

**UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM**

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**TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE 2011 PRC  
CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING ENGLISH**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis reports an enquiry into Chinese primary and junior high school English teachers' perceptions of, and responses to The Revised Curriculum (2011) for Full-time Compulsory Education. This document claims to hold a very different view of English teaching from previous curricula, but this claim is largely unexplored.

The research first aims to understand the challenges The Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for primary and junior high school teachers of English in the PRC. On the basis of this, the research also aims to understand teachers' beliefs about The Revised Curriculum (2011) and what challenges they identify. Research into effective teaching gives a prominent role to teacher beliefs and knowledge not only about teaching, but also about changing any existing practices. Fullan (1993) argues that any educational reform ultimately relies on teachers, so their views and perceptions are pivotal to the success of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The study was conducted in two phases. Phase one involved a document content analysis of the 2001 and 2011 curricula to identify the changes aimed for in the 2011 curriculum and evaluates how these changes might affect teachers. In this phase of the research, a novel approach was taken to examine teachers' views of the Revised Curriculum (2011) through their activities on web forums in China. Their comments were sampled and analysed using NVivo to generate a map of their views and the relationships between them. The Phase one research showed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) is different from the 2001 version in some important ways. It foregrounds the *humanistic value* of student-centred teaching and learning, while giving teachers free choice of teaching method and a new role by contributing to curriculum development for the classes they teach from reflecting on the effectiveness of their methods and practices.

Phase two of the research, based on the findings of Phase one, used written teacher questionnaire responses and semi-structured individual interviews in order to collect the views of a wider sample of teachers. This thesis reports the results and analysis of the teachers' views and perceptions. The findings amplified the findings from the Phase one research and suggest that teachers have a range of concerns. The teachers in this study were uncertain about their new role; they were not clear about what a shift to student-centred teaching and learning implied. The teachers were also uncertain about the nature of *reflection* on their own practice and the possible accountability this reflection might entail. This study suggests these teachers were finding it challenging to understand the notion of the teacher as a professional who does not simply *know* and *deliver* the curriculum according to the new definition, but is seen as responsible for *designing* and *creating* the curriculum for their own particular students. This study also identifies an important tension between the published curriculum and the assessment system for English in China which, if left unresolved, is likely to leave teachers unable to meet the demands of both.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CLT	=	Communication Language Teaching
CMC	=	Computer Mediated Communication
ELT	=	English Language Teaching
MOE	=	Ministry of Education
PRC	=	People's Republic of China

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

My interest in this topic is rooted in my personal experience. As part of my MA dissertation, I found that Chinese students regarded rote learning as their basic approach during their English language learning experience and wondered whether students' problem solving ability, all-round language use ability and English thinking ability could be improved under the exam-oriented, teacher-centred and book-centred teaching model (Zhang, 2007) used in the PRC at that time. However, when the 2011 curriculum was introduced, I saw new possibilities which addressed some of my original concerns. I was keen to explore these.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) [*PRC English Language Curriculum Standard for Full-time Compulsory Education*] (Ministry of Education, 2011) includes profound changes both to curriculum content and role of the teacher. This is not just a claim made by the authors, but even a cursory inspection shows a high degree of change from the previous version (2001). These changes seem to be about the teachers' professional role, the way they should teach, the goals of English teaching and the materials they should use. However, the nature and extent of such changes has - so far - been unexplored in the west and it is unclear whether or to what extent these changes are understood by either teachers or researchers (Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012).

There is currently no study focusing on the 2011 curriculum and the accompanying challenges that teachers face, so I hope that the results of this study may provide insights into the teachers' problems, roles and demands and as a basis for future related studies whose results may provide insights for positive interventions and support for teachers.

The teaching of English in China has been based on a strongly centralized

curriculum produced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Liao, 2004) for the last fifty years. The Revised Curriculum (2011) is unlike the curricula in many western countries in that it specifies not only what is to be taught but also how it is to be taught - it is a syllabus but also teaching guidance for teachers. This study will demonstrate that the 2011 curriculum has lofty new, pupil-centred goals; it has a different vision of language learning from the earlier curriculum, as it outlines new roles for both teachers and students, and requires teachers and students to engage in different activities and materials from those of the past. This study will argue that The Revised Curriculum (2011) is a very significant educational reform. Fullan (1993) argues that many factors may contribute to achieving the goals of educational reform, but any educational reform ultimately relies on teachers. Therefore, teachers may need to revise their roles, teaching behaviors and views in order to meet The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s requirement. However, as an English teacher of middle school (13-15) pupils, I have found that it is difficult for teachers to implement unfamiliar classroom practices, and this difficulty may result in a gap between the official rhetoric and the teachers' actual instructional practices. I am interested in the changes this revised curriculum aims to bring to the teaching of English and how teachers can best respond to them. This study includes a detailed analysis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) for English language in order to explore the direction of policy changes, the theoretical impetus behind such changes and their implications for teachers. The study will then examine the beliefs and understandings of teachers. This is fundamental to assuring the successful implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The findings of this study reveal the new demands placed on teachers; the ways teachers understand their roles; the ways they understand the Revised Curriculum (2011); their views about their training and practices when teaching; and the implications for teachers, their training and their teaching. If the curriculum is so different from the past, it is important to understand how teachers make sense of it and adapt to it. It is also important to know when or in what areas teachers do not adapt or do not see the need to adapt or feel that they cannot adapt to changes in their role and teaching methods. These are the

preoccupations of my study.

## **1.2 Aims of the study**

The initial aims of this research are to:

- identify the key changes in the 2011 curriculum from the previous, 2001 curriculum and how these re-conceptualize the role of the teacher and the demands of teaching English in the PRC;
- examine the framework, basic concepts, main objectives, teacher roles and the requirements demanded of teachers by The Revised Curriculum (2011).
- explore how teachers understand the changes to the curriculum and the nature of their teaching roles;
- explore how teachers have been trained or educated themselves about the changes to the curriculum;
- identify what the implications of the changes are for the teaching of English teachers in the PRC.

The next chapter, the review of literature, offers the conceptual understanding that underpins these aims and also underpins the selection of an appropriate method and methodology.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the existing research and theory relevant to my study, to make clear not only what the research background is, but also why my research questions are appropriate against this background. The Revised Curriculum (2011) has not been the subject of academic study yet, so the research reviewed covers the following areas:

- research into what it means to be a good teacher of English and how this is represented in the 2011 curriculum;
- the role of teachers' beliefs and how the new underlying philosophy is represented in the 2011 curriculum;
- the nature of teachers' subject knowledge and understanding, and how this is represented in the 2011 curriculum;
- the sort of training which teachers need according to the teachers themselves and the Revised Curriculum (2011) and how this is represented in The Revised Curriculum (2011);
- the definition of curriculum;
- the relationship between the curriculum and society;
- theories of educational changes;
- the use of resources in English language teaching in China.

All these are huge areas of research and the aim of this chapter is to draw these areas together to provide a background to my study. I will consider each area and discuss the literature and how it relates to The Revised Curriculum (2011).

## 2.2 The Revised Curriculum (2011)

In the recent past, many English teachers in China believed that to ensure that their students passed the competitive national examination was their major mission (Anderson, 1993; Zhang, 2007). Studies of Chinese students' learning situations note that students in China concentrate painstakingly on the grammar-based examinations, which seldom put emphasis on communicative skills (Hu, 2002) and that Chinese students tend to regard intensive reading, memorization, rote learning and the use of translation as their basic approaches during their English language learning process (Hu, 2002). Students believe they need to accept and remember all the knowledge and information taught by their teachers and textbooks (Hu, 2002); they are seen as the passive recipients of knowledge (Hu, 2002; Littlewood, 2000) and the literature has repeatedly been concerned about students' (lack of) problem solving ability, basic language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), their ability to appropriately use the English language and their conceptual, thinking ability in this exam-oriented, teacher-centred and book-centred teaching model (Zhang, 2007). However, Littlewood (2000) examined whether Asian students wanted this teacher-centred approach and concluded that: 'Asian students do not, in fact, wish to be spoon-fed with facts from an all-knowing *fount of knowledge*. They want to explore knowledge themselves and find their own answers' (p 34). The literature suggests a growing awareness that the exam-oriented model does not meet the requirements of students' individual development or students' character development.

Since the early nineties, in order to address these issues, the Ministry of Education of the PRC has undertaken a series of English curriculum reforms which are of the utmost importance to tens of thousands of teachers of English in China, but have not been discussed in the English literature about teaching English in China. The earlier, 2001 Curriculum (Piloted Document, MOE, 2001) was published in July, 2001 and piloted in 42 national experimental areas at length between 2001-2011 (Ding, 2012; Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012; Zheng, 2012). This pilot document was revised in light of the pilot study findings then became the basis for the Revised Curriculum (2011).

The piloting process is too lengthy to discuss here, but the result - the Revised Curriculum - is significantly different from the 2001 piloted version, especially the areas related to the professional role of the teacher, the teacher's subject knowledge and use of that subject knowledge, and student-centred teaching. The new document serves as an authoritative curriculum for English in China; it specifies the teaching content, defines a new role for English courses, sets new teaching objectives, provides teaching guidance for teachers, sets new roles for English teachers and suggests assessment measures.

One aim of this reform is that teaching English in China may be improved by being more student-centred, by teachers being proactive and taking more responsibility for the totality of student outcomes - skills and character development as well as knowledge (MOE, 2011). However, on route to this change, there are still some unaddressed issues to be researched and overcome. These are discussed as the background to this study.

An internet survey of more than 4000 teachers' views about the 2001 curriculum in 29 national pilot areas (21st century education research institute, 2011) found that 74% of the respondents endorsed the basic concepts and target framework of the 2001 curriculum. However, only 24.6% of the teachers felt satisfied with the actual effect of the 2001 curriculum. They believed that the 2001 curriculum would not be able to achieve the expected goals and lacked guidance for teachers. 52.3% of the teachers agreed that the '2001 curriculum promotes the quality of education, to some extent', but 31% of them thought the effect was not obvious, and 16% claimed that the 'exam-oriented education' phenomenon became more seriously entrenched in the 2001 curriculum. This survey of the pilot curriculum also highlighted teachers' worries about their roles, although the nature of the survey means the readers cannot know how representative the results are. 83% of the respondents felt they were facing big changes in their teaching methods. 73% of the respondents agreed that their subject knowledge was not systematic/adequate enough, they felt that the 2001 curriculum made their teaching more difficult. In addition, 62% of teachers in the rural areas claimed that 'rural areas are

facing more difficulties in implementing the 2001 curriculum#. In terms of ‘the main problems in implementing the 2001 curriculum’, ‘assessment and exams’ ranked in first place, ‘education resource deficiency’, and ‘insufficient training’ were in second and third place. Other factors such as ‘the insufficiency of competent teachers’, ‘the fast speed of the implementation’, and ‘lack of guidance’ have made it more difficult for teachers to implement the curriculum. Many teachers claimed that if the college entrance examination system stays the same, then the new assessment under the 2001 curriculum is unlikely to be sustainable. Respondents from rural areas were more concerned about the problem of insufficient training and resources. These are certainly issues which need to be investigated. As a result of the pilot process of the curriculum, the Revised Curriculum (2011) is very different in some important respects: the teacher’ roles, professional development and student-centred teaching and other ways because these were the main issues brought up by the survey and have hitherto not been examined in detail but will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.

### **2.3 What it means to be a good teacher**

The issue of what it means to be a good teacher is very important for my study, because the curriculum brings together what is to be taught and the best ways of teaching. In doing so, it creates pressures for teachers by describing what a *good* teacher is, which is very different from the traditional view of the teacher that most teachers will have grown up with and hold dear. For this reason, I wish to consider traditional Chinese and western views of good teaching, because I believe these contrasting views are central to the evaluation of the Revised Curriculum (2011)’s aims and objectives and the change in the demands it places on teachers.

Cortazzi and Jin (1996) note the very different cultural views of teaching, learning and classrooms, which are an important background to this study. They conclude that Chinese teaching norms tend to focus on large class sizes; discipline in the classroom; transmitting knowledge to students; learning

methods such as memorisation/rote learning, imitation and repetition, all influenced by the pressure of an exam-oriented education. Although teachers in China recognise the importance of individuality, their priorities are knowledge mastery rather than collaborative knowledge construction between teacher and students, which pay less attention to individual feelings. However, western teachers attach greater importance to classroom communication and individual learning, and also criticize the Chinese rote learning approach for its lack of creativity, self-expression and interaction (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). The findings of Cortazzi and Jin's (1996) study also show that there is a persistent belief in China that anyone can be successful in language learning if he/she is diligent but this diligence normally relies on rote learning approaches (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). These disparate cultural backgrounds have come together in The Revised Curriculum (2011), so the review of literature will look at ways they underpin the curriculum.

### **2.3.1 The Definition of a 'Good Teacher' in different cultures**

In China, an effective English teacher has four important features: good pedagogical knowledge which focuses on control in the classroom; good subject knowledge; positive beliefs; and to be of good character (Xie, 2006). Cortazzi and Jin's (1994) survey of students confirmed this view and noted that students thought subject knowledge to be the most important issue. A good teacher is the *master* of her subject.

In the west, Davies and Pearse (2000) note that the definition of a *successful English teacher* does include emphasis on a teacher's subject knowledge. However, from the pedagogical knowledge aspect, the definition of an *effective English teacher* in China puts more value on the importance of controlling the class, while the definition proposed by Davies and Pearse (2000) puts more emphasis on understanding student development and requires English teachers to make their classes more communicative, which reflects the importance of CLT for English language teaching.

### **2.3.2 Confucius's definitions of what makes a good teacher and the Revised Curriculum**

A *good teacher* is a cultural construct and I believe The Revised Curriculum (2011) challenges the traditional Chinese construct of a *good* teacher. The Revised Curriculum (2011) is concerned with the experience and training of existing teachers in China, so it is important to review the background to identify how Confucian ideas are included or challenged in the 2011 curriculum.

In the modern PRC, Confucius still plays an important role as a key cultural philosopher, underpinning many aspects of Chinese life, but especially teaching and the relationship between teachers and pupils. The figure of Confucius has been a central feature of revisionist assessment and now. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) actually described himself as a teacher and his legacy has left a very special and distinctive place in Chinese culture and society for teachers (Gu, 2005; Rao, 1998; Run-hua, 2006, Wang, 1999). He set a glorious and lofty example for all teachers to emulate, therefore, Confucius is known as 'an exemplary teacher for all ages' (wanshi shibiao) and 'the greatest sage and teacher' (zhisheng xianshi) (Rao, 1998, p 49; Wang, 1999, p84). From his own teaching practice, Confucius stated the requirements for being a good teacher in Chinese culture and I argue that these values still have a very important influence on understandings about the role of teachers in modern East Asian societies, which are often referred to as *Confucian Heritage Cultures*. Indeed, Confucianism, or at least a revised version using his name as a reference point, has become more widespread in the last decade than at other times in the history of the PRC (Yu, 2008). However, a different view of the teacher in the curriculum appears to be emerging within the 2011 curriculum's revised policy for the teaching of English. Additionally, suggestions for a change in content in the revised curriculum challenges past perspectives.

### **2.3.2.1 Challenges to Confucian views of teacher domination in the classroom**

The modern revisionist representation of Confucius believes that the teacher plays a dominant role in the teaching process (Rao, 1998). Teachers, it is argued in the traditional context, should already be very knowledgeable and able to answer students' questions at any time (Brick, 1991), and have good class control skills (Degen et al., 1998). Confucius suggested that the teacher should be a paragon of virtue and learning as an example for students to follow (Rao, 1998; Scollon, 1999; Wang, 1999; Run-hua, 2006). As a result, English teaching across the PRC has, in general, been quite teacher-centred and teacher-dominated (Adamson et al, 2000; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006); however, it could be argued that almost all curriculum subjects have been taught in this manner. The modern revisionist representation of Confucius suggests setting a high standard for teachers: only when a teacher can learn well and conduct him/herself in an appropriate manner, can he/she teach well. Therefore, a good teacher should be a good learner, suggesting she should be aware of the learning process and behave in such a way as to be a good role model and uses his/her actions to positively affect students' development.

Today, a variety of titles given to teachers in China reflect their social and moral obligations and teachers enjoy rather more respect than in the west (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996) but they also have a strict relationship defined by Confucianism, of mutual respect and care. In Confucian teaching, there is less about students feeling comfortable in class and more about whether they are making progress (Rao, 1998; Run-hua, 2006). Teachers in China do not expect to be challenged or questioned by their students, leading to the classroom culture described by Cortazzi and Jin (1996), above, where students do not question teachers.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) does, however, put more emphasis on the students' learning experience rather than the tradition view where teachers are much more concerned about their pupils' progress. The implication is that positive learning experiences and making progress are not mutually exclusive,

so perhaps students can learn even better when they can understand their progress and feel positive about it. In a traditional teaching environment, teachers are seen as far exceeding students in terms of their level of knowledge and moral development (Scollon, 1999; Chen-chung, 1984), thus teachers have absolute control over taking initiatives and are seen as initiators of knowledge while students can only be passive recipients (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). The traditional teaching relationship between teachers and students can sometimes be problematic for students in language classes. Run-hua's questionnaire (2006) found that 54% of students chose the option 'the teacher seldom talks to me'; 48% chose 'the teacher cannot understand my emotions'; 40% selected 'I cannot find a teacher to talk with'; and 38% agreed with 'teacher makes me feel very nervous and uncomfortable'.

The teacher's role in the western tradition is different in a way that challenges the Confucian approach. A good teacher should be a good guide, organiser, cooperator and communicator rather than the dominant actor (McBer, 2000). The ideal relationship between teacher and students should be where they are engaged in a collective enterprise rather than one with an authoritative exemplar as in the traditional teaching context in China. The *good teacher* in the western tradition puts more emphasis on the student's development. This creates a different classroom culture in language classes in China compared to the west (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

The expected teacher roles documented in The Revised Curriculum (2011) share some common features with the role of the 'good teacher' suggested by McBer (2000) by putting more emphasis on communicative language teaching and all it implies for the use of language in the classroom and students' development. The Revised Curriculum (2011) challenges the dominant role of teachers in the traditional teaching context in China and promotes more student-centred autonomous learning, encourages Chinese students to undertake more communicative performance in English classes. For example, an activity (see Appendix 1.1.) in the 'recommended classroom activities' part of The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, pp 100-101) emphasises what the



students should do, making clear that the teacher's role is to 'guide' and 'encourage'. This is a very new and different emphasis for Chinese teachers coming from a Confucian background and challenges the dominant role of the teacher in the classroom.

In The Revised Curriculum (2011) teachers are asked to 'guide students to cooperate with others, help each other, and cooperate to achieve a shared task' (MOE, 2011, p 20), and to 'guide students to learn from each other, make progress together, help students learn to study independently, let them enjoy the happiness of communication and cooperation in the learning process' (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26) so that students can participate in the learning process more actively through different kinds of pair work and group-work. This puts the role of the teacher nearer that of facilitator than that of leader suggesting the influence of western ideas of language teaching.

However, below, I argue that, because of the perceived dominant role of the teacher in the classroom in the traditional Chinese teaching context and the influence of teachers' beliefs and experience, it may be very challenging for teachers and students in China to adopt pedagogical practices that seems to place teachers on a par with their students and challenge the teachers' authority, especially as it seems to be against Chinese cultural expectations to adopt The Revised Curriculum (2011) as it may mean teachers losing face (Ping, 2010). In this connection, Chinese teachers of English may find The Revised Curriculum (2011) highly threatening and they may face personal and cultural challenges in trying to adapt themselves from being good teachers in a traditional context to being good teachers in a modern context.

#### **2.3.2.2. The teacher as learner**

According to Confucius, learning is the foundation of teaching, and only if a teacher learns well can he/she teach well (Run-hua, 2006). In Confucius' view, only when a teacher has the virtue of 'learning without satiety' and is a constant - life-long - learner, can he/she stimulate students' intellectual curiosity (Run-hua, 2006, p 29), master a profound body of knowledge (Rao,

1998) and qualify to be called a good teacher (Rao, 1998). However, the nature of their learning is not clear and Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHCs), or at least a revised version using his name as a reference point, have been accused of prioritizing mastery and rote learning (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). The Revised Curriculum (2011) discusses a range of learning for teachers which are more than simply knowing about English, but includes requirements for three aspects of English teachers' development by:

- renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency constantly;
- accumulating teachers' pedagogical knowledge and improving their practical teaching ability constantly;
- carrying out teaching practices based on reflection to encourage dynamic sustainable professional development (MOE 2011, pp 32-33).

This idea of learning for teachers is the very basis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and, for this reason, it is important to continue this review with a discussion of the research into the knowledge, beliefs and training teachers may need.

## **2.4 Teachers' Knowledge**

Teachers' knowledge from a western perspective has been heavily researched, especially since early 1980s (Ben-Peretz, 2011; Calderhead, 1996; Carter, 1990; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Woolfolk Hoy et al., 2006). According to Clandinin and Hamilton (2010), initially, studies focused on 'knowledge for teachers', and then shifted to 'teacher thinking' and finally to 'teacher knowledge' (p 1). Views of teacher knowledge underlie teachers' actions (Carter, 1990) and teacher knowledge affects every aspects of the teaching act (Connelly *et al.*, 1997).

In 2011, Ben-Perez reviewed important studies on teacher knowledge for language teaching and noted that the focus has shifted from *subject matter* to *personal aspects of knowledge*, and has recently shifted to *multicultural teachers' knowledge* but that, ultimately, most models of teacher knowledge are based on one or more aspects of Shulman's work (1987) which proposes

several types of teacher knowledge:

- Content knowledge (subject matter knowledge; a teacher's understanding of the subject she/he teaches in the classroom);
- General pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of teaching methods and strategies that are not limited to particular disciplines);
- Curriculum knowledge (knowledge of the programmes and materials that support and guide teachers within a specific subject area);
- Pedagogical-content knowledge (knowledge of the way to represent the subject matter for learners);
- Learners' knowledge and learners' characteristics (knowledge and understanding of different types of learner);
- Knowledge of educational contexts (knowledge of the learning environment);
- Knowledge of educational ends (knowledge of the goals, attitudes and beliefs based on the classroom experience).

Shulman (1986) suggests teachers should not only be able to define the accepted truths for learners within the subject area, but also be capable of explaining to them 'why a particular proposition is deemed warranted, why it is worth knowing, and how it relates to other propositions' (p 9). This implies that teachers' subject knowledge encompasses both knowledge of the subject matter itself and knowledge of the context within which students learn (Alexander *et al.*, 2002). For example, if an English teacher needs detailed knowledge about a foreign culture, he/she must also have an understanding of the history of the formation of the culture and what it means to learn in this different culture. So, the process of helping and guiding learners learn specific subject matter includes not only delivering the prescribed content, but also enabling learners to participate in the learning process by understanding their background - where they are coming from, in everyday parlance.

Many studies demonstrate that subject knowledge plays a significant role in the success of teaching. Borko *et al.* (1988) indicate that student teachers with high

levels of subject knowledge put more emphasis on students' needs and make lesson preparation less detailed. Grossman *et al.* (1989)'s study showed that trainee teachers with good subject knowledge tend to help students build their own knowledge structures rather than just transmit knowledge by depending on students' memory skills. Brown *et al.* (1997) found that effective teachers of numeracy with high standards of subject knowledge tend to put more emphasis on establishing the connections between mathematical ideas, and promote understanding through discussion.

The definitions of the knowledge of specialist English teachers at secondary level in UK are well developed (Poulson and Radnor, 1996). Effective teachers of English (as a school subject) or other subjects tend to have a rich knowledge base within their discipline (Medwell *et al.*, 1999). This knowledge base normally encompasses the following elements: knowledge about teaching content; knowledge of learners and their learning; and knowledge of effective teaching within the subject area (Medwell *et al.*, 1999). Daw (2000) emphasises the central importance of subject knowledge for teachers and suggests that an effective model of the importance of subject knowledge needs to include:

- The organisation and definition of knowledge in English
- Knowledge of the content and skills that have been selected as Curriculum Standards
- Knowledge of the assessment of students' development
- Knowledge of pedagogy for particular students' needs

Reviewing the literature about teachers' knowledge, I conclude that subject knowledge is widely known and accepted as an essential and key component for teachers to acquire and that teachers' own subject knowledge can affect their classroom practice. However, it is also clear that subject knowledge per se is not enough to make a good teacher nor is it a simple concept.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) notes The core of implementing The Revised

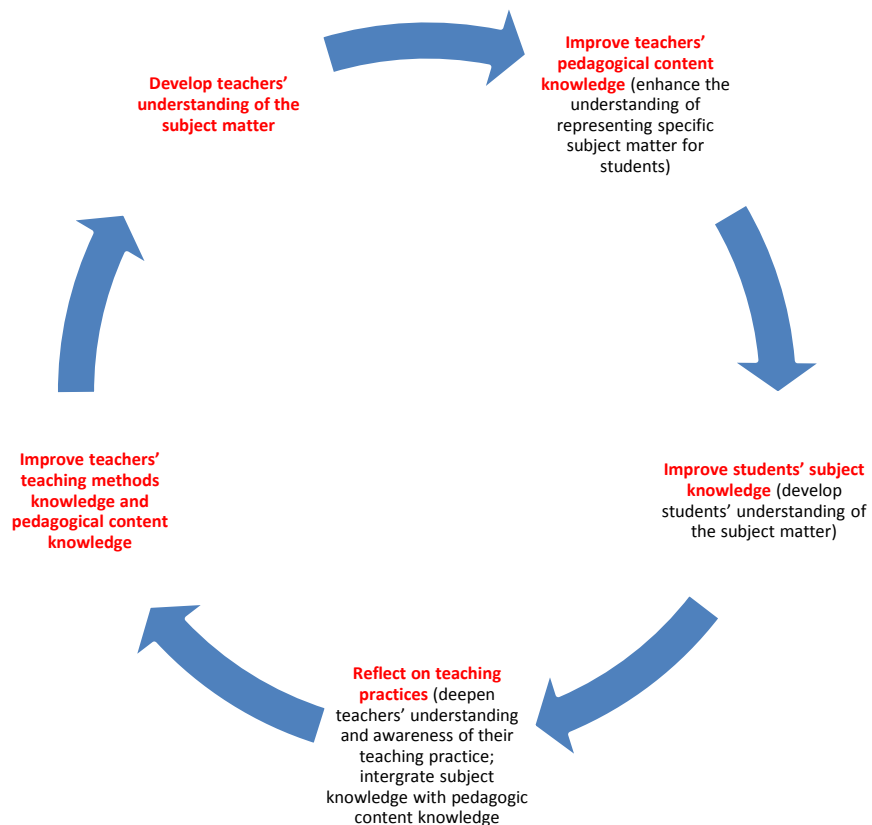
Curriculum (2011) effectively lies in the level of teacher professional development (MOE 2011, p 32) and that teacher professional development has three aspects (MOE 2011, pp 32-33):

- renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing teachers' language proficiency;
- developing teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and improving their practical teaching ability;
- reflecting on teaching practices and promoting the dynamic and sustainable development of their professional skills;

The Revised Curriculum (2011) also provides suggestions for English teachers about how to renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency (MOE, 2011, pp 32-33), which are summarised below:

- English teachers should use English as the target language in the classroom;
- great importance should be attached to improving teachers' basic linguistic knowledge (including phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and discourse);
- teachers should have good all-round language use ability;
- teachers should have the ability to read professional literature and take an active part in academic exchanges;
- teachers should have strong cross-cultural awareness and competence;
- teachers should constantly update their linguistic knowledge and improve their language skills.

Moreover, The Revised Curriculum (2011) links teachers' subject knowledge with pedagogical content knowledge and reflective teaching to offer a teaching model (Figure 2.1) which creates a virtuous cycle for effective English teaching.



**Figure 2.1 Cycle for effective English teaching**

(Created by Man Lei, Adapted from MOE, 2011, pp 32-33)

## 2.5 Relationship between teacher beliefs and practices

The beliefs of teachers and their effects on teaching are an important part of understanding teachers and may be the key to the success of educational changes (Brummelhuis, 1995). Brown and Cooney (1982) defined beliefs as the key determining factors of an individual's action which guide their behaviour. Richards (1998) notes that beliefs about English language teaching (including teachers' values, attitudes, expectations, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning) are normally affected by: their previous experience as learners at school; their experience as classroom observers; their teaching experience; their prior training experience.

Researchers' have varied views on the relationship between teacher beliefs and their classroom practices. Some studies show that it is consistent relationship

between teacher beliefs and practices. For example, Pajares (1992) refers to beliefs as *messy constructs*, but argues that there is a close relationship between belief and knowledge. He points out that teachers' beliefs are far more influential than their knowledge on the way they organise tasks and solve problems, on the kinds of decisions they make, on the way they plan lessons, and on the way they behave in the classroom. Several researchers (Breen *et al.*, 2001; Burns, 1992; Gu, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Moon, 2000; Nespor, 1987; Richards and Lockhart, 1996; Richards, 1998; Smith, 1996; Smith, 2002; Trappes-Lomax and McGrath, 1999; White, 1999; Woods, 1991) have a similar view about the importance of teachers' beliefs for ELT classroom practice, showing that teachers' practices are highly consistent with their beliefs. English language teachers bring their own beliefs to situations related to English teaching, and their beliefs are normally regarded as important predictors of their general classroom practice. Their concept of teaching can be regarded as reflecting their beliefs about teaching, which affects their understanding and attitudes and also guides their behavior.

Teaching methods mean the way teachers put their beliefs into classroom practice. Therefore, it is necessary to understand teachers' beliefs to design any professional development programme that aims to change classroom practices (Medwell *et al.*, 1999). In the situation of curriculum reform, Kennedy (1988) suggests, 'teachers may be required to change the way they think about certain issues, which is a deeper and more complex change' (p 329). That is to say, it may be necessary and important to change teachers' beliefs in order to implement any educational reform, as Fullan (1982, 1991, 2001) has discussed.

However, some studies suggest that changes in teacher beliefs, understandings, and attitudes are likely to follow changes in their behavior rather than determine it. For example, Huberman's study (1981) of a reading programme innovation showed that initial teacher training and ongoing assistance should be provided for teachers to help them adapt to a new programme. All the teachers, trainers and administrators in the study suffered a period of high confusion and anxiety because of the introduction of the new programme.

According to Huberman, after the new programme started, the teachers still needed some time to link their behaviour with the concepts of the programme. Even six months later, the teachers still had little sense of why specific behaviour patterns can lead to certain results.

Some research also indicates that there may be inconsistencies between teacher beliefs and their observed practices (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Desforges and Cockburn 1987; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Galton, Simon *et al.* 1980; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Richards, 1996, 1998, 2001; Olafson and Schraw, 2006; Duffy and Anderson, 1984) and some studies have even found no significant correlation between the two (Hoffman and Kugle, 1982; Yim, 1993). This may be because many other factors that can greatly influence teachers' beliefs during their actual classroom practice (Borg, 2003; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Richards, 1996). For example, there may be inconsistencies between beliefs and practices if the teacher is in the process of coping with changes in his/her beliefs before putting changes into actual practice (Richardson *et al.*, 1991) when some propositions are incompatible (Schutz, 1970), or when there are multiple belief systems (Graden, 1996). Moreover, it was suggested that different research methods affect whether the findings indicate limited consistencies between teacher beliefs and their practices (Basturkmen, 2012), but sophisticated methods do not necessarily indicate a high degree of correspondence either.

Indeed, according to Pajares (1992), the relationship between teacher beliefs and their practice is complicated; it can be described as *dialectical* rather than *unilateral*. Thus, belief and practice can affect each other: beliefs can guide and shape behaviour but reflections on experiences and behaviour can influence (and possibly change) beliefs (Breen *et al.*, 2001; Sato and Kleinsasser, 2004). However, although many studies (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Fung and Chow, 2002) have indicated a limited correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their practice, Basturkmen *et al.*'s (2004) research findings show that the practices of more experienced teachers tend to relate to their beliefs more clearly than those of novice teachers. Consequently, Basturkmen (2012)



suggests that further studies concerning teacher beliefs should compare the results obtained from the relatively experienced with those from inexperienced teachers (in the same or a similar school). Thus my study will take teachers' experience into consideration when I examine teachers' perceptions and needs in relation to the Revised Curriculum (2011).

## **2.6 Teacher Training**

The Revised Curriculum (2011) tells English teachers to improve their level of professionalism (教师专业化发展) through continuous learning in a number of areas (see Section 2.4) and demands that teachers should constantly update their language knowledge and proficiency in order to be good teachers in a modern society. Teacher training plays an important role in how far curriculum changes can be successfully implemented (Carless, 1998; Vandenberghe, 2002). Vandenberghe (2002) claims that teachers need guidance and opportunities to learn the new content and methods of communicating with learners otherwise educational reform cannot be implemented successfully.

As discussed above, Chinese teachers' views of teaching are likely to be influenced by traditional teaching concepts, therefore, when examining the Revised Curriculum (2011), it is important to examine how the curriculum addresses subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and what advice teachers are given and of what sort. Teacher training programmes, therefore, need to be capable of updating teachers' knowledge and make huge changes to teachers' existing beliefs to increase their awareness of the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) in order to help them adapt to the innovation. However, teacher training provision in China is mainly through short intensive courses attended by teachers on a selection basis and so do not support all teachers. Even if short courses have a huge impact on some teachers, those teachers, without proper guidance, may have difficulty understanding the new concepts or fall back on their previous teaching experiences and ignore the innovations (Vandenberghe, 2002).

Moreover, as Ping pointed out (2015), there is a common problem for teacher trainers in China that their training programme lacks of interactions and trainees tend to be unresponsive, which Ping (2015) described the training as passive class with silent learners. This could be a frustrating experience for both trainers and trainees which may lead to some unexpected results (Ping, 2015), for example, the passive training is not stimulating and interesting for trainees; trainees may ignore the value of the things they have learned during training programme because the lack of motivation; the trainer may lack of enthusiasm and energy about teaching the class; trainees may not understand the training content well because they tend to not interrupt the trainer with their questions. As discussed in Section 2.3.2.1 in Chapter Two, two reasons may casue this passive learning approach. The most important reason is due to the high authority and hierarchical society in Chinese culture which lowers learners' status and lead them to be passive recipients to receive whatever the higher status teachers transmit to them. The second reason is that questions or challenges from learners may put teachers at the risk of losing face because they may not have the correct answer.

Another potential problem concerns the assessment system in China, especially the College Entrance Examination. If the assessment system stays the same, it seems less meaningful to put emphasis on the new content (for example, communicative activities) that will not be tested in the examinations. Since competition in China is so central to success, teachers may not focus on training for the curriculum changes, and students may fall back on being passive recipients of knowledge, paying little regard to the curriculum changes.

## **2.7 Relationship between curriculum and society**

This section reports on important developments in English curriculum in China in the last 50 years, with a focus on the compulsory level of education which is the centre piece in this study. This is important information for understanding the current curriculum and degree of change.

