on each other.

I am not suggesting that teachers who do not know each other cannot form a peer coaching pair; it could also be the case that Sandra really could not find much that she could learn from May, or she was skeptical about the effectiveness of the peer coaching programme. As reported by Kurtts and Levin (2000), one of the major challenges in peer coaching is that coaches lack the skills to provide feedback. Similarly, Soisangwarn and Wongwanich (2014) found in their peer coaching study that teachers were not able to develop as reflective teachers, to learn to transfer new skills to the classroom or to encourage peer support and feedback, which was due to the teachers having less effective partners, or a self-awareness of their lack of professional knowledge when offering constructive feedback. This might have been the issue in May and Sandra's dyad. Also, Woods et al. (1997) point out that constrained collaboration may institutionalize informal discourse; such institutionalizing is counterproductive in terms of communication and teachers' practice.

As shown by the other three pairs, pairing up with a friend as a peer coach can lead to a more positive impact. It is also true that, in the peer coaching process, as the relationship grows, teachers can establish trust among each other and feel more

emotionally secure (Robbins, 1991; Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004). “While trust deepens throughout the process, it has to be established in the earliest phase of the peers’ work together” (Parker et al., 2014, p.123). Therefore, it would be an advantage to work with someone one has already known well. “Selecting the appropriate partners — is a key to the success of peer coaching [...] giving the participants some choice in the selection of a peer partner is related to the eventual success and satisfaction of outcomes” (Parker et al., 2014, p.124). Amy's statement in her second interview sums this up well:

...We get to know each other better, and there is more trust. When I asked someone to be my peer coach, I thought of someone I trusted and felt comfortable with.

With a trusting relationship being established, both partners can communicate in an informal manner, which enhance openness and like-mindedness, and can present challenges to be examined without the defensiveness or anxiety that compromises outcomes.

3.5. Peer coaching as a means to exercise teacher leadership

In the educational leadership literature, there is a shift of discourse towards the notion of shared or distributed leadership (Frost and Harris, 2003; York-Barr and Duke, 2004). In contrast to traditional views of leadership, distributed leadership emphasises collective responsibility and collaborative working. Central to the idea of distributed leadership is “the view that leadership is not the sole preserve of the individual at the top, but that it may be exercised by anybody within the organisation” (Frost and Harris,

2003, p.480). It implies that all teachers have the potential to contribute to leading institutional/departmental development and change. Hence the emergence of the notion teacher leadership.

Leithwood et al. (1999) reduce the concept of leadership to the business of influencing. In a similar vein, Frost and Harris (2003) suggest that although *teacher leadership* is defined in various ways, “attempts to define teacher leadership seem most commonly to centre on discussions about who can exert influence over colleagues and in what domains” (2003, p. 485). If so, when teachers articulate and reflect on their teaching principles and practices, and share insights and understanding in a peer coaching relationship, they are exercising teacher leadership because they are virtually exercising influence over the beliefs, principles, intentions and actions of others.

Sammons et al. (1995) and Sammons et al.’s (2007) research on the effectiveness of schools may have implications for universities as well. Their research suggests that effective schools are ones which have achieved a high value coherence and a shared vision. While some may interpret it as a call for firm leadership from the top down, an alternative interpretation can be to see coherence as a result of critical discourse in which teachers articulate their perceptions and ideas, reflect on them, and move to a shared understanding. This suggests that teachers should be engaged in the processes of decision making and development efforts (Harris and Lambert, 2003). To do so, it would require that the department and the institution create and nourish a work culture that encourages and facilitates the achievement and exercising of teacher leadership. The departmental heads and institutional leaders need to recognise the important influence of teachers’ tacit principles on their practices and the contributions that teachers can make to leading departmental and institutional improvement through the

exercising of their leadership.

4. Recommendations for a Peer Coaching Programme

Drawing from the points discussed above, I can make some recommendations for a future peer coaching programme. First, it should include a focus on identifying teachers' conceptualisations or principles of their classroom work; second, the programme needs to be prolonged; third, it is worthwhile to have an initial learning input at the beginning of the programme; fourth, one should have a trusted friend as a partner so as to have a successful peer coaching relationship. I illustrate these points in detail below.

Identifying teachers' own principles

Peer coaching programmes that include a focus on identifying and understanding teachers' conceptualisations of their classroom work and how these have developed are likely to assist promoting change and improvement through enhancement of ongoing reflective practice. Beginning with the individual, teachers may be encouraged to begin to understand their own intentions, principles, beliefs and perceptions. This process can be enhanced through dialogues amongst the teachers themselves or with those who understand practice. Teachers' beliefs, perceptions, principles and intentions have to be articulated by the teachers themselves to become known. This articulation process is in fact a reflection process as when one uses words to talk about what one does, one can understand what one does more clearly. Teachers' articulation

of conceptions of their practices is by no means only for their individual reflections. As professionals, teachers need first to discover and understand their practices, and second, to increase their professionalism through sharing their insights and understanding (Bailey, 1996). During the course of peer coaching when teachers observe each other's practice and exchange ideas, teachers may begin to question their own principles and practices and consider change, especially when getting to know alternative ways of thinking and acting.