Learning English has become a worldwide activity (Fishman, 1996; Britton et al., 1990 Brutt-Grifflern 2002; Crystal 1997; Graddol, 1997; McArthur, 2001; MOE, 2011; Pan and Block, 2011). The British Council (1995) conducted a survey worldwide. Of the 1,398 respondents, 96.3% agreed that English acted as and will still act as the world's leading language of international communication in the future. As China is a rising economic power (second only to the US) within the world at present (Arrighi, 2007), an increasing number of Chinese people have been busy with their English studies because English will stand them in good stead for the future (MOE, 2011; Pan and Block, 2011, p 396). The inclusion of English as a school subject all over the world has been prompted by various motivations. In some countries, English has been adopted as a unifying lingua franca for the purpose of administration, education and broadcasting; elsewhere, for performing the functions of international exchange, business, scientific development, economic progress, international competition (Ross, 1992); national construction, and empowerment or repression (Adamson and Morris, 1997; Pennycook, 1996). As an internationally used language, English plays an essential role in world trade and international communications, which makes English study a significant strategy for implementing globally-oriented policies for 'modernisation' (Adamson and Morris, 1997). This has lead to an increasing demand for learning English (Norton and Wu, 2001).

At the national level, the Chinese leadership seen English language learning as essential to the modernization of the state and social progress (Jin and Cortazzi, 1996; Ross, 1992; Adamson and Morris, 1997). According to Tsang (2000), after the New PRC was established in 1949, particularly after the reform and open-door policies announced in 1978 the Chinese government has tried to build a socialist country with Chinese characteristics by emphasising ideological liberation, reform and innovation. This indicates the beginning of the post-modernisation of political life in China as it shows China's government's attempts to modernise and innovate (Jin and Li, 2011). Because the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders support Western-style *modernisation* policies (with Chinese characteristics), English language

learning is seen as essential for obtaining scientific knowledge and technological expertise in order to deal with international affairs (Adamson and Morris, 1997; Hu, 2003), and to help China along the path to modernisation (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996b; Hu, 2003; Xu, 1990).

English language learning has an important role and status in China's modernisation programme and people in China's pursuit of personal welfare, so English teaching in China has been gaining increasing attention and popularity (Hu, 2002; Hu, 2003; MOE, 2011; Pan and Block, 2011, p 396; Ross, 1992). There has been an urgent demand to improve English teaching in the Chinese education system, particularly at the compulsory education stage (MOE, 2011).

On a personal level, many English learners have high instrumental motivation to learn English. A good level of English can offer more educational, social and economic opportunities: to enter university; to study abroad; to get a desirable job, especially those wishing to work in companies which have international business; to read material in English; and be eligible for promotion to higher professional ranks (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996b; Ng and Tang, 1997; Zhou and Chen, 1991; Hu, 2003). Many English learners regard English as a valuable asset which provides access to both material resources and better personal development and learn it without having any personal intrinsic interest in it (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996b; Gao and Li, 2002; Hu, 2005). Moreover, learning English is compulsory in middle schools and colleges in China, and from September 2001, learning English became compulsory in Primary schools from Grade 3 onwards as well (MOE, 2001; Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, p 4).

Foreign language education at all levels in China reflects the changes in the socio-political context of the time (Adamson, 2004; Adamson and Morris, 1997; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996b; Hildebrandt and Liu, 1991; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Lam, 2002, 2007; Lu, 1995; Xu, 1985). Many researchers (Adamson and Morris, 1997; Hu, 2005; Scovel, 1995; Wang and Lam 2009; Yi, 2010) have

traced the development of English education in China; normally three periods are identified: the first period from 1949-1965, the second from 1966-1976 and the third from 1977 onwards. The Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976 is a huge historical issue and divided the period into three parts (Lam, 2002, p 245). This section mainly follows Lam's (2002, p 246) division and divides the sixty years of English curriculum change in PRC since 1949 into six phases, as shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Six phases in English language education in China**

(Lam, 2002, p 246)

<b>Years</b>	<b>Phases in English Education</b>	<b>Historical Period</b>
1951-1956	The interlude with Russian	Before the Cultural Revolution
1957-1965	Back-to-English	
1966-1970	Repudiation of English learning	During the Cultural Revolution
1971-1976	English for renewing ties with the West	
1977-1990	English for modernisation	After the Cultural Revolution
1991 onwards	English for international stature	

From 1902 to 1922, the Japanese influence on China meant that English teaching in China was modeled on Japanese practices, prioritizing reading and translation with little or no attention to spoken English. However, as British and American influence grew, English teaching began to emphasise spoken English and listening. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, China's relationship with the Soviet Union meant language learning leaned towards Russian, and English teachers had to learn and subsequently teach, Russian, while English as a subject was deleted from the school curriculum. However, from early 1959, as China's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated,

China's role in international affairs made a good command of English necessary. As a result, English teaching was gradually re-introduced into the school curriculum in addition to Russian. Since 1977, with the end of the Cultural Revolution, English teaching has been developing vigorously (Adamson, 2004).

Learning English in China has only really a fifty year history, and this was interrupted by the Cultural Revolution. Today, however, all children in China study English for 8/9 years, which has created a massive, unprecedented demand for teachers and resources of the English language. The Government is keen to promote English for economic reasons and to address the demand for it with a national curriculum and textbooks. This historical background is important for understanding the approaches that have been taken to English teaching and therefore today's curriculum. However, this study concentrates on the most recent history, particularly the origins of the 2001 piloted curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) for English, which, I will argue in Chapter Four, includes some major changes in the direction of English teaching.

The 2001 Curriculum [English Language curriculum standard for Full-time Compulsory Education] (MOE, 2001), was published in July, 2001 and piloted in 42 national experimental areas (Ding, 2012; Yu, 2012; Zheng, 2012) at length between 2001-11 (Ding, 2012; Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012; Zheng, 2012). In order to fully promote China's development and reforms for quality-oriented education and further the reforms of compulsory education, the PRC Ministry of Education began its tracking investigation on a large scale from 2003 to 2007 (Wang, 2012). About 117,000 respondents were involved into this government survey including all the provincial education administration departments, the headmasters, teachers, students and parents from the national experimental areas to give the Ministry of Education a thorough understanding of the outcomes of the experimental research into English curriculum standards (Wang, 2012). After summarizing the information, discovering the existing problems and gathering advice from English subject experts, scholars, researchers, and teachers, the Ministry of Education authorised the revision

group for Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards to carry out the revision and discussion of the curriculum standards (Ding, 2012; Zheng, 2012).

The basic concept and target framework of the 2001 curriculum was, apparently, unanimously endorsed by a vast numbers of teachers (Yu, 2012; Wang, 2012), though the evidence is not available for inspection. This pilot document became The Revised Curriculum (2011). However, the resulting revised curriculum has been changed significantly from the 2001 piloted version, especially the elements relating to the professional role of the teacher, the teacher's subject knowledge and the use of that subject knowledge, and effective English teaching. The detailed analysis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) in comparison with the 2001 pilot curriculum will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## **2.8 Curriculum and curriculum definitions**

### **2.8.1 The definition of a Curriculum**

In a public or government school context in China, education is structured through the curriculum and the subjects represented within it. The term 'curriculum' is widely-known and used but encompasses a broad range of definitions. In the simplest definition, the *New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* defines 'curriculum' as 'a course of study'. This seems very similar to the definition of 'syllabus' which is defined as to 'concise statements of ... [a] course of study'. David (2001) clarifies the difference between these two terms by pointing out that, 'syllabus' implies a narrower meaning, focusing on the detailed content (what needs to be taught and learnt) and 'curriculum' is broader, including the 'hidden' aspect of a learning setting. A narrower, functional definition is proposed by Celce-Murcia & Olshtain (2000), suggesting curriculum is:

A document of an official nature, published by a leading or central educational authority in order to serve as a framework or a set of guidelines for the teaching of a subject area [...] in a broad and varied

context (p 185).

Stenhouse (1975), on the other hand, views curriculum in a broader way as:

An attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice (Stenhouse, 1975, p 4).

This last definition is more valuable, for it emphasises three main points: 1) that a curriculum is based on educational principles 2) that it is open to interpretation and 3) that it is actually practicable. In my study, the meaning of ‘curriculum’ approaches that Celce-Murcia & Olshtain’s (2000) and Stenhouse’s (1975) but has some differences. The Revised Curriculum (2011) is authorized and published by the Ministry of Education in China; it serves as an authoritative curriculum for English; it specifies the teaching content, new role of English courses, sets new teaching objectives, provides teaching guidance for teachers, sets new roles for English teachers and suggests assessment measures. However, the Revised Curriculum (2011) is open to interpretation. Teachers are not just blindly following The Revised Curriculum (2011) but are required to adjust and be creative within the curriculum (MOE, 2011). The Revised Curriculum (2011) is also genuinely practicable. Unlike the curricula in many western countries, it specifies not only what is to be taught but also how it is to be taught - it is a syllabus but also teaching guidance for teachers. The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lofty new, student-centred goals. Compared to its predecessor, it embodies a different vision of language learning, different roles for the teachers and students, and demands different activities and materials.

## **2.9 Educational change**

This section considers why educational change occurs because the changes in the curriculum I have introduced in the Revised Curriculum (2011) are an example of wide and highly significant educational change.



### **2.9.1 Theories of educational change**

Educational change is usually initiated from one of two directions. One kind of educational change is referred to as ‘from above’, ‘top-down’ or ‘imposed change’ (Fullan, 1994; Wideen and Pye, 1994), that is, educational change initiated by policy makers and often undertaken with researchers’ support to help schools implement innovation. Another kind of change is labeled ‘grassroots’, ‘bottom-up’ or ‘voluntary change’ (Fullan 1994; Wideen and Pye, 1994) and refers to educational innovation initiated by teachers and normally with outside assistance. Although Liao (2004) claims that the teaching of English in China is based on a strongly centralized curriculum produced by the Ministry of Education, and educational change thus follows a ‘top-down’ direction initiated by policy makers and ‘piloted’ and supported by research, I argue that the Revised Curriculum (2011) requires some necessary and dynamic adaptation and creativity, not just straightforward implementation by teachers. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.9.2, Chapter Two.

Wideen and Pye (1994) suggest that educational change can be distinguished as occurring in five areas, each of which has a specific way to change:

- Curriculum development (focuses on the implementation of better curriculum materials)
- School effectiveness (emphasises students’ achievement and other related elements)
- School improvement (focuses on the improvement of schools and primarily intends to solve school problems by improving the internal conditions in schools)
- Teacher research (means teachers as researchers participate in the reform process. This approach is a kind of teacher emancipation for coping with issues in the classroom)
- Teacher development (pays attention to teachers as learners and active participants in the reform process. This approach puts teachers at the centre of educational reforms and school changes instead of only regarding teachers as the means of implementing any educational

reform. Teacher development is a research area that grew out of the above developments.)

These domains do not develop in isolation from each other, neither do they have distinct boundaries (Brummelhuis, 1995). In a general sense, each domain can provide a certain amount of knowledge concerning education, especially about educational innovation. In general, curriculum innovation, school effectiveness and school improvement represent a paradigm within which the motivation for change comes from those who guide or support the reform. Teacher research and their development represent a paradigm in which the teachers are the centrepiece of the whole change process or they direct the change (Brummelhuis, 1995; Wideen and Pye, 1994).

In my study, although the educational change comes from the ‘top-down’, it is impossible to say that the Revised Curriculum (2011) is only curriculum change because it calls for a change in teacher behavior and beliefs. The Ministry of Education published the Revised Curriculum (2011) to change the experience of students and their learning outcomes, to solve the problems of teaching in practice and to cope with the difficulties of teacher development (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012). This revised curriculum includes profound changes both to curriculum content and role of the teacher (MOE, 2011). This is not only a claim made by the authors, but a cursory inspection shows there is a high degree of change from the original piloted version (2001) and this will be examined as part of the thesis. The main idea of the Revised Curriculum (2011) is to ‘lay a solid foundation for students’ lifelong development’ (MOE, 2011, p 2). Students are the main actors in the teaching activities and teachers facilitate students’ study. Teachers must be responsible for their students’ development. Exam-oriented education gives students few opportunities for self-development (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011). So, to activate the changes required by the Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers have to teach differently and need to know different things. Teachers may need to change their attitudes, teaching behaviors and views in order to meet the Revised Curriculum (2011)’s

requirements. For instance, in a traditional teaching environment, teachers are seen as way beyond students in terms of the amount of knowledge they have and their moral development (Scollon, 1999; Chen-chung, 1984), thus teachers have absolute power over initiatives and are seen as the initiators of knowledge while students can only be passive recipients (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). However, the expected behavior of teachers documented in the Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on communicative language teaching, implying use of language by students, student autonomy and development. The Revised Curriculum (2011) challenges the dominant role of teachers in the traditional teaching context in China and aims to promote student-centred and autonomous learning and encourage Chinese students' communicative performance in English class. For example, (see Appendix 1.1.) in the 'recommended classroom activities' part of The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, pp 100-101) the teacher's role is to 'guide' and 'encourage'; teachers are to guide students to cooperate with and help each other to achieve shared task completion (MOE, 2011, p 20), so that students learn from each other, make progress together, learn to study independently of the teacher and enjoy the satisfaction of communicating and cooperating in the learning process (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26). Students thus participate in learning by doing, so can be both active and pro-active - for example, by suggesting problem-solving strategies - through different kinds of pair and group-work activities. This means teachers have to undergo a role change and become the facilitators of learning. The notion of a teacher as the ultimate authority is challenged. Teachers are now encouraged to develop learner-centred practices based on an emancipatory view of education whereby students are responsible for their own learning.

However, I argue that, because of the perceived dominant role of teachers in the classroom in a traditional Chinese teaching context and the influence of teacher beliefs and experience (as discussed in Section 2.3.2.1), it could be very difficult and challenging for teachers to adopt the new roles advocated in the Revised Curriculum (2011) which threaten their authority in the classroom. This is a very new and different emphasis for Chinese teachers from a Confucian heritage background and challenges the dominant role of the teacher,

requiring great changes from teachers' current practices and beliefs.

Apart from this, other obstacles may prevent the adoption of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) which The Revised Curriculum (2011) advocates. CLT has not been very successful in China since its introduction in the early 1990s (Hu, 2002; Liao, 2004), so has not received widespread support or is often paid lip-service to, so traditional teaching methods still dominate many classrooms (Hu, 2001, 2005; Ye, 2007). Researchers both in China and Western countries (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby and Sun, 1989; Cortazzi and Jin, 2006; Li, 1984; Liao, 2004; Rao, 1996; Hu, 2002) have discussed the constraints preventing the adoption of CLT in classrooms: these include big class size, limited time for one English class, lack of necessary resources, teachers' lack of language proficiency and sociolinguistic competence, the pressure of examinations, and cultural factors. These mentioned factors may make it difficult for teachers to implement the Revised Curriculum (2011) which advocates the CLT approach. Consequently, teachers face big challenges in taking on The Revised Curriculum (2011). My study is mainly concerned with the changes required in teachers' beliefs and perceptions in relation to the Revised Curriculum (2011).

According to Fullan (1982, 1991, 2001), the nature of educational reform is to put new things into practice. Sticking with the classroom context for the sake of simplicity, changes would likely occur in:

- materials (curriculum materials or technologies);
- teaching practices (teaching strategies or learning activities);
- beliefs (pedagogical assumptions or perceived relevance).

Most educational reform initiatives aim to influence the above three areas (Fullan, 1991). Changes in materials are more obvious than the other two because they are more tangible and concrete. People can see what and how materials are actually being used. What makes educational changes more difficult and dangerous are the changes in underlying beliefs and classroom

practices, and these two aspects may be crucial for the success of changes like those in the Revised Curriculum (2011) (Brummelhuis, 1995; Fullan, 1991). However, even people are willing, it is still difficult for them to significantly change what they are used to doing and thinking (Pajares, 1992). This is why effective professional development always goes hand in hand with effective implementation. So, the process of educational reform is also a process of 'learning' (Fullan, 1991), but it is the adults who learn in this context rather than the students. Professional development in the Revised Curriculum (2011) will be discussed in Chapter Four.

### **2.9.2 The fidelity, adaptive and enactment perspectives on the implementation of change**

Implementation is more than just a mechanical process that follows the introduction of a new or revised curriculum. It may include the learning of new skills, knowledge, concepts, beliefs and attitudes. This learning takes place within individuals (Berman, 1981; Peters, 2003) but also between individuals (Fullan, 1982; Leithwood, 1981) and within organisations (Huberman and Miles, 1984; Fullan, 2003) in order to put an innovation into practice.

The theory of educational changes can be seen as a theory of exploring and understanding the meaning of various kinds of difficulties (Fullan, 1991). Snyder *et al.*, (1992) summarised the three different perspectives of implementation as the 'fidelity perspective', 'mutual adaptation process' and 'curriculum enactment perspective'.

The 'fidelity perspective' stresses the importance of the official curriculum. The assumption is that educational reform is supposed to be well-developed and already exists. The teachers' task is to fully and faithfully implement the curriculum in a pre-defined way with little or no adaptation (Fullan and Pomfret, 1977; Fullan, 1991; Ryan, 2004; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). Consequently, the curriculum is written by experts, and teachers are seen as recipients rather than co-creators of the curriculum. Under the fidelity perspective, the successful implementation of educational change demands teachers to

implement the planned curriculum. Some studies on curriculum change that follow a fidelity approach suggest that teachers either resist the implementation of a curriculum reform, or adapt the curriculum according to their unique situation and the learners they teach rather than strictly comply with the top-down curriculum reform (Ryan, 2004, p 665). I argue that the traditional teaching model in China mainly follows the fidelity approach where teachers just transmit what the curriculum material says to students, and students are the passive recipients of knowledge (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002). Neither teachers nor students play a significant role in the implementation process, and their initiatives are ignored in this context. However, because of their unique local conditions, it is challenging for every teacher to use the planned curriculum in their teaching with a high degree of fidelity. After the 1986 *Quanrizhi Zhongxue Yingyu Jiaoxue Dagang* [English Language Syllabus for Full-time Secondary School] was published in China, English teachers played an increasingly important role in the process of producing the syllabus and accompanying textbooks because feedback from teachers about the problems in actual classroom teaching began to influence the design of the English syllabus and accompanying textbooks.

The ‘mutual adaptation perspective’ emphasises the importance of teachers and that change is normally the result of teachers’ adaptations and decisions made by teachers because it is they who cope with the revised curriculum materials (Fullan and Pomfret, 1977; Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). From this perspective, the teacher’s outlook interacts with and affects the impact of the implementation. Supporters of this view believe that all educational circumstances are unique and thus modifications after the implementation of an educational change might be required: curricula might need to be modified to suit local school conditions; some course practices need to be modified to adapt to local conditions (Bygstad, 2005; McLaughlin, 1987; Ryan, 2004; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). Teachers working in this way constantly modify the curriculum materials, their teaching methods, techniques and teaching goals. They need to interpret the original lesson plans from their own perspectives. If the teachers under the fidelity view-point are seen as ‘passive

consumers', teachers under the mutual adaptation approach can be seen as 'positive consumers' of the pre-defined educational change plan. Thus, from this perspective, the successful implementation of educational change demands necessary, active adaptation by teachers rather than simple implementation, and is what the earlier 2001 curriculum demands of teachers, to be as curriculum adapters (discussed detailed in Section 4.2.9, Chapter Four).

While the fidelity perspective and mutual adaptation perspective examine the ways teachers cope with various externally designed curriculum materials, the curriculum enactment perspective sees the curriculum as an emerging process designed and shaped together by teachers and students (Snyder *et al.*, 1992) and plays strong emphasis on teacher-student interaction and communication. The teacher's role is that of a cooperator, organiser and communicator in the classroom rather than a dominator. Supporters of the enactment perspective believe that the curriculum is not pre-existing, external, or static, but created from experience within the classroom and the teacher-student interaction process. This perspective regards teachers as curriculum designers rather than implementers. Educational change, therefore, is a process of designing and shaping the curriculum by teachers through their daily classroom practices (Ryan, 2004). Another reason why the text of The Revised Curriculum (2011) is examined in detail in Chapter Four is to demonstrate the approach the curriculum takes - fidelity, mutual adaptation or adaptive and enactment perspective - by looking through the documents. The views of teachers will be examined and discussed in Section 6.3, Chapter Six.

### **2.9.3 The Phase of implementing curriculum change**

Apart from the theories and perspectives of educational change, change also consists of a number of activities. Some researchers (Berman, 1981; Fullan, 1991) claim that the developmental process of educational change consists of a trio of loosely connected and interactive processes rather than being linked in a consecutive manner. And there is no requirement that one stage must be completed before the next stage can begin. Berman (1981) identifies the implementation phases of mobilisation, implementation, and

institutionalisation as the three phases of educational change. Fullan (1991) and Gross *et al.*, (1971) hold a similar opinion that the implementation phase consists of initiation (adoption), implementation and institutionalization (continuation, incorporation). Glickman (2002) suggests there is a process of design, dissemination, implementation and evaluation. Van den Akker (2004) argues that any curriculum innovation can be broken down into three key areas - what is intended, implemented and attained. These concepts are mirrored, more ideally, by McKernan (2008) who describes them in terms of intentions, transactions and effects (p 35). Odden (1991) describes the implementation process as including macro-implementation and micro-implementation. Table 2.2 provides an adapted exposition of Odden's point of view of the implementation process.

This study will focus on the user implementation phase of implementation, particularly on teachers' perceptions and needs regarding to the implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

As this study is specifically concerned with the challenges faced by English teachers during the implementation stage, it is necessary to revisit Stenhouse's (1975) definition of curriculum (see Section 2.8.1, Chapter Two), which argues that any valuable curriculum should be 'capable of effective translation into practice' (p 4); and also, according to Fullan (1991), 'however well designed, must be implemented if it is to have any impact on students'. These practical reasons make the implementation stage demonstrably the most problematic and challenging phase in the change process (Marsh and Willis, 2007, p 224) and the point at which most changes fail (Fullan and Pomfret, 1977).

It seems that if the planned curriculum is perceived as good, it will be readily embraced in practice. However, Marsh and Willis (2007) argue that, 'Careful planning and development are obviously important to a good curriculum, but they count for nothing unless teachers are aware of what a plan calls for and how they can implement it in their classroom' (p 213). After reviewing fifteen curriculum projects Fullan & Pomfret (1977) reported that many innovations



were not implemented in the way their developers had hoped because teachers were not made fully aware of the underlying intentions. This lack of clarity was also one of fifteen research based interactive factors identified by Snyder *et al.* (1992) and thought to affect implementation. For an overview of these factors, see Figure 2.2 on p 40.

**Table 2.2 Implementation process**

(Odden, 1991)

Macro-Implementation (Passages)	Micro-Implementation (Phases)	User Implementation
<b>Administration</b>  Translation of a policy decision into a specific government programme	<b>Mobilisation</b>  Adoption at the school level	<b>Teacher use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low degree of personal concerns regarding new programme</li><li>• High level of mastery of programme</li><li>• Limited adaptation of new programme as operationalised in practice</li></ul>
<b>Adoption</b>  The adoption of the programme at the regional/ district/ local/ community level	<b>User implementation</b>  Implementation at the classroom level by the teacher	
<b>Micro-implementation</b>  The delivery of the programme at the school and classroom levels with the support of the local authority	<b>Institutionalisation</b>  Sustained implementation of innovation within the school	
<b>Evaluation</b>  Determination of success of the programmes		

Fullan (1991) further points out that ‘no one knows for sure what is best’ concerning the implementation of changes (p 110). What makes them difficult are the various factors that affect and interact in the implementation process. This is not simple and to consider it critically, various researchers ((Fullan et al., 1988, Fullan, 1991; Louis and Miles, 1990; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Snyder *et al.*, 1992) point out the key factors that inhibit or facilitate the change process. The following section gives the comprehensive coverage of

these factors that may affect the change.

## **2.9.4. Factors Affecting the Change**

### **2.9.4.1 Factors affecting the Initiation stage**

The factors affecting the decisions to initiate curriculum change and those influencing the implementation of the change have been central to many studies. Drawing on previous research and theory, researchers like Fullan, (1991); Snyder *et al.*, (1992) discuss a large number of factors associated with the decision to initiate a change and the actual use of the change. The initiation stage represents a combination of the three R's – 'relevance, readiness and resources' (Fullan, 1991, p 63), which are factors necessary prior to the implementation of an innovation.

Relevance refers to the need, the clarity of the innovation, the teachers' understandings of the innovation, and also the utility of the change judged from what it can offer to teachers and students. Studies on the influence of relevance on the implementation of an innovation show clearly that substantial changes tend to be adopted and implemented more successfully than minor changes. This is because the scale of the change needs to be large enough for practitioners to notice the changes are worthy of their efforts, but also not too massive for them to feel overwhelmed by working with the change (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1986). In my study, many researchers (Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012) claim that there are no essential distinctions between the 2001 curriculum (piloted document) and The Revised Curriculum (2011), and maintain that The Revised Curriculum (2011) standard keeps the framework, basic concepts, main objects, and most of the demands of the piloted version. This is why I aim to analyse the text of The Revised Curriculum (2011) carefully.

Readiness involves the teachers having access to the essential skills and knowledge required for the successful implementation of an innovation. It also refers to the school's practical and conceptual capacity to initiate and develop

the intended changes and get ready to adopt new materials, new equipment and new practices. In other words, the level of readiness can affect the balance between the benefits and risks of taking up an innovation (Prochaska *et al.*, 1994). In my case, The Revised Curriculum (2011) discusses a range of learning for teachers which is not simply about knowing more English, but includes requirements for English teachers' professional development from three aspects, which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Moreover, teachers need to develop some additional skills and knowledge because of the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011), discussed in Section 6.2, Chapter Six.

Resources refer to the availability of financial conditions, teaching and learning materials, equipment and the time required by the innovation. In my case, teachers were asked about the resources they were using under The Revised Curriculum (2011) in terms of their time, materials, their use network, TV and other resources. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.9 and Section 4.3.5.

In summary, according to the literature, curriculum changes can present difficult challenges for teachers. The relationship between the initiation and implementation stages are loosely connected but closely intertwined. The initiation stage can generate commitment or alienation, meaning or confusion, or just be ignored by individuals or organisations (Fullan, 2001). On the other hand, even unsuccessful beginnings can be turned into successful change depending on what happens during the implementation stage, and vice versa.

#### **2.9.4.2 Factors affecting the implementation stage**

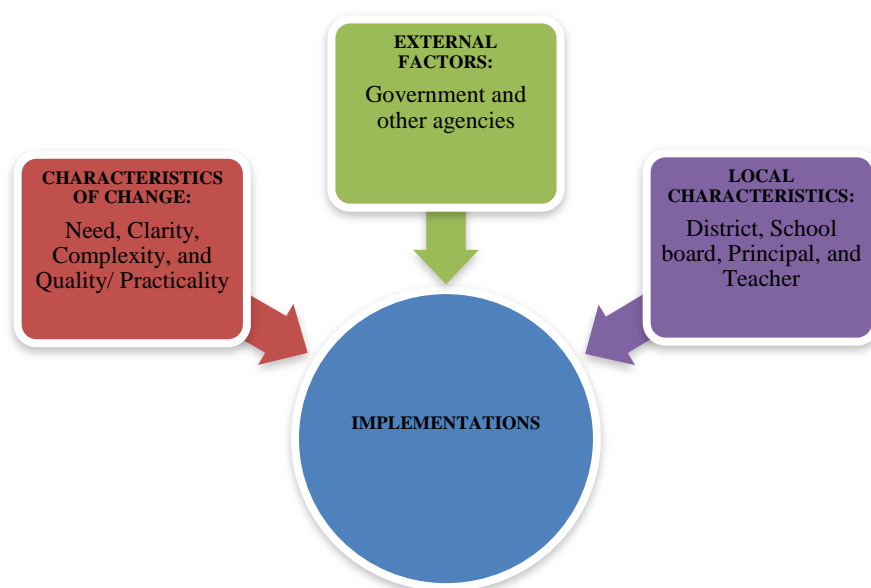
This study is particularly concerned with that Odden (1991) above, identifies as the 'implementation phase' of curriculum change, which consists of the process of putting new ideas, programmes, activities and structures into practice by the those attempting or wanting change (Fullan, 2001). As discussed above, several definable aspects of classroom or school life are changed if a change in the curriculum is fully implemented, for example,

changes in curriculum materials, in classroom practices, in underlying beliefs or understandings and in learning practices. The implementation stage is very important because it is the means of achieving goals (Fullan, 2001). However, according to Charters and Jones (1973), implementation does not always turn out to be completed in the desired way, or may turn out to be non-existent (no real change), superficial, partial, and so on. In short, implementation is a variable, and if it is a good change, its success (such as better outcomes for learners or teachers' increased skills and knowledge) will be judged by the quality and degree of change in practice.

Researchers (Fullan *et al.*, 1988; Fullan, 1991; Louis and Miles, 1990; Huberman and Miles, 1984) have identified some critical factors that can facilitate or inhibit the implementation of an educational change:

- Clarity about the goals and needs of the change,
- Approaches and purposes of the change;
- The organization of staff development activities;
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluation;
- The procedures for training new staff;
- The continued support of the head teacher and other supporting teachers (who had already received the initial training);
- The support from the government and other agencies.

Fullan (2001) lists nine key factors that may affect the implementation process, and categorised them into three areas. Figure 2.2 provides an adapted exposition of Fullan's view of the key factors. It needs to be noted that the factors or aspects can be altered and are not fixed. Each factor can be divided into several sub-variables. I will discuss the factors associated with my study.



**Figure 2.2 Key factors that may affect the implementation process**

## **2.9.5 Characteristics of change**

### **2.9.5.1 Characteristics of change themselves**

I will start with the discussion about the four factors relating to characteristics of the change themselves, which are: need, clarity, complexity, and quality.

#### **2.9.5.1.1 Need**

‘Need’ here refers to whether the need for a curriculum change is recognised (Fullan, 2001). The results from several large-scale studies, for example, the Experimental Schools project (Rosenblum and Louis, 1979) and Rand Change Agent study, confirm the importance of ‘need’ in relation to making initiation decisions and to the successful implementation of innovation. However, the importance of need is not always straightforwardly clear (Datnow, 2000); the individuals or organisations involved may not see the need for a change (Fullan, 2001). This may be for three reasons. First, schools are overloaded with improvement plans so the desired objectives are not easy to achieve, hence if a given need fails to relate to other needs, it may be neglected. Second,

individuals may become clear about their needs only during the implementation process (Bodilly, 1998; Bodilly and Berends, 1999). Third, need is only one of nine key factors, so it can be clarified later in the implementation process (Fullan, 2001). In my case, the need for change was been set out by the PRC government after a ten year pilot of the 2001 curriculum (MOE, 2011).

Huberman and Miles (1984) suggest that during the early implementation phase, it is necessary for the individuals involved to feel the importance and relevance of the needs addressed in this case, the question is whether the teachers and schools perceive the need for change.

Moreover, the participants of change need to perceive that they are making some tangible progress toward the needs, if they do understand them. Huberman and Miles' view throws light on my study. It provides useful suggestions for those organisations and school principals involved in the change in China: early rewards or some tangible progress were incentives during the implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **2.9.5.1.2 Clarity**

Clarity here means whether teachers are able to identify essential features of the change (Fullan, 2001; 2007). Lack of clarity may refer to unclear objectives or unspecified ways of implementation. Fullan (2007) claims that even when the need for an innovation has been recognised, pinpointing what teachers need to do differently is always a barrier to the change process because teachers need to know how to do things differently to implement the change in actual practice.

Seahorse *et al.* (1999) point out that, in order to achieve clarity, the involved individuals need a 'sense of purpose that is explicit, shared, flexible', as they are required to adapt to changing circumstances constantly. However, explicit purposes are absent in much curriculum change documentation. Gross *et al.*'

(1971) study also confirm that most teachers in the study were unable to identify the main and key features of the curriculum. Lack of clarity of the curriculum, therefore, represents a major problem during the implementation phase.

Textbooks tend to be another challenge and called ‘false clarity’ by Fullan (2007). Many studies claim that teachers in China tend to slavishly rely on textbooks (Biggs, 1996; Yeung, 2009; Su, 2007; Halstead and Zhu, 2009; Yan, 2012), and this faithfulness to textbooks might lead teachers to ignore or not address other policy goals (Fullan, 2007). Berman (1977) and Berman *et al.* (1979) argue that curriculum innovations may not much change teachers’ practice in the expected way but simply lead them do the same thing in new ways that generate ‘little improvement in educational practices and student outcomes’.

In this study, I argue that the Revised Curriculum (2011) does clarify the expected goals and gives some suggestions and teaching examples to guide English teachers to understand and implement it, hence, I intend to find out whether the teachers in this study were able to identify the essential features of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **2.9.5.1.3 Complexity**

Complexity means the difficulty of and the extent to which practitioners are responsible for, implementation (Fullan, 2001, 2007; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). The complexity of an educational innovation has been discussed by various researchers (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Berman, 1981; Brummelhuis, 1995; Dalziel and Schoonover, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2003; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). Generally speaking, the nature of change is multidimensional and takes place in a particular context that includes political, social, economic and moral aspects (Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Berman, 1981; Dalziel and Schoonover, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2003). The organisations and individuals involved, and particular contexts are just a few of the factors in any change effort. More

specifically, concerning the actual components or dimensions of an innovation, the level of complexity mainly depends on the new teaching materials, new teaching strategies and alteration of beliefs (Brummelhuis, 1995; Fullan, 2001). According to Fullan and Pomfret (1977), changes that are drawn up in consultation with teachers and those which provide a certain level of complexity, but not to the extent that the level of adjustment required by teachers becomes overwhelming, are more likely to be implemented effectively in practice. However, changes that are incompatible with teachers' existing beliefs, teaching materials and strategies, and impractical or unpiloted are more likely to pose challenges to implementing the change (Marsh and Willis, 2007). For example, changes in the use of new materials without any other changes in strategies may be a minor change. If a change includes all the three aspects of potential change, it tends to be rather more complex. The complexity of a change is not only a feature of the change itself but also a feature of teachers in terms of the discrepancy between the teacher's current practice and beliefs, and future ones after the reform. In my case, the changes to The Revised Curriculum (2011) are not just material changes but also promote other changes such as in teaching practices and beliefs. So, The Revised Curriculum (2011) is not a minor change but a more complex one.

#### **2.9.5.1.4 Quality and Practicality of the Change Programme**

The last factor relating closely to the nature of change concerns the quality and practicality of the innovation programme: are teaching and learning resources available or is adoption more important than implementation (Snyder *et al.*, 1992)? Fullan (2001) and Wedell (2009) point out that a change may have quality problem (such as inadequate quality, inappropriate or even lack of materials) if the decisions of initiate the change were made based on political necessity or on a perceived need without enough preparation time for development. This may be because ambitious innovation programmes are frequently politically driven from a top-down direction, thus, the period of time between the decision to accept and adopt a change and the actual beginning of the implementation is often too short to consider the quality of the change.



Also, when adoption is more important than implementation, decisions are often made without sufficient time to generate the essential resources.

The importance of the quality of front-end materials (such as teaching and training materials) and resources is indicated by some studies on the evaluation of successful changes, for example, Slavin and Madden's evaluation of the Success for All model (1998), Kearns and Harvey's evaluation of the New American Schools reform (2000), and the evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategy by Barber (2000) and Earl *et al.*, (2000) indicate that the importance of the quality of the necessary materials for change should not be underestimated. Fullan (2007) further points out that lessons learnt from large scale unsuccessful innovations in the past show that 'policy makers cannot simply depend on people's capacity to bring about substantial change, they need to propel the process with high quality teaching and training materials' (p 92). In addition, the individuals involved can go farther and faster by adopting materials and resources of a suitable quality and by 'establishing a highly interactive infrastructure of pressure and support' (Fullan, 2001, p 79).

The Revised Curriculum (2011) was based on the piloted (2001) curriculum and summarised the previous ten years' experience (Ding, 2012; Sang and Kong, 2012; Yu, 2012; Zheng, 2012). After summarizing the feedback experience, discovering existing problems and gathering advice from English subject experts, scholars, researchers, and teachers, the Ministry of Education authorised the revision group of the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard to conduct the revision and discussion of the curriculum (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012; Ding, 2012; Zheng, 2012). The Revised Curriculum (2011) was piloted and supported by research, so is more likely to be complete and clear than the earlier one. So, I intent to discover whether new teaching and learning resources are available, suitable and of good quality. This will be discussed in Chapter Four, Section 4.2.9 and Section 4.3.5.

### **2.9.5.2 Local characteristics**

This section will analyse the social conditions of change, the setting in which individuals work, and the expected or unexpected activities that may affect the implementation of change.

Cuban (1988) and Fullan (2007) claimed that the school culture can either hinder or support a school through change. Thus, successful implementation of any new programmes requires the school to foster a positive climate to encourage support, communication and cooperative activities by teachers (Huberman and Miles, 1984; Joyce, 1983; Showers, 1985). The school as a unit is a critical element of change, but change is often the result of system initiatives dependent on the support and strategies provided by larger organisations particularly if the change is a multilevel, complex system-oriented one where the organisational culture is being changed (Fullan, 2001).

#### **2.9.5.2.1 The School District**

In China, the school district means *Xuequ*, which refers to all the schools situated within that area and governed by a particular authority (Handian [Chinese Dictionary], 2013; Baidu baike search, 2013). The role of the school district includes building up a track record for managing change, and maintaining the critical preconditions for the next new initiative (Fullan, 2001). Studies show that the support of the district administration and central staff is very important for educational change within the district (Little and Dorph, 1998; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Spillane, 1999; Spillane, 2000). When the change's aim is to make a substantial improvement, local implementation at the district level tends to be more important (Little and Dorph, 1998; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Fullan, 2001). The district administrators set the conditions for the implementation of innovations to the extent that they share their knowledge, support and understanding to help put the change into actual practice (Fullan, 2001).

The role of the school district shares areas in common with local education bureaux in China. To take the Yingtan Education Bureau as an example, the key roles of the local Education Bureau are:

- Being responsible for researching the main problems for education reforms and developments in the city;
- Guiding and coordinating the Education management work in all the departments of the whole city;
- Putting forward the education reform and development strategy, drawing up the Education career development plan;
- Guiding, coordinating and examining the implementation work;
- Being responsible for the recording and analysing of the educational information in the city;
- Guiding and coordinating the reform to the education system in the city;
- Being responsible for the management of the educational funds in the city;
- Being responsible for the management of education at all levels;
- Being responsible for drawing up local rules and regulations for the non-governmental schools. Also, the education bureau needs to guide, manage, monitor and examine the running of schools in the non-governmental sectors;
- Being responsible for all the teachers in the city and guiding teachers' work over the whole city. Being responsible for the qualification recognition of the teachers and management;
- Being responsible for all formal school education and examinations at all levels;
- Being responsible for guiding all schools' moral education, ideology and political education, sports and health education, arts, safety education and national defense education;
- Organizing and managing citywide education reforms, education research, and exchange of experience work and so on (Yingtan Education Bureau Website, 2012).

In short, the role of district administrators in western countries and the role of local education bureau in China both influence the quality of implementation directly and indirectly, and their role cannot be ignored.

Fullan (2001) also discussed school boards and communities, but there are no school boards in China to further the discussion here.

#### **2.9.5.2.2 The Principal**

The school as a unit is a critical element, so the principal of a school is an important factor of educational change (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Fullan, 1986; Fullan, 2001). Much research has put strong emphasis on the significance of principals as instructional facilitators or leaders of the implementation process (Sebring and Bryk, 2000; Berman and McLaughlin, 1977; Berman et al., 1979; Clark and Peterson, 1986; Fullan, 1986; Fullan, 2001; Sammons, 1999). The most important function of principals is their influence on teachers' work and work conditions, both directly and indirectly (Fullan, 1986).

#### **2.9.5.2.3 Teacher characteristics**

##### **2.9.5.2.3.1 The Role of Teachers**

A contentious issue is whether teachers should be understood as simply implementers (lacking initiative, limited motivation and superficial implementation) of an educational change (Goodson, 2005; Luttenberg *et al.*, 2013) or as joint explorers and designers of the educational change (Spillane *et al.*, 2002; Coburn, 2004), as discussed in 2.9.2 'The fidelity, adaptive and enactment perspectives on the implementation of change'. The Revised Curriculum (2011), requires teachers to make and develop the curriculum rather than simply implement the curriculum, as teachers have to 'reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly, and can both teach and research during the teaching process, improve their knowledge level of teaching theories and practices, and then create and shape their personal way of

teaching in class' (MOE, 2011, p 33).

Attention is also paid to the key challenges teachers face under The Revised Curriculum (2011) - group work and learning from each other, reflective practice, mixed ability teaching and the teacher in the role of guide. I will discuss the teachers' role and their challenges in detail in this thesis in a later section.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) maintains that: 'The core issue for implementing the new *English Curriculum Standard* effectively lies in the level of professional development of teachers' (MOE, 2011, p 32). This indicates the teachers' role in implementing change which is very similar to Fullan's (2001) view of teachers' role in change. The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lofty new, pupil centred goals, a different vision of language learning, different roles for the teachers and students, demands different activities and materials. Fullan (1993) argues that many factors may contribute to achieving the goals of educational reform, but any educational reform ultimately relies on teachers. Therefore, teachers may need to change their roles, teaching behaviors and views in order to meet The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s requirement.

#### **2.9.5.2.3.2 Teaching quality**

Teaching quality is widely recognised as being one of the most influential factors in creating and maintaining a successful education system. Many research studies have identified substantial differences in student achievement between those that have high-performing teachers and those that do not (Haldenby *et al.*, 2010; Hanushek, 2002; Sanders and Rivers, 1996) but their claims depend on how 'achievement' and 'high performing' are defined. In a transmission-based curriculum in the Chinese context, a teacher's performance level has been closely linked to his/her students' exam outcomes (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

Traditionally, teaching quality has been linked to teacher training and experience. Vandevoort *et al.*'s study (2004) supports this view. However, research conducted by the Rand Corporation (2010) in the United States over a five-year period showed teachers' qualifications had little influence on student achievement. Fuller and Clarke (1994) also found that teacher training rarely explains variation in student performance (p 129) in Europe and the US, however, they cite a range of studies from countries in Latin America, Africa and South East Asia which suggest it does impact on teacher quality and on students' performance. This might be because the curriculum in some countries such as China is largely based on a product-oriented, teaching-testing approach, familiarity with the curriculum content and ability to produce students who get high marks in exams would be considered valuable teaching 'experience' and so contribute to student performance in this way. The results of these studies and others like them show that attempting to generalise findings across countries is inadvisable. Fuller and Clarke (1994) conclude that more work needs to be done on defining and assessing the different modes of teacher training. So, in my study, I wanted to find out teachers' perceptions about the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) and what relationship they see between teacher quality and student outcomes.

#### **2.9.5.2.3.3 Teacher Professional Development**

In western countries, some researchers (for example, Fullan, 1991; Vrasidas and Glass, 2004) state that professional development is the process of helping teachers develop their content knowledge and the skills they need to succeed in their teaching. In this way, teachers can prepare and so make better curriculum and classroom teaching decisions.

Professional development can take various forms: collective or individual development, continuing education, pre-service and in-service education, group work, team curriculum development, peer collaboration, and peer support (Vrasidas and Glass, 2004). Fullan (1991) sees teacher professional development as 'the sum total of formal and informal learning experience

throughout one's career' (p 326). Therefore, continuing professional development is essential for schools struggling with revised curriculum innovations. Researchers in China share similar views with western researchers, for example, Zhao (2010) points out that teacher professional development refers to teachers' self-education promoting activities and the learning process which make them become more efficient teachers by taking part in further educations within the education context in order to link their new knowledge, skills and attitudes to their basic knowledge of teaching and administration so inter-teacher cooperation can be improved. According to Zhao (2010, p168), the specific content of teacher professional development in the Chinese education context includes:

- subject knowledge and capabilities: the knowledge and capabilities of the curriculum, teaching materials, and activity content;
- general knowledge and capabilities: life philosophy, interpersonal communication, leisure activities;
- expertise: the knowledge and capabilities of educational technologies, class administration, student counseling, new knowledge of education and research;
- professional attitudes: service passion, teaching commitment, teaching desires.

This is different from the professional development in The Revised Curriculum (2011) which I will discuss in Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four.

I think it is important to review the professional development Chinese teachers have experienced in the past in this section. In 1999, an action plan was drawn up by the PRC Ministry of Education for education for the 21st century. One of the important concerns was to address the urgent needs for teacher professional development through in-service teacher education. This is a huge stride for education in China because it affects more than 550,000 English teachers at secondary level, and millions of secondary students studying English (Cheng and Wang, 2004). Upgrading the English subject and pedagogical knowledge of this enormous number of teachers - with only 55% junior secondary teachers holding a bachelor degree at that time (1999) - was a daunting task for

Education Colleges and Teacher Colleges in China (MOE, 1999). From the perspective of teachers' education practices in China, the growth in the number of teachers indicates that they tend to spontaneously and unconsciously improving themselves and achieve maturity. In 2010, Zhao administered questionnaires to secondary and primary schools teachers in different provinces in China to obtain data about their professional development. From analysing more than 200 questionnaires, Zhao's study found schools pay very little attention to teacher professional development, neither do they have sufficient resources and teaching materials for teachers to use. Teachers' professional development comes mainly through academic qualification, professional skill training and in-service education. 87% of participants in the study stated that teacher professional development can only be achieved through training programmes. In addition, some teacher education and training are only lip service, as most training focuses on teaching techniques and teaching skills, paying little attention to practical teaching issues. This kind of training has limited impact on improving professional development, and even has some negative effects on teachers' professional development. For example, awareness of professional development for practicing teachers is decreasing. The majority of teachers in the study found it difficult to accept any new concepts and new teaching approaches, and also found it difficult to make the problems the encountered in teaching their research topics. They did not see the value of teaching research; only 38% of teachers in the study stated that they were involved in teaching research projects. Moreover, some teachers have little awareness of the advantages of cooperating with other teachers. The study showed that 42% of the teachers participated in cooperative teaching activities once each month. The results show that the professional development Chinese teachers have experienced in the past has not been paid enough attention and nor promoted or developed very well for teachers. The spontaneous and unconscious growth processes of teachers' professional development could take longer time to complete. Consciousness-raising about the value of continuing professional development for teachers may take more time without more support.



Bruner (1966) emphasises the importance of the professional development of teachers; ‘if the production of a curriculum cannot move, perturb and inform teachers, it will have no effect on those whom they teach’ (Bruner, 1966, p.xv, cited in McKernan, 2008, p 95). So, the professional development of teachers cannot be ignored and it can strongly affect the effectiveness and success of the implementation of a curriculum reform. The Revised Curriculum (2011) includes the concept of ‘teachers’ professional development’ for the first time and attaches great importance to it. As this topic has not been mentioned in previous curricula, the ‘professional development’ in The Revised Curriculum (2011) will be analysed and discussed in detail in Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four.

An awareness of the need to provide professional development opportunities for English teachers to facilitate the implementation of the Revised Curriculum (2011) change has been recognised by the policymakers in China yet five years into the process of revising the curriculum since 2011, there has been no study focusing on the professional development of teachers. Some studies have shown that teachers may be exposed to a variety of strategies in teacher professional development, but decisions on which strategy to adopt and how to use it will strongly depend on teachers’ beliefs about teaching (Borg, 2003; Ernest 1989, cited in Pajares 1992, p 311; Tudor, 2001) and their local educational context (Freeman and Freeman, 2001, p 186). So, my study compared and analysed the 2001 old and the Revised Curriculum (2011) to see what problems the new requirements posed for English teachers in terms of their professional development (as discussed in Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four), and then I used questionnaires and interviews to explore teachers’ beliefs, perceptions and needs in relation to their professional development since The Revised Curriculum (2011) was adopted from 2011.

### **2.9.5.3 External factors**

#### **2.9.5.3.1 Government**

The relationship of the school to the external agencies is quite complicated, but necessary to analyse in order to understand their influence on school

implementation of change. Government agencies focus on policy and project initiation (Fullan, 2001). In considering the role of the government, the question is mainly about whether the government facilitates or inhibits change (Harris, 2009; Levin, 2009; Fullan, 2001). In western countries, the government tends to be central to discussion and decision-making for educational change (Levin, 2009), although its interference does not always seem to be positive (Townsend and Bates, 2007). However, the situation is different in China from western democracies. In China, government policy is made more slowly (see above with reference to piloting) and is largely adopted uncritically (Liao, 2004). In the west, there is a classic case of two totally different worlds: the government agency on the one hand and the local practitioner on the other hand (Cowden and Cohen, 1979). Educational reform will fail if one side knows nothing of the subjective world of the other, so it is important that, in implementing any changes, the government is aware of the views and concerns of teachers. The main problems from the government side that may inhibit implementation include lack of role clarity, ambiguity about expectations, lack of balance between the authority and supporting roles of external agencies, and absence of regular interpersonal forums of communication. However, the situation is rather different in China, where teachers are expected to implement government policy, but may not have a full understanding of it or the ability to put it into practice.

To sum up, the level of success of an innovation cannot be determined by the existence or absence of one individual indicator but is basically the outcome of ‘a dynamic process involving interacting variables over time’ (Fullan, 1991, p 67). In other words, influencing indicators interact with each other to facilitate or inhibit the success of the innovation rather than impact on the implementation in isolation. The more positive factors available to facilitate the change process, the more change can be accomplished through actual behaviour.

## **2.10 The Use of Resources in English Language Teaching in China**

In the Chinese context, English textbooks are crucial for the quality of English language teaching because they are the most important and even sometimes the only English teaching and learning resource for many teachers and students (Hu, 2002). As mentioned in the ‘What it means to be a good teacher’ (section 2.3), the traditional teachers’ classrooms in China can be summarised as being teacher-centred, textbook-centred, and test-centred (Adamson *et al*, 2000; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Gu, 2002; Zhang, 2007) supplemented by some minor features of communicative elements. I have already discussed the role of the teacher in the Chinese context in previous sections. In this section, I discuss the main factors that contribute to the dominance of English textbooks in China from the cultural and historic aspects.

Chinese education was organised around the revisionist representation of Confucian tradition which requires students to memorise, recite and explain (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996), the four basic components of learning in the traditional context being memorisation, understanding, reflecting and questioning (Chu, 1990). In particular, ‘memorisation’ is an especially important element of the learning mode (Biggs, 1996). In China and other Asian countries, learning and assessment primarily focus on textbook contents (Hayes and Introna, 2005), which put strong emphasis on ‘memorisation’ (Biggs, 1996). As described in Hayes and Introna’s study (2005), teachers in China always use one book for each course, and the courses normally systematically cover the textbook contents. The exams demand students show how well they have memorised the content of the textbook and their course notes – always verbatim. Usually, there is minimal or no analysis or interpretation expected from the students (Fang and Warschauer, 2004). Pennycook’s (1996) research in China also shares some similar findings on the learning model in classrooms in China. He argued that people should not show their frustration with the form of learning that focuses on ‘memorisation’ from textbooks but should regard it as a different concept of learning deeply embedded in cultural and linguistic practices.

In short, the emphasis of the Chinese cultural model of learning English can be described as ‘transmission’ which relies on the mastery of knowledge and the rote-learning of contents (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; 1998) from textbooks or lecture notes. Hence, teachers are expected to focus on transmitting declarative knowledge to students (Biggs and Watkins, 1995; van Veen and Slegers, 2006). Because textbooks are the most important, even the only, English teaching and learning resource for many teachers and students (Hu, 2002) in the Chinese context, teachers rely on textbooks to transmit knowledge to students, hence the main reason for their dominance in classrooms in China.

The dominance of textbooks in Chinese context seemed may also result from teachers’ lack of professional competence and expertise (Yan, 2012) (such as pedagogical competence and English language proficiency). The 2011 curriculum encourages teachers to ‘adopt all the available resources (such as network resources, multimedia teaching resources, library, broadcast) to enrich their teaching content and the exhibiting form, as well as improve their classroom teaching effectiveness’ (MOE, 2011, p 32). However, Yan (2012) argues that the teachers’ lack of pedagogical competence and limited English language proficiency may further aggravate their difficulty with experimenting with new ideas such as new resources. A common lack of pedagogical competence is claimed to be due to limited formal pre-service training and in-service training, according to Yan (2012).

There is some evidence from other studies that teachers of English in China tend to rely on textbooks - even slavishly (Yan, 2012) partly because textbooks can support and guide them to complete their teaching objectives (Gu, 2002) in a safe and easy way. The Revised Curriculum (2011) notes a lack of professional competence and expertise in many English teachers and raises the concept of the ‘professional development of teachers’ (MOE, 2011, p 32), discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The ‘professional development of teachers’ seems positive for teachers’ development and their classroom practices and may help teachers transfer from a textbook-centred teaching model to a more communicative teaching model if their level of professional development can

be improved. However, as discussed above, Chinese teachers' views of teaching are greatly influenced by traditional teaching concepts, while the Revised Curriculum (2011) introduces ideas of Western origin, developed in a different cultural setting and different teaching context. Teacher training programmes to be effective therefore, need to update teachers' knowledge and make huge changes to teachers' existing beliefs, increase their awareness and understanding of the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) in order to help them adapt to and adopt the innovation away from the textbook-centred teaching model to a more communicative teaching model. However, as teacher training provision in China is mainly through short intensive courses attended by teachers on a selective basis, it does not cater for all teachers. Even if short courses have a huge impact on some teachers, those teachers without enough guidance may have trouble understanding the new concepts or fall back on their previous teaching experiences and rely solely on the textbook again.

There may also be examination-oriented culture reasons for the dominance of textbooks as a resource. The perpetuation of the examination-oriented culture and exams which test detailed knowledge of the curriculum reflected in textbooks (Biggs, 1996; Yeung, 2009; Su, 2007; Halstead and Zhu, 2009) may be a fundamental reason for the dominant role of textbooks in the Chinese context. In Yan's (2012) study of English teachers' teaching behaviour in China, she noticed that school head teachers' concerns about exam results from the great pressure of the prevalent examination-oriented culture in Chinese society, and this contributes to forming a strong examination-oriented school climate. Teachers' behaviour and attitudes seemed to have been greatly affected by school head teachers who focused on exam results (Yan, 2012). The higher power distance (Hofstede *et al.*, 1991) and the collectivism of traditional Chinese culture (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996) in schools can be seen in teachers' obedience and subordination to head teachers without challenging them (Walker and Dimmock, 2000). Also, because the evaluation of teachers' performances is based on their pupils' exam results (Yan, 2012; Wedell, 2005), this forces teachers to teach for the purposes of passing exams. So, I argue that, this mainstream recall-type examination-oriented education system in China,

especially the non-communicative textbook-based college entry examinations (Gaokao), has greatly contributed to textbooks' dominant role in the context of Chinese education.

The lack of facilities and equipment in some areas may also explain the dominant role of textbooks in China. Although the 2011 curriculum encourages teachers to 'adopt modern educational techniques and all the available resources (such as network resources, multimedia teaching resources, library, broadcast)' (MOE, 2011, p 32) because of the economic imbalance between different areas in China, some underdeveloped and poor regions, especially rural areas, may face the problem of insufficient resources. An internet survey of 4000 teachers' views of the 2001 piloted curriculum in 29 national pilot areas (21st century education research institute, 2011) found that the respondents from rural areas had a particular problem of insufficient training and resources. Textbooks are relatively cheap and are for by students, who expect to do so, and it is a well-established practice. So, teachers in underdeveloped areas may have extremely limited choices in their teaching resources; textbooks may be their only available resource. Then, it is not surprising that teachers in these areas are very textbook-centred. In addition, although many areas, especially the developed regions of China, use material from the internet rather than using the textbook alone, the results of Wang and Coleman's (2009) study of 'Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education in China' shows that internet materials are regarded as a source of information rather than a means of communication. In other words, internet resources and multi-media materials used in English classes still follow the 'transmission' teaching model and serve as an alternative to textbooks, but with extra multimedia effects. Similar results were found in other researchers' studies (Zhong and Shen, 2002; Liu *et al.*, 2003; Gu, 2006) which argue that internet resources are used in English classes for transmission-oriented teaching pedagogy and, thus, are no better than the pure delivery of conventional materials through the means of internet. In short, textbooks remain the predominant authoritative sources of language and also cultural input in English classes (Wang and Coleman, 2009) while internet materials are

often used as a complementary means of language input but serve a similar function to textbooks.

Apart from the great challenges from the cultural traditions discussed above, factors contributing to the dominance of textbooks may arise for historical reasons as well. As discussed in Section 2.10, Chapter Two, textbooks have played a significant role at each phase of English language education in China following the changes in the socio-political context. For example, between 1956-1960 during the interlude when Russian was the dominant foreign language, the passages included in the textbooks were politicized, aimed at promoting a strong sense of national identity, to the point where the texts were distorted and irrelevant and unattractive to students (Adamson and Morris, 1997). During the Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1970, all English textbooks were abandoned as useless by the Ministry of Education because the study of anything foreign was categorised as unpatriotic (Lam, 2002, p 246). Most recently, the 2012 new series of English textbooks were published soon after the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Looking back at the history of ELT education, especially English textbook development in China, in summary, English textbooks are the most important teaching and learning resources for English input for many teachers and students in China. English textbooks at all points of China's history of learning English have reflected changes in the socio-political context in China of the time and also serve as the most concrete and practical document to guide teachers and students through their English language learning process.

To sum up, this section has looked at the factors contributing to the dominant role of textbooks in the Chinese context from a cultural and historical aspect. Cultural factors including the emphasis on the 'transmission' of knowledge which relies on mastery of knowledge and the rote-learning of contents (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996); teachers' lack of professional competence and expertise; the perpetuation of the examination-oriented culture and exams

which test the detailed contents of the English curriculum; and the lack of facilities and equipment in some areas may all be important reasons for the dominant role of textbooks in education in China. In addition, historical factors make the accompanying textbooks a tool which reflects the changes in the socio-political context in China and also the most important resource for teachers and students to learn English.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

The review above has considered some of the key challenges to the implementation of the Revised Curriculum (2011): the changing conceptualisation of the role of the English teacher and what this means for teachers' knowledge; the effect of teacher beliefs on how teachers teach and learn and how this might affect training for teachers; the curriculum and its relationship with society, theories on educational changes, and the use of resources in English teaching in China. This study has attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What challenges does The Revised Curriculum (2011) pose for teachers?
2. What will teachers need to know and do, to really deliver this curriculum?
3. What are the teachers' beliefs about the changes and the challenges?
4. How far do they understand their new roles and the demands of teaching this revised curriculum?

On the basis of this research, I hope to be able to suggest the practical implications for training and teacher self-development to support the successful adoption of the Revised Curriculum (2011) and, ultimately, improve English teaching in China.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHOD AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this Chapter, I discuss the methods used in my investigation and the methodological considerations in relation to my research questions:

1. What challenges does The Revised Curriculum (2011) pose for teachers?
2. What will English teachers need to know and do to actually deliver this curriculum?
3. What are the teachers' beliefs about the changes and the challenges?
4. How far do they understand their new roles and the demands of teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011)?

The basic method used in this study had two main phases:

Phase one: a documentary analysis of the revised curriculum and an analysis of web forum comments to establish the perceived extent of the changes and likely challenges.

Phase two: a questionnaire to 227 teachers in Jiangxi province and interviews with 18 teachers, based on the findings of Phase one. This method and the reasons for its selection and use will be discussed in this chapter.

The chapter is organised into three sections. First, the rationale behind the research approach adopted is provided. This first section also includes a discussion of the reasons for choosing the methodology used – how the purposes of the research and data collection methods complement each other. Second, a discussion of the research design is followed by a description of the processes involved in the analysis of the data. The final section of this chapter addresses the ways in which ethical considerations were addressed in this study.

### **3.2 The Epistemology underpinning the study**

Two primary epistemological approaches have traditionally dominated research and played a great part in the development of social science: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2015; Denscombe, 2002). Denscombe (2002, p 14), describes positivism as: ‘an approach to social research that seeks to apply the natural science model of research to investigation of social phenomena and explanations of the social world’. This approach focuses on examining and testing an external reality by an ‘objective’ enquirer. This view of research has implications for what counts as being valid and reliable. It is, in short, one view of the world. This study was not taken positivism but an alternative perspective - interpretivism, which rejects some of the views held by positivism (Denscombe, 2002) and takes a different view of what counts in social research. To the interpretivist, the focus of research should be interpreting the meanings that research participants give to their actions (Denscombe, 2002) so that the researcher, and reader, can understand the meanings, values, and lived experience from the participants’ own perspectives. This paradigm takes a very different view of reality, assuming that it exists in the meaning- making of social actors. This perspective necessarily takes a different view of validity from a positivist view. My research asks what teachers understand about the Revised Curriculum (2011) and, therefore, takes an interpretivist stance which seeks to explore teachers’ experience, beliefs and views, and the meanings they construct. Teachers’ beliefs are based on their experience (Richards, 1998). This is important because the way teachers interpret the curriculum and actually use it, and their views of it, represent the reality of the curriculum. The reality I am interested in is the interpretations of the participants — teachers and, to a lesser extent, policymakers. I am not checking whether these reflect external reality because that is not the reality I am interested in. Figure 3.1 shows the framework for my study.

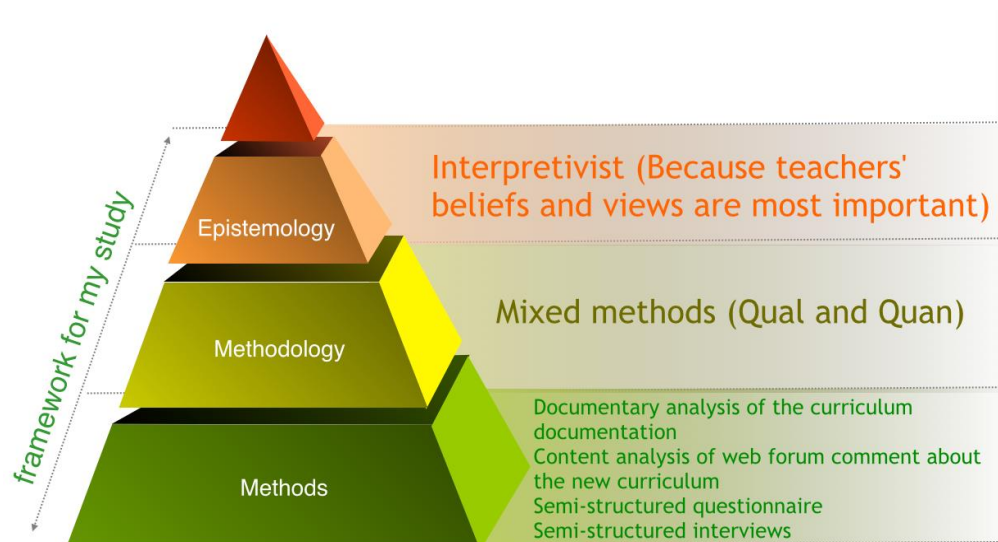


Figure 3.1 Framework for my study

### 3.3 The research approaches

The methodological choices in my research are based on the questions of ‘*what do I need to know and why?*’ (Bell, 1999, p 101) and ‘*what counts the reality for me?*’

In this study, the intentions of the government expressed through a curriculum document are an interesting possible reality. However, these are words on paper which, although they show intent, are not the same as the understandings of the individual teachers who actually teach the curriculum. This is the reality I seek to explore in a valid and reliable way, which has guided my decisions about what approach, methodology, methods, and instruments were appropriate for the data collection and data analysis. I believe that when deciding on a research approach it is necessary to consider its ‘fitness for the purpose’ as the ‘guiding principle’ since ‘different research paradigms are suitable for different research purposes and questions’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p 1). Therefore, the decision to use particular research methods in my study was determined by their appropriateness, the purpose of this study, the research questions and my preferences and other practical considerations.

The research design for this study involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative approach in the form of content

analysis of web forum comments about The Revised Curriculum (2011) and questionnaire survey answers aimed to develop a general description of the most common problems for teachers in implementing the Revised Curriculum (2011) and teachers' perceptions and beliefs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The qualitative approach involved the use of documentary analysis of the curriculum documentation and semi-structured interviews. Documentary analysis helped me to explore the government's proposals, the direction of policy changes, the theoretical impetus behind such changes and their implications for teachers, and also check any key changes between these two curriculum documents. Interviews were used to capture teachers' beliefs and perceptions in more depth than the questionnaire responses. The way teachers interpret the curriculum and actually use it, and their views, is the reality of the curriculum. The qualitative approach in this study was used to complement the quantitative data and also to provide qualitative context to the quantitative data collected. In this study, the interpretivist paradigm is taken, as this research seeks to explore teachers' experience, beliefs and perceptions, and their meanings from the teachers' perspectives.

The data collection in Phase two took place in Jiangxi, China between March and July 2014. This involved the English teachers of the primary and junior middle schools in Jiangxi. A detailed account of the methodology and methods employed in this study is given in the following section.

### **3.3.1 My methodological orientation and choice of methods**

The purpose of this study was to explore the demands of The Revised Curriculum (2011) for English teaching and teachers' understandings of, responses to and difficulties with this curriculum. To achieve this purpose required information from a variety of sources, principally the curriculum documents which contain the intentions of the authors of the curriculum and the English teachers in China themselves. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies was therefore considered the best approach. A

survey questionnaire and web forum content analysis was used to collect quantitative data, while semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis formed the qualitative data collection methods. The choice of a multi-strategy research for the present study was for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I needed to find the best way to answer the specific research questions (Hammersley, 2013):

...: selection among these positions ought often to depend on the purposes and circumstances of the research rather than being derived from methodological or philosophical commitments. This is because there are trade-offs involved. For instance, if we seek greater precision we are likely to sacrifice some breadth of description; and vice versa. And the costs and benefits of various trade-off positions will vary according to the particular goals and circumstances of the research being pursued. (Hammersley, 2013, p 172).

Many researchers (Patton, 1990; Straus and Corbin, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Murphy et al, 1998; Cohen et al., 2000; Gobo, 2001; Cresswell, 2012) suggest that quantitative and qualitative research can be effectively combined as mixed research methods in the same study based on the goals of the study. Patton (1990) and Fielding and Schreier (2001) also point out the advantages of adopting a combination of methods from both approaches to generate greater breadth and depth to the analysis which neither on its own could generate. To be more precise, quantitative data would, on the one hand, add 'breadth' to the analysis by providing a description of a general view as a result of a large-scale study of a representative sample (Kelle, 2005). On the other hand, qualitative data can add 'depth' to the analysis by providing a more detailed explanation of the categories in the quantitative data so that meaningful pictures of social phenomena might emerge (Kelle, 2005). Kelle (2005, p 17) further suggested that 'Quantitative and qualitative methods usually provide information on different levels of sociological description ... In order to formulate adequate social explanations of certain phenomena it will

often be necessary to combine both types of information.’ Because of these advantages, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was best suited to my study, and the resulting combination of the data helped me to generate wider and deeper explanations of the research topics.

Secondly, adopting a variety of methods made it possible to explore the curriculum from different perspectives - the perspectives of the authors and the perspectives of the teachers, leading to a deeper and broader understanding of English teacher perceptions of, and responses to the Revised Curriculum (2011). For example, data from the analysis of curriculum documentation and web forum comments as well as wider investigation of teachers’ reported views and practices through questionnaire and interview data gave a deeper picture of teachers’ understandings of the Revised Curriculum (2011) and the main difficulties they may face in implementing it.

The third reason for adopting a multi-research strategy had to do with time and financial constraints. Relying only on quantitative data collection methods such as questionnaire surveys would have been of limited value and not offered the necessary in-depth picture of the research topic. However, reliance on only qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews, would not only have been time consuming, but also expensive (such as the cost of travelling to meet interviewees). A combination of the two methodologies was, therefore, considered most appropriate.

Consideration of these factors regarding my own research and taking the view that combined methods was ‘what best fits a particular study’ (Robson, 1993, p 20) in my case, I adopted the multi-research strategy. In the following sections, the instruments used, the context, schools and the participants in this study, and the procedures of administration will be presented.

### **3.4 Data collection methods and time line**

As mentioned earlier, I adopted a multi-method approach in my study in two

phases. Phase one was the curriculum documentary analysis and web forum content analysis. The documentary analysis was to identify the intentions of the authors of the Revised Curriculum (2011) and the web forum illustrated the perceptions of teachers participating in it. Phase two, based on the findings of Phase one, was used to develop written questionnaires for teachers and the responses guided the questions in the semi-structured individual interviews in order to collect the in depth views of a subset of teachers.

### **Time Line for Data Collection**

<b>Time Line</b>	<b>Activity</b>
October 2012 - February 2013	<b>Phase one:</b> Collecting and analysing data from curriculum documentation
March 2013 - January 2014	<b>Phase one:</b> Collecting and analysing data from Web forums
January 2014 - February 2014	<b>Phase two:</b> Constructing and revising the questionnaire and interview questions based on the findings of Phase one
February 2014	<b>Phase two:</b> Conducting pilot study of the questionnaire and interview
March 2014 - April 2014	<b>Phase two:</b> Collecting data from questionnaires
May 2014 - July 2014	<b>Phase two:</b> Collecting data from interviews
August 2014 - February 2015	<b>Phase two:</b> Analysing data collected from Phase two

### **3.4.1 Documentary analysis**

#### **3.4.1.1 Documentary analysis of the curriculum documentation**

Some researchers claim that there are no essential distinctions between the 2001 piloted PRC English curriculum and the 2011 new English curriculum (Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012). The Revised Curriculum (2011) standard keeps the framework, basic concepts, main objectives, and most of the demands of the previous curriculum document (Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012). My research questions

are about the challenges the 2011 new English curriculum poses for teachers; what will English teachers need to know and do, to really deliver this curriculum and their perceptions to the new roles and the demands of teaching this revised curriculum. Therefore, I argue that are significant differences between 2001 and 2011, so I conducted a comparative documentary analysis of the 2001 curriculum (MOE, 2001) and 2011 curriculum (MOE, 2011), in order to explore the nature and direction of policy changes and the expressed theoretical impetus behind such changes. These changes have implications for teachers which can be inferred as a basis for later exploration.