Lengthening the programme

Peer coaching programmes should last for at least two terms. Because of the time constraints of this study, the peer coaching programme lasted for only one term (15 weeks). However, Cordingley et al. (2015) find that, to produce profound lasting change, professional development interventions need to be prolonged. According to their review, the most effective professional development lasted for at least two terms – more usually a year or longer. Also, although a number of studies indicate the difficulty in changing tacit beliefs and understandings, some researchers do suggest that long-term development programmes can be quite successful (for example, Richardson and Placier, 2001; Mattheoudakis, 2007) that a relatively long exposure to a different learning culture and alternative ideas and practice can have an impact on some of the teacher's deepest beliefs and principles.

Initial input

I also recommend that, prior to a peer coaching programme, it is beneficial to provide teachers with some professional development opportunities. Then the peer coaching

programme can serve as the follow-up support to strengthen the teachers' learning. It is suggested that the "one-off" type of training without any follow-up support has limited impact on teachers' teaching behaviour (McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Day and Sachs, 2004). However, if these "one-off" training sessions are followed by a peer coaching programme, teachers will have the chances to apply their new learning to practice and continue to help each other to fine-tune these new skills or knowledge during the peer coaching process. In this study, the "one-off" training session prior to the start of the peer coaching programme served as a CPD initiator that helped to plant the idea of student-centred learning approaches into the teachers' minds and this peer coaching programme served as the follow-up support providing them opportunities to actualise and further improve their student-centred learning approaches.

It is important that teacher development programmes should provide not only opportunities for teachers to recognise their own principles and beliefs but also access to alternative ideas and practices. If teachers' thinking and doing are to shift, they must have something to shift to. Teachers need to have opportunities to wrestle with alternative approaches, which should form an important part of their professional reflections. Therefore, it is worthwhile to have professional development opportunities before a peer coaching programme.

Trust

Trust is an essential element in a peer coaching relationship. As shown in this study, pairing up with a trusted friend as a peer coach can lead to a more positive impact. Nias et al. (1989) point out that when teachers establish a sense of security between each other, they are able to share their difficulties, and show their vulnerable sides,

which is a characteristic of a genuine collaborative culture. Hu (2006) also finds that “people are more likely to open up to someone with whom they are socially at ease” (p.36). One possible reason why May and Sandra had a less successful peer coaching relationship is that they did not know each other prior to the peer coaching programme and there was not enough trust being established in their relationship. As Parker et al. (2014) indicate, if practitioners simply put people in pairs to practise peer coaching, “the result is often pairings with two quite different and incompatible sets of challenges and resources[...] a high quality relationship needs to be created between participants who are well suited to providing real help to each other” (p.128). Parker et al. (2014) also suggest that although trust can deepen throughout the peer coaching process, it needs to be established in the earliest stage of the peer coaching relationship. Therefore, it would be an advantage to work with someone one has already known well.

5. Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This study is an attempt to find out the impact of a peer coaching programme, and to do so, I looked at the difference of a group of English teachers’ sense-making of their classroom work before and after the peer coaching programme. As discussed in Chapter Two, a small strand of research in existing literature has investigated language teachers’ constructions of classroom practices. The existing research has focused much on the identification of the general domains of pedagogical knowledge from teachers’ explanations of practices (for example, Al-Mekhlafi & Ramani, 2009; Gatbonton, 2000 & 2008; Mowlaie and Ranimi, 2010; Mullock, 2006). There are also studies that have focused on the identification of teaching principles that guide teachers’

practices without locating them into superordinate categories (for example, Bailey, 1996; Richards, 1996; Tsang, 2004). However, little research has been done to investigate the teacher's framework for classroom work and to identify the principles that are at the heart of the teacher's work. This study, besides investigating the impact of the peer coaching programme, contributes to existing research in understanding the teacher's conceptual framework for practice with the development of the framework of classroom work for the individual teacher. With the identification of the teaching principles and strategic intentions that make up the teacher's framework, this study has provided evidence to support Breen et al.'s (2001) hypothesis that "teachers may frame their work in terms of a hierarchy of principles" (p. 498), and Richards' (1996) suggestion that there may be principle(s) at the centre of the teacher's approach to teaching.