Documentary analysis is used as a major source of information for social studies (Weiss, 1998). Documentary materials can either serve as the main source of data for research (Finnegan, 1996) or serve as supplementary data by providing convincing evidence 'when other techniques fail to resolve a question' (Weiss, 1998, p 260). The documents in my study are the 2001 piloted curriculum (MOE, 2001) and The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011). These documents provide reliable and good quality information about the intended changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011). On the basis of a detailed analyses of the differences between the two documents, the challenges teachers face were inferred and used as the basis of the questionnaire and interviews. Moreover, these documents also helps corroborate and strengthen the evidence gathered from other sources including semi-structured interviews and questionnaire survey. More than one source of data also gave me the chance to explore how far the policy aligned with teachers' beliefs.

In addition to providing convincing evidence, Weiss (1998) noted that documentary analysis also helps the researcher to become more familiar with the documentary materials and helps to save the researcher's time. By analyzing the curriculum documents, I became thoroughly familiar with the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) and possible challenges teachers face, which saved time for ingenerating the questionnaire and interview questions.



Atkinson and Coffey (2004, p 46) claim ‘there are many research questions and research settings that cannot be investigated adequately without reference to the production and use of textual materials’. However, they also suggest that in using documents, researchers must clearly know what such documents can be used for. The purpose of using documentary data in my study was to help me to understand the key differences between the 2001 curriculum and the 2011 curriculum, and to answer two of my research questions to find out the challenges the Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for teachers; and what teachers need to know and do to really deliver this curriculum. The data gathered from the documentary analysis helped me to generate the questionnaire and interview questions, and supplement my data by providing convincing evidence.

#### **3.4.1.2. The analysis of the data from the curriculum documentation**

Whatever type of data is generated or the methodology employed, the ultimate aim of a researcher during data analysis is to find answers to research questions from the data collected (Robson, 1993). This section tells the reader about my approach to the publicly available documents which form The Revised Curriculum (2011). This pilot document became the basis for The Revised Curriculum (2011) (MOE, 2011). This revised curriculum aimed to change teacher behavior and beliefs and was published by the Ministry of Education to ‘change the experiences of students and their learning outcomes’; to ‘solve the problems in teaching practice that were not solved in 2001 curriculum’; and to ‘cope with difficulties in teacher development’ (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, pp 1-2). This is not only a claim made by the revision group, but a cursory inspection shows there is a high degree of change from the previous version (2001). The changes are documented in the literature (see Section 2.9.4, Chapter Two) but in a very limited way. Moreover, the literature concerning the Revised Curriculum (2011) is not systematic or research based. Therefore, a priority for my study was to analyse the piloted and revised curriculum documents to establish the nature of the differences between the texts and the intended differences in teaching practices from those in the draft document previous practices. To do this

analysis, in my study, I followed the ‘lens’ (or ‘keyhole’) comparison advised by Walk (1998) in which I weighted the 2001 curriculum (MOE, 2001) less heavily than the 2011 curriculum (MOE, 2011), I used the 2001 curriculum as a lens through which to view the 2011 curriculum. Each section was compared to establish what had been added, what had been removed and what changes in the content and form of words had been made. Just as looking through a pair of binoculars changes the an object is seen, using the 2001 curriculum as a framework for understanding the 2011 curriculum changed the way I saw the Revised Curriculum (2011) and also helped me to see the differences between the two curriculum documents more clearly.

Following the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), the analysis of the data from the curriculum documentation in this study starts off with data reduction. In my study, I went through the 2001 curriculum (as the framework) section by section and kept making comparisons with The Revised Curriculum (2011) to find differences and understand their implications. I took some examples of comparisons, and put them in a chart. These comparisons were also related to a key criterion: would the teachers need to know or do something different to understand the Revised Curriculum (2011) content or intentions? This process is based upon changes (in terms of content, amount or arrangement of text) in the curriculum documentation, but also required me to infer the intentions of the authors of the curriculum, based on the literature review. For example, where the authors of the Revised Curriculum (2011) discuss their proposals for developing the professionalism of teachers, my analysis identified:

- a change in the form of words;
- the insertion of a whole section about professionalism;
- the use of the word professionalism (教师专业化发展) which was not used in the earlier, piloted curriculum.
- I interpreted these three types of change to suggest an increased emphasis on the professionalism of teachers, and the likelihood of it making new demands on them. They may be required to know and do new things to address this aspect of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The related information from the chart was pulled together under the headings in Chapter Four. The main changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) are presented in Chapter Four.

### **3.4.2 Content analysis**

#### **3.4.2.1 Content analysis of web forum comment about The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

As an international student, I am far away from my country and the site of the changes I am interested in—China. I have no personal direct access to relevant materials or people. Moreover, the different cultural setting in China means that difficulties may not be discussed in public because this might be misinterpreted as being negative. Consequently, it was difficult for me to obtain the relevant literature concerning teachers' responses to the 2011 changes which they now have to implement. However, informal talk and discussions on web forums about the Revised Curriculum (2011) are an innovative way to explore teachers' understandings of it and of the changes it may imply and their reactions to these. So, this novel approach was taken to discover teacher views through their activities on web forums in China, which allowed me access to sample views expressed anonymously in a semi-private professional forum by teachers and to generate categories which represented their views. In this way, a preliminary analysis of teachers' views, perceptions and understandings was generated for use with the documentary analysis discussed above to identify any perceived challenges which could then be explored in the questionnaires and interviews.

The popularity of the internet has favoured the expansion of computer mediated communication (CMC) among users in the 21st century (Montero *et al.*, 2007). CMC such as Wechat and Web forums are becoming increasingly common because they are low-cost (Barak and Fisher, 2009; Gerressu and French, 2005), anonymous, private, acceptable, and accessible (Barak and Fisher, 2009). As Jyothi *et al* (2012) assert, not being constrained by real-time and real-place, CMC allows users to 'meet' online when face-to-face meetings

are not possible, but the other advantages over face-to-face meetings: their increased communication efficiency through fewer unnecessary elaborative statements and repetitions (Condon and Cech, 1996); sufficient time and space is available for users to organise their statements (Jyothi *et al*, 2012); more topic-related messages are produced than in face-to-face meetings (Jonassen and Kwon, 2001), and users are encouraged to share and learn more about a certain topic or field (Jyothi *et al*, 2012). Some people may feel more comfortable ‘talking’ online than in face-to-face communication (Jyothi *et al*, 2012) because the users lack self-confidence in face-to-face meetings, or feel safer not having to share their personal information, or may feel more included and supported via CMC, especially in the face of changes which may be professionally daunting. CMC offers a ‘safe’ space to share and explore concerns.

According to Henri’s (1992) definition, CMC involves three steps: First, one user sends a message online, then another user gives his/her response to this message, and then the original sender gives his/her response in turn. The online discussion forum is a type of CMC (Marra, 2006) but is more complex as messages can be replied to and addressed by many people - anyone involved in the discussion group (McDonald and Gibson, 1998). People using online forums can share and discuss a particular domain of interest (Dornelles, 2001). In my research, teachers in China debated and shared their information, questions and opinions about the new English curriculum through online discussion forums. They can get professional advice from peers and experts by using the forums. Online discussion forums provide participants with extra space and time to add succinct, precise, detailed, coherent and complete statements to discussions (Lapadat, 2002), making them an ideal place to discover what teachers think of the Revised Curriculum (2011), the role of the teacher and their own professional needs. However, because messages can be posted by anonymous user members of the general public, there may also be some inaccurate responses and wrong answers. Moreover, the use of CMC involves only a self-selecting part of the population of teachers of English-possibly those who use electronic media in other aspects of their lives. It is not

possible to say whether these users represent the English teaching community accurately. In using CMC, it is important to recognise the threat to valid conclusions this poses and understand that conclusions based on CMC must be treated cautiously.

Being text-based and stored online, discussion forums allow participants' thinking and reasoning to be visible (Asbell-Clarke and Foster, 2004) and direct observation of online communication instead of a collection of retrospective accounts through face-to-face interviews (Seale *et al.*, 2010). Web forums therefore were considered a more intuitive way to get credible evidence for my research study than even face to face interviews, where criticism of authority is culturally difficult.

#### **3.4.2.2 The analysis of the data from the web forum comments about The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

All the comments from revised curriculum-related 'topics' (Web pages that start with a topic posted by a user followed by responses to the question from other users of the Web site) were collected from March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 till January 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, from a selection of popular forum Web sites about English teaching in China. The selection of websites was based on Google search results, which are ranked according to popularity. Topics that related to The Revised Curriculum (2011) from two different Web forums (New Thought English Education Forum, and People's Education Forum) were collected.

The New Thought English Education Forum is a national, government-funded forum which aims at enhancing the quality of English teachers. Many famous experts are active in this forum, so it allows many English teachers to interact with the public and experts. The forum moderators are three English experts from Beijing Normal University: Hong Lin, Zehang Chen, and famous teacher trainer, Xin Ma. These three experts were involved in the drafting and revising of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the design of the new series of textbooks. This is important, because the expertise of the senior participants of this forum gives the New Thought English Education Forum a very particular

status. It is funded and developed by Jinri Yuanding Technology Co., Ltd and the Center of Curriculum Material Development for Compulsory Education of the Ministry of Education in China, and also serves as a platform for teachers across the country to learn and share opinions about the Revised Curriculum (2011) as well as a platform for promoting curriculum reform. This forum is updated at the start of each month.

The People's Education Forum, hosted by the People's Education Press, is an independent forum run by a publishing house. It receives much less traffic. This forum is less dominated by experts, but also had a much shorter period of interest in the curriculum and was not updated from 2009 to 2012.

CMC forum analysis methods can be categorized as: quantitative analysis, content analysis, and social network analysis methods (Kim and Lee, 2012). Quantitative analysis methodology shows the amount of CMC discussion and the analysis of interaction levels by considering the number of posts made by users, as well as the responses, and the number of logins by users (Benbunan-Fich and Hiltz, 1999). This method, however, fails to note the type and structure of CMC discussion. This task can be performed through a content analysis to analyse the type, structure, and level of online discussion (George, 2008). In this method, the content of online discussion is classified according to certain categories of analysis. The social network analysis method focuses on analysing the relationship between participants and the structure of online discussions through nodes and links (Hu and Racherla, 2008). However, some particular types of CMC discussion cannot be analysed by using this method. In my research, the main concern is not the nature of the interactions but the content of the English teacher's posts and the advice given. So I took a relatively traditional view and used Nvivo for content analysis. However, the sampling of views was innovative.

The material was indexed using Nvivo 10 software, noting the following aspects:

- Years of teaching experience and previous experience of teacher training of user (if known)
- Place the user comes from (if known)
- Any other demographic details—for example, position ( e.g. teacher, principle, etc.)
- Any action already taken to apply the Revised Curriculum (2011) by the person posting (e.g., having taken the training course about the Revised Curriculum (2011))
- Type of question being asked (e.g., ‘What should I do?’; ‘Who can help me . . . ?’)
- Type of response—for example, practical advice, correct or incorrect information, and recommendation of an action or method, reassurance.
- Keywords from discussions (in both questions and responses)

The most frequently occurring topic keyword terms were selected for the analysis presented in the next chapter. This was a thematic analysis from an inductive approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Because the web forum comments were conducted in Chinese, I analysed the data in Chinese and wrote the report in Chinese, and then translated the final report of the web forum comments into English to avoid any inconsistencies in the translation process and ensure the validity of the content; in addition, it was more convenient for me to cope with the data in my own language. The most common six topics are shown in section 5.1 and those results were used for the design of the questionnaires and interview questions in this study.

### **3.4.3. The sample of schools and participants in Phase two**

Phase two was a questionnaire to 227 teachers in Jiangxi province and interviews with 18 teachers, based on the findings of Phase one.

#### **3.4.3.1 Context**

Based on the considerations of time, accessibility and accommodation, I chose Yingtan city, my hometown, to conduct the study. Yingtan (Chinese: 鹰潭) is a prefecture-level city in the east of Jiangxi province, People’s Republic of China.

Its location near the trisection of Jiangxi, Fujian, and Zhejiang has made it a strategically important city for centuries. Today, it continues to be a major rail transport hub in China (Yingtian Government Website, 2014). Yingtian city has an area of 3,554 km<sup>2</sup> and had a population of 1,124,906 in the 2010 census. The emphasis on education and schooling is very high in Yingtian city. There are 409 primary schools and 522 English teachers in elementary schools in Yingtian city. For junior middle school education, there are 66 junior middle schools with 597 English teachers (Yingtian Government Website, 2014).



**Figure 3.2 The location of Jiangxi Province**



**Figure 3.3 The location of Yingtian City Jurisdiction in Jiangxi Province**

I decided to conduct my research in Yingtian city for three reasons. First, in survey studies, researchers attempt to collect information from a representative subset of the population (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Robson (1997) also states that the value of a survey study depends on choosing a representative, non-biased sample. Because of the economic imbalances between different areas in China,



it may be more difficult for regions with insufficient qualified teachers and resources to implement the Revised Curriculum (2011), especially parts place high demand on teachers, students and local conditions. As the economic situation in Yingtan city is not very developed, unlike big cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing, schools in Yingtan city may face more problems than those in more developed cities. For example, teaching materials and resources may be insufficient due to lack of funds, especially in the rural areas; teachers may have fewer opportunities to attend any training programmes; they may not be enough qualified. All these factors might make it more difficult for Yingtan city to meet the requirements of the Revised Curriculum (2011) than the developed cities. In addition, Yingtan city consists of an inner city area; suburbs, village, town and rural areas, which is ideal for my study because I wanted to collect data from schools in urban areas, the suburbs and rural areas as the teachers in these three different areas may have different perceptions and problems in relation to implementing the Revised Curriculum (2011).

Second, choosing the city where I grew up added validity to the interpretation of the study's findings, as I am familiar with the culture and circumstances and am able to accurately interpret the subjects' language use and conceptual meanings (Christensen and James, 2000). I can also understand the subjects' local accent easily. Jourard (1964) states that people tend to disclose more about themselves to people who resemble them in various ways than to people who differ from them. So, I hoped the participants would have more enthusiasm and interest in my research because I was from the same city as them. Indeed, in the piloted interviews, it was obvious that most of the participants saw this research as an opportunity to have a voice about improving the quality of English language teaching and learning and to solve the problems they had in their teaching practices. Therefore, they were very helpful, supportive and gave me some useful feedback. In addition, I had easy access to schools in Yingtan city because I have friends in some schools there and also a friend works in the Yingtan Education bureau. Therefore, Yingtan city was selected as the case study sample.

### 3.4.3.2 The schools and the participant teachers

Since The Revised Curriculum (2011) is only for primary schools (age 7-12) and junior middle schools (age 12-15) (MOE, 2011), the population for this study consists of teachers of English from government primary and middle schools within this geographical location. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 show the background information of the schools in this study.

**Table 3.1. Background information of the target schools in the study**

District	Total number of schools	Total number of English teachers	Teachers selected for this study (the total number divided by 5)
City area	Primary schools: 53	Primary school: n=153	Primary school: n=31
	Junior middle schools: 19	Junior middle school: n=224	Junior middle school: n=45
Suburb, village and town area	Primary schools: 133	Primary school: n=141	Primary school: n=28
	Junior middle school: 27	Junior middle school: n=250	Junior middle school: n=50
Rural area	Primary schools: 223	Primary school: n=228	Primary school: n=46
	Junior middle school: 20	Junior middle school: n=123	Junior middle school: n=25
Total number	Primary schools: 409	n=1125	n=225
	Junior middle school: 66		

(Source: Jiangxi Education Government, <http://www.jxedu.gov.cn>)

**Table 3.2. Background information of the target schools in the questionnaire**

<b>District</b>	<b>Primary Schools involved in the questionnaire</b>	<b>Total number of English teachers in selected primary schools</b>	<b>Junior Middle Schools involved in the questionnaire</b>	<b>Total number of English teachers in selected Junior middle schools</b>
<b>City area</b>	Primary School 1	13	Junior Middle School 1	17
	Primary School 2	12	Junior Middle School 2	15
	Primary School 3	9	Junior Middle School 3	14
	Primary School 4 (*)	7	Junior Middle School 4 (+)	11
<b>Total number</b>	3 + 1(*)	34 + 7(*)	3 + 1(*)	46 + 11(*)
<b>Suburb, village and town area</b>	Primary School 1	11	Junior Middle School 1	15
	Primary School 2	7	Junior Middle School 2	14
	Primary School 3	6	Junior Middle School 3	12
	Primary School 4	5	Junior Middle School 4	11
	Primary School 5 (*)	6	Junior Middle School 5 (+)	7
<b>Total number</b>	4 + 1(*)	29 + 6(*)	4 + 1(*)	52 + 7(*)
<b>Rural area</b>	Primary School 1	6	Junior Middle School 1	4
	Primary School 2	5	Junior Middle School 2	3
	Primary School 3	6	Junior Middle School 3	3

	Primary School 4	5	Junior Middle School 4	3
	Primary School 5	4	Junior Middle School 5	2
	Primary School 6	5	Junior Middle School 6	2
	Primary School 7	3	Junior Middle School 7	3
	Primary School 8	5	Junior Middle School 8	2
	Primary School 9	3	Junior Middle School 9	3
	Primary School 10	4	Junior Middle School 10	2
	Primary School 11 (+)	4	Junior Middle School 11 (+)	4
<b>Total number in Rural area</b>	9 + 1	46 + 4	9 + 1	27+4
<b>Total number in the study</b>	16+3	109+17	16+3	125+22

(\*): Only involved if not enough returns

(Source: Jiangxi Education Government, <http://www.jxedu.gov.cn>)

Prior to the data collection procedure, official approval was sought. Access in China was via the head teacher of each school and the consent forms were distributed to the participants assuring them of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research (see Appendix 2 and 3.4.2.). All the participants were asked to consent to the interviews being recorded. I also ensured that the participants would not suffer any disadvantages, violation of privacy, or risk from taking part, or any emotional harm (BERA, 2011).

For the quantitative phase of this study, 225 English teachers in 32 selected schools in Yingtian (age 22-60) were involved into the questionnaire survey. The teachers in the sample were all English teachers in primary schools and junior middle schools since The Revised Curriculum (2011) is only for English course in primary schools (age 7-12) and junior middle schools (age 12-15) (MOE, 2011). As shown in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, I began with cluster sampling techniques (Cohen *et al.*, 2013) to select schools and teachers. In city area, 3 primary schools and 3 junior middle schools were selected. Considering that I may not receive all the questionnaires back and some questionnaires may be invalid, 1 primary school and 1 junior middle school will be involved if cannot get enough returns. In suburb, village and town area, 4 primary schools and 4 junior middle schools were selected, 1 primary school and 1 junior middle school will be involved if cannot get enough returns. In rural area, 10 primary schools and 10 junior middle schools were selected, 1 primary school and 1 junior middle school will be involved if cannot get enough returns. The schools in each area were selected because they have the largest number of English teachers and can reflect the typical district settings. I also tried to choose schools that I could access easily without requiring too much time to arrive.

To obtain the participants for the qualitative phase, I relied on a purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2002) to identify teachers from the surveyed samples with specific relevance to this study's underlying objective. Participants for the interviews were selected because of what they know and what they do, rather than randomly (Kumar, 2011) in the case of this study,

then the participants were selected because they have different views as reflected in their questionnaire responses, and they can be representative in terms of location, gender, education qualification, training experience, and teaching experience. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point out that a sample of the population under study should be carefully selected for a deep understanding of the phenomenon to take place. They say:

Qualitative researchers ... set out to build a sample that includes people (or settings) selected with a different goal in mind (different from quantitative researchers): gaining deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people. This approach to purposefully selecting people (or settings, organisations) for a study acknowledges the complexity that characterises human and social phenomena ... and the limits of generalizability ... (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p 56)

Following Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) argument, the selection of the study sample covered more than a mere representation of the population groups. 18 interviewee teachers were selected on a voluntary basis. At the end of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked if they agree to continue their participation in this research by taking further interview. I also was considerate to select the participants who have different views as reflected in their questionnaire responses, and who can be representative in terms of location, gender, education qualification, training experience, and teaching experience. Table 3.3 presents the characteristics of the expected interviewee teachers in the study.

**Table 3.3 The expected characteristics of the target interviewee teachers (n=18)**

Statistics	School		Location			Gender		Education Qualification				English Teaching Experience (Years)					Training Experience	
	Primary English teachers	Junior middle school English teachers	City	Suburb	Rural	Female	Male	Technical secondary school or below	Junior college	Undergraduate	Master	<5	6-10	11-15	16-25	>26	Yes	No
<b>Number in Yingtian*</b>	522 (47%)	597 (53%)	377 (34%)	391 (35%)	351 (31%)	996 (89%)	123 (11%)	0 (0%)	235 (21%)	806 (72%)	78 (7%)	190 (17%)	246 (22%)	492 (44%)	123 (11%)	68 (6%)	492 (44%)	627 (56%)
<b>Expected Number in interview</b>	8 (47%)	10 (53%)	6 (34%)	6 (35%)	6 (31%)	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	4 (21%)	13 (72%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	4 (22%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	8 (44%)	10 (56%)

(\*: Source from Yingtian Education Bureau, [www.ytedu.gov.cn](http://www.ytedu.gov.cn))

Table 3.3 above summarises the demographic information of the location of the English teachers in Yingtan city and expected participant teachers in the study. I tried to involve participants (see table 3.3) for the interviews that met the requirements. However, such ideal situation was not always possible, so I had back-up informant candidates for the interview, in case the ideal ones were not available.

### **3.4.4. Questionnaire**

#### **3.4.4.1 The written questionnaire**

The use of a questionnaire helped me capture the basic demographic data and views of a comparatively large number of teachers in order to provide a background picture of the unknown landscape of teachers beliefs about the curriculum. The questionnaires were followed by semi-structured interviews to further clarify the responses to the questionnaire, as discussed below.

Following the content analysis, a questionnaire was designed to examine teachers' perceptions and reactions to the Revised Curriculum (2011). Questionnaires have been used extensively in educational research for to collect data from large populations (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998; Bell, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2013; Bryman, 2015). This study adopted the 'self-administrated' questionnaire which required the participants to complete the questionnaire independently (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). The purpose of using the self-administered questionnaire in my study was to gather quantitative data from a large number of participant teachers reflecting their basic demographic data and general perspectives of their perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011). Thus, the use of questionnaires added scope and breadth to my study by allowing information to be obtained from a large number of English teachers. Because of the time constraints in this study, gathering data through interviews from the same large number of participants would have been impossible. Using questionnaires also allowed the participant teachers to express their opinions anonymously so that they could feel more free and relaxed in answering the questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the participants' responses to the questionnaire provided a basis for the subsequent



interviews and the interviewees were selected because of their different views reflected in their questionnaire responses, and were representative in terms of location, gender, education and qualifications, training experience, and teaching experience.

The questionnaire was administered to English teachers only. The questionnaire was prepared in English first (See Appendix 4.1) and then translated into Chinese (See Appendix 4.2) in order to let the participants have a better understanding of the statements. A draft version of the questionnaire was designed after consultation with my supervisor. The format of the questionnaire was initially as both hard copy and online questionnaire because I was not sure which format was more efficient. The format of the questionnaire in the main study was determined after the questionnaire had been piloted to see which format had a higher return rate.

The BALLI, short for ‘Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory’ (Horwitz, 1985) has been used by many researchers, for example, Horwitz 1985, 1988; Kern, 1995; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Samimy and Lee, 1997; Peacock, 1999, 2001), in order to explore teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about language learning and teaching and is a Likert-type instrument mainly used in studies about beliefs. Some researchers use BALLI or modified BALLI, and others create their own questionnaires and have follow-up in-depth interviews.

According to the findings from foreign language teachers and students’ free-recall verbal reports in an American university, BALLI was mainly designed and developed based to cover five areas: difficulty in language learning; foreign language aptitude; the nature of language learning; learning and communication strategies; and motivation and expectations. However, Kuntz (1996) and Yang (1992) claimed that the question items mentioned in BALLI failed to include all the language learning issues. According to Horwitz (1988), the aim of BALLI is not to provide a whole picture but merely examples of general understandings of the beliefs that teachers might encounter in their own situations. Taking those issues about BALLI into

consideration. I decided to adapt and develop BALLI to get a deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs.

The original questionnaire (piloted) used in this study involved 81 items in total and is structured into two sections (Appendix 4.1 and 4.2). The first section in the questionnaire collected the demographic data of the respondents such as information on their age, gender, length of service, qualifications, official position, previous teacher-training experience and the location of their school (city, suburb or rural) to facilitate differential analysis.

The second section of the questionnaire includes 68 items about teachers' beliefs compiled from the basic BALLI and one question asked the teachers if they wanted to participate in an interview. The 68 items in Section two are ranked on a five point Likert scale of agreement which requires respondents to tick the answer closest to their view (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree). I selected several items from the BALLI and made some modifications. I also added supplementary questions in order to capture respondents' answers concerning three research questions in this study:

- teachers' beliefs about the changes to the Revised Curriculum (2011) for English teaching;
- the challenges and opportunities they recognise for improving English teaching;
- how far they understand their new roles and the demands of teaching this revised curriculum.

The items in the second section can be divided into five topics. Items 14, 34, 35, 50, 51 and 74 are statements of teachers' perceptions of teacher training. Items 15-27, 33, 41 and 71 explore teachers' beliefs about the nature of language teaching. Items 36, 37, 39, 40, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65 and 73 aim to discover teachers' understanding of the Revised Curriculum (2011). Items 29-32, 42, 48, 53-58, 68, 72 and 81 are about teachers' actual

teaching practice. Items 28, 38, 43, 44, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 75-80 are statements about the difficulty of language teaching.

The disadvantages of using questionnaires are that self-reported data may not have a high level of validity, and it provides descriptions rather than explanations (Munn and Drever, 2004). In recognition of the limitations of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were carried out to expand the responses to the questionnaire and to validate the initial findings.

#### **3.4.4.2 Piloting the questionnaire**

Piloting is an important process in social research (Bryman, 2015; Oppenheim, 2001). It helps with the design and validity of the questionnaire and also to anticipate how long it takes to complete the questionnaire. To make sure that the questionnaire was clear for participants to understand and would not be confusing to interpret or respond to the questions, and to determine whether paper or electronic means of administering the questionnaire were more efficient for getting completed questionnaires returned, I piloted the questionnaire with English teachers in China before conducting the main study.

The questionnaire was prepared in English first and then translated into Chinese (See Appendix 4.1 and 4.2). Since the questionnaire was prepared for the Chinese context, I contacted three friends (one working in the Nanchang Education Bureau; one working in a middle school in Poyang county; and one with some teacher friends working in primary schools) and asked for their help to send questionnaires to the English teachers they knew in primary schools and junior middle schools. The format of the questionnaire was both hard copy and online. I sent both formats of the questionnaire to the three friends by e-mail attachment on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and asked them to both print out the questionnaire and send the link to the online questionnaire to enough English teachers and let them choose the format they preferred. My friends helped me to collect the returned hard copies of the questionnaire and scanned them to me by email attachment. The responses from the online questionnaire were collected by myself.

Twenty-four English teachers (eighteen female and six male) were involved in the piloting of the questionnaire. These participants come from 6 different cities in China -- Guangzhou, Yantai, Nanchang, Bijie, Poyang and Beijing; teachers in the sample for the main study did not pilot the questionnaire. 11 of the involved English teachers completed the questionnaire online because they have easy access to the internet and stated that it was convenient for them to do the questionnaire online. Also, some said that they chose to do the questionnaire online so my friend did not need to collect hard copies from them. 13 of the involved teachers chose to complete the hard copy of the questionnaire because they are not familiar with how to use the computer and they stated that the hard copy format was easier for them. For the main study, considering that teachers in rural areas may not have easy access to the internet, and some teachers in the pilot study claimed that they are not familiar with computer techniques, I use hard copy questionnaire formats in the main study to ensure enough questionnaires would be returned.

The time the participants used to complete the questionnaire varied from 256 seconds to 926 seconds, the average time being 694 seconds (approximately 12 minutes), suggesting it was a manageable amount of time, which might have contributed to the high completion rate.

The comments from the pilot participants concerned the order of the questions in the questionnaire; they suggested it seemed unstructured because the four questions about one topic (such as target language use in English classes) are not grouped together. I explained this was because I mixed up the questions in order to make the participants consider each question carefully. Then they told me that they thought this was reasonable and worked well.

The analysis and revision of the pilot questionnaire took 18 days. After analysing the pilot questionnaire I discussed the results with my supervisor and we agreed to make some changes:

- added a question to find out what training for the Revised Curriculum (2011) the teachers had had;

- I decided to reverse some questions, for example, the original question was: ‘The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should design and adopt various kinds of language teaching methods rather than task-based teaching method only’. I changed this to: ‘The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should only use task-based teaching method’.
- I also changed the title of the questionnaire. The title was ‘English teachers questionnaire about the implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011) for Full-time Compulsory Education’. In the introductory paragraph I explained that I was researching English teachers’ opinions about English courses and the Revised Curriculum (2011). When I read the responses to the pilot questionnaire I realised that some teachers agreed with the Revised Curriculum (2011) related question but these responses were contradicted by their answers to other questions. I thought that they might be affected by the title. The title leads the participants to support the Revised Curriculum (2011). For that reason I changed the title to ‘English teachers questionnaire’ and in the introductory paragraph I only mentioned that I was researching teachers’ views about English course.
- I made some changes to the wording of some questions for easy reading and clarification and deleted some words because one participant told me that she thought some questions were a little lengthy. For example, I made Item 48 in section 2 clearer and shorter. The original question was: ‘You think the training programme you have already attended had the problem of using lecture-based teaching methods, spoon feeding the trainees, and lacked interaction’. I changed it to: ‘You think the training programme you have already had was lecture-based, spoon fed the trainees, and lacked interaction’.
- A few spelling mistakes and grammatical errors were also corrected. For example, Item 12 in the piloted questionnaire was: ‘You think the training programme you have already had was closely linked to teaching in practice’. I changed it to: ‘You think the training programme you have already had was similar to actual teaching practice’.

- In order to ensure the Chinese/English translation was accurate in terms of subtle meanings in the questionnaire, I asked one Chinese colleague to translate the Chinese and another colleague to translate the English and see what they came up with. Then, I changed the original translation of some words in the piloted questionnaire to make the questions more readable and more understandable for the participants.

A copy of the final revised questionnaire used in the main study is provided in Appendix 4.3 and 4.4.

#### **3.4.4.3 Administering the questionnaire**

First, I contacted the head teachers in 32 selected schools. The first head teachers I contacted told me that in their school, there are paper questionnaires almost every week, and teachers seldom completed them because they do not think they are reliable or useful, they think it is just more paper work that cannot benefit them at all. In order to solve this problem, I came to the schools on an agreed date with the consent forms, which I distributed to the participants, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. I briefly explained the study and emphasised that participation was voluntary. Then, I introduced the outline of the questionnaire and instructions for all the sections. In order to reduce the risk of frivolous responses from participants (Robson, 1993), I clearly explained to the participating teachers the expected contribution of this research, for example, to provide insights into the participants' and other teachers' problems, their roles and demands and that it had the potential to help improve the quality of education in general. I emphasised the importance of their responses to this study. In addition, I gave the teachers the opportunity to raise questions before their participation in the research.

Then, I distributed the questionnaires to all the English teachers who agreed to take part in this study. I left some additional questionnaires with consent forms for teachers who were absent. When I went to collect the completed

questionnaires on the agreed date, the head teacher told me that almost every English teacher had completed my questionnaire and said that I had made this questionnaire seem valuable to them. In order to make the data more reliable and get more returns, I went to all the 32 selected schools directly with the questionnaires and repeated this procedure.

The time for completing the questionnaire varied from 12 to 37 minutes. Participants who were willing to continue their participation in this study by being interviewed left their contact details at the end of the questionnaire.

#### **3.4.4.4. The analysis of the data from the questionnaires**

The analysis of the data from the questionnaires began once the questionnaires were gathered and compiled. They were grouped according to the location of each school (city, suburb and rural area). Finally, I numbered the questionnaires from 1 to 227, which is the total number of participant teacher returns.

In the questionnaire, there were 81 closed questions and 1 question that asked the teachers if they wanted to participate in the interview. For the analysis of the closed questions the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. The data were entered manually into Excel spreadsheets. In order to carry out statistical analyses using SPSS software, I then transferred the data from Excel into the SPSS program. I attended the SPSS training program at the University before I started to analyse the data to ensure that the procedures of analysis and statistical tests employed were correct. I also consulted a statistical specialist at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics in China to help me check the process of analysis was correct. Because the participants gave their answers to the questionnaire in Chinese, I analysed the data in Chinese and wrote the report of the findings of the questionnaire in Chinese, then translated the final report of the questionnaire into English to avoid any translation problems with the participants' responses in the analysing process; also, it was more convenient and easier for me to cope with the data in my own language.

Reliability has to do with the consistency of a measure across different kinds of test (external) or within itself (internal) (Coolican, 2003). It is the extent to which the measuring instrument always obtains results with high similarity when other conditions are unchanged (Bell, 1999). Validity deals with whether the instrument measures what it was initially planned to measure (Coolican, 2003; Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Due to the time constraints and participants' reluctance to test the questionnaire on again, making testing on two separate occasions, the reliability of the questionnaire in this study was determined by examining the internal consistency. According to Pallant (2013, p 6), internal consistency refers to 'the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute (that is, the extent to which the items 'hang together'). In measuring the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for the first section of the questionnaire. As discussed earlier, the first section had five topics: Training; The nature of language teaching; Teachers' understanding of the Revised Curriculum (2011); Actual teaching practice; and The difficulties of language teaching.

The questionnaire has a Likert-scale format. Participants were asked to choose from 'strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree' for each statement which represent or imply teachers' beliefs. The participating teachers give a score (1-5) to each item. In positive sentences, 'strongly disagree' scores 1, 'disagree' scores 2, 'neither disagree nor agree' scores 3, 'agree' scores 4, 'strongly agree' scores 5. The reversed sentences score in the opposite way. For example, 'strongly disagree' scores 5 in reversed sentences.

To be acceptable as a reliable measure of attitude, a scale should have a reliability coefficient of above 0.7 (Wu, 2001). The Alpha reliability coefficient was 0.808 for the first topic; 0.873 for the second topic; 0.947 for the third topic; 0.958 for the fourth topic; and 0.966 for the fifth topic, which indicate that the questionnaire was reliable. Table 3.4 below shows the reliability



coefficients of the items in this study.

**Table 3.4. Reliability Coefficients of the Questionnaire**

Categories	Alpha
Training	0.808
The nature of language teaching	0.873
Teachers' understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011)	0.947
Actual teaching practice	0.958
The difficulty of language teaching	0.966

The validity of the questionnaire was achieved through the use of the expert validation method. I constructed and revised the questionnaire under the supervision of an expert in this field - my supervisor - who gave thought-provoking comments on the face validity and content of the questionnaire. Also, I used peer debriefing (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985) by asking two colleagues to check the face and content validity. Face validity in my case refers not to what the questionnaire actually measured, but to what it superficially appeared to measure. I was only concerned with how the questionnaire appeared to the subject users - i.e. whether to the ordinary person it looked as if it measured what it was supposed to - not the essential matter of what it really measured. The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by getting expert colleagues to assess whether the content of the questions reflected the intended variable or not. The comments from the expert supervisor and colleagues went a long way to ensure both the high face and content validity of the questionnaire.

### **3.4.5 Semi-structured Interviews**

#### **3.4.5.1 The interviews with teachers**

The interview is probably the most widely used method of data collection in

educational research (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998) and has been defined as ‘a two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him (/her) on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2013, p 271). Interviews involve the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer (Cohen *et al.*, 2013, p 272). The main purpose of using interviews in my study was to collect qualitative data from the teacher participants. Gao and Watkins (2002) point out that qualitative interviews are considered an appropriate instrument to gain in-depth insights into teachers’ perceptions, ideas, and constructions of reality and explore teachers’ conceptions of teaching. Other researchers (Patton, 1982; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Punch, 2011) also agree that interviews can help researchers to find out what is in and on the participants’ minds, understand deeply their beliefs and practices through their terminology and judgments, and capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences. McCracken (1988, p 9) argues that interviews are beneficial for a more authentic view of participants’ feelings and perceptions: ‘The (interview) method can take us into the mental world of the individual and glimpse the categories of logic by which he or she sees the world.’ So, in my study, the aim was to capture English teachers’ real beliefs, views and perceptions in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011) because the way teachers interpret the curriculum and actually use it, and their views, is the reality of the curriculum in practice.

Moreover, using interviews as a tool in this study allowed me to follow up ideas, probe responses, investigate motives and feelings, and go deeper into why the respondents responded as they did and enabled me to discover some points that I may not have been able to obtain through the questionnaire (Bell, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Munn and Drever, 2004). Robson (1999, p 229) also argued that interviews ‘offer the possibility of modifying one’s line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot’. Although the use of questionnaires provides the opportunity to reach more respondents, it

might provide descriptions rather than explanations (Munn and Drever, 2004). This means the questionnaires alone might not have explored what was under the surface of responses and would not necessarily provide the reasons why the participant teachers in this study agreed or disagreed with an item or why they felt implementing the Revised Curriculum (2011) is difficult. The intention was for the findings to provide important insights about the English teachers' views, beliefs and perceptions in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011) which, as mentioned, has not been unexplored in the west or in China. So, in recognition of the limitations of the questionnaire mentioned, I decided to use semi-structured interviews to expand the responses to the questionnaire and validate the findings.

#### **3.4.5.2 The interview approach**

Robson (1999, p 31) identifies three kinds of interview: fully structured interview, unstructured interview, and semi-structured interview. As Bell (1999, p 136) points out that, once the researcher has decided what he/she needs to know, 'a decision will have be made about the type of interview which is most likely to produce the information required'. In my study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual interviewees and allowed follow-up questions and probes designed to clarify each respondent's response (Coleman, 2012; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The advantages of using semi-structured interviews are:

- to answer the interview questions and explain any misunderstanding experienced by the interviewees (Cohen *et al.*, 2013);
- to provide the flexibility to adapt the questions to the responses given and to explore in depth the themes which emerged in the interview (Cohen *et al.*, 2013; Robson, 1993); in other words, semi-structured interviews are more open and flexible research tools (Drever, 1995), and allow the researcher to guide and probe for extra information when necessary, thus leading to more detailed and in-depth understandings (Bryman, 2001);

Therefore, with the aim of probing and exploring issues based on the research

questions and collecting data in the participants' own words so that insights would be developed into teachers' views, perceptions and beliefs in relation to the Revised Curriculum (2011) as well as making the analysis more manageable, I favoured the semi-structured, in-depth interview approach in my study. Since this study was carried out in different primary and junior middle schools located in different districts (city area, suburb, village, town and rural areas) in China, the key issues that interview subjects in different districts emphasised could be different. This constituted an important reason for using the semi-structured interview approach, often formulated around some pre-set research questions but to provide the flexibility to adapt the questions to the responses given (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

To avoid overlapping redundancy in the interview questions (Gillham, 2005), the questions did not repeat the participants' existing responses in the questionnaires, but explored in-depth details about the interviewees.

The interviews were conducted individually with each teacher, mainly because the different cultural setting means that difficulties may not be discussed in public in China in case they are interpreted as negative. Hence teachers might not have wanted to talk openly about their experience, beliefs, perceptions and viewpoints in a focus group environment. Therefore, I decided to conduct individual interviews with the teachers.

In order to put the interviewees at ease and obtain clearly understandable and more in-depth information, the interviews were conducted in the participants' mother tongue -- Mandarin.

#### **3.4.4.3 Interview Schedule**

An interview schedule (see Appendix 5.1 and 5.2) was generated, based on the literature review, research questions and participants' responses to the questionnaire. These topics were identified as the focus of interest and used to guide the flow of questioning during the semi-structured interview. The main areas of the interview questions were:

- teachers' views and understandings of the old and revised curriculum;
- teachers' beliefs about the changes to their teaching practices (such as teaching methods, teaching objectives, resources, target language in class, grammar, vocabulary, reflection, and communication with colleagues);
- teachers' views on teaching and teacher's roles;
- teachers' views on the professional development of teachers;
- teachers' views on training for the Revised Curriculum (2011);
- teachers' background information.

However, I tried to remain flexible and respond to the flow of conversations; also, the interviewees were given the flexibility to move from one question to another if the need arose in order:

... to project their own ways of defining the world ... flexibility rather than fixity of sequence of discussions ... to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in a pre-devised schedule (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p 147).

To allow the interviewees to express their own opinions, I included both open-ended and closed questions within a semi-structured framework. Closed questions can seek specific information, while open-ended questions tend to elicit interviewees' attitudes, views and perceptions to encourage speculation or anticipation (Wellington, 1996). Many of the interview questions are indirect and I avoided asking direct questions such as 'What is your role as a teacher in class' because people's conceptions and beliefs in relation to given situations are implicit and tacitly held, and thus, they cannot always be determined by asking direct questions. Therefore, I used a range of strategies and tools, such as scenarios and vignettes (described in the following paragraph), various kinds of questions, and some probing questions (see Appendix 5.1 and 5.2).

The use of vignettes and scenarios is a good way to elicit perceptions, opinions,

beliefs and attitudes from responses or comments on stories depicting different scenarios and situations (Hill, 1997, p 177; Hazel, 1995, p 2; Hughes 1998, p 381). Although there is not much literature about the use of vignettes, especially within qualitative research or as a complementary method with other data collection techniques, researchers (Finch, 1987; Hill, 1997; Hazel, 1995; Hughes 1998) offer similar descriptions of their use of vignettes in their research. Finch (1987, p 105) for example, describes vignettes as ‘short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond’. In other words, short scenarios in written or pictorial form are used to elicit participants’ comments or opinions on examples of people and their behaviour.

Vignettes can be employed in different ways and for different purposes. They can be employed to enhance existing data or to generate data not obtained by other research methods (Hazel 1995; Hughes 1998). For example, MacAuley (1996) employed vignettes and other techniques such as postal boxes and games to explore children’s perceptions and experiences of long-term foster care by eliciting their ‘inner’ perceptions, views and value systems. Wade (1999), in her work on children’s perceptions of issues such as the family, used vignettes (short stories on topics) after each individual interview. Barter and Renold (1999) sought to explore the violence between young people in residential children’s homes, using vignettes in conjunction with semi-structured interviews. Hughes (1998, p 381) suggested the use of vignettes as a good way to elicit participants’ opinions and perceptions from their responses or comments to stories depicting scenarios, individuals and situations. My study explores English teachers’ experience, beliefs and views, as well as the phenomena involved and their meaning from their perspectives in relation to the Revised Curriculum (2011), consequently vignettes were used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews. For Question 17 in the revised interview schedule, I gave the interviewees a vignette (see Appendix 5.1) about what Mr Lin does in his daily English teaching, and asked how they felt about it? Did they think they might do anything different to improve the teaching? Then, in the following questions 18 and 19, I asked the interviewees to

describe an example of a successful English lesson they had taught or experienced in the past. I also asked them to describe their role as an English teacher and the students' role in order to gain insights into their real opinions about what they expected teachers' and students' roles to be, and so compare them with the expectations of the Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **3.4.5.4 Piloting the Interview Schedule**

The interview questions were pilot tested before embarking upon the field study, to discover the appropriate probing and prompting techniques. Piloting the interview schedule helped not only to check validity and avoid redundancy, but also to anticipate the length of an interview, and generate possible follow up questions (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) and gave me the chance to modify practices before conducting the interviews in the main study (Powney and Watts, 1987). Moreover, piloting interview questions helps to increase the researcher's confidence in managing the flow of questions and helps predict possible dilemmas (Bell, 1999). Therefore, the interview questions used in this study were piloted before the main study. While preparing the interview schedule before leaving for the main study in China, I initially wanted to pilot the interview questions with two Chinese teachers of English through Skype software. However, because the first interviewee seemed a little short of time during the telephone interview and answered most of the questions quite briefly, I did not get much useful information from the first interview. So, after a discussion with my supervisor, I decided to involve two more interviewees in the pilot interview. Two of these three participants are friends in China and another one was recommended by a friend. All of three teachers had already completed the piloted questionnaire and they all agreed to have a pilot interview.

As mentioned on page 28, the accuracy of the Chinese/English translation of the interview questions was checked by asking a Chinese colleague to translate the Chinese and another to translate the English and comparing their versions with mine. I subsequently changed the translation of some words in the original interview questions to make the questions more understandable for

interviewees.

It took me three days to contact and arrange an appointment with these three participants because I needed to choose the right time when each interviewee and I were both available and I had to take the time differences between China and UK into consideration. When I was planning my time for the piloted interviews, I had considered this kind of possible delay already and took these possible delays into consideration and provided more time in my time schedule for the main study. With the permission of the participants I opened the loudspeaker of my mobile phone and used the voice recorder to record the proceedings and also managed to take brief notes which I later compared with the tape-recorded version for any discrepancies.

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself and also explained the purpose of the study to the participants. I explained that the data I was collecting was only for academic purposes. I also made them understand that none of the information they provided would be used against them in any way. This initial briefing was to ensure their cooperation and also to fulfill my ethical obligations. Then, I asked each of the participants all the interview questions I had prepared. I had clear responses to most of the questions. The three interviews lasted 15 minutes, 31 minutes and 42 minutes, respectively, the average being approximately 29 minutes and this gave me an idea of approximately how much time I needed for each interview. However, the time used for the first interview was far less than I had expected because she answered most of the questions quite simply. During the interview process, the interview with the first teacher stopped abruptly once because the Skype signal is not very steady. At the end of the interview, I asked each of the interviewees to comment on the interview questions and topics, and also on the flow of the conversation. Their comments are presented in Appendix 5.3. In the final interviews in the main study, the time taken to complete the interviews varied from 22 minutes to 49 minutes.



Although it is possible interview teachers in China through Skype, one of the disadvantages of telephone interviews is the reduction in social cues (Opdenakker, 2006). I could not see the interviewees, so some social cues such as body language cannot be used as a source of supplementary data. Also, being unable to see the interviewees meant fewer possibilities to create a good/friendly interview atmosphere.

Another disadvantage of the telephone interview is that the interview can easily be interrupted by factors such as a weak signal or the participants being called away by others, so stopping the interview abruptly. Because of this the interviewer has less chance of creating a good interview ambience. However, face-to-face interviews can standardise the interview situation better (for example, if they all occur in the same room) (Opdenakker, 2006) and the interviewer can see the interviewee in the flesh.

Moreover, Opdenakker (2006) argued that, because face-to-face interviews mean that interviewer and interviewee can respond to the other's words more directly, this enables the interviewee to be more spontaneous in his/her responses and not deliberate for too long. However, the interviewer needs to concentrate more on the flow of conversation and adapt the questions to the responses given.

Considering the factors mentioned above and the comments from the participants that I discussed with my supervisor, we agreed to use face-to-face interviews in the main study.

There were 19 questions in the interview schedule. QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis Software (2012) was used to analyse the responses. The data were entered manually into the NVivo 10 program. I attended the NVivo training program at the University before I started to analyse the data to ensure that the procedures for analysis were correct. Because the interviews were conducted in Chinese, I analysed the data in Chinese, wrote the interim report of the pilot interviews in Chinese, and then translated the final report of

the pilot interviews into English to avoid any translation problems in the analysis process and so added to the validity of the content; also, it was more convenient and easier for me to cope with the data in my own language.

After analysing the pilot interviews, I made some changes to the interview questions (final version see Appendix 5.4 and 5.5):

- I made some changes to the wording of some questions for easier understanding. For example, the original Question 17 was: ‘Imaging that I invited you to visit and review my English class’. Then I changed it to: ‘Imaging that I invited you to inspect my English class’;
- Because some teachers may not have been familiar with the content of the Revised Curriculum (2011), so it would have been difficult for them to understand some of the meaning of my questions concerning what was in the Revised Curriculum (2011). So, in the main study, I decided to explain each question orally and always gave some examples or hints when the interviewees were confused to help them understand my questions more easily and quickly;
- Because one of the participants mentioned that she had not been aware of the differences between the 2001 earlier curriculum and the Revised Curriculum (2011). I decided to change question 2 of the piloted interview schedule to: Are you teaching the Revised Curriculum (2011)? *If yes, how are you finding it? If no, what do you think needs to be changed?*
- I added a question: ‘Look at the example (see Appendix 5.4) of what Mr Lin does in his daily English lessons, how do you feel about that? Please justify your answer (*Use Vignettes*). Because participants in the pilot study took too long to answer questions 15 and 16, which asked them to reflect on and think about teaching a good English lesson, I added this vignette to help them reflect on their English teaching and learning and to provide a basis for reflection to allow the participants to identify and examine their views and conceptions and then, compare them with their classroom practices.
- One of the participants was reluctant to answer the question ‘Which university did you graduate from?’ I think the answer to this question may

be private, so I decided to change it to ‘What was your major?’

- I decided to add the question: ‘Have you ever learnt phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology as part of a programme?’ to help me explore whether teachers with phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge would face fewer difficulties implementing the Revised Curriculum (2011).

### **3.4.5.5 Conducting the interviews with the participants**

After the administration of the questionnaires, I read and summarised the teachers’ answers soon after I get the questionnaires back from each school in order to help me determine which teachers to interview following the expected characteristics of the participants (see Table 3.3). When I could not get an ideal sample for the interview, I relied on what I had available, then, I contacted the selected participants individually, and decided the possible interview times with each participant. I faced some challenges during this process. I called one of the participant who had agreed to be interviewed and asked for a possible time to arrange a face-to-face interview, but she was aggressive and do not believe I was a researcher. I explained my academic purpose again but she said she do not believe me and hung up the phone. I felt embarrassed and thought this shows that some teachers may not take this study very seriously; also, it may be show that this teacher thought this study was not useful to her, so she was hypervigilant. So I chose a different participant.

Another teacher agreed to be interviewed, but repeatedly postponed the interview, so I changed to a different participant. I think this shows that some teachers had a negative reaction to this research. The possible reason may be that these teachers did not believe that this research could benefit them. In spite of this, most of the participants had a very polite attitude and gave interviews which were useful to my study.

I revisited the selected schools on the date we had decided for the interviews with each participant. Because every participant’s timetable was different, I had to visit each school several times throughout the study.

Eighteen interviews were conducted: four in the head teacher's office, three in the staff room and eleven in a free classroom. The time taken for each interview was between 23-47 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' free time.

With the permission of the participants I used a voice recorder to record the interviews and also managed to take brief notes which I later compared with the tape-recorded version for any discrepancies.

At the beginning of each interview, I again introduced myself and also explained the purpose of the study to the teachers. I explained that the data I was collecting was only for academic purposes. I also told them that none of the information they would provide would be used against them in any way. Moreover, all the interviewee teachers were assured of confidentiality and anonymity at the beginning of each interview. This initial briefing was done to ensure their cooperation and to fulfill my ethical obligations.

I interviewed the teachers without any preconceived hypothesis or researcher bias (Hatch, 2002). I tried to avoid any personal judgments about the participants' experiences (Sokolowski, 2000) and put myself into a situation of 'setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, as if for the first time' (Moustakas, 1994, p 85). I also cleared my mind as much as possible before the data collection phase in order to listen to what participants told me with as little prejudice as possible and with an open mind about what they had experienced with the Revised Curriculum (2011). I tried to find out the participants' real views revealed from the interviews and report them rather than impose any pre-specified framework. This was the driving force through all the interviews. I used the interview schedule (see Appendix 5.4 and 5.5) but I also probed to clarify or elicit further information where necessary. The probes were neutral and I tried not to lead the participants. I made the semi-structured interviews flexible and often encouraged free-flowing, exploratory discussions in order to capture deeper and wider perspectives of the research topic.

In addition to the interviews, I also used the participants' responses to the questionnaires to explore the underlying reasons in their interviews in order to gain a better understanding.

All the interviews were audio taped. Tape recording is thought to easily capture the information in interviews more faithfully and allows the researcher to concentrate on managing the flow of questions rather than rushing to write notes (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Powney and Watts, 1987, p 147). In my study, interviewee approval forms were sent to each interviewee before the tape recording was made. The disadvantages of using audio recording include the effect it may have on interviewees by making them 'more guarded about what they say especially when sensitive material is being discussed' (Vulliamy, 1990, p 105). In order to prevent such reactions, I tried to establish a friendly relationship with the interviewees and strongly emphasised the strict confidentiality and anonymity of all the information they provided.

However, mechanical or technical problems may arise which can lead to a loss of valuable information (Powney and Watts, 1987). Therefore, I checked the voice recorder before each interview began rather than during the interview. This also helped reduce the tension and avoided the interviewee teachers objecting to the use of the tape-recorder and the process of being recorded. Also, I took precautions before conducting the interviews to avoid any unexpected issues such as the recorder breaking down, and brought an extra recorder with me for each interview.

I listened to each recording and transcribed the interview while they were still fresh in my mind (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This measure benefited me in three ways, as a:

- if I had missed or could not understand anything, I could revisit the interviewees for another interview if necessary to ensure the validity of the data gathered from interviews;
- if I had forgotten any additional information that emerged from the interview;

- I could reflect on my actions during the interview, to see where and how I could follow up ideas and probe responses, and manage the flow of conversation better in subsequent interviews.

### **3.4.5.6 The analysis of the data from the interviews**

After gathering the data from the interviews, I analysed it to find answers to the research questions. At this stage I needed to decide what constituted usable data for analysis. So, a careful selection of usable data needed to be undertaken before the analysis phase.

The first challenge for me was preparing the data for analysis. This phase can be described as ‘transforming raw data into readable form for data analysis’ (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p 128). During this stage, I chose to play the central role in transcribing all the interviews because I viewed this as an opportunity to increase my familiarity with the growing body of data, which would aid the process of analysis. Whether to use full transcripts or ‘abridged transcripts’ (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p 131), is a debate among researchers. Walford (2001) contends that depending on what is sought from the interviews, it may not be necessary to transcribe the entire recording because it is time-consuming and information repetitive. He suggests researchers need only to transcribe the key points, unless the purpose is discourse analysis. However, Walford’s (2001) statement contrasts with many other researchers’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Mason, 2002) believe that a complete transcription is necessary during fieldwork. For example, Mason (2002) argues that:

... it is also important not to over-estimate the representational or reflective qualities of interview transcripts ... a transcript is always partial partly because it is an inadequate record of non-verbal aspects of the interaction ... the same applies to audio and video recordings, which have to be regarded as partial reconstructions of interviews rather than full records ... ask yourself which aspects of the interaction you do not gain access to ... with tape recording and transcribing, this does not give you much access to the interviewer’s observations, interpretations, experiences and judgements (Mason, 2002, p 77).

I agree with this statement because the non-verbal interactions of the interview cannot be captured in tape-recorded conversations, therefore, it is necessary to make complete transcriptions in order to minimise data omissions although it is a lengthy procedure. Complete transcriptions of the data also provided me with the opportunity to 'inspect sequences of utterances without being limited to the extracts' (Silverman, 2000, p 149), which would not be the case if I used only 'abridged transcripts' (Krueger and Casey, 2000, p 131). So, in my study, I produced verbatim transcriptions of the recorded interviews, avoiding any editing. In so doing, statements in the transcript are coherent within the context of a live conversation. Each individual participant was given a code to protect confidentiality. Moreover, I sent the entire transcription to the interviewee so he/she was able to check whether the transcripts 'produced a recognisable reality' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p 147) in his/her view before the transcripts were used for analysis. This increases the validity of the conclusions, as it ensures that the meanings of the transcription were accurate in the eyes of the interviewee.

The data were transcribing manually by utilising the qualitative analysis software, QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis Software (2012) and a more detailed analysis used Nvivo 10 as well. The NVivo software helped me reduce the risk of human error in searching for information on the whole database, make coding more systematic but also increased the reflexive nature of my analysis. The use of 'nodes' for categories in NVivo allowed me to use this software to build relationships between parts of the data.

Because the interviews were conducted in Chinese - Mandarin - I deliberately used original-language transcripts during the analysis process to maintain the original meaning conveyed by the participants. As mentioned previously, the report of the findings was in Chinese, and the final report of the interview was translated into English to avoid any translation problems of participants' responses during the analysis and support the validity of the content. It was also more convenient for me to cope with the data in my own language.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p 122) describe three approaches to analysing qualitative data: presenting the data without interpretation, descriptive-interpretative analysis and theory building. I choose the second approach that is descriptive, recognising that some interpretation is necessary in the analytical process.

Once the transcripts were ready, it was time to analyse the interview data. Researchers (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Krueger and Casey, 2000) stress the need to stay focused on the conceptual framework and research questions while analysing the data. Miles and Huberman (1994, p 55) state ‘... conceptual frameworks and research questions are the best defence against overload. They also reflect a point ... that data collection is inescapably a selective process.’ In my case, there were quite large volumes of data gathered from the interviews, so I tried my best to stay focused on the answers to my research questions while reading the transcripts. Despite a conscious effort to stay focused during the analysis process, I also made allowances for issues or concepts that emerged progressively. I listened carefully to the interview recordings and read the transcripts many times, which created familiarity with the interview data.

The next step in the data analysis is data coding. Miles and Huberman (1994, p 56) defines codes as:

... tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to ‘chunks’ of varying size – words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one (e.g., a metaphor).

In my case, using NVivo allowed me to create additional codes as well as make links between different categories of information (nodes). For first-level coding, the transcripts were read many times in order to gain an overall sense of the participants’ perceptions and needs in relation to the Revised Curriculum (2011). I read through each interview transcript as a whole several times.



During this process, the statements, issues, themes or topics, which had the potential to answer the research questions, emerged (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). I coded the data using NVivo into categories that represented teachers' perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011). In developing the main categories, all the interview transcripts were treated as a whole, without regard to individual variation. The categories are not meant to describe the variation between individuals, but the range of categories represented within the interview transcripts as a whole (Marton, 1981). When new categories emerged, I revisited the previously coded transcripts to identify any instances of the newly emerging categories that had not been noticed in the initial coding. The categories within each broad topic were coded using Nvivo and organised into tree nodes. This whole process was based entirely upon the transcripts rather than my preconceptions.

After identifying statements, coding and categorising them, it was necessary to check the coding because it can serve as 'a good reliability check' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p 64). Checking coding gave me the confidence that the data had been rigorously coded. It also gave me the opportunity to get familiar with the data obtained from the interviews. Furthermore, checking the coding can prevent some unconscious omissions and check whether every theme, statement, issue, or topic fits its assigned category. In this process, I bore in mind that maybe not every theme or statement would fit into the initial set of categories; new categories might emerge. I thus repeatedly re-categorised and made adjustments to the categories until the categories were stable. During this restructuring of categories process, I used the inter-coder reliability check technique (Silverman, 1993; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) which required me to constantly return to previous interviews and compare the categories for each case. This constant comparative approach is not only helpful in increasing the validity of the results drawn (Silverman, 1993; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) but also provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my interview data. In order to check coding and reduce my personal bias, I discussed the coding with an expert supervisor in this field – my supervisor. Also, used adopt peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994) by asking

several colleagues who are research students in the School of Education to check the codes.

Following the data analysis, I produced an initial research report. Many researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994) suggest that checks should be provided by the participants at this stage to verify whether the researcher has ‘produced a recognisable reality’ in the participant’s view (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Hence, in this study, provided the participants with the initial research report and ask them to comment ‘on the accuracy of descriptions, explanations and interpretations’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p 147).

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

I had to bear in mind ethical considerations in order to avoid harming the research participants and respect all those who directly or indirectly contributed to this research. Cohen *et al.*, (2002, p 56) cautions ‘social scientists have a responsibility not only to their profession in its search for knowledge and quest for truth, but also for the subjects they depend on for their work.’

Verma and Mallick (1999) point out that the researcher has an obligation to respect the participants’ rights, values, needs, and desires. Therefore, this study observes the requirements of the British Educational Research Association’s (2011) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (BERA, 2011) which includes voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from this study at any stage. I also ensured that the participants would not suffer any disadvantages, violation of privacy, risk from taking part, or emotional harm (BERA, 2011).

Official approval from the University of Nottingham was sought before carrying out the study involving the teachers. It is also a requirement of the School of Education in the University of Nottingham that an Ethics Committee

assess the researcher's research aims, questions, proposed methods of data generation and research instruments in line with the British Educational Research Association's (2011) guidelines before the researcher can engage in the research. This requirement was met in February, 2014.

Access to schools, and pupils, in China is via the head teacher of each school and the 'Participant Information Sheet: For teachers' (see Appendix 2) which clearly explains the research topic, purposes, potential benefits and the processes involved in the data collection, was distributed to the participant teachers. The 'Participant Consent Form' (see Appendix 3.1 and 3.2) emphasises that the participants have the right to ask questions concerning the study before participating in it; the right to withdraw from the research at any stage (Seidman, 1998), and the right to contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if they wish to make a complaint relating to their involvement in the research. All the participants were asked to read the 'Participant Consent Form' and sign it before being involved in this study.

Considering the importance of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research, I informed the participants that all information collected in this study would be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be used for academic purposes. Their information would remain anonymous and I would protect the participants' identity and school's real name by using codes such as letters and numbers (for example, Teacher A, School B, etc.) when reporting and analysing the data (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Participant' answers are completely confidential and would not be shown to anybody. As soon as data had been analysed, the raw data is kept in archives for three years and then discarded. , I promised the participants would be informed of any outcomes and provided with copies of any reports or publications that involved their participation (BERA, 2011).

Another crucial point of ethical behaviour relates to data interpretation. The language used in this study should not be biased against any of the participants

involved because of gender, age, beliefs or disability.

Finally, I offered each teacher an opportunity to check the transcript of their interviews and he/she could check whether the transcripts had ‘produced a recognisable reality’ (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p 147) in his/her view before the transcripts was used for analysis.

### **3.6 Reliability and Validity**

This section focuses on the issues of validity and reliability in relation to the research methodology. Cohen *et al* (2000, p 105) define validity as whether ‘a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure’. There are two dimensions of validity: internal and external.

Internal validity refers to the issue of the accuracy of the information and whether it matches reality (Merriam, 1988; Verma and Mallick, 1999). In relation to increasing validity, Cohen *et al*, (2000, p 105) suggest that:

Validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher.

Supporting these views, Smith (1990, p 171) argues that objectivity is also necessary to arrive at an accurate interpretation of events:

Objectivity is the regulative idea that guides all inquiry, largely a measure directed of how researchers undertake and carry out their research in that it requires them to be precise, unbiased, open, honest and so on.

Therefore, in my research, I needed to be aware and honest about my own influence that could affect the research. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that it is impossible for researchers to be totally objective. However, every effort was made to minimise my own bias and beliefs through taking appropriate measures: the questionnaires and interviews with teachers were conducted without any preconceived hypothesis or any researcher bias (Hatch, 2002). I

suspended (as far as possible) my personal judgments about what I thought participants' experiences might be (Sokolowski, 2000) and also set 'aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, as if for the first time' (Moustakas, 1994, p 85). I also cleared my mind as far as possible before the data collection phase. In this way, I listened to what the participants told me with as little prejudice as possible and with an open mind about what they had experienced with the Revised Curriculum (2011) to discover the participants' real views through their responses and reported them rather than impose upon them any pre-specified framework. This was the driving force throughout the research especially in the interviews. I used the interview schedule (see Appendix 5.4 and 5.5) but I also probed to clarify or elicit further information where necessary. The probes were neutral and I tried not to lead the participants. I made the semi-structured interviews flexible and often encouraged free-flowing exploratory discussions in order to capture deeper and wider perspectives of the research topic.

Appropriate instrumentation is also required to improve internal validity (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) and reducing personal bias as much as possible (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). So, the questionnaire and interview questions used in this study were constructed primarily based on the existing literature and The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the earlier 2001 piloted curriculum. Moreover, I constructed and revised the questionnaire and interview schedule under the supervision of my supervisor who gave thought-provoking comments on the face and content validity of the questionnaire and interview questions. I also used peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) by asking two colleagues to check the face and content validity of the questionnaires and interview questions. In order to ensure the Chinese/English translate was accurate in terms of subtle meanings in the questionnaire and interview questions. I asked one Chinese colleague to translate the Chinese and another colleague to translate the English and compared the differences. Then, I corrected the original translation of some words in the questionnaire and interview questions and made the questions more readable and more understandable for

participants.

Researchers point out that conducting a pilot study is necessary to increase the validity, reliability and practicability of inquiry (Morrison, 2002; Oppenheim, 2001). Therefore, the questionnaire and interview questions were pilot tested amongst English teachers in primary schools and junior middle schools in China who shared similar characteristics with the participant teachers of the main study (see Section Pilot Study). Brown and Dowling (1998, p 67) argue that ‘whichever approach is adopted it is vital to carry out a pilot study with a sample which matches the profile of the sample for the main study’. The feedback from the pilot study helped not only to check validity, avoid redundancy, but also to anticipate the length of time required to answer a questionnaire and conduct an interview, think of possible follow up questions in the interviews (Cohen *et al.*, 2000) and gave me the chance to modify procedures before conducting the interviews in the main study (Powney and Watts, 1987).

External validity deals with the issue of generalisability of the results (Cresswell, 2003). The intent of my study was not to generalize to other provinces of China (as is evident from the size and nature of the sample in this study) but to form a unique interpretation of teachers’ understandings of the Revised Curriculum (2011), and of the changes it may imply and their reactions to it. This is important because the way teachers interpret the curriculum and actually use it, and their views, is the reality of the curriculum. However, ‘generalisability’ can be reconceptualised as ‘transferability’, ‘comparability’ or ‘fittingness’ (Schofield, 1993) in a study with a small size sample, emphasising the detailed description of the context and content of the study (such as the research instruments, the sample characteristics etc.) so that it can be generalised to similar contexts. In my study, I included as much detail about the context and the content as possible. Therefore, the findings of my study could be transferable or generalisable to other similar research within a similar context. Thus, and similar research is likely to produce findings that have relevance beyond the current study. Detailed description of the study can

also enable readers' to have an idea about the extent to which these research findings may inform their own study or experience.

Creswell (2003) points out that involving participant from different contexts and areas may add to the external validity of the research findings. So, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants in my study were selected from three different demographics - urban, suburb, and rural areas to contribute to the external validity of the findings.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter set out the methods used in the study and the methodological decisions taken in choosing these methods. In the next two chapters, the findings will be presented. Chapter four will set out the Phase one findings of the documentary analysis and analysis of web forum posts. Chapter five will set out the Phase two findings of the larger study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS OF PHASE ONE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This Chapter reports the findings of Phase one of my study: the findings from the MOE curriculum, which will be discussed first, and the findings from the web forum, which will be discussed in the second half of the chapter.

#### **4.2 Results of the analysis of the 2001 curriculum and 2011 curriculum**

This section reports the result of the analysis of the 2001 piloted PRC English curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) and discusses these findings in relation to the literature in the field. I used the 2001 curriculum as a lens through which to view the 2011 curriculum. Each section was compared to establish what had been added, what had been removed and what changes in the content and forms of words had been made in the 2011 version.

This Chapter introduces and discusses the 2011 curriculum in detail with reference to the 2001 English language (piloted document) as that was the most widely implemented curriculum prior to the present one. The most important findings are:

- the new role of English courses;
- small changes to the Course Objectives;
- objectives for different levels;
- different teaching objectives for different areas;
- authenticity and contextualization;
- teachers' professional development;
- small changes to the assessment part;
- new roles = responsibilities for teachers.



These findings and the evidence for them are discussed below.

#### **4.2.1 The new role of English course**

One aspect of The Revised Curriculum (2011) that changed from the 2001 version is greater emphasis on what is described as ‘humanistic values’, a term which may be unclear to readers coming from outside the PRC. It is necessary to explain ‘humanities’ in Chinese context first. ‘Humanities’ (human-centred) is an important Chinese idea originally discussed in the ‘I Ching’ (易经), the ‘great harmoniousness’ being the core of its human-centred spirit (刚柔空错, 天文也。文明以止, 人文也。观乎人文以化成天下). Human-centred qualities refer to an individual’s understanding, intelligence and character which reflect his/her aptitudes/potential as a human-being, and are seen as at the core of quality-oriented education. The term is included many times in The Revised Curriculum (2011). In this context ‘humanistic values’, when related to learning English, refer to teachers taking into consideration students’ feelings, emotions, and general needs for self-development (Ding, 2012; Yu, 2012; Zheng, 2012). This is related to the Confucian teaching of valuing other people, which means taking care of and responsibility for one’s students (Rao, 1998; Run-hua, 2006). It can refer to a different type or meaning of care from that used in the West. Confucian teaching is less concerned about students’ comfort and feelings in a lesson and more concerned about supporting them to make progress. The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on students’ classroom experiences than the traditional teaching, which is more concerned with pupils’ subject progress. Perhaps students learn better when they can understand the progress they are making and they feel positive about it.

The role of English (and the reasons for teaching it) has changed in each revised curriculum publication in China. One major change has been to develop humanistic values in the teaching of English. In describing the role of foreign language learning, the 2001 earlier curriculum (piloted document) began to recognise the value of student-centred teaching of a language to ‘broaden learners’ horizons, enrich their life experiences, develop their

cognitive thinking skills, temper individual willpower and encourage co-operation, help cultivate positive virtues and personality traits, and so help each student develop as a whole person' (MOE, 2001, pp.1-2). However, the role of English in the 2001 earlier curriculum has not changed from the above and still focuses on the instrumental value of teaching and learning a foreign language for knowledge and language use. Compared with the 2001 curriculum, The Revised Curriculum (2011) goes beyond the instrumental value of knowledge acquisition and changes the role of English into 'a combination of instrumental value and student-centred learning' (MOE, 2011, pp.1-2), that is learning English is both for future or economic purposes and the enrichment of the self, and for the development of a new world view. In this subtle way, a change in language within a key Ministry document opens opportunities for a change in attitude to reflect the new realities facing China. An example (see Appendix 1.2) from the 'recommended classroom activities' part of The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, pp 112-115) emphasises the cultivation of students' positive attitudes, humanistic qualities and moral education, as well as language use. The teacher should help the students to build their confidence, cultivate the willpower to overcome difficulties, guides students to recognise their strengths and weaknesses; these are important aspects of the core concepts of the Revised Curriculum (2011). The 'humanistic values' in The Revised Curriculum (2011) means regarding students as the focus of learning and teaching, puts students' development as the first priority, including learning English to be a global citizen and develop as a whole person. In this thesis I use the term 'student-centred' as I believe this best expresses the meaning of the Chinese term, although it is not a literal translation.