This study goes further than those studies that are only interested in teachers' beliefs – what they say they wish to achieve, without heeding what they actually do in the classroom. In other words, this study is not searching for the teachers' espoused theories of practice, but to obtain their theories-in-use, which actually determine their classroom actions. To illustrate the analytical process, I first observed a complete lesson of each of the eight participating teachers, followed by an interview with the teacher to elicit the teacher's sense-making of her practices in the observed lesson. In the interview, I encouraged the teacher to describe her practices in the observed lesson as much as possible before making sense of them; based on my observation notes I also gave prompts on the teacher's practices where necessary to elicit her sense-making. I recorded each interview and fully transcribed them into English. Interview transcripts, observation field notes, and reflective notes and memos that I kept during data collection constituted the data sets. In analysing data, I started with individual case

analysis, looking for themes and patterns. Then I moved to cross-case analysis for each dyad, noting similarities as well as contrasts. I had data and analyses reviewed and confirmed by all participants. Basically, my approach is to observe what the teachers do in the classroom and then, through interview, seek the principles that guide their work from their explanations for what has happened in the observed lessons. By asking the teachers to make sense of their actual classroom practices, this study can address the teachers' theories-in-use.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, much of the existing research on peer coaching (for example, Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004; Bowman & McCormick, 2000; Brouwer, 2009; Browne, 2006; Hasbrouck, 1997; LeBlanc & Zide, 1987; Mousavi, 2014; Parker et al., 2014; Ross, 1992; Scott & Miner, 2008; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Soisangwarn and Wongwanich, 2014; Sparks, 2002; Zwart, R.C. et al. 2008) reveals evidence of the benefits of peer coaching to the improvement of teachers' teaching practice, their attitude toward teaching, the effects of peer coaching on teachers' self-efficacy and teachers' learning process of peer coaching. However, little or perhaps none has been written on the relationship between peer coaching and teachers' teaching principles. This study has filled this gap. Researching the changes of how teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme provides a profound understanding of the impact of peer coaching. I find support from Freeman's (2002) argument that "while we might arrive at crudely accurate maps of teaching by studying it from the outside in, we will not grasp what is truly happening until the people who are doing it articulate what they understand about it" (2002, p.11). This study is able to take a close look at the change of the teachers' conceptual framework for practice throughout the peer coaching programme and how the teachers influenced each other that led to the change in their practices. It has been possible to

study the process of adaptation or development in the teachers' conceptualizations of classroom work in detail.

This study has found that peer coaching can help to change teachers' teaching principles and perceptions of their practice. Although the peer coaching programme of this study lasted for only 15 weeks and the training session prior to the start of the peer coaching programme became an unexpected variable that somewhat altered the results of this study, there is still enough evidence showing that this peer coaching programme could help to change the teachers' beliefs and perceptions. May and Wendy's teaching principles had changed by the influence from their partners; for the rest of the teachers, even though their teaching principles remained unchanged, there were also various degrees of change in their practices and perceptions because of the mutual influences within each peer coaching pair.

This study also discovered elements that can facilitate a peer coaching programme to be a more effective CPD programme. As mentioned in Section 5 of this chapter the recommendations of a future peer coaching programme, first, it should include a focus on identifying teachers' conceptualisations or principles of their classroom work; second, the programme needs to be prolonged; third, it is worthwhile to have an initial learning input at the beginning of the programme; fourth, one should have a trusted friend as a partner so as to have a successful peer coaching relationship. These four elements can help to produce a more positive impact in peer coaching.

6. Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Research

This study is largely based on the teachers' verbalisations of their work. What verbal reports can provide is an indication of teachers' pedagogical thoughts, i.e. some insight into teacher thinking and beliefs rather than "an accurate portrait of how teachers think in action" (Mullock, 2006, p.51). It is likely that there remain ideas that the participants did not or could not verbalise. It is also possible that my role as an insider led the participants to censor what they reported. The colleague rapport between the participants and me might have resulted in their giving what they thought I wished to hear. Nevertheless, due to the purpose of the study, which is to discover and understand the teachers' constructions of their classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme, getting the teachers themselves to verbalise their work has appeared to be the viable means. As Mullock (2006) points out, at present, verbal report procedures remain one of the very few means of gaining insight into teachers' thinking.

In this study, the teachers' teaching principles and strategic intentions found at the beginning and the end of peer coaching programme are based on the teachers' conceptualisations of practices within the limit of one lesson. It is likely that more practices and their conceptualisations can be found from more lessons of the teachers. Because of the time limit of this research, the framework developed for each participant's classroom work in terms of teaching principles and strategic intentions is an indication of the teacher's framework for practice. It is possible that from a longer engagement with the teacher, a more complicated framework may be developed with

more teaching principles and strategic intentions and more complicated inter-relations between them. It is suggested that for future research, the researched teachers be followed for a longer time (more lessons) so that a more comprehensive view of the teachers' work can be presented. Meanwhile, as the present study only focuses on the participants' English reading courses, it will also be interesting to follow teachers for different courses to compare their teaching principles for courses of different nature, and to find out whether there are principles that transcend subjects or they may be subject specific.

The teachers' sense-makings of practices were elicited from the teachers' own descriptions of practices in the observed lesson and my prompts based on my observation notes. While the teachers' teaching principles are often the teachers' most voluntary and emphasised statements in explaining their general approaches to the lesson, some of the strategic intentions which explain the teachers' specific actions in the lesson were given under prompts – therefore, to some extent, they are related to what “caught the eye” of the researcher. Being an English language teacher myself and a colleague to the participants, in noticing their practices, I depended not only on the clues from previous research in the literature but also my “instinct” – the common sense that I have from being a language teacher and sharing the work culture with the participants. This has indeed given me an edge in this research; however, it is possible that different observers might notice different actions.