Teachers are now asked to develop their students' linguistic competences and their thinking abilities; to enrich the students' learning experience, promote positive attitudes, develop a positive outlook and open mind through their teaching activities. Traditionally, English teaching in China has been accused of prioritizing learning to pass exams and ignoring students' emotional development (Wang, 2012). Unlike traditional curricula in China, the revised curriculum prioritises the 'cultivation of emotion', defined below, as the

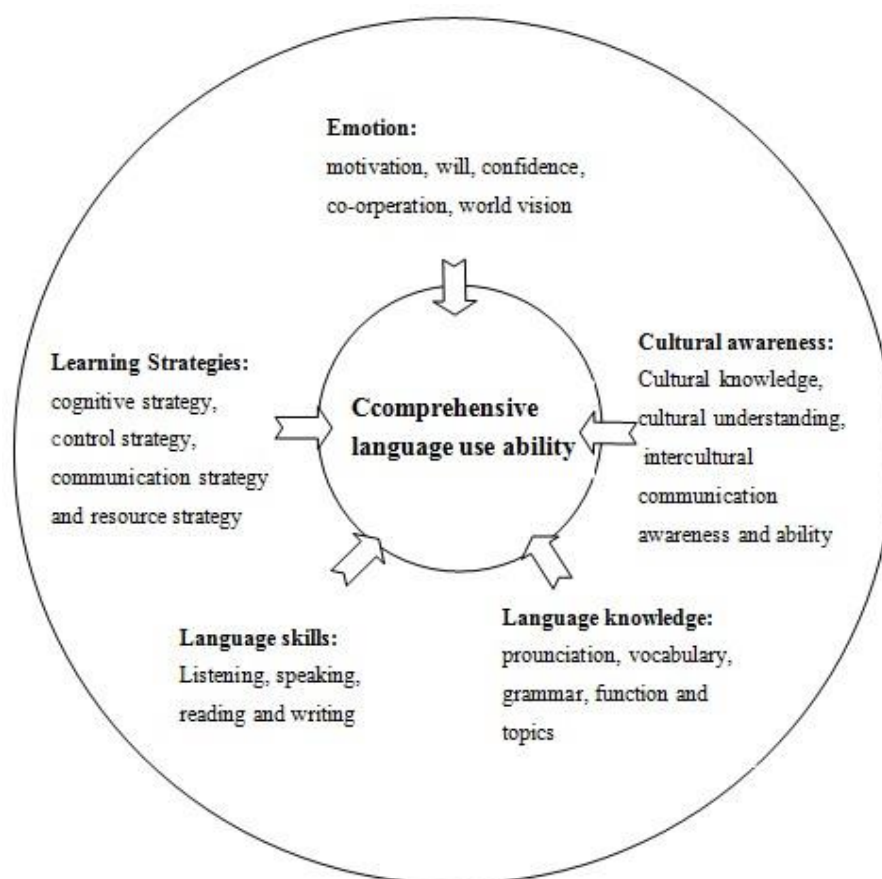
general objective of the English course. According to the 2011 curriculum (MOE, 2011), ‘emotion’ refers to the related factors that may affect students’ learning processes and outcomes such as interest, motivation, confidence, will power and team spirit, and the patriotism and global vision formed gradually during the learning process.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) proposes some very significant changes to the role of the teacher. As discussed in Chapter Two, teaching in China and other cultures which share a Confucian heritage (or at least, the modern revisionist representation) have often been described as teacher-centred (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002), textbook-based (Biggs, 1996; Hu, 2002, p 98) and characterised by rote learning (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hu, 2002). However, much of this style of teaching was assimilated from the late 19th century onward from European models in place in modernising Japan. It has been viewed as a, ‘process of accumulating knowledge only’ (Hu, 2002, p 97), where teachers transmit knowledge to students, and students are seen as passive recipients of knowledge (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). The 2011 curriculum gives a new focus to the learning process as, ‘a practical process of constructing and using knowledge for immediate purposes’ and the teacher is not the ‘learning centre’ any more, but an organiser, guide, designer, and co-operator in learning (MOE, 2011, p 36). English teachers, therefore, must change their attitudes and practices according to the curriculum objectives, learning activities, and learning processes as well as the needs of students. Teachers should also guide students to develop individual learning abilities (MOE, 2011, p 38), to make students become the true learning focus and to foster learner autonomy. This new definition of the role of English teaching offers a vision of a student-centred class where teachers formulate new teaching goals, but it is likely to place some huge hurdles to overcome in changing their traditional practices.

#### **4.2.2 Changes to the General objective - Stronger emphasis on ‘emotion’**

The previous 2001 curriculum set the general objective of English courses in compulsory education as ‘to cultivate students’ language use ability’ without

any reference to attracting students' interest and motivating them. The Revised Curriculum (2011) changed the wording to 'to help students form a preliminary all-round language use ability, to cultivate students' positive attitudes and promote healthy mental development, and to improve students' all-round qualities' (MOE, 2011, p.8). It can be seen that the student attitude or response is strongly emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teachers therefore need to pay more attention to students' concerns and feelings, in order to guide and inspire their students to form positive attitudes to learning and develop a healthy personality.



**Figure 4.1 The layout of the English course objectives**

(MOE, 2011, p.9)

Students' all-round language use ability is still based on 'a mastery of attitude, knowledge, skills, learning strategies, and cultural awareness' as in the 2001 curriculum (MOE, 2011, p 8). The layout of the English course objectives is

shown in Figure 4.1.

Traditional English teaching in China, as discussed, has been accused of prioritizing learning for passing exams and at the expense of students' emotional, responsive development (Wang, 2012b). Unlike the traditional education system, The Revised Curriculum (2011) takes a step forward by including the 'cultivation of emotion' to the general objective of English courses. According to the 2011 curriculum (MOE, 2011), 'emotion' refers to the related factors that may affect students' learning process and learning effect such as attitude, interest, motivation, confidence, will power and team spirit, and the patriotism and global vision formed gradually during the learning process. In addition, it is necessary for English teachers to be aware that a positive attitude will help students to learn a language more positively and effectively while lack of motivation will negatively affect language study (MOE, 2011) and this had not been referred to in the 2001 curriculum. So, in using the Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers need to be put more emphasis on cultivating positive attitudes in students so students experience the happiness of personal achievement when learning English.

Traditional education in the Chinese context, as pointed out, is deeply influenced by the modern revisionist representation of Confucian idea, (Biggs, 1996b; Lee, 1996; Scollon, 1999) which puts strong emphasis on cultural hierarchy and teacher-dominated teaching (Biggs, 1996b) rather than a harmonious relationship between teachers and students and student-centred teaching, as encouraged by the Revised Curriculum (2011). Students in a traditional education context need to respect their teachers in a very polite way (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). Traditional English teaching in China, as pointed out, has also been accused of prioritizing the type of learning needed for passing exams (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996) and ignoring students' emotional responses in their language learning development (Wang, 2012b), teaching strategies which are incompatible with the new requirements of the Revised Curriculum (2011), where teachers are asked to cultivate positive attitudes in students, motivate

them to be interested in learning English and build up their confidence in using as part of the English learning process. So, under the Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers should ‘establish good relationships with students’ and help to ‘foster a relaxed and positive climate’ (MOE, 2011, p 38) for students to help students form positive attitudes to promote better learning.

The 2001 earlier curriculum suggested English teachers to teach through more communicative activities but did not discuss students’ comfort or feelings in the process. The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, p.48) suggests cultivating positive attitudes and motivating students by suggesting English teachers design interesting activities to stimulate their students’ interest so that students can participate in those activities positively (learning by doing). In particular, The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks English teachers to design proper communicative activities and pay extra attention to involve those students with poor English proficiency so they can experience using English with happiness and experience the feeling of success. This is the new emphasis of the 2011 curriculum which was not part of the earlier curriculum. Moreover, The Revised Curriculum (2011) points out for the first time that primary English should be about ‘learning English with fun and a positive attitude’, excluded from the earlier (2001) curriculum. All the factors discussed above, it can be seen that the Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on motivating students, experiencing English as fun and with a positive attitude than the earlier curriculum did. This is better for students because researchers and documentary evidence (Pine and Boy, 1997; MOE, 2011; Wang, 2012b) claim that various meaningful activities based on students’ characteristics, interests and feelings can not only broaden students’ horizon, develop their cognitive skills, increase their knowledge and shape their characters, but also enrich the content of teaching, enliven the classroom atmosphere, harmonize the relationship between teachers and students, and improve teaching outcomes. Moreover, some integrated activities, such as listening to English songs and writing down the lyrics are encouraged because they can help students to master new knowledge in practice, as well as review previous knowledge. These activities are encouraged by the 2011 curriculum because they can contribute

to the development of the students' all-round ability in the use of different kinds of language skills within authentic contexts.

The stronger emphasis on 'emotional development' in the Revised Curriculum (2011) mentioned above better reflects a more student-centred approach than the 2001 earlier curriculum did, which, according to Johnson and Johnson (1998, p 158) and MOE (2011), allows for personal growth and responsibility and represents whole-person learning, going significantly beyond the learning of English for knowledge acquisition alone. This also poses new challenges for teachers and their previous dominant role in the classroom and requires them to pay more attention to the development of healthy personalities and positive attitudes.

#### **4.2.3 Objectives for Different Levels – Progress and continuity Principle**

In order to present the differences between different grades, the 2001 earlier curriculum used a five-band system to show the aims and objectives of learners' language ability at each level, and described each component of the different band levels in detail. The Revised Curriculum (2011) has revised some of the aims in the earlier curriculum to make them more precise and reflect the principle of progress and continuity in learning English, which was not mentioned in the earlier curriculum. The new aims also give a better view of the differences between the different levels. The detailed changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) are presented below.

##### **4.2.3.1 Language skills**

The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts greater emphasis on students' own experiences with and use of the language in practice than the earlier curriculum did. For example:

- In the 'speaking' section objectives for Level Two (students who have graduated from primary school), the Revised Curriculum (2011) adds new content: 'students should be able to give a brief account of recent

happenings in daily life' (MOE, 2011, p 14), which was not been mentioned in the earlier curriculum. This change puts greater emphasis on students' own experience and use of language.

- In the 'speaking' section objectives for Level Four, the wording changes from: 'students can exchange information and present their views on some familiar real-life topics' (MOE, 2001, p 9) to: 'students can use simple language to describe their own or others' experiences'(MOE, 2011, p 16). It can be seen that this change presents a more independent/individual task for students and emphasizes again students' experience portrayed through their use of the English language.
- In the 'Reading' section for Level Four objective, the wording changed from: 'students can understand simple stories' (MOE, 2001, p 9) to 'students can understand some writing styles such as simple personal letters, expository texts' (MOE, 2011, p 16). This change links more to typical texts of students' own experience in Chinese so brings learning the English language closer to their daily lives.
- In the 'Writing' part of Level Four objectives, the Revised Curriculum (2011) changed the wording from 'students can write notes and simple letters' (MOE, 2001, p 9) to 'students can draft and revise short compositions with the help of teachers' (MOE, 2011, p 16). It can be seen that The Revised Curriculum (2011) specifies more clearly that the teacher's role is to guide and help students to finish an independent task, and students are responsible for the main part.

These changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) mean English teachers need to pay more attention to their students' own experience, which they can bring to the classroom and use in their English language practice, the students' different levels of English and learning styles, and also respect students' as individuals, which can promote students' positive attitudes to some extent and again reflects the new concept of 'student-centredness' encouraged by the Revised Curriculum (2011) as discussed in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 of this chapter.



#### **4.2.3.2 Language knowledge – from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability**

Compared with the 2001 curriculum, the Revised Curriculum (2011) offers better guidance for English teaching at primary level by listing the specific teaching content including phonetic knowledge, grammar, functional items and topics, which were not listed in the earlier curriculum. Also, the 2011 curriculum adjusts some of the objectives of language knowledge. For example, in the ‘Phonetic knowledge’ section for Level Two, the wording changed from: ‘students should know the pronunciation of the letters in the alphabet’ to ‘students should pronounce the letters in the alphabet correctly’ (MOE, 2011, p.18), which transfer the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability (competence).

Phonetic teaching is very important in language teaching. Because of uneven economic development in China, there are wide variations in teaching conditions, teacher quality and living standards across the country (MOE, 2011). According to Zhu (2013), basic education is still backward in some poor regions in China especially in some rural areas, which result from the natural environment, economic conditions, resource allocation, and teachers’ professional levels. At the beginning of English language learning, both the old and the Revised Curriculum (2011) suggest the teaching of phonetic knowledge begins with imitation. So, English teachers need to provide more opportunities for students to practice and imitate, and help students develop good articulation. The use of multi-media, audio and video equipment is more frequently mentioned and encouraged in the Revised Curriculum (2011) than the earlier one as a good way to help students in poor areas to develop their phonetic ability. I suggest that some authentic materials such as original English films and speech could also be used in order to build up students’ language sense and lay a solid foundation for the pronunciation and intonation of English language by giving them the experience of actual language in use.

#### **4.2.3.3 Emotion and attitude**

In terms of the ‘the objectives of the motivation and attitude cultivation’ part for Level Two (students who have graduated from primary school), the Revised Curriculum (2011) adds some new objectives for English language learning and teaching not mentioned in the old 2001 curriculum, for example:

- The Revised Curriculum (2011) adds: ‘students can enjoy the pleasure of learning English’ and put this new objective in first place in ‘the objectives of the motivation and attitude cultivating’ section. This change puts greater emphasis on students’ having a positive attitude to English language learning.
- The Revised Curriculum (2011) adds: ‘students should be willing to learn and use English, and teachers should tell students not to be afraid of making mistakes in using English’. It can be seen that this change puts more emphasis on students’ attitudes and motivation in learning and using English; it also reflects students’ role as central in class, while the teacher’s role is to guide and encourage students to use and therefore learn, English.
- The Revised Curriculum (2011) adds: ‘in group activities, students can actively work with others’. This addition puts more emphasis on students’ teamwork skills.
- The Revised Curriculum (2011) adds a new objective not discussed in the previous curriculum, ‘students are willing to expose themselves to foreign cultures, and need to strengthen the cultivation of the patriotic emotion’, also, The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires students to be aware of the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures through their daily communication and learning. These changes reflect the idea of humanistic values (student-centred teaching) in the Revised Curriculum (2011) whereby English teaching and learning puts students’ development at the forefront, learning English to be a global citizen and developing as a whole person.

It can be seen that the students' motivation and attitudes are strongly emphasised in the Revised Curriculum (2011). The above mentioned changes go beyond using English for the acquisition of knowledge and put more emphasis on student-centred practices and all-round student development.

#### **4.2.4 Different Vocabulary Requirements for Different Areas**

Another obvious change in the Revised Curriculum (2011) is that it includes a proprietary vocabulary list for Level Two which is absent from the earlier curriculum. Taking basic 600-700 words in total, the Revised Curriculum (2011) selects 423 core words for students to use to express some related topics. The remaining 200-300 words are supplementary or optional and teachers can choose to teach those words according to their local situations. This change can help solve problems such as the unbalanced development of the curriculum in different regions and schools in different areas (city, suburb and rural) and with different English levels, student ability and different resources to help students master vocabulary. This change provides more flexibility and openness in the curriculum, making it easier to teach students with diverse competences. It may also reduce the emphasis on rote learning of vocabulary or, at least, the proportion of time taken on this.

#### **4.2.5 The Change of Vocabulary List in The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

First, I want to give some examples of:

1. Give me some water so I can water the flowers.
2. In the green, in the green tree, green house  
Advance with the times. Three times five equals fifteen.

It can be noticed from above examples that the same word may have different meanings and functions in different contexts. The correct analysis and understanding of a word, a phrase and a sentence depends on the linguistic context, situational context and other extra-linguistic elements. In order to help students master the use of a certain word, the best way may be to use the word

in real a language situation. The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages English teachers to pay more attention to creating real, meaningful contexts in teaching, so that students can learn English in a more true-to-life setting (MOE, 2011, pp 3-4, p 27). For example, the previous 2001 curriculum referred to *parts of speech* (POS) in the vocabulary list and used Chinese to explain the meaning. The 2011 curriculum does not refer to POS and explaining in Chinese. This development suggests mastering the correct use of new vocabulary items should be according to the context of use to develop students' sense of how the English language works in practice and their all-round language-use ability, and to form effective vocabulary learning strategies to acquire and use the language successfully.

With this new emphasis in the Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers need to change the way they communicate with students, and help them understand better the contextual connotation of language (MOE, 2011, p 31). Teachers need to train students' language skills in as authentic an environment as possible within the classroom, let students enjoy learning the English language and focus on student-centred education, in order to improve students' language levels; for example, by letting students practice in pairs and by using games, quizzes, singing, short sketches and role-play in class.

#### **4.2.6 Big change about the teaching methods**

There is a big change between the two curricula in teaching methods. The previous 2001 curriculum asked teachers to adopt task-based teaching methods while the Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests, 'English teachers should create real context through practical language activities' and teachers should design and adopt various kinds of suitable teaching methods which attach equal importance to the process and outcome (such as task-based teaching methods) to improve students' pragmatic competence' (MOE, 2011, p 26-27). This revision encourages teachers to adopt a variety of teaching methods according to the specific teaching content and actual situation of the students. Teachers need to plan more creative activities closer to the reality of student's daily and

social lives, and provide more opportunities for students to use the English language for real communication. The Revised Curriculum (2011) refers not only to task-based teaching methods, as the previous 2001 curriculum did, but also other teaching methods to encourage teachers to actively explore and reform teaching methods to improve teaching outcomes<sup>7</sup>. It can be seen that The Revised Curriculum (2011) seems to take the curriculum enactment perspective discussed in Section 2.9.2, Chapter Two that the curriculum is not pre-existing, external, or static, but created and designed within the classroom experience and teacher-student interaction process. Within this perspective, teachers are not just delivering the Revised Curriculum (2011), but are designing and shaping the curriculum to suit their students. The role of the teacher, in this revised curriculum is as a curriculum creator, not simply implementer.

This change requires teachers to have strong awareness of the need to participate in the process of creating and shaping the curriculum, so they should constantly revise and improve, construct and explore the curriculum to suit their students' situation. This is a big shift from the 2001 curriculum, which, although it emphasised a task-based approach, did not talk about how to implement it.

#### **4.2.7 Teacher professional development**

Teaching English according to The Revised Curriculum (2011) is said to be the basis for improving the quality of teaching (MOE, 2011). The 2011 curriculum (MOE, 2011, p.32) explicitly states that: 'the core of implementing The Revised Curriculum (2011) effectively lies in the level of the professional development of teachers'. The Revised Curriculum (2011) specifies three requirements for English teachers' development: renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency constantly; improving teachers' subject pedagogical knowledge and improving practical teaching ability constantly; carrying out reflective teaching and promoting the

sustainable professional development of all teachers.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) is the first English curriculum to include the concept of the ‘professional development of teachers’ (MOE, 2011, p.32) while this term was not in the previous 2001 curriculum. The 2011 curriculum uses the most space for the ‘suggestions for Teaching’ part to elaborate the requirement for English teachers to improve their teaching and development. The earlier 2001 did not suggest how English teachers might renew their subject knowledge and improve their language proficiency, but The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts forward suggestions for teachers, which are:

- more importance should be attached to basic linguistic knowledge learning including phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and discourse;
- English teachers should have good all-round language ability;
- English teachers should use English as the classroom language;
- teachers should have greater cross-cultural awareness and competence;
- teachers should constantly update their language knowledge and proficiency as part of the development of society and language (MOE, 2011, p.32).

Compared with the earlier 2001 curriculum, the suggestions in the Revised Curriculum (2011) gives a more detailed view of English subject knowledge which could benefit teachers’ professional development. The Revised Curriculum (2011) also points out that reflection is an important way to sustain the professional development of teachers. Reflection can be thought as a process of problem-detecting, problem-analyzing and problem-solving. According to the Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, p 33), reflection ‘promotes the integration of content knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge’; ‘deepens the understanding and awareness of the teaching process and students’ learning process’; and ‘promotes teachers’ independent professional development awareness and ability’. The development of teachers seems like an ongoing process of reflection on teaching practice and experience. So, teachers are required to reflect and update their teaching experiences constantly,

find out and analyse their weaknesses and find solutions to sustain their awareness and ability for independent professional development. The current teaching and research system tends to create good conditions for teachers' collective reflection and cooperation. The Revised Curriculum (MOE, 2011, p 33) also requires teachers to actively share their experiences with others through cooperative learning and gradually create and shape their personal way of teaching in the class room according to their students' needs to improve their level of professionalism as teachers.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) raises expectations of teachers' level of professionalism, to help the understanding of requirements for the implementation of the Revised Curriculum (2011), but is a major culture change for teachers. However, in China, there are 9,089,800 full-time English teachers and 282,000 compulsory education schools (data from <http://teacher.eol.cn>), so this requirement is a very large undertaking. Also, the English teachers undertaking training and those going to be trained come from the background of the earlier curriculum, old expectations and old ways of working. Moreover, as there are constraints preventing the adoption of the CLT approach in China (discussed in Chapter Two), all these things make the implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011) a big task.

#### **4.2.8 Changes in the Assessment Part**

The Revised Curriculum (2011) reflecting the concept of student-centredness, emphasises the function of assessment to promote learning and students' development, extends the discussion and introduction of formative assessment, adds various evaluation examples and strengthen the guidance for English teaching assessment.

According to the previous 2001 English curriculum standards, the main aim of learning English is to improve students' practical language use ability, and the central task of the English course is to help students have certain levels of

ability in the use of English (MOE, 2001, p 1). The overall goal of English course at compulsory level is to cultivate the students' all-round ability to use the language (MOE, 2001, p 1). However, the previous 2001 curriculum did not offer any specific methods or any examples to explain how to evaluate students' all-round language use competence - which leads to the problem of how to assess pupils. The English course in primary schools normally uses an evaluation method for junior students, for example, multiple choice, questions translation, content assist and pattern transformation. These types of exercises cannot evaluate pupils' language use ability, or assess pupils' actual cognitive level.

In order to solve these problems, the Revised Curriculum (2011) puts forward assessment methods and 41 examples (25 for primary schools) including a formative assessment scale, summative assessment exercises and scoring criteria. The new examples are more practical and more goal-oriented for evaluating students' practical language use ability. For instance, the examples for Level Two (students graduating from primary school) are all task-based assessment. The Revised Curriculum (2011) makes the assessment methods more consistent with the course objectives and suggests English teachers evaluate students according to their English language use ability. The new assessment encourages teachers to:

- reflect the 'student-centred' concept and let students participate in the assessment process;
- combining summative and formative assessment together and emphasising the learning process as well as the learning outcomes;
- English teachers should adopt reasonable and variable assessment methods (such as student self-assessment, peer assessment, parents' assessment and teacher assessment) according to students' age and cognitive levels;
- Teachers should give positive feedback to help students feel successful and confident through assessment. Summative assessment could combine



oral tests, listening tests and written assessment together to examine students' all-round language use ability (MOE, 2011, pp 34-35). The big exam at the end of Year 9 (junior middle school final year) should assess students' practical all-round language using ability rather than just testing students' language knowledge.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on the speaking and listening parts of the curriculum. The previous 2001 curriculum encouraged including listening in the mid-term and end of the term exams to be not less than 20% of the total assessment. However, this requirement was not compulsory and speaking was not emphasised in the previous curriculum. The Revised Curriculum (2011) changed the wording to 'The objective of testing at the end of certain units determines the content and form of summative assessment and summative assessment can include speaking, listening and writing and language knowledge use' (MOE, 2011; p 36). In addition, the Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages the inclusion of speaking, listening, reading and writing in English language teaching (MOE, 2011). It can be seen that speaking and listening are more emphasised in this revised curriculum, but their assessment is still not compulsory.

#### **4.2.9 Teachers' new roles in teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

A big change between the two curricula concerns teachers' roles. To support the introduction of the revised curriculum standards, the role of English teachers need to change. An analysis of the curriculum was undertaken, specifically focusing on the main *Objectives* (MOE, 2011, pp 8-24) and on the final *Teaching Suggestions* section of the materials (Ministry of Education, 2011, pp 25-33). These sections were analysed to identify how teachers would need to adapt to follow the suggestions and achieve the objectives. The following roles were identified, and teachers are often required to take on more than one role to achieve the objectives specified. In addition, examples from the appendices have been listed below to illustrate the roles:

#### **4.2.9.1 The Teacher as the organiser of differentiated learning**

The earlier 2001 curriculum asked teachers to combine the specified teaching content with teaching objectives, to motivate students to participate in classroom activities and to respect every student. However, the revised curriculum goes much further, and specifies that the English teachers' role is as an organiser of learning: 'It is the teachers' responsibility to organise the teaching process and teaching content carefully in order to allow students of different levels and from different learning backgrounds to learn cooperatively and actively' (MOE, 2011, p 26). This idea of students working collaboratively and at different levels within one class introduces a communicative culture for the teaching of English in a Chinese setting previously dominated by textbooks and by large classes of children all working at the same pace (Biggs, 1996; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006). Indeed, The Revised curriculum (2011) expects teachers to understand 'all students' different learning experiences, learning levels, and learning styles; respect students' personal characteristics; take full advantage of students' potential' (MOE, 2011, p 26). Effectively, teachers are expected to support students of different levels of ability based on their previous performance and individual characteristics - a new and demanding approach to teaching. These requirements also embody a new view of the assessment of language proficiency as a basis for effective differential assessment.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) also gives teachers a new responsibility for cultivating students' positive motivation and confidence levels: 'Teachers should motivate students, build up their confidence, help them experience satisfaction success learning English, and enable all the students at different stages to make consistent progress' (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26). This is a new aspect of the curriculum, introducing a much more 'student-centred' approach to English classes and a greater emphasis on the students' learning experience.

The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires English teachers to combine students' mother language (Chinese language) learning experience with the demands of

students' cognitive development, and focus on cultivating students' ability to use basic language learning strategies on the basis of the differences and similarities between Chinese and English (MOE, 2011, p 28), which was not mentioned in the previous 2001 curriculum. Comparing to the 2001 curriculum, the Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should help pupils develop good learning English language habits and a good sense of how English operates (MOE, 2011, p.28). Teaching case 1 in Appendix 1.1 explains the teacher's role as an organiser in the Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **4.2.9.2 The Teacher as guide in co-operative learning**

Whereas the 2001 curriculum asked teachers to provide opportunities for students' independent study and for communication with others, the Revised Curriculum (2011) asks English teachers to 'guide students to be willing to cooperate with others, help each other, and cooperate to achieve a shared task' (MOE, 2011, p 20) and 'guide students to learn from each other, make progress together'. Teachers are exhorted to lead students to learn to study independently, guiding them 'enjoy the happiness of communication and cooperation in the learning process' (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26). The curriculum provides explicit teaching examples to show teachers how to guide students' learning. This change indicates that the revised curriculum puts more emphasis on the teacher's role as a guide, than on the teacher as the sole dominating presence in the classroom. The revised curriculum also makes it clearer that it is the teacher's responsibility to motivate students to want to learn English and communicate with other students. It could be argued that this perspective reflects more accurately the historical realities of true Confucian teaching.

The 2001 curriculum asked teachers to recognise and correct students' mistakes, whereas the revised curriculum takes a different approach to mistakes by asking English teachers to 'choose the right time and use the appropriate method to cope with students' mistakes' in their language practice procedures (MOE, 2011, p 26). This student-centred approach, being more sensitive to

students' feelings, emphasises that the teacher's role is to guide and help students at appropriate times, a role which may well be unfamiliar to teachers used to simple, straightforward correction and interrupting students to correct them.

#### **4.2.9.3 The Teacher as curriculum designer**

The change in the relationship between teacher and students is evidenced by the range of communicative activities that teachers are asked to design and the examples which are provided for them. The earlier 2001 curriculum asked teachers to give students more opportunities to communicate in class while the Revised Curriculum (2011) places higher demands on teachers by asking them to 'design communicative activities based on students' individual differences' and to 'create more real-life situations for students' (MOE, 2011, p.26; p 31; p 43). In particular, the Revised Curriculum (2011) mentions that the activities designed for the primary stage should be interesting and fun (MOE, 2011, p 31). This change makes it clear that teachers have a role as designers in English teaching, the activities and teaching content for students should be designed to suit with local teaching reality. Also, the Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on the individuality of students and their motivation to learn English to improve their attitudes to learning.

As mentioned above, the previous 2001 curriculum asked teachers to use task-based teaching methods in their English teaching (MOE, 2001, p 19-21). However, the Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests English teachers should 'design and use various kinds of teaching methods which attach equal importance to the process and outcomes to improve students' language skills' (MOE, 2011, p 26-27). The Revised Curriculum (2011) in addition asks teachers to design different teaching methods based on their local situations, not only task-based teaching but other teaching methods as well, to encourage teachers to explore new teaching methods to improve teaching outcomes. This aim of using English in realistic contexts, a key tenet of the communicative

approach to English teaching that is internationally dominant (Liao, 2004; Hu, 2002), demands, however, that teachers understand this approach and its goals – a factor which cannot be taken for granted. The revised curriculum means that teachers will need to broaden their range of knowledge about how to teach language. This also requires schools' having head teachers who can lead teacher re-training (Cowan *et al*, 2014, pp 148-168).

The revised curriculum is fundamentally different not only in its content, but also in its approach to the curriculum. As mentioned, it adopts a curriculum enactment perspective, recognising that the curriculum is not pre-existing, external, or static, but should be created and designed through classroom experience and the teacher-student interaction process (Ryan, 2004; Snyder *et al.*, 1992). This is evident in the emphasis on teacher reflection to improve practice, and teaching to suit particular contexts and situations, the need for teachers to work in teams and the repeated emphasis on teachers making choices about their teaching methods. In this approach, teachers are not just *delivering* the revised curriculum, but are *designing* and *shaping* the curriculum to suit their students' needs. The envisaged role of teachers is as curriculum creators rather than simply implementers. However, this is a huge change for teachers who are habituated to operating within top down curriculum delivery and indeed, hierarchical system. Today's teachers of English in China will need to be aware of their role of creating and shaping the curriculum which, again, cannot be taken for granted to happen, unless their teacher-training in college also adopts the spirit of the revised 2011 guidelines.

This is a big change which indicates that teacher's role is not simply to implement but also to develop and explore, so this revised curriculum tends to take a 'curriculum enactment perspective' as discussed in the Review of Literature (Section 2.9.2, Chapter Two) because from this perspective, teachers are curriculum makers rather than implementers. The Revised Curriculum (2011) does not specify which teaching method should be adopted, but

encourages teachers to create and shape methods to fit their students' needs by themselves. This change demands teachers are acutely aware of the need to take on the process of designing and shaping the curriculum, thus need to constantly improve their ability to construct and explore the curriculum goals in order to adapt the curriculum to suit their local conditions.

The revised curriculum not only requires English teachers to use multi-media resources and real life examples of language use; it also suggests that teachers make full use of their own life experience as part of students' learning experience to enrich their teaching content (MOE, 2011, pp 30-31). This change reflects a commitment to harnessing students' interests and make language learning relevant to students' real lives. However, it also asks teachers to take more responsibility for their choice of resources, expand their range of materials, and crucially, go beyond textbooks as a source of classroom material. For teachers used to using textbooks and workbooks, the requirement to design new types of activities with revised materials is a new and challenging role. Implicit within this ministry proposal is that teachers' experiences and lives become a learning resource for use in their classrooms. The Revised Curriculum (2011) also gives suggestions for teaching examples to show teachers how to use resources in a more appropriate way (see teaching case 1 and 2 in Appendix 1.1).

#### **4.2.9.4 Teacher as cooperator in learning**

The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks teachers to harmonize their relationships with students (MOE, 2011, p 26) – something not previously mentioned but which is suggestive of a very different pupil-teacher relationship from that characterised previously as being the model of the traditional Confucian teacher. In Western teaching contexts, the ideal relationship between teacher and students is one of individuals engaged in a collective enterprise (Hay McBer, 2000) rather than one of an authoritative exemplar as practised in established teaching contexts in China and has dominated Chinese language

teaching classroom (see Chapter Two). This new emphasis in the revised curriculum has been influenced by perspectives focusing more on the student's personal development which originate from Russian, German, Italian and English language educational thinkers. English teachers are told to encourage students' learning and use of English through 'observation, practice, exploration and cooperation' in well-organised classroom activities (MOE, 2011, p 26). This change encourages English teachers to put more focus on developing students' cooperative skills. This is a new view of students: instead of seeing them as passive recipients of learning, the teacher is required to pay much more attention to the feelings and emotions of their students and their experience of learning English. This aims to create a positive and enjoyable classroom climate, but it also poses challenges for English teachers by questioning traditional beliefs about the role of the teachers and students in the classroom.

#### **4.2.9.5 Teacher as Communicator of learning**

The previous 2001 curriculum noted the importance of English-speaking countries' culture to English language learning, and asked teachers to help students broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding of foreign cultures. The Revised Curriculum (2011) uses more space to suggest how teachers might cultivate students' intercultural awareness and ability and also emphasises that teachers should guide students to understand Chinese and foreign culture's differences and similarities, develop students' ability to communicate in different cultures (MOE, 2011, pp 28-29) while this was not mentioned in the earlier, 2001 curriculum. This change puts stronger emphasis on the differences and similarities between foreign, especially western culture, and Chinese culture, this raises new demands for English teachers by asking them to constantly acquire knowledge about different cultures and develop their own intercultural ability so can they develop students' ability to communicate in different cultures. Moreover, The Revised Curriculum (2011) also demands English teachers 'create close-to-life intercultural situations as much as possible based on students' English language levels, actual cognitive

levels and living experiences’ in order to help students develop their intercultural skills while they are experiencing the different cultures. This specification was not mentioned in the previous curriculum. This change puts greater emphasis on students’ own experience and use of language. The Revised Curriculum (2011) also provides suggested teaching situations for teachers to show how to help students communicate in different cultures (See Appendix 1.3).

#### **4.2.9.6 Reflector and researcher of teaching**

The Revised Curriculum (2011) places much greater emphasis on teachers reflecting on their teaching - what went well, not so well and so on - than the earlier approach, by illustrating, in detail, the importance and benefits of teacher reflection. Reflection can help teachers to, ‘find, analyse and solve problems in teaching’, so it helps to support individual teacher’s professional development. By engaging in reflection, teachers can, ‘deepen their understanding of the teaching and learning process’ and, they can also ‘improve their subject knowledge and pedagogical competence’ (MOE, 2011, p 33), so this is beneficial for teachers’ professional growth and development. But most importantly, teachers will undertake reflection not only individually, but within peer groups to address the challenges and problems facing them in their day-to-day professional lives. This emphasis on reflection suggests it can become a mechanism for developing teachers’ knowledge and understanding, and help them to adapt to the changes in their roles.