This study has attempted to find out the impact of a peer coaching programme through investigating the change of the teachers' teaching principles and strategic intentions in the light of their experiences, beliefs and perceptions. It is felt that with the same time limit, a more in-depth study of a smaller number of subjects (2 to 3 peer coaching pairs)

might have produced more stories about the participants' experiences, and a fuller view of how they influence each other might have been captured. Meanwhile, a study that lasts for more than one term (one or two years) may provide a better understanding of the impact of the peer coaching programme and how teachers' teaching principles and beliefs develop over time.

Lastly, a study that also measures the change of students' learning outcome in relation to the change of the teachers' teaching principles and practices can reveal how the change of teaching principles and practices affect student learning. After all, student learning is the end purpose of teachers' professional development.

7. Final Words

This study has sought to understand the impact of a peer coaching programme. Through the analysis of a group of eight English language teachers' sense-makings of their classroom practices in observed lessons, this study has established for each teacher a framework of teaching principles and strategic intentions that appear to guide much of the teacher's classroom work before and after the peer coaching programme. By comparing these frameworks and analysing the data from their interviews and journals, I was able to see the changes of their teaching beliefs and how they influenced each other during the peer coaching process.

The teachers' frameworks of teaching principles and strategic intentions are found to be an interwoven system of their beliefs in language teaching and learning. The teachers'

conceptual frameworks for practice and the important influence of teachers' teaching principles on practices uncovered in this study suggest the need to address practice through a focus on the teachers' conceptual frameworks. Researching the changes of how teachers make sense of their actual classroom practices before and after the peer coaching programme provides a profound understanding of the impact of peer coaching. In this study, I found that this peer coaching programme could help to change the teachers' beliefs and perceptions in various extents, which led to changes in teachers' practices. Trust is found to be an important element in a successful peer coaching relationship. Having a trusting relationship, partners can communicate in an informal manner, which enhances openness and like-mindedness, and can present challenges to be examined without the defensiveness or anxiety that compromises outcomes. Therefore, it would be an advantage to pair up with somebody one knows well as a peer coach. I have also argued that peer coaching can help to promote an articulate, reflective, and collaborative work culture, which should facilitate and sustain teachers' professional development, promote teacher leadership and contribute to educational improvement.

For most of the participants, I believe this research had been a meaningful process to them, making them think more about their work and gain new insights into their work, and in turn, improve practices. For me, the researcher, the process has been perhaps even more valuable and educational. The research has been a process of constant reflection. This reflection has been not only on the methods used but also on my professional practice. Being an English language teacher myself and a colleague to the participants, I have been exposed in the research process to the conceptualisations and practices of eight teachers and how they influenced each other. This exposure to their work has made me reflect on my own. It has given me access to practices and

ideas alternative to my own and made me ponder on them. Observing them and talking with them has made me gain insights into their work and discern strengths from their approaches, which will become valuable reference for my own professional practice. In a way, I was practising peer coaching with all of the participants and I have learned from all of them.

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Appendix A Interview Guide

1. Please describe how you conducted this lesson and explain the reasons for the way you approached it.
2. Please describe as detailed as possible your particular actions during the lesson. Please give reasons for each action. (Use the observation notes to give prompts where necessary.)
3. Is there anything about the lesson that you would want to particularly emphasise and comment on?
4. How typical is this lesson of all your lessons for the course? Are there additional practices that you often adopt but did not occur in the lesson?
5. How do you think English language is learned? How should it be taught?
6. Did your own English learning experience have any influence on the way you teach the language?
7. (For a Reading class teacher) How do you think an English Reading class should be taught?
8. (For a Listening/Speaking class teacher) How do you think an English Listening/Speaking class should be taught?
9. How do you describe your role as a teacher? How do you describe the role of the students? How do you understand your relationship with the students?
10. Could you share with me a most memorable experience or incident that has particular significance for you as a teacher?
11. Could you summarise your main teaching principles with regard to this lesson and this course?

(Question 12 to 14 are for the interviews at the end of the peer coaching period.)

12. Does this peer coaching programme serve the purpose of facilitating your professional development? If yes, in what ways? If no, why?
13. How do you describe the relationship with your coaching partner now as compared to the beginning of the peer coaching programme?
14. Would you like to continue to participate in this peer coaching program?

Appendix B Observation Notes (an example)

Name of subject: Amy

Name of course: English Reading Level II

Date of observation: 20th January, 2011

Length of observation: 105 minutes (1:00-2:45pm)

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
1:05pm Teacher calls roll.	
1:10pm Teacher asks students to read their prepared poems. Teacher asks one student from the first group to come out to read. Some students are talking to each other.	Students are sitting with their own groups.
1:12pm After the first student has finished, another student from the second group to come out and read his poem. The whole class applaud afterward and teacher praises his good work.	
1:13pm The third student comes out to read his poem. Teacher asks if the student was thinking of someone when he wrote the poem and the student said no one particular.	
1:15pm The fourth student comes out to read his poem. He reads it in an informal manner.	Class atmosphere is quite relaxed. Students seem to be attentive.
1:16pm Teacher asks students how to distinguish the pronunciation between “serene” and “ceiling”.	Correct students' pronunciation error.
1:17pm Teacher asks students to take out a piece of paper to write down six sentences of what they did today, and gives students five minutes to do the task.	Teacher smiles a lot.
1:22pm A student's phone rings. Teacher takes his phone away and reminds students that if their phones ring, she will take them away. Then teacher walks around to check on students' work.	Keep discipline.

1:25pm Teacher asks students to select 3 out of the 6 things that they wrote down and put them in time sequence. Teacher asks students what “time sequence” means and asks a student to give an example.	Make sure students understand her instruction.
1:28pm Teacher asks one student to share her list.	
1:30pm Teacher asks students to arrange the events shown on the PPT slide according to the time sequence. Teacher walks around to check on students' work. Students seem to be on-task.	Make sure students are on-task.
1:39pm Teacher collects students' paper.	
1:40pm Teacher introduces another task – students will discuss the term “quality of lives” in groups and think of way to improve it and then report to the class.	Make students think. Let students explore and learn by themselves. Cultivate critical thinking skills?
1:42pm Teacher give some illustration to help students understand the term. Teacher walks around to give individual help.	
1:48pm Teacher asks one student to come out and report. The student suggests three ways to improve quality of lives.	
1:52pm A student from the second group comes out to report. After the student has finished, the class applaud.	Classmates are supportive to each other.
1:53pm Teacher introduces another task – students will need to think of practical ways to improve the quality of relationship with family and friends.	
1:55pm Teacher walks around to check each group to guide their discussion.	Teacher is friendly to the students.
2:00pm Teacher invites a member from Group 3 to come out and report. Teacher brings up a question – how do we communicate with our parents effectively?	

<p>2:04pm Teacher asks one student to share her view, but the student doesn't know how to express it in English. Teacher asks her to share it in Chinese and she does.</p> <p>Then another student shares his ideas.</p>	<p>Encourage students' participation even in their first language.</p> <p>Teacher encourages students to share their ideas and seldom criticize them.</p>
<p>2:07pm Break time</p> <p>Students talk and play during the break.</p>	
<p>2:15pm Teacher asks students to look at the text and asks students some text-related questions shown on a PPT slide.</p> <p>Teacher asks some students to give answers. Some students volunteer their answers.</p> <p>Through the questions, teacher introduces the concept of the “topic sentence” - being the first sentence of a paragraph and introducing the main idea of the whole paragraph.</p>	<p>Teacher hasn't given much lecture up till this point.</p> <p>Students are attentive in general.</p>
<p>2:27pm Teacher asks students to find certain things from the text.</p>	<p>Teacher guides students to find the information by themselves instead of telling them.</p>
<p>2:33pm Teacher asks students how they understand a relatively difficult sentence in the text.</p> <p>Students don't seem to understand and have not much response.</p> <p>Teacher gives students some help by explaining some words and restructure the sentence.</p>	<p>Teacher always asks students to find answers by themselves instead of telling them.</p>
<p>2:37pm Teacher introduces some English sayings and asks students if they know similar saying in Chinese.</p>	
<p>2:42pm Teacher asks students one more text-related question. Students look for the answer in the text.</p>	
<p>2:44pm Teacher assigns homework – read a story.</p> <p>Lesson ends.</p>	

Appendix C Interview Transcript (an example)

Interviewee: Amy

(R: researcher; A: Amy)

R: Please describe how you conducted/arranged this lesson and explain the reasons for the way you approached it.

A: The lesson was divided into three parts: discussion, report and text analysis. Discussion and report gave the students a chance to think, reflect and share their ideas with each other. Text analysis concentrated on appreciation and comprehension of the contents of the text.

R: Please describe as detailed as possible your particular actions during the lesson. Please give reasons for each action.

A: The topic of this lesson is ideal life and the theme is to pursue one's ideal life, improve the quality of life and try one's best. It is a broad topic but it is closely related to the students. It's time for college students to think about their life style, such as where they want to settle down, what they want to do and what is important for life. That's why I put in discussions in the lead-in part. They need to talk and reach a final agreement and then report to the rest of the class. It gives them time to think, share and talk in front of others. I wish they can learn the importance of team work. Group work provides such a space for them. For each lesson, they work in different groups. In that way, they get to know each other and learn to work with different people, instead of sticking with a few friends and losing the chance of getting to know more. For the text, I design questions for each paragraph, some about the contents, some about difficult sentences, and others about text appreciation. Students have not formed the habit of reading English essays. They need guidance in reading, and questions

help them to notice and see something special in a story. Instead of my teaching the text to the students, they have to read it and look for answers. I can reduce my teaching time. I am there as a monitor, not as a traditional teacher who gives all the information to a silent and passive class.