The revised curriculum encourages teachers to establish teaching teams working in an atmosphere that encourages sharing, communication, cooperative learning and cooperative exploration (MOE, 2011, pp 32-33). This was not mentioned in the 2001 curriculum - the suggestion that teachers should work together as a learning community to support their own and each other’s professional development. The Revised Curriculum (2011) also provides suggested teaching sample cases to show teachers how to help students communicate in different cultures (See Appendix 1.3).



Hence the revised proposals offer a transformative view of what teachers are, implicitly requiring teachers not just to change their teaching practices, but also the ways they learn about teaching. The Revised Curriculum (2011) demands that teachers participate in personalising the curriculum and teaching methods. They are expected to adopt a more communicative approach and to develop their own professional knowledge through reflection. Chinese teachers of English whose training and professional practice comes from past traditions, might find The Revised Curriculum (2011) unfamiliar and challenging when required to adapt from being ‘good teachers’ in the traditional context to ‘good teachers’ in the modern society. However, the new generation of teachers for whom these ideas are now part of the institutional framework will perceive them to be normal expectations.

This is a really different view of the teacher, and to accomplish all these things, traditional teachers will not just have to change their teaching methods, but the ways they learn about teaching. As discussed above, Chinese teachers’ views of teaching are likely to be influenced by traditional teaching concepts, while The Revised Curriculum (2011) incorporates some ideas of Western origin, developed in a different cultural and teaching context. It is very interesting to note these things here because in Section 2.9, Chapter 2, I pointed out these were features of western research into curriculum change, and their influence suggests that this very popular research has had an impact on the curriculum in China.

#### **4.2.10 Main Changes to the New English Textbooks**

Most recently, the 2012 new series of English textbooks was published soon after the introduction of the Revised Curriculum (2011). The new English textbook content was modified on the basis of three points (Curriculum research institute, 2012):

- The Revised Curriculum (2011);

- the findings from the 11th five-year National Planning Research Topics: ‘the comparative study of the characteristics of a variety of textbooks after the introduction of the Revised Curriculum (2011)’ and ‘the research and exploration of students’ subject assessment standards in primary and middle schools’;
- the feedback and comments from the 2002 English textbook used.

The 2012 new English textbook attaches stronger importance to a combination of ‘instrumental function’ and ‘humanistic function’- that is, learning for utilitarian purposes and child-centred learning, aimed at developing students’ all-round language ability in use. The new series of textbooks have been modified in eight respects:

- The overall framework of teaching materials has been adjusted, and made more reasonable;
- Added oral examples for students to imitate;
- Adjusted the gradient of content input, effectively making the primary school discourse syntactically and lexically simpler but more students-centred in terms of content, with enriched ideological and humanism discourse content.
- Played a stronger guiding role in the writing process, to gradually develop students’ writing ability;
- Controlled the quantity of vocabulary items, making repetition rates higher, to attain a uniform distribution of vocabulary;
- Optimised activities for learning grammar in real life situations so no activity is based on grammar alone, like rote-learning;
- Expanded the content of phonetic teaching to cultivate students’ spelling and reading skills;
- Improved the self-assessment part, and to support students’ reflection and inductive learning ability.

Compared with the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) discussed earlier, it can be seen that the new English textbooks reflect most of the changes and

key points in the Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **4.2.11 Summary of the Main Changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

In conclusion, The Revised Curriculum (2011) has the following changes:

- The new role of English courses as a combination of instrumental and student-centred values;
- Schools in different areas (urban, suburban and rural) and with different resources can plan different teaching objectives and teaching content and set different starting grades for learning English;
- English learning features of progress and continuity;
- Different vocabulary requirements for different areas;
- English teachers should create close-to-life activities for students to let them learn English in a more true-to-life context;
- Teachers should use various kinds of teaching methods which attach equal importance to the process and result, to improve students' language in-use ability not restricted to task-based teaching;
- A new concept of teachers' professional development;
- New assessment tools put more emphasis on formative assessment and speaking and listening;
- Teachers' have new roles as organisers, guides, designers, cooperators, communicators and reflectors.

Some researchers claim that there is no essential difference between the 2001 curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011), noting that the Revised Curriculum (2011) standards keep the framework, basic concepts, main objectives, and most of the demands (Wang, 2012; Yu, 2012). However, I argue, based on these findings, that the two documents have different visions of language learning, different roles for teachers and students and demand different activities and materials. It is with these findings in mind that the creation of the research tools for Phase two (questionnaires and interviews) were developed. The findings from the web forum analysis, discussed below,

allowed me to evaluate how teachers were experiencing this change.

### **4.3 Findings from the web forum data**

Ethically, the approach to sampling raises interesting issues. The data was not collected from participants who gave informed consent for its use for this purpose, although it is a form of self-report data. However, it was published online and freely available and so has the status of published material and, as I am analysing this publication without the consent of the participants, I decided to anonymise all the participants.

The most frequently occurring topic keyword terms were selected for the analysis presented in this section. This is a thematic analysis from an inductive approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Extracts from web forums have been translated from Chinese into English. The most common ten topics are shown below and were used for the subsequent questionnaire and interview based study.

#### **4.3.1 Lack of understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

Teachers claimed they found it difficult in understanding the Revised Curriculum (2011). For example, Teacher A said:

*I am a teacher trainer for the Revised Curriculum (2011). I find the teachers confused when I work with them. The teachers can only understand the surface meaning of the Revised Curriculum (2011); they are not able to understand the ideas in-depth and do not know what should they do to implement the curriculum. However, they really want to be trained and need guidance. They asked whether they could seek guidance from experts such as Teacher Wang. I told them, 'Teacher Wang is too busy. We can learn the Revised Curriculum (2011) by ourselves, learn from this forum or learn from other experts'. (Teacher A)*

Teacher A's comment shows that teachers' lack of understanding of the Revised Curriculum (2011) is an issue. Some teachers have problems trying to implement the Revised Curriculum (2011). They do not know where to turn for help to understand the Revised Curriculum (2011).

Some teachers found the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) not clear enough for them to understand and implement. For example, below shows how Teacher B understands a change in the Revised Curriculum (2011):

*Can anyone help me to solve my problem?*

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) says:*

*For Level Two, students should:*

*Write some simple greetings and wishes.*

*Write simple and short sentences according to the tips. But, I do not know what kind of greetings and wishes students can write? To be more precise, what does simple and short mean? How many sentences equal 'short'? The idea is too vague for teachers so we cannot handle it.*  
*(Teacher B)*

Teacher C's discussion is another comment showing how the teachers understand a change:

*I teach students in a rural area. Rural students' English proficiency is poor. Teachers create English songs by using some daily conversations in the textbook. Many students have made good progress using this method and they are more motivated. However, I saw that the Revised Curriculum (2011) requires English songs compare to the previous one. Why? Do I need to use that other method now? I do not know what kind of songs are suitable? Can we design songs for students? (Teacher C)*

Teacher C's comment shows the questions teachers have about meaning behind the Revised Curriculum statements (2011).

Teacher D's comment on web forums showed s/he found it difficult to

understand some concepts in the Revised Curriculum (2011):

*I feel confused about the meaning and differences between the terms group work, cooperative learning and autonomous learning in the revised curriculum. I think cooperative learning does not equal group learning, and cooperative learning is not the opposite of autonomous learning. Does group work include autonomous learning sometimes? Can anyone help me? (Teacher D)*

Some teachers have problems understanding the objectives of English courses and the value of the Revised Curriculum (2011). For example, some teachers asked:

*What is the reason for setting different objectives for each grade? (Teacher E)*

*What are the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011)? (Teacher F)*

*Teacher F: What is the value of the Revised Curriculum (2011)? Who is this revised curriculum created for? And why do we have this revised curriculum? (Teacher G)*

#### **4.3.2 Teaching grammar in context**

Teachers claimed they found it difficult to teach grammar within the Revised Curriculum (2011) guidelines. Below are Teacher H and Teacher I's comments about teaching grammar:

*I remember that, the previous 2001 curriculum did not require teachers to teach students grammar. But now, the Revised Curriculum (2011) requires teachers to teach grammar. So, I do not know how to teach grammar under the Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher H)*

*I do not think we didn't need to teach grammar under the previous 2001 curriculum. We needed to teach grammar in the past. But the change in the Revised Curriculum (2011) is that we need to let students learn and*

*understand the grammar in context. The purpose of learning English should not be only about learning grammar knowledge. (Teacher I)*

Teacher H's comment shows that s/he did not understand the previous 2001 curriculum.

#### **4.3.3 Different kinds of teaching methods**

Teachers claimed they were used to traditional teaching methods (teacher-centred and textbook- based) and do not know how to design different teaching methods and materials, for example,

*My teaching is based on textbooks and I do not know how to adopt different kinds of teaching methods according to different situations. (Teacher J)*

#### **4.3.4 Student-centred**

Teachers stated they found difficulty undertaking student-centred teaching according to the Revised Curriculum (2011), for example:

*In the past, we knew that English is a tool, but we knew little about 'humanism' (student-centred approach). Many teachers teach English only for the reason that it is their responsibility to impart knowledge to students and help them get high scores. Most English teachers seldom pay attention to their students' development. After learning about the Revised Curriculum (2011), I now know the value of student centred learning but it is not easy in practice. (Teacher K)*

*I want to include more student-centred activities in class but found that students are not active in taking part in communicative activities. Neither teachers nor students are used to student-centred teaching and learning. (Teacher L)*

#### 4.3.5 Teaching resources

Resources refer to the availability of financial support, teaching and learning material, equipment and time demanded by the innovation. For example, ‘actively use video, multimedia and network resources to enrich the teaching content and form, as well as improve classroom teaching’s effectiveness (MOE, 2011, p 32). Also, The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers use broadcasts, TV, English journals and magazines, library and other resources to provide good contexts to expand students’ space and channels for autonomous learning’ (MOE, 2011, p 32). Thus, resources such as computers, overhead projectors, slide projectors and other software, libraries, and journals should be available for school teachers so they can adopt new technology and learn new skills.

Teachers’ talks and discussion on web forums showed that some of them put too much emphasis on textbooks as teaching resources. For example,

*Now, every school in our province is following this activity -- ‘learn the curriculum and teach the textbook’. This is really difficult for us. We also need to make a ‘knowledge tree’ (raised by experts, aim: let the teacher link every lesson, every unit in the textbooks of every grade together). Can anyone give us some resources? Thanks. (Teacher M)*

Teacher N shows her/his worry about the way to use textbooks by saying:

*I do not know what the purpose and content of the ‘knowledge tree’ is. I am a little worried that this activity may ask teachers to put too much emphasis on textbooks and knowledge points for exams rather than focusing on the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011). That may not be the right way of learning using the revised curriculum. Textbooks are useful but should not be the only teaching resource and we should not be too textbook-reliant. (Teacher N)*

Teacher M responses to Teacher N by saying:



*The 'knowledge tree' is really difficult. It relates to all the units, all the grades and all the lessons. It should be called knowledge forest instead. This weekend, I will work overtime again. In addition to the knowledge tree, I should prepare a 2000 words speech draft for the speech competition about 'learn the curriculum and teach the textbook'!*  
(Teacher M)

*To Teacher M, I do not agree to make simple things more complicated. Why not start from every lesson, every unit? Why do you need a 2000 word speech draft? I think you put too much work into teaching the textbook but that is not what the Revised Curriculum (2011) requires.*  
(Teacher N)

*To Teacher N: I do not know the reason either. We should finish the tasks assigned by the head teacher, so I'll just bite the bullet and do it.*  
(Teacher M)

Teacher M's talks showed that some teachers focus on learning the textbooks rather than the Revised Curriculum suggestions (2011).

Some teachers also discussed their difficulty in planning resources for different students. For example:

*I want to raise a question: my students' English level is different. When we plan activities for students such as an imitation activity, some of the pupils can paraphrase the sentences, but some of them cannot. Does anyone have any suggestions?* (Teacher O)

#### **4.3.6 Progress and continuity**

Teachers stated they began to recognise progress and continuity within the English course after the introduction of the Revised Curriculum (2011):

*After learning about the Revised Curriculum (2011) in the training*

*program, I began to realise that the English courses are progressive and follow a continuum. In the past, I thought that students' English language ability could be improved in a short time. So, I always felt confused as to why students did not achieve the expected learning results. In the training course, Professor Chen helped me understand that the formation of students' linguistic competence takes a long time.*  
(Teacher P)

#### **4.3.7 Teachers' new role as a reflector**

Many teachers claimed that they found reflection not very useful and mainly for the purpose of finishing the work set to be viewed by their superiors, for example:

*Teachers write their teaching reflections mainly to cope with the inspection from our superiors; we do not think it is useful and efficient to make teaching reflections.* (Teacher Q)

#### **4.3.8 New Assessment**

The issues teachers raised most frequently related to the new assessment are presented below:

- If the exam system stays the same, how can teachers change their teaching methods?
- What is the purpose of changing teaching methods and teachers' roles if the traditional teaching model can increase students' exam scores?
- Teachers only need to teach what will be examined in exams, and ignore the cultivation of students' learning ability. This is really harmful for students' development.

Teachers' comments about the new assessment from web forums show that they are strongly affected by the perpetuation of the examination-oriented culture in the Chinese education context. Teachers' concern about exam results arises from the great pressure from the prevalent exam culture, and this

contributes to forming a quite strong exam-oriented school climate. Teachers' stated behavior and attitudes seem to have been heavily influenced by school head teacher's focusing on exam results and they also pointed out that their evaluation of teachers' school performance was also based on their students' exam results, and thus forced the teachers to teach for exam purposes. As two teachers from web forums said,

*The new assessment puts more emphasis on listening and speaking. However, the exams, especially the College Entry Examinations (Gaokao), remain the same and exams are actually the most important things both for me and for my students' future ... The Revised Curriculum (2011) is more communicative, but some activities and the focus on speaking may be time-consuming and useless because these will not be tested in the Gaokao. As a result, I will ignore the unessential listening and speaking activities in class if I do not have enough time for them. (Teacher R)*

*Of course, the new assessment forms are good for students, but the final teaching objective is good exam results. Our head teacher will rank each class' exam results after every examination. It really puts pressure on teachers. I want my students to have high scores in tests and this also how my teaching quality and performance is evaluated. (Teacher S)*

*English courses must serve for the purpose of Gaokao (college entrance examination). (Teacher T)*

*Although we should link the class to the Gaokao, we should reflect it: What are the requirements of Gaokao? How can we train students to have these abilities? What is central to improving students' reading ability? (Teacher C)*

*We expect quick results, teaching students for the sake of Gaokao, Zhongkao (senior high school entrance examination), mid-term*

*examination, end-of-year exam and other examinations. We teach what will be examined, and ignore the cultivation of students' learning ability. This is really harmful. (Teacher B)*

#### **4.3.9 Problems when implementing The Revised Curriculum (2011) in practice**

Even when teachers understand the new concepts in the Revised Curriculum (2011), some claimed they still found it difficult to put these ideas into practice.

*At the teachers' conference, many teachers articulated their confusion and questions. For example, the 2011 curriculum states, 'English teaching in Primary school should be based on activities' and 'we should cultivate pupils' interest first'. However, when we tried to put these ideas into practice, we found we were so confused -- what kind of activities can stimulate pupils' interests? How can we keep discipline in the classroom during talking activities? How do we design effective activities? Etc. We need someone to help to us solve these problems. (Teacher F)*

*In the implementation process, we always face these problems: large class sizes, students' with different characteristics, exam-oriented assessment, etc. (Teacher J)*

#### **4.3.10 Lack of training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

Some teachers value the teacher training for the Revised Curriculum (2011), for example:

*The three-day training enabled me to find out that I had not understood The Revised Curriculum (2011) fully in the past. As a new teacher, I am inexperienced. I cannot grasp the key points and the difficulties all at once. These training days showed me the way forward for my future teaching. In addition, as a new teacher, I realised that I should put in more effort if I want to teach well, organise the class well. (Teacher S)*

*I realised the role of the Revised Curriculum (2011) and the differences between the new and the previous curriculum after the training. I hope the leaders can offer us more opportunities like this to improve our teaching ability. (Teacher T)*

Today, web-based discussion may well be part of any large-scale curriculum changes. However, the examples above illustrate the main areas of concern by teachers. The findings from the web forums convey a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the very limited formal training offered. The lack of training and guidance for teachers, therefore, may prove detrimental to the improvement of English language education in China. Teachers claimed that mainly short intensive teacher training programme are offered and attended by teachers on a selective basis, so they do not cater for all teachers. Many teachers from web forums complained that they could only take online training courses on the Revised Curriculum (2011) if they needed guidance. Many teachers claimed that online training lacks interactive communication and cannot solve their particular problems in practice, therefore training is never very effective. In particular, teachers from rural areas mentioned that it is even worse in rural schools because teachers there do not have sufficient training and they also lack good quality teaching materials and equipment. For example:

*I think online training lacks communication, therefore, the training is never very effective. (Teacher C)*

*I really learned a lot from the teacher training course. This is a good opportunity for us to improve ourselves. The training can really improve teachers' quality of teaching. However, these opportunities are seldom provided. (Teacher K)*

*Teachers prefer training that takes account of their actual situations. The training course should help them to sort out, analyse, and solve*

*their practical problems. Teachers will not be motivated by theoretical concepts. Theoretical training is not useful. (Teacher L)*

The findings from web forums show that the teachers are concerned with a wide range of issues. As a result of this, these key findings - interesting in themselves - guided the questionnaire and interview topics for the next phase of the research as discussed in Chapter Three so enabled me to gain a much clearer and more detailed quantitative and qualitative picture in Phase two.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This web forum analysis identified the appropriate questionnaire and interview questions. It also identified that there are several levels of questions; some teachers are concerned with small details and some teachers are still struggling with the big issues discussed earlier in this chapter. Phase two will examine this in detail in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS OF PHASE TWO**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this Chapter, I present the findings of the study based on the data analysis methods discussed in the Methodology Chapter. The results of the questionnaire and the findings from the interviews are discussed together in relation to key findings so that the reader can see how these two sources of data were used to create a picture of teachers' experience and understandings of The Revised Curriculum (2011). The first section of this chapter describes the range of teachers involved in the survey and interviews to establish the basis of the findings. The Chapter then goes on to present the questionnaire responses and interview contributions concerning their training and the new English curriculum.

#### **5.2 The characteristics of the participants in this study**

##### **5.2.1 Questionnaire respondents**

For the quantitative phase of this study, I distributed 273 questionnaires to English teachers in 36 selected schools in Yingtan, and got 227 returns, a very high return rate of 83%. This high return rate is because I went to the schools, explained the study and distributed and collected the questionnaires myself. Moreover, the headteachers supported the questionnaire distribution and aims. This means that teachers might have felt compelled to complete the questionnaires or, on the other hand, they may have felt that the completion of the questionnaire was an approved activity.

Appendix 6 summarises the biographical information of the questionnaire respondents. The teachers in the sample were either English teachers in primary schools (46%) or junior middle schools (54%) because The Revised Curriculum (2011) is only for use in primary schools (age 7-12) and junior middle schools (age 12-15) (MOE, 2011). I began with a cluster sampling

technique to select the schools and teachers (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). In city areas, there were 76 teachers (33% of the participants) from four primary schools and four junior middle schools. In suburban, village and town areas, 79 teachers (35% of the participants) from five primary schools and five junior middle schools were selected. In the rural area, 72 teachers (32% of the participants) from ten primary schools and ten junior middle schools were selected. The schools in each area were selected because they have the largest number of English teachers and can reflect their typical district settings. This sample of schools was larger than described in the method and methodology Chapter, but, offered the chance to expand the survey following the strategy discussed, thus I chose to do so, because I felt that it was appropriate to the aim of a questionnaire to offer as broad a picture as possible.

The questionnaire sample had more female teachers (92%) than male teachers (8%). This is a reflection of female dominance in English teaching in compulsory education in China, according to a report published by Beijing Normal University in July 2012.

In terms of educational qualifications, all the 227 teachers had a diploma from junior college or above. The majority of the participants had obtained a bachelor's degree (77%) while other participants were either junior college graduates (18%) or had obtained a master's degree (5%). This reflects the qualifications of the teacher population in China. The teachers' 2013 qualification structure report (MOE, 2013) is relevant to the teachers in my study because this is the year the data was collected. The report says that 99.83% of the primary school teachers in China had the technical secondary school diploma or above, 99.28% of the junior middle school teachers had a junior college diploma or above.

62% of the questionnaire participants had an English major qualification, and 66% had followed phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology courses. In addition, the questionnaire asked about the seniority of the teachers in the school hierarchy. In China, teachers start as basic teachers, and teachers with



leadership potential are identified early in their careers and nurtured to become leaders and given the training and responsibility to develop and support excellent teachers in their schools and be models of effective practices. Backbone teachers - as they are referred to - are outstanding teachers with high educational qualifications, good subject knowledge, high achievement in specific disciplines and have the capacity to teach and do research (MOE, 1962). Discipline leaders have the responsibility of leading all the teachers. In my study, 59% of the questionnaire respondents were normal teachers, 37% were backbone teachers, and 4% were discipline leaders. So the sample included teachers at all levels of seniority. The teaching experience of the teachers responding to the questionnaire ranged from two to thirty-two years.

### **5.2.2 The characteristics of the interviewee teachers**

Interviewee teachers were selected on a voluntary basis (see Section 3.4.3.2 Chapter Three, above), I tried to include a teacher stratified sampling strategy based on the ratios above but my priority was to select participants who had different views in their questionnaire responses, so that these could be explored. This is not, therefore, a perfectly stratified sample of the population, or even of the questionnaire respondent teachers, but it is hoped that by having a range of views from teachers of all ages and locations, a broader picture of their views can be developed. Of the 227 returned questionnaires, 86 teachers (38%) volunteered to take part in interviews. This high agreement to be interviewed rate is because I went to the schools, explained the study and gave them the reference letter from the University of Nottingham and the head teachers supported my study. This means that teachers may have felt that being interviewed was an approved activity. Appendix 7 gives a summary of the characteristics of the interviewee teachers in this study. In total, 18 English teachers from 10 different schools were interviewed in Yingtian city, 16 female (89%) and two male (11%). In the city area, six English teachers were involved (33% of the participants). In the suburb, village and town area, six English teachers were selected (33% of the participants). In the rural area, six English teachers were selected (33% of the participants).

In terms of education qualification, 12 participants (67%) had a bachelor's degree, five participants (27%) were graduates of technical secondary school or below, and one (6%) had obtained a master's degree. 11 participants (61%) were English majors, and 12 (67%) had ever followed phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge courses. This seems to be a particularly well-qualified selection, given the discussion above, these teachers seem in line with the general level of qualification. In addition, ten (56%) respondents were normal (basic) teachers, seven teachers (39%) were core teachers, and one teacher (5%) was a discipline leader. So the sample included teachers at all levels of seniority. The teaching experience of the teachers ranged from three to twenty-nine years, which might be expected as seniority usually relates to experience.

This sample of interviewee teachers was almost the same as described in the Chapter Three, although the teachers' qualification profile was a little different from the characteristics identified for the reasons discussed above. However, it is important to show that both the questionnaire and interview respondent samples allow me to offer well-founded findings.

### **5.3 Features of questionnaire responses**

The first finding from the questionnaire relates to the methodological issues. Two features of the questionnaire responses deserve particular comment: the high return rate and the pattern of responses. Looking across all the questions, an overall pattern of questionnaire responses indicated high levels of neutrality and a relatively low level of disagreement in the responses to all the questions (except the conversed questions). This showed the teachers agree with most of the statements in the questionnaire and were positive about the changes in the Revised Curriculum (2011) but the interview findings suggest this impression is not as uniform as it seems. Whilst positive views can be inferred from *agree* and *strongly agree*, there are far fewer negative views indicated by *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. The apparent lack of disagreement does not necessarily show they generally agree. This may show widespread agreement but may also show that teachers used the neutral category to opt out, remain unsure or show

mild disagreement, as in fact, the high percentage of neutral responses may also express uncertainty or lack of comprehension. In addition, the questionnaire in my study was sanctioned and I got a very high return rate (83%), so people might not have wanted to seem negative and so went for neutral. The cultural significance of the lack of disagreement and high neutral responses are discussed in relation to other studies in Chapter Six. So, in my findings, the level of agreement is the most telling finding whereas the level of disagreement probably does not reveal as much.

## **5.4 Presenting the questionnaire results**

The analysis of the questionnaire is extremely long and many answers present interesting patterns. The raw data from the questionnaires are in the appendix. I present the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires together so that the readers can see what I believe are the main interesting results of my study.

## **5.5 Are teachers teaching the 2001 or the 2011 curriculum?**

Of the 227 respondents to the questionnaire 223(98%) reported that they were teaching the Revised Curriculum (2011). All 18 interviewee teachers were asked '*have you taught the 2001 curriculum*' and '*are you teaching the Revised Curriculum (2011)*'. All 18 respondents had taught the 2001 earlier curriculum, and all were teaching the Revised Curriculum (2011) when they were interviewed. This is clear evidence that the Revised Curriculum (2011) is in operation in all types of school and, therefore, that the teachers in my study should be in a position to answer questions about the curriculum, their understanding of the language and training needs for the Revised Curriculum (2011).

## **5.6 Teachers' views on The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

### **5.6.1 How are teachers finding The Revised Curriculum (2011)?**

All 18 teachers interviewed were asked '*How are you finding the Revised Curriculum (2011)?*' Eight teachers (44%) said that they did not understand the Revised Curriculum (2011) very well. Four teachers (22%) said that they found The Revised Curriculum (2011) much easier for students to understand than

the previous one. Three teachers (17%) found the Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on 'speaking' and 'listening'. Three teachers (17%) said they did not find any significant differences between the 2001 earlier curriculum and the Revised Curriculum (2011). One teacher (6%) said that she found there was less content in the Revised Curriculum (2011) but more content in the exams. One teacher (6%) said that she found The Revised Curriculum (2011) reflects the reality of language by putting greater emphasis on learning English through context.

- **Lack of understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

Nine respondents (50%), three from urban schools, two from suburban schools, four from rural schools, stated that they did not know much about the Revised Curriculum (2011) because had not had any training opportunities to learn about the Revised Curriculum (2011) or had not had enough training.

*Actually, I do not know very much about The Revised Curriculum (2011). I did not have any training opportunity for The Revised Curriculum (2011); I also have not read The Revised Curriculum (2011) carefully. We need to read The Revised Curriculum (2011) by ourselves. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*Actually, I do not have a very clear idea about how The Revised Curriculum (2011) works because I have not read The Revised Curriculum (2011) carefully; and the training I already have had is far from adequate. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*I found The Revised Curriculum (2011).... well, to be honest, there might be some changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) but I do not know of anything in detail because I did not learned to use The Revised Curriculum (2011) yet. (Teacher J, from a city)*

*I do not know very much about The Revised Curriculum (2011), because I missed the training opportunity for The Revised Curriculum*

*(2011). I do not have any impressions of The Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Supporting this view, in the questionnaire (see Section 4.4), 73% of the teachers claimed that ‘*the training programme they had already had was attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers*’. Perhaps, the selective training programme for teachers in China is one of the reasons why teachers do not understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) well. However, it is slightly surprising that teachers did not find out more about a curriculum they are actually supposed to be teaching.

- **The new textbooks are much easier for students to understand than the previous one**

Four teachers (22%), three from suburban schools and one from a rural school, said that they were not familiar with The Revised Curriculum (2011), so they spontaneously raised the issue of the new textbooks when asked about The Revised Curriculum (2011). They found the new textbooks based on The Revised Curriculum (2011) were much easier to use than the previous textbooks.

Two of the four teachers believed that the new textbooks were much easier for students to understand and accept. For example, Teacher C said:

*I am not familiar with The Revised Curriculum (2011), but I am using the new textbooks; I found the new English textbooks based on The Revised Curriculum (2011) are easier than previous textbooks. Students should accept and understand the new textbooks better. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Teacher N had a very similar opinion to Teacher C and she also mentioned that the new textbooks are better at highlighting the key points:

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) seems easy to teach. I found the new textbooks under The Revised Curriculum (2011) are simpler than*

*previous textbooks, and the new textbooks put more emphasis on the key points. The key contents are clearer now. (Teacher N, from a rural)*

Teacher D complained that although she found The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the new textbooks seemed easier than the previous ones, students in rural schools still face the problem of understanding the new textbooks. It is very interesting to hear this view since this suggests that teachers in rural areas face greater difficulties than teachers in city or suburban areas:

*I found The Revised Curriculum (2011) seems simpler than before, and the new textbooks based on The Revised Curriculum (2011) looks easier to teach than previous textbooks; however, most of the students in our school are rural, their English is poorer than students in city areas, and it is still very difficult for these rural students to understand and accept the new textbooks. (Teacher D, from a rural)*

Teacher D's view supports the questionnaire results (discussed later in this chapter). It can be seen that rural respondents are always the highest proportion agreeing that there are difficulties in the questionnaire. The questionnaire results indicate that the respondents from rural areas felt they faced more challenges and difficulties in their teaching practice in comparison with other teachers from city and suburban areas.

These interview answers (above) raise the interesting issue of what the teachers mean by 'understanding' and 'teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011)'. If teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011) means using new textbooks in old ways, are they teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011)? Does understanding The Revised Curriculum (2011) involve understanding the new methods and perspectives discussed above, or is it enough to follow the new textbooks?

- **Putting more emphasis on 'speaking' and 'listening'**

Three teachers (17%) said that they found The Revised Curriculum (2011) places stronger emphasis on 'speaking' and 'listening'. For this reason, they

believe that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has is a moves from being about knowledge of language to an all-round ability to use language orientation.

*I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) is good. The previous 2001 curriculum put emphasis mainly on 'reading', but now, I found The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts stronger emphasis on 'speaking' and 'listening'. So I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) has shifted from knowledge orientation to an all-round ability orientation. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Teacher A shared a similar opinion to Teacher B:

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) is much better. It puts more effort on cultivating students' speaking and listening ability. The previous 2001 curriculum puts emphasis mainly on grammar, but now, The Revised Curriculum (2011) is more practical and useful than before. (Teacher A, from a city)*

However, Teacher D claimed that rural students' English ability is very poor. She found it quite challenging for her to involve more speaking activities in class and to use the new textbooks that focus on 'speaking':

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages more students' activities especially 'speaking' and 'listening' activities. The new textbooks under The Revised Curriculum (2011) also involve more 'speaking' and 'listening' activities than the previous textbooks. However, I am in a rural school, teachers rarely focus on the teaching of the spoken-English here. Rural students' English ability is quite poor, so teachers always put strong emphasis on grammar and vocabulary teaching. 'Listening' practices are not very difficult for us, but oral English practices are really difficult and challenging. (Teacher D, from a rural)*

This teacher has highlighted the issue of teachers' subject knowledge. The Revised Curriculum (2011) demands much greater subject knowledge (speaking and listening) of the teacher, even though this is not how she has put it.

- **No significant differences between the 2001 earlier curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

When asked '*How are you finding The Revised Curriculum (2011)?*' Three teachers (17%) spontaneously mentioned that they did not find The Revised Curriculum (2011) anything special because they thought there were no significant differences between the 2001 earlier curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011):

*I found there was nothing special in The Revised Curriculum (2011) because the previous 2001 curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) are almost the same. No big differences. (Teacher G, from a city)*

*I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) is okay. The Revised Curriculum (2011) does not include any obvious changes compared to the previous curriculum. (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

Teacher P from a rural school said that she only noticed that the pictures in the new textbooks are more intuitive under The Revised Curriculum (2011):

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) seems better. I found the new textbooks under The Revised Curriculum (2011) are quite flexible and visible. The pictures in the new textbooks are more intuitive and clearer for students to understand. I think this revised curriculum is better. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

These three teachers illustrate that the analysis (see Chapter Four) of the main differences between old and revised is not clear to all teachers and suggests that a good proportion of the teachers are not in a position to address the



changes. This issue arose in the interview questions about differences between the two curricula and is discussed more specifically below, in section 5.5.4.

- **Less content in The Revised Curriculum (2011) but more content in the exams**

One teacher (6%) from a suburban school felt there is less content in The Revised Curriculum (2011), but the exams include more content than the curriculum:

*I found that, under The Revised Curriculum (2011), we have less content for teaching. Now we have one exam for each unit. But less content in The Revised Curriculum (2011) has not made the exams easier. The exams will test lots of areas that students have not learnt yet or are not included in the curriculum. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

The analysis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) in Chapter Four noted that it places more responsibility for designing materials and modifying content on the teachers. The findings of this study suggest that not all teachers have understood this.

- **Revised curriculum reflects the reality of language in use**

One teacher (6%) from a city said that the design of the situations in The Revised Curriculum (2011) reflects the reality of language use better than before:

*I found The Revised Curriculum (2011) very good. I like the design of the situations in The Revised Curriculum (2011) such as grammar learning section and vocabulary learning section; they reflect the reality of language and encourage teachers to do so. (Teacher M, from a city)*

The questionnaire results also support teacher M's view. They show that most participants agreed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) put more emphasis on learning English through context and reflect the reality of language use. For

example, 84% of the teachers agreed that *'The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises learning grammar in context'* (see Table 4.5). Also, 84% agreed that *'The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should create more authentic language contexts to enable students to learn vocabulary in a more true-to-life setting'*.

### **5.6.2 Do the teachers feel they understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) well?**

All 18 teachers were asked *'do you feel you understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) well?'* 16 teachers (89%) said they did not think they understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) well, especially when they had not had adequate training.

*Without training for The Revised Curriculum (2011), I do not understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) well. As teachers, our main job is teaching. We seldom have the training opportunities for curriculum change. I think there may be more training opportunities in big cities such as Shanghai. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*I do not have any training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) so I do not understand The Revised Curriculum (2011). We do not analyse The Revised Curriculum (2011). We just follow what the school leader asks us to do. I have read The Revised Curriculum (2011), but actually I do not have any impressions from it. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

*Training for only two days did not help me to understand The Revised Curriculum (2011). I forgot most of the information I learnt from the short training, so I can only read and summarise The Revised Curriculum (2011) by myself. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Two teachers (11%) including the teacher who had had adequate training, said that the training they had received helped them understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) better, but they complained that they soon forgot what they

had learnt from the training, for example, Teacher C said:

*With training, I could understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) better. I think I understood The Revised Curriculum (2011) well when I was in the training process. But just like students who forgot most of the things the teachers taught them after the class, I forgot what I had learnt soon after the training programme ended. But I have been a teacher for so many years, I know how to teach English even I forget what The Revised Curriculum (2011) said. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

This is an interesting picture because teachers feel able to confess that they do not understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) but do not seem to feel they should find out more about it by themselves.

### **5.6.3 Do the teachers feel well prepared to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

All 18 teachers were asked ‘do you feel well prepared to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011)?’ Only two urban teachers (11%) with some training experience said that they felt well prepared to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teacher A said that she learnt from the training programme that teachers should adjust and modify the curriculum according to their local conditions. She believed she prepared well to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011):

*I think I prepared well. I changed a lot. The Revised Curriculum (2011) raises higher requirement for us by asking teachers to adjust and modify the curriculum, rather than repeat what the book says. This revised curriculum requires teachers to teach English in a more flexible way, I learnt this from the training, so I prepared well and teach The Revised Curriculum (2011) in a very flexible way to fit my local situation. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Teacher J from the city area also said that she learnt from the training

programme that teachers should put more emphasis on ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ according to The Revised Curriculum (2011)’s suggestions. She felt well prepared to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011):

*I can say I prepared well to teach The Revised Curriculum (2011). I learnt about it from the training. I can see there are changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011), so, I have made some changes in my teaching as well. For example, I put stronger emphasis on ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ following The Revised Curriculum (2011). I understand some of these key changes and I will make efforts to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher J, from a city)*

These teachers seem to value their training.

#### **5.6.4 Do the teachers find The Revised Curriculum (2011) very different from the earlier curriculum**

Asked: ‘Do you find The Revised Curriculum (2011) very different from the earlier curriculum’, nine teachers said that they did not find any differences between the two curricula, which indicated that they did not notice the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) and were not in a position to address these changes.

The other nine teachers (50%) said that they found The Revised Curriculum (2011) very different from the earlier, 2001 curriculum. Then, those teachers were asked ‘what do you consider are the main differences’. Five respondents (56%) said that the biggest difference is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered its requirements for students. For example, Teacher P and Teacher C mentioned that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered the number of vocabulary items students have to learn:

*The biggest difference is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered the vocabulary requirement for students to learn. There are fewer mandatory words listed in The Revised Curriculum (2011). I think this has reduced the burden on our students. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) is very different. It has fewer words to learn now than before. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

The analysis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) in Section 4.2.5, Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility on the teachers for using and choosing supplementary vocabulary according to different teaching conditions. This new change in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is beneficial to schools in different areas and with different resources to help students master vocabulary. It makes the teaching of vocabulary more flexible than before and enables teachers to choose the best teaching plan according to their actual situation. However, teacher P's and Teacher C's responses suggest that not all teachers have understood this.

Four teachers (44%) said that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered the requirements of textbook content for students, for example:

*The most obvious change in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is that it has lowered the requirements of textbook content. Now we have less content to teach. Because of this reason, I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered the requirements for teachers and students. But the exams are becoming more difficult, so I feel very confused. Why are the textbooks under The Revised Curriculum (2011) easier but the exams not easier? I do not know what to do. So, English teachers in our school have decided that we will just ignore The Revised Curriculum (2011), which seems more theoretical and impractical than the reality for us. The Revised Curriculum (2011) does not guide us much; the only function is to help and guide us to write an essay about The Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*The biggest change in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is that it has lowered the level of textbook content for students. The new textbooks' content is reduced, but we have much more content in the exercises and*

*exams, which do not appear in the textbooks, so I do not know what I should teach. (Teacher G, from a city)*

*I think the biggest change in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is that it has lowered the requirements for students. For example, the new textbooks' content is easier and less than before. (Teacher R, from a suburb)*

Section 4.2.9, Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has lowered the requirement of how much to teach from textbooks but placed more responsibility for designing teaching materials and modifying the curriculum on the teachers, in response to local situations. These teachers' (above) responses suggest that not all teachers have understood this, although they recognise the slimmed-down textbooks.

Although the interview results show that the interviewee teachers do not have a clear understanding of their responsibility for designing teaching materials and modifying the curriculum, in response to local situations, the questionnaire data (see Table 5.5) has a different result. The majority of the participant teachers (85%) agreed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to their local situations. The interview results reveal that not all the participants have understood this statement in the questionnaire well or they are unclear about it.

Of the nine respondents who found The Revised Curriculum (2011) very different from the 2001 earlier curriculum, one of them (11%) said that the biggest difference is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) is more in favor of putting student-centred teaching theory into practice and so create an enjoyable climate for students.

*I think the biggest change in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is that it has put more emphasis on student-centred teaching. I remembered The Revised Curriculum (2011) demands students learn from each other;*

*students can study independently, they can enjoy the satisfaction of communicating and cooperating in the learning process. All these new emphases will make The Revised Curriculum (2011) more student-centred. (Teacher A, from a city)*

This teacher has highlighted the issue of student-centred teaching and teachers' new roles under The Revised Curriculum (2011). The Revised Curriculum (2011) sets higher requirements for teachers by placing more responsibility on them to guide and help students by making the students the center of the class, even though this is not how she has discussed it. Teacher A's response may suggest that not all teachers have understood their new roles under The Revised Curriculum (2011) but have begun to see changes in the teaching demands.

Of the nine respondents one (11%) said that the biggest difference is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) offers some teaching methods and examples to suggest how to teach English.

*The most obvious change is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) offers some specific methods and examples to explain how to teach and how to evaluate students in a good way. The teaching examples should be very helpful. But I have just had a quick look at the examples, I did not read them carefully. (Teacher J, from a city)*

This teacher has highlighted the suggestions for teaching and evaluation under The Revised Curriculum (2011), which gives lots of actual teaching examples for teachers. Teacher J's response suggests that not all teachers have understood the use of the suggestions for teaching and evaluation.

Of the nine respondents two (22%) said that the biggest difference is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) reflects the real use of the English language much better than the earlier curriculum.

*The biggest change is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages*

*the creation of more real contexts for teaching so that students can learn English in a more true-to-life setting. It is easier for students to understand this way of learning English, but I think this sets higher requirements of both teachers and students. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*The most obvious change is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) is more true-to-life as it suggests including more authentic situations to let students use English. Authentic situations in class will focus on students' speaking and listening ability. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.9 in Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility for designing authentic activities on the teachers to reflect the real use of the English language. Teacher D's and Teacher F's responses (above) suggest that some teachers have understood this.

## **5.7 Humanistic values**

As discussed in the review of literature, 'humanistic values' in The Revised Curriculum (2011) means regarding students as being at the center of learning, putting students' development as the first priority for learning English to become a global citizen and develop the pupil as a person, rather than simply adding knowledge of English. In this thesis, I have used the term 'student-centred' where 'humanistic values' are discussed as I believe this best expresses the meaning of the Chinese term, although it is not a literal translation.

In the interviews, all 18 respondents were asked: '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) has redefined the role of English courses, do you know what their new roles are?*' Surprisingly, none of the teachers were clear about changes to the role of English courses. For example:

*I have a little understanding about the role of the English course, but I do not know anything in detail. (Teacher A, from a city)*



*I do not know the role of the English course. (Teacher B, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses above suggest that some teachers do not understand the role of English courses embodied in The Revised Curriculum (2011).

Then, all teachers were asked: *the new English course includes instrumental and humanistic values, what do you think of these values?* Of the 18 respondents five (three urban teachers and two rural teachers) claimed that they had no idea or did not understand what instrumental and humanistic values were, even after I explained the definitions to them. For example:

*I have no idea about the role of the English course. (Teacher I, from a city)*

*I do not know the role of English course because I did not read The Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher N, from a rural)*

Of the 18 respondents two rural teachers (11%) said that it was difficult for their school or area to support the humanistic value side of the English course.

*I have heard of instrumental value but I have never heard of humanistic values. After your explanation of humanistic value, I think it really depends on the quality of the school and the development of that area. I mean, for example, in some undeveloped cities, their education is not good, they cannot achieve humanistic values. But in some developed cities such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, I think it is easier for schools there to achieve humanistic values. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*Our school cannot achieve humanistic values because we do not know how to achieve that, we did not learn it. Also, our school never focuses on humanistic values. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

**Table 5.1 English teachers' responses to questions about humanistic values**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
15. Teaching English should develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and to improve students' all-round human qualities	City	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (8)	60 (79)	10 (13)
	Suburb	4 (5)	6 (8)	16 (20)	41 (52)	12 (15)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	28 (39)	32 (44)	12 (17)
	Total	4 (2)	6 (3)	50 (22)	133 (58)	34 (15)
36. The Revised Curriculum (2011) defines the role of the English courses as a combination of instrumental and humanistic values.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	9 (12)	56 (74)	9 (12)
	Suburb	4 (5)	3 (4)	14 (18)	42 (53)	16 (20)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	16 (22)	48 (67)	4 (6)
	Total	4 (2)	9 (4)	49 (17)	146 (64)	29 (13)
48. Teaching English to develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and to improve students' all-round human qualities is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	5 (7)	18 (24)	41 (54)	11 (14)
	Suburb	2 (2)	11 (14)	30 (38)	30 (38)	6 (8)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	31 (43)	40 (56)	0 (0)
	Total	3 (1)	24 (11)	79 (35)	111 (49)	17 (7)
80. Teaching English to both develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and improve students' all-round qualities as human-beings is difficult.	City	0 (0)	15 (20)	11 (14)	43 (57)	7 (9)
	Suburb	8 (10)	15 (19)	14 (18)	40 (51)	2 (3)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	8 (11)	56 (78)	4 (6)
	Total	8 (3)	34 (15)	33 (14)	139 (62)	13 (6)

These interview responses show that these terms remain new and alien to teachers and this also casts some doubt on the questionnaire responses.

Questionnaire, items 15, 36, 48 and 80 in Table 5.1 are humanistic value items, so they are clustered together. From the questionnaire result, 73% of the respondents agreed that *'the role of the English course combines both instrumental values and humanistic values'*. However, 22% of the questionnaire participants indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment, especially teachers from rural schools (39% neutral responses). As shown in Table 5.1, 77% of the teachers agreed that *'The Revised Curriculum (2011) defines the role of the English course as a combination of instrumental and humanistic values'*. Given that this is the very essence of The Revised Curriculum (2011), 77% is a surprisingly low agreement rate. 17% of the respondents gave neutral responses, which may be because they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment, while teachers from rural schools occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (22%). The choices for teachers' practices are not consistent with the choices about language learning beliefs and the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Only 56% of the respondents agreed that *'teaching English to both develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and to improve students' all-round humanistic qualities is successful in practice'*. However, 35% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand it, were uncertain or unwilling to comment while rural respondents occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (43%). It seems this new approach is not yet universally accepted and there is more work to do. Questionnaire participants knew these values are emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from the questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not know what they mean. This finding from the interviews shows that some teachers think that achieving student-centred learning is closely linked to their local level of development and the quality of their school. In particular, interviewees from rural areas in this study claimed it was more challenging to achieve human-centred values in their teaching than teachers from more developed areas. This confirms the questionnaire results: the majority of the respondents (68%) agreed that *'teaching English to both develop students' basic English*

*knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and improve students' all-round human qualities is difficult'* while rural respondents had the highest level of agreement (84%). 14% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. This is a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area especially, rural areas.

The interview results offer some insights into how teachers understand *humanistic values* an important and new emphasis in the curriculum. Of the 18 respondents five teachers (28%) said that the humanistic value of the English course means stimulating students' interest in learning English. For example:

*I think humanistic values such as arousing students' interest are very necessary for learning English. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

*I think 'humanistic value' in The Revised Curriculum (2011) takes students' development and local conditions into consideration. English is a new language. If teachers do not motivate students and arouse their interests, students will not be interested in learning English. After using The Revised Curriculum (2011), students take more interest in English than when using the earlier curriculum. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

Of the 18 respondents, one teacher (6%) said that the humanistic values in the English course meant putting more emphasis on 'speaking'.

*Putting more emphasis on humanistic values is definitely good for students' practical use. Under the previous earlier curriculum, we were so concerned with teaching grammar, doing exercises and 'teaching to the test' that we had little time to dedicate to 'speaking'. But now, The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages learning in happiness and using English in authentic contexts. Under The Revised Curriculum (2011), we have lots of interesting topics for students to have drills in, which can inspire students. So I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on 'humanistic values' but also raises the requirements*

*of teachers and students. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 respondents two teachers (11%) said that the humanistic value of the English course meant emphasising western culture.

*The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts more emphasis on humanistic values, which are reflected in the new textbooks as well. For example, the new textbooks include more references to western culture. I cannot remember anything else. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*The humanistic values include cultural exchanges between Chinese culture and western culture in English teaching. We should pay attention to the differences between Chinese culture and western culture in the English class. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

This comment shows a misunderstanding of ‘humanistic value’. Moreover, the teachers are convinced that teaching humanistic values is challenging.

Of the 18 respondents, one teacher (6%) said that the humanistic value in the English course included putting students at the center of the class.

*The humanistic value includes putting students at the center of the class and paying attention to them. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 respondents, four teachers (22%) said that the humanistic value of English courses includes promoting humanities exchanges (cultural and educational exchanges), emphasising students’ humanistic education and value education. For example:

*The humanistic value in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is very good! For example, in the textbooks, we have humanistic education at the end of each unit, which reflects the ‘humanistic value’ of English course. I think The Revised Curriculum (2011) has made great progress. We did not have istic value in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is very good! (Teacher F from a city)*

*Our school has paid attention to students' humanistic education and value education for very long time. Actually, we have taught students some related knowledge such as social science knowledge almost every lesson. But under the earlier curriculum, we did not teach students so much humanistic knowledge because the textbooks include very limited information about this. But now, the new textbooks include more humanistic knowledge, so we put more emphasis on humanistic education. (Teacher J, from a city)*

*Humanistic values are very necessary. English courses and other subjects all have their humanistic education aspects. We will teach students some of the related humanistic education and value education in class. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

Of the 18 respondents one teacher (6%) said that humanistic values include helping students develop as a whole person and forming students' good character. However, she also complained that The Revised Curriculum (2011) should also pay offer teachers training in the psychology of education:

*Humanistic values include helping the student develop as a whole person and form his/her character. This is good for students. However, after teaching English for more than ten years, I want to complain that, the students nowadays are totally different from those that went before. They are spoiled and do not respect teachers very much. They really need to receive humanistic education and moral education to help them develop the whole person and for good character formation. They are only good at playing on computers now. Also, parents' attitudes are different as well. Teachers are under pressure. If possible, I think it is very necessary to have some training course for teachers in the psychology of education and put more emphasis on teachers' mental health. It seems useless to only raise the demands placed on teachers. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

From the 18 teachers' responses above, it was noted that teachers have very different interpretations of the meaning of 'humanistic value' in The Revised Curriculum (2011).

### **5.8 Progress and continuity**

In the interviews, all 18 respondents were asked: '*what do you consider are the main features of English language learning?*' All of the teachers said that the main features of an English course are steady progress and continuity. For example:

*I think the main features of English course are progress and continuity because students cannot improve their English level in leaps and bounds. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Teacher G's response suggests that teachers understand the features of English course under The Revised Curriculum (2011). When the teachers were asked: '*What do you think about the progress and continuity of the courses?*' All 18 teachers mentioned that learning English means accumulating knowledge. For example:

*English learning is the accumulation of knowledge: letters constitute words, words constitute phrases, and phrases constitute sentences. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

However, Teacher E further complained that, although English learning has features of progress and continuity, the English textbooks they are using in their school are not coherent and the level of difficulty is not developed progressively - they do not show progress and continuity:

*Learning English learning is an accumulation of knowledge. However, I think the design of the English textbooks for pupils are not coherent and do not show a good, gradual, progression for students. The textbooks in primary school are difficult, but the English textbooks in junior middle school start by learning the Alphabet again, which is not reasonable at*

*all. The textbooks for students at grade four in primary school cover the simple present tense, present continuous tense, past indefinite tense and simple future tense. However, the textbooks for junior middle school cover all these tenses again. I think it is meaningless and not coherent at all. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

The interview results show that all the teachers agreed that the main features of an English course are progress and continuity but they see the textbooks as disconnected from each other, which they see as not good for students features of an English course are progress Section 2.10, Chapter Two, English textbooks play a crucial role related to the quality of English language teaching, not least because they are the most important, if not the only, English teaching and learning resource available to many teachers and students (Hu, 2002). Therefore, it could be challenging for English teachers, especially for those who tend to rely on textbooks, maybe or even slavishly, to ensure the progress and continuity of their English teaching if the textbooks do not develop progressively in the way they are used to. The findings from the interviews support the questionnaire results to some extent (see Table 5.2). The questionnaire, items 18, 73, 54, and 44 in Table 5.2 are progress and continuity items, so they are clustered together. Questionnaire respondents had a high degree of agreement with the statement, ‘*English learning has the features of progress and continuity*’ (90%) which is consistent with the interview results. Both questionnaire and interview data suggest that teachers have a good understanding of some features of progress and continuity. However, only 78% teachers agreed with the statement ‘*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English language teaching has the features of progress and continuity*’. Given that this is the very essence of The Revised Curriculum (2011), 78% is a surprisingly low agreement rate. Most questionnaire participants have some understanding of the progress and continuity of English teaching but did not note these are emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from the questionnaire data), this may indicate that teachers are not very familiar with the key concepts in The Revised Curriculum (2011) or have a very narrow



concept of progress.

**Table 5.2 English teachers' responses to questions about progress and continuity**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
18. English learning has features of progress and continuity.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	5 (7)	39 (51)	30 (39)
	Suburb	2 (3)	2 (3)	8 (10)	41 (52)	26 (33)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	44 (61)	24 (33)
	Total	2 (1)	4 (2)	17 (7)	124 (55)	80 (35)
73. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English language teaching should have progress and continuity.	City	2 (3)	0 (0)	15 (20)	50 (66)	9 (12)
	Suburb	2 (3)	2 (3)	15 (19)	38 (48)	22 (28)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (17)	56 (78)	4 (6)
	Total	4 (2)	2 (1)	42 (19)	144 (63)	35 (15)
54. Progress and continuity in English language teaching at different stages can be successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	24 (32)	46 (61)	4 (5)
	Suburb	2 (3)	8 (10)	15 (19)	45 (57)	9 (11)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	32 (44)	32 (44)	0 (0)
	Total	2 (1)	18 (8)	71 (32)	123 (54)	13 (5)
44. Ensuring progress and continuity in English language teaching at different stages is difficult.	City	6 (8)	21 (28)	20 (26)	26 (34)	3 (4)
	Suburb	3 (4)	23 (29)	21 (27)	28 (35)	4 (5)
	Rural	4 (6)	20 (28)	16 (22)	28 (39)	4 (6)
	Total	13 (6)	64 (28)	57 (25)	82 (36)	11 (5)

Moreover, 19% of the questionnaire respondents gave neutral responses to this statement, which could mean they did not understand, or were uncertain or unwilling to comment. Practice choices are not very consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). 59% of the respondents agreed that ‘progress and continuity in English language teaching at different stages is successful in practice’. However, 32% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this, which indicates they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. In particular, rural respondents occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (44%) to this statement. In addition, 41% of them agreed that ‘progress and continuity in English language teaching at different stages is difficult’ while rural respondents occupied the highest proportion of agreement (45%). This is a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area especially rural ones. It seems that ensuring the progress and continuity of English teaching is not yet universally embraced and there is more work to do.

The interview results offer some insight into why some teachers find making sure their English language teaching has progress and continuity difficult. All 18 teachers were asked: *‘do you find ensuring progress and continuity in your English language teaching at different stages difficult, and why?’* Ten respondents (56%) said that they found ensuring the progress and continuity of their English teaching at different stages difficult because language learning is boring and some students are lazy, others give up easily when they face difficulties in learning English. For example:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of English language teaching at different stages is difficult. Some students are lazy and will easily give up trying to learn English when they find some difficulties. We are under ‘exam-orientated education’. If students cannot learn English well, they cannot get high scores in the senior high school entrance examination, so they cannot go to a good high school. English learning really affects students’ futures. However, lots of students do not know the importance of learning English; they are too naughty and do not*

*follow my suggestions. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*Ensuring progress and continuity in English language teaching is difficult because English language learning and accumulation is boring; many students do not have the motivation to learn English and do not want to carry on learning English. Teachers always try to stimulate students' interest in learning English, but it is not realistic to always do this, especially when students are in the higher grades. They cannot improve their scores if they do not have the motivation to learn English. (Teacher N, from a rural area)*

Teacher F further added that, ensuring the progress and continuity of English teaching is more difficult in rural areas because of the students' poor English proficiency levels and the under developed local economy, so they do not have sufficient teaching resources to help their students learn English progressively:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of English language teaching is difficult, especially in rural schools, because rural students' English language proficiency is relatively lower than that of urban students. Also, our teaching conditions are worse, so we can only rely on textbooks. All these factors make it more difficult for rural teachers to ensure progress and continuity. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

Teacher F's response shows that she thinks progress and continuity are closely linked to her students' English proficiency level and local economic conditions. This supports the literature discussed in Section 2.10, Chapter Two that many English teachers tend to rely on textbooks, even slavishly, because textbooks are their main or only teaching resource (Hu, 2002), and this problem could be worse in rural areas because due to their poor economic conditions, teachers there have very limited choices, maybe only the textbooks without help from other resources. Therefore, it could be challenging for teachers, especially those in rural areas, to ensure the progress and continuity of their English teaching if the textbooks are their only resources and are do not developed

progressively.

Six teachers (33%) said that they found it difficult to ensure the progress and continuity of their English teaching at different stages because they do not have a good English language learning environment. Students can only learn English inside the classroom, not in every day life. For example:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of my English language teaching is difficult. Students learn a lot from class but they seldom use English. We do not have a positive English language learning environment for students. Many of the students are too shy to speak out. Very few of students will use English to say hello to teachers. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Teacher L had a very similar opinion to that of Teacher C:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of English language teaching is difficult because we do not have a good English learning environment. Students can use and practice other subjects in their real life (such as Chinese), but students can only learn and use English in the classroom. If students speak English outside the classroom, other students even laugh at them s: 'you are so uppity because you think you have learned English?' So, students become more and more reluctant to practise speaking, and this has narrowed down our English learning environment. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

Teacher P further added that if parents do not know English, this also makes it more difficult to ensure the progress and continuity of English teaching in rural areas:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of English language teaching is difficult because we do not have a good English learning environment and students' parents have never learned English. We only use English*

*in the classroom. When we want to ask parents to read dictations for the students, most of the students said that their parents do not know English. This makes the learning of English more difficult. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

Of the 18 respondents, one (6%) said that she found ensuring the progress and continuity of her English language teaching difficult mainly because the textbooks are not coherent nor develop gradually. So, many students do not carry on learning English in primary school because they know they will learn English from the start when they go to junior middle school, so it seems unnecessary for them to bother to learn in primary school:

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of English language teaching is difficult because textbooks are not coherent and do not develop learning gradually. Many students and parents will think that it is not important to learn English in primary school because students will learn English from the start when they enter junior middle school. However, they ignore the fact that English learning is a process of accumulation. I think the design of the textbooks makes it difficult for teachers to ensure progress and continuity in their English language teaching. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 teachers, two (11%) said that they found it difficult to ensure there was progress and continuity in their English language teaching because students are not interested in learning English and do not want to carry on with it. Only one of the 18 teachers (6%) said that she did not find it difficult to ensure the progress and continuity of her English language teaching because she thought the curriculum and textbooks reflect progress and continuity and she could follow the curriculum and textbooks to teach English without difficulty.

*Ensuring the progress and continuity of my English language teaching is not difficult. We have English courses for primary school (grade*

*three) and middle school, so it is not difficult if we teach students by following the curriculum and textbooks. (Teacher K, from a city)*

Teachers' responses above show that, of the 18 interviewees, 17 (94%) found ensuring the progress and continuity of their English language teaching at different stages difficult. This suggests this is a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area. How to ensure the teaching of English has progress and continuity is not yet universally agreed upon and there is more work to do.

## **5.9 Teaching practices**

The 18 teachers were asked about what changes they had made to their teaching because of the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and what changes they would like to see in their English teaching. Questions were asked related to teachers' 'teaching methods', 'teaching objectives', 'resources', 'target language in class', 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'reflection', 'communication with colleagues' and the 'professional development of teachers'. However, the ways these questions were asked allowed the teachers more freedom to discuss their particular context than the questionnaires did, so that this was a much less structured set of data.

### **5.9.1 Teaching methods**

#### **5.9.1.1 Have the teachers changed their teaching methods?**

The 18 interviewees were asked, '*have you changed your teaching methods?*' Seven teachers (39%) said that they had changed their teaching methods because of the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Those 7 teachers were then asked: '*Why? What were e thee teaching methods you used to use and what are you using now?*'

One said that she had changed her teaching methods because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers should help students experience satisfaction when learning English:

*I have changed my teaching methods because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests English teachers should motivate students and help them experience satisfaction when learning English. Before the adoption of The Revised Curriculum (2011), I was using the grammar-translation teaching method and textbook-based teaching method. Because of the exam-oriented education in China, I put strong emphasis on grammar teaching and practice. Now, I focus on the audio visual approach because The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts stronger emphasis on letting students use English. I usually play some English cartoons and movies to students. Students are very interested in watching these movies and cartoons. For example, I usually play the American TV series 'Family Album U. S. A.' when the content relates to what I want to teach in that lesson. I will let students learn English in a more authentic language-learning context and let them enjoy the satisfaction of learning English, following what The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests. The multi-media resources are very useful in our school. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Section 4.2.2; Section 4.2.5 and Section 4.2.9 in Chapter Four, noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility on the teachers for helping students experience satisfaction learning English in an authentic language-learning context. Teacher A's response suggests she has understood this.

Five teachers (28%) said that they have changed their teaching methods because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers use more communicative activities or because the new textbooks include more communicative activities.

Teacher F said that she had changed her teaching methods from task-based teaching to a more communicative language teaching (CLT) approach because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers to do this, but she also complained that factors such as large class size, limited time for each lesson,

strong emphasis on students' performance, can make it difficult to involve more communicative activities in class teaching:

*I have changed my teaching methods because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests English teachers use more communicative activities to motivate students and let them use English in class. Before using The Revised Curriculum (2011), I only used task-based teaching, but now, sometimes I use communicative teaching methods in class as well. Most of the time, I use less communicative activities because of the pressure to complete all the teaching tasks. We have lots of content to teach, we have lots of students in one class (70 students), also, we only have 45 minutes per lesson. All these factors force me to use less communicative activities such as group work that may take up too much time in class. I feel very pressured because The Revised Curriculum (2011) asked teachers to do many new things such as include more group work and more teaching methods, but the headmaster and parents mainly put their emphasis on students' exam scores. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

Teacher N said that she sometimes uses a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach now because the new textbooks include more activities.

*I have changed my teaching methods from textbook-based teaching without any communicative teaching to involving communicative teaching methods as well because the new textbooks include more communicative activities for students. In order to adapt to the new textbooks, I follow the textbooks to let students take part in the communicative activities to use English. (Teacher N, from a rural)*

Section 4.2.2 and Section 4.2.9 in Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the new textbooks place more responsibility on the teachers for involving more communicative activities in class. The teachers' (above) responses suggest they have understood the importance of using English, though they may still rely mainly on the textbook.



One teacher (6%) said that she had changed her teaching methods because The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers should put more emphasis on humanistic values in the English course.

*I have changed my teaching methods. Before, I only used task-based and textbook-based teaching methods, but now, I will include more humanistic knowledge such as social science in English lessons following what The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests, not just focus on the textbooks. When I am preparing for lessons, I will look for information related to teaching content in order to increase students' knowledge and broaden their horizons. For example, I will tell students a story that explains some knowledge. This sets higher requirements for teachers in our lesson preparation. (Teacher J, from a city)*

Section 4.2.1, Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility on the teachers for helping students enrich their humanistic knowledge in English lesson. Teacher J's response suggests she has understood this.

The interviewees above are not only adopting task-based teaching methods, their responses illustrate the questionnaire data: only 26% of the questionnaire participants agreed that they should '*only adopt task-based teaching methods*' in teaching English while 13% did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. In addition, 26% agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should only adopt task-based teaching method*' while 26% were uncertain, unwilling to comment or did not understand this statement (see Table 5.3.1).

The choices of teaching method are consistent with the choices made due to language learning beliefs and the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Interviewees' responses also showed that they are successful in adopting various kinds of language teaching methods. This supports the questionnaire results (see Table 5.3.2): 62% of the questionnaire participants

agreed that *‘adopting various kinds of language teaching methods is successful in practice’* while 30% did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment.

**Table 5.3.1 English teachers’ responses to questions about teaching methods**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
22. English teachers should only adopt task-based teaching method.	City	8 (11)	33 (43)	11 (14%)	21 (28)	3 (4)
	Suburb	16 (20)	33 (42)	8 (10)	14 (18)	8 (10)
	Rural	87 (11)	40 (56)	12 (17)	12 (17)	0 (0)
	Total	111 (14)	106 (47)	31 (13)	47 (21)	11 (5)
47. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should adopt task-based teaching method only.	City	6 (8)	25 (33)	19 (25)	22 (29)	4 (5)
	Suburb	13 (16)	28 (35)	12 (15)	18 (23)	8 (10)
	Rural	0 (0)	36 (50)	28 (39)	8 (11)	0 (0)
	Total	19 (9)	89 (39)	59 (26)	48 (21)	12 (5)

Of the 18 interviewees 11 teachers said that they had not changed their teaching methods. Those 11 teachers were then asked: *‘Why not? What teaching methods are you using?’*

Five of them said that they had not changed their teaching methods because they do not understand or have not learnt how to follow The Revised Curriculum (2011), so they do not know the requirements about the teaching methods.

**Table 5.3.2 English teachers' responses to questions about teaching methods**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
30. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasise both process and results are successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	4 (5)	19 (25)	47 (62)	5 (7)
	Suburb	1 (1)	5 (6)	20 (25)	48 (61)	5 (6)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	28 (39)	32 (44)	4 (6)
	Total	2 (1)	17 (7)	67 (30)	127 (56)	14 (6)

Also, these 5 teachers mainly teach from the textbook or used task-based teaching and sometimes, using communicative language teaching (CLT). For example:

*I did not change my teaching methods. I did not learn The Revised Curriculum (2011), so I do not know what the requirements are for the suggested teaching methods. I am teaching from the textbook and sometimes, I use a communicative teaching method. I use English to communicate with the good students, who can give a quick response to me using English. However, the students with poor English do not want to learn English. They find it very difficult to learn English and I also feel very pressured having to teach those students. I do not know whether it is because I, the Teacher did not learn The Revised Curriculum (2011) or because the students' English is so poor, we cannot improve the students' scores, as the students are not motivated to learn English. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*I have not changed my teaching methods. I have not learned about The Revised Curriculum (2011), so I do not know what other ways of teaching English there are. I use task-based and communicative*

*teaching methods. I always let students play some games because I think pupils cannot concentrate for too long. Of course, I need to finish all the teaching tasks as well. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

The interviewees' responses above indicate that the teachers probably do not know what the suggested teaching methods are if they have not learned how to use The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teacher C's and Teacher D's responses suggest some teachers do not understand it.

Four of the respondents said that they had not changed their teaching methods because factors such as the exam-oriented education, large class size, limited time for each lesson, make it impossible to change the teaching method they are using. One of those teachers uses task-based teaching methods and sometimes, communicative language teaching methods. Three use task-based and textbook-based teaching methods. For example:

*I am using task-based and textbook-based teaching methods. I have not changed my teaching methods but that does not mean that I do not want to change; it is because there are so many factors preventing me from changing teaching methods. For example, we have lots of students in one class (around 80 students) and have only 45 minutes for each lesson. The most important reason is that we are teaching for the exams. The headmaster requires us to improve the students' scores. So, even though we know other teaching methods are better, we cannot use them because finishing the teaching tasks and improving the students' exam performance are the most important things for teachers. The theories in The Revised Curriculum (2011) are good, but do not take our local situation into consideration, which makes it impossible to implement. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Two of the respondents said that they had not changed their teaching methods because they had been used to the traditional teaching method for more than ten years: textbook-based teaching and sometimes task-based teaching. It is

difficult for those teachers to make any changes in their teaching methods. For example:

*I have not changed my teaching methods because I have been teaching English for more than ten years. It is very difficult for me to change my way of teaching English. I mainly used textbook-based teaching and sometimes task-based teaching. I seldom use communicative language teaching or pupil-centred teaching. (Teacher G, from a city).*

*I have not changed my teaching methods because I have used my way of teaching English for too many years. If I used the new teaching method, I would fall back into using my old way automatically. I teach English using the textbook in order to complete the contents of the textbook. I teach English following what the textbooks write. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

The interviews above show that the teachers, especially those with long teaching experience, might find it difficult to change their fixed teaching methods. The interviewees' responses support the questionnaire results (see Table 5.3.3): 55% of them agreed that 'adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasise both process and results is difficult' while the rural respondents occupied the highest proportion (72%). So, the choices of method are consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). This is clearly a challenging area of teaching in practice, with many teachers feeling they do not achieve the goals identified.

**Table 5.3.3 English teachers' responses to questions about teaching methods**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
79. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasise both process and results is difficult.	City	1 (1)	21 (28)	13 (17)	34 (45)	7 (9)
	Suburb	3 (4)	20 (25)	23 (29)	29 (37)	4 (5)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	16 (22)	44 (61)	8 (11)
	Total	4 (2)	45 (20)	52 (23)	107 (47)	19 (8)

#### 5.9.1.2. Teachers' expected teaching methods

All 18 interviewees were asked, 'what teaching methods do you think are best in English classes?' Seven teachers (39%) said that they thought communicative language teaching (CLT) method is the best for English classes because it can motivate students and give more students satisfaction when learning English.

*I think the communicative teaching method is the best in English classes. But CLT requires the teacher to be very well prepared for the lesson, also, teachers need to have a basic understanding of their students. Only when these requirements are meet, can communicative language teaching methods motivate student; raise their interest in learning English and develop their abilities such as listening ability and speaking ability. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*The best teaching method in English classes should be communicative language teaching. I expect that when students are learning English interactively, they enjoy it. The students have fun and I enjoy communicating with them as well. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Three teachers (17%) said that they thought task-based teaching methods are best in English classes because they can improve the students' scores in the exams. For example:

*The best teaching method in English classes is task-based teaching. When we have oral practice in class, I do not know whether it is because I did not motivate them or for other reasons, but students are not very keen on having e conversations, so, I mainly use task-based teaching, and try to finish each task in class. I teach students the knowledge points, vocabulary, reading and sometimes listening. We do not have much oral practice because we are teaching for the exams. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*The best teaching method in English classes is task-based teaching because I think this is a better way to improve the students' exams scores than the communicative teaching method. We have exam-oriented education. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

The interviews above showed that the teachers found it difficult to use communicative activities because students have little motivation to participate, and they do not see the link between improving the students' communicative competence and their exam performance.

Three teachers (17%) said that they think textbook-based teaching is the best for English classes because they think the exams test what students learn from textbooks, and exams are what concern them the most. For example:

*The best teaching method in English classes is textbook-based teaching because we are teaching for the exams. If students learn the textbooks well, they can achieve high scores in the exams. (Teacher L, from a city)*

Of the 18 teachers, three (17%) said that they thought a combination of task-based teaching and communicative language teaching is the best way to

motivate the students and improve their performance in the English classes. For example:

*The best teaching methods for English classes are task-based and communicative language teaching. I think we should involve more communicative activities because we cannot complete tasks if we do not communicate with students. By using these two teaching methods, we can motivate students and improve their performance at the same time. (Teacher J, from a city)*

*Communicative language teaching methods are important for motivating students; also, we need to have task-based teaching in order to improve the students' exam performance. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Two