R: You said “instead of my teaching the text to the students, they have to read it and look for answers”. What if a lot of the students in a class are unmotivated learners and they hardly participate in the assigned tasks, will you still employ the same approach or will you conduct the lesson differently?

A: Yes, I have to, and I already had to, especially with the students for the second semester who are moved up from Level I reading. They are less motivated. Motivated students are ideal students and the teacher has an easy time because things go the way she expects, but with the weak students, most of whom are not that motivated, and whom need a lot of persuasion and patience, the teaching methodology has to be different. I have found that, teaching the same course to different classes shows a lot of difference. When I first started to teach, I thought that it was to be exactly the same since the teaching materials were the same. How could it be different? Now I know better. I told my students to preview. When they failed to do so, I would try as best as I could, to give them some time to scan the text. At the same time, I told them that if they did not do as I asked, it would be very difficult to follow the pace in class. The students needed one text to experience it, and the second time, it was better. For the weak students, I did not analyze the text the way I did with the advanced students. It is amazing to discover how I can handle a text so differently with different students in different semesters. I guess the answer is “change”.

R: Is there anything about the lesson that you would want to particularly emphasise and comment on?

A: Yes. The theme of the text was to improve the quality of one’s life which I

believed was closely related to real life. Any reflection on the theme would help the students to deepen their understanding of it and also urged them to think about their own lives and their relationships with family and friends.

R: How typical is this lesson of all your lessons for the course? Are there additional practices that you often adopt but did not occur in the lesson?

A: I would say this lesson was typical of all my lessons especially when the theme of the text was of great importance to the life of the students. Whether it was discussion or text analysis, I intended to have as much interaction as possible between the students and me and also among the students so that they knew that they were working in groups and the class was on the whole one big group.

R: How do you think English language is learned? How should it be taught?

A: English language is learned, first of all, because there is a sense of necessity of the learners. If a learner is keen on learning the language, he would be attentive and willing to participate. The second one is a suitable environment in which the language is used a lot and the learner has to think and express his ideas with the language. It is difficult to make one see the necessity. It comes from within, not without, although we can try hard to create and maintain an English-learning environment. We do it simply because we hope to change. Education comes with hope, hope for something better.

R: In your opinion, what are some effective ways to learn English?

A: There are two effective ways. One is motivation, or interest. The second one is guidance. With our school library growing, I suggest that we offer a reading list to the new comers so that they are better motivated and better guided.

R: Did your own English learning experience have any influence on the way you teach the language?

A: Yes, sure. I was taught in a traditional way in which there was not much interaction between the teacher and students. Students sat, listened and took notes;

teachers did most of the talking, or even, all of the talking. It influenced my early teaching, but now I am changing because I have seen the necessity to change. An old method does not justify its existence. Now I am wondering sometimes. If I had been taught in an interactive way, would my English be better? This question helps me to change.

R: How do you think an English Reading class should be taught?

A: The reading part should be done by the students. They should have finished reading the text and come to the class with some general ideas. A reading class helps the students to look at the text from different angles, think and reflect, and learn to appreciate the beauty of this language. A reading teacher is there to show the direction, and the students walk to the destination.

R: How do you describe your role as a teacher?

A: Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.

R: How do you describe the role of the students? How do you understand your relationship with the students?

A: Students are independent learners. Most of the learning happens only when they pay attention and intend to take in the information and digest what they have learned. Learning is easier and the effect is better when the learner opens up his mind. On the other hand, students are dependent learners in that they expect guidance from their teacher. Their expectation is not only a psychological fact, but also a real demand because they need to be trained to see new things, to think deeper and sharpen their minds. A teacher plays a lot of roles in a class. She is an overseer, an observer, a listener, and someone who really cares about the students.

R: Could you share with me a most memorable experience or incident that has particular significance for you as a teacher?

A: Well, it happened at the beginning of last semester when I taught Level II reading. The students were having a discussion and I was walking around to see whether they needed any help and talked to them occasionally. They were advanced students. Some of them entered this university because their performance in the college entrance exam was not ideal and this university was not their first choice. Anyway, one of the boy students, who had an old reading book with him, which was unusual because freshmen usually have new books. You could tell how the student looks upon on a course by the way he uses a textbook. He told his group mates, several boy students, that this university was bad and the students who studied here were trash. I happened to hear what he said, and I knew that some other students heard it too. Even though they had not heard it, they had their doubts. They had studied hard for more than twelve years, most probably ever since they were born, to enter a first-class university. The whole nation expects that from every student. At that time, there was nothing else I could do. I had to respond to that student. His comment made me uncomfortable and angry. Nobody wanted to be a teacher of trash students, right? It was an insult not only to me, to himself, but also to other students. Whatever he said, he was my student, and I would not let him spoil my class because it was the beginning of the semester. So I talked to the whole class. I did not mention his name when I quoted what he said. That reading class is one of the classes who is close to me, even now they are not my students. As for that student, he was quiet most of the time, but he never missed any class, not even one. He changed his textbook in the middle of the semester. It was a new one, though he did not take many notes. I wish he can feel better about himself.

R: Could you summarise your main teaching principles with regard to this lesson and this course?

A: I do not only teach the reading materials. I am teaching human beings. In class, I

observe their learning, adjust my pace of teaching, and interact with them. Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.

R: Does this peer coaching programme serve the purpose of facilitating your professional development? If yes, in what ways? If no, why?

A: Yes. It helps me to see where I need to improve. I have been teaching for some time. There is some danger in it. Sometimes I am too confident, falsely believing that my teaching is perfect; sometimes I am not sure about myself, wondering about my performance and students. It is the first time I have participated in peer coaching, and I am so glad that I have done so. I observe my students, and my peer coach observes me. There is, as the old saying goes, a bystander is always clear-minded while a person involved is likely to get muddle-headed.

R: How do you describe the relationship with your coaching partner now as compared to the beginning of the peer coaching programme?

A: We get to know each other better, and there is more trust. When I asked someone to be my peer coach, I thought of someone I trusted and felt comfortable with. During the semester, we talked about our classes and teaching. It was easier and funnier because we shared one class.

R: Having participated in this peer coaching program for one semester, what is the biggest change that has occurred to you as a teacher?

A: The biggest change is that I know I am not perfect and there is always room for improvement and change.

R: Does this peer coaching program help you to build confidence as a teacher?

A: Yes and no. I said yes because it did help me to see my shortcomings and also point out ways for improvement. And “no” because there are still times when I am not quite sure whether I should be a teacher or not. This is probably one drawback

of the program - reduce teachers' confidence by knowing more about one's own shortcoming. I was wondering whether it happens to other teachers, and whether they ask themselves the same question. Knowing one's career is more difficult than I imagine.

R: Would you like to continue to participate in this peer coaching programme?

A: Yes, but I need to change my peer coach since she quitted the job.

R: What did you learn from your partner during that one semester of peer coaching program? (For example, teaching skills, class management skills, teaching philosophy, etc.)

A: It was a new, warm and valuable experience. I guess, at the beginning, it was not an easy task to invite someone into your class and observe you. There must be a basis of trust, of feeling comfortable to have a peer right on the spot when everything is happening in your class, which used to be only you and your students. A classroom, in a sense, is a private place, open only to the legitimate few. To open it up to someone else means that there is letting go of that false sense of security and that strong sense of self-centeredness. A classroom is not a fortress besieged. It was in that process of inviting your peer coach and having her in your place and sharing and accepting your own shortcomings and discovering that you were far from being perfect, that there was new hope of becoming a better teacher.

R: Did you and your partner come up with any new idea(s) in teaching? (For example, teaching skills, class management skills, teaching philosophy, etc.) If yes, please illustrate.

A: The most important and rewarding was improvement in class management skills concerning various aspects of giving a specific lesson and interacting with students, things that might seem as insignificant as where the teacher should be seated when the students were giving their presentations. There were a lot of little conversations after

the peer coach sessions. It is impossible to recall them now. Those conversations were focused on the details of a class. I guess that was what was so interesting and worth trying about peer coach. Your peer coach could see details, or faults, or clues that you were blind to, or unwilling to, or unlikely to see. Conversations about those details fix you up and you start afresh. It is difficult to tell what exactly has happened that makes you a somewhat different teacher, but it just works that way. Years of efforts and struggles, and then having a witness for those endeavors, is fun.

R: What did you learn in the peer coaching process?

A: The essence of peer coach is trust and getting rid of, even just a little bit of, self-centeredness. It enhances the foundation of human relationship, since teachers are no exception and they play a very important role in living that foundation so that their students can enjoy education and go on to trust others in life. Peer coaching forces one to recognize the agonizing truth that one is not perfect and should pretend to be so. In this sense, it is emancipation. And there is hope that there will be a better future and self, not just as teachers.

Appendix D Amy's Classroom Practices and Her Sense-making of the Practices

Classroom practices	Sense-making of the practices (quotations or summaries of participant's statements)	Sense-making (analytic categories)
<p>Asked students from each group to come out and read their prepared poems. After the first student had finished, another student from the second group came out and read his poem. The whole class applauded afterward and teacher praised his good work. The third student came out to read his poem. Teacher asked if the student was thinking of someone when he wrote the poem and the student said no one particular.</p>	<p>I intended to have as much interaction as possible between the students and me and also among the students so that they knew that they were working in groups and the class was on the whole one big group.</p> <p>In class, I observe their learning, adjust my pace of teaching, and interact with them. Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.</p>	<p>Interact and communicate with students.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to learn team work.</p> <p>Teacher being observer.</p> <p>Provide students opportunities to practice using the English language.</p>
<p>Asked students to write down six things of what they did that day, and then asked students to select 3 out of the 6 of those things and put them in time sequence. Teacher asked students what "time sequence" means and asked a student to give an example.</p>	<p>I intended to have as much interaction as possible between the students and me.</p> <p>Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.</p>	<p>Interact and communicate with students.</p> <p>Ensure students understand her instruction</p>
<p>Asks students to arrange the events shown on the PPT slide according to the time sequence.</p> <p>Teacher walks around to check on students' work. Students seem to be on-task.</p>	<p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Teacher being observer.</p>
<p>Asked students to discuss among their group members the term "quality of lives" and think of way to improve it and then report to the class.</p>	<p>Discussion and report gave the students a chance to think, reflect and share their ideas with each other.</p> <p>It's time for college students to think about...what is important for life. That's why I put in discussions in the lead-in part. They need to talk and reach a final agreement and then report to the rest of the class. It gives them time to think, share and talk in front of others. I wish they can learn the importance of team work. Group work provides such a space for them.</p> <p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to think and express their own ideas.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to learn team work.</p>

	<p>learning.</p> <p>They get to know each other and learn to work with different people, instead of sticking with a few friends and losing the chance of getting to know more.</p>	
<p>Gave some illustration to help students understand the term - "quality of lives".</p> <p>Walked around to give individual help.</p>	<p>A reading teacher is there to show the direction, and the students walk to the destination.</p> <p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Provide guidance when necessary.</p>
<p>Asked students to think of practical ways to improve the quality of relationship with family and friends and invited a member from Group 3 to come out and report.</p>	<p>Discussion and report gave the students a chance to think, reflect and share their ideas with each other.</p> <p>Any reflection on the theme would help the students to deepen their understanding of it and also urged them to think about their own lives and their relationships with family and friends.</p> <p>I intended to have as much interaction as possible between the students and me and also among the students so that they knew that they were working in groups and the class was on the whole one big group.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to think and express their own ideas.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to learn team work.</p>
<p>Walked around to check each group to guide their discussion.</p>	<p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Provide guidance when necessary.</p>
<p>Brought up a question – how do we communicate with our parents effectively?</p> <p>Asked one student to share her view, but the student didn't know how to express it in English. Teacher asked her to share it in Chinese and she did.</p>	<p>In class, I observe their learning, adjust my pace of teaching, and interact with them. Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.</p>	<p>Interact and communicate with students.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p>
<p>Asked students to look at the text and asked students some text-related questions shown on a PPT slide.</p> <p>Asked some students to give answers. Some students volunteer their answers.</p> <p>Through the questions, teacher introduced the concept of the topic sentence - being the first sentence of a paragraph and introducing the main idea of the whole paragraph.</p>	<p>Students have not formed the habit of reading English essays. They need guidance in reading, and questions help them to notice and see something special in a story. Instead of my teaching the text to the students, they have to read it and look for answers. I can reduce my teaching time. I am there as a monitor, not as a traditional teacher who gives all the information to a silent and passive class.</p> <p>A reading class helps the students to look at the text from different angles, think and reflect, and learn to appreciate the beauty of this language. A reading teacher is there to show the direction, and the students walk to</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Let students discover and learn by themselves.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to think and express their own ideas.</p> <p>Provide guidance when necessary.</p> <p>Interact and communicate with students.</p>

	<p>the destination.</p> <p>In class, I observe their learning, adjust my pace of teaching, and interact with them. Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.</p> <p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p>	
<p>Asked students to find certain things from the text.</p>	<p>Instead of my teaching the text to the students, they have to read it and look for answers. I can reduce my teaching time. I am there as a monitor, not as a traditional teacher who gives all the information to a silent and passive class.</p> <p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p> <p>A reading teacher is there to show the direction, and the students walk to the destination.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Let students discover and learn by themselves.</p>
<p>Asked students how they understand a relatively difficult sentence in the text.</p> <p>Students didn't seem to understand and had not much response.</p> <p>Teacher gave students some help by explaining some words and restructured the sentence.</p>	<p>Instead of my teaching the text to the students, they have to read it and look for answers. I can reduce my teaching time. I am there as a monitor, not as a traditional teacher who gives all the information to a silent and passive class.</p> <p>A reading class helps the students to look at the text from different angles, think and reflect, and learn to appreciate the beauty of this language. A reading teacher is there to show the direction, and the students walk to the destination.</p> <p>Students are responsible for most of the learning. A teacher oversees the process of learning.</p> <p>In class, I observe their learning, adjust my pace of teaching, and interact with them. Teaching is communication, and communication works better when interaction comes from both sides.</p>	<p>Make students take responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>Encourage students' active involvement.</p> <p>Let students discover and learn by themselves.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for students to think and express their own ideas.</p> <p>Provide guidance when necessary.</p> <p>Interact and communicate with students.</p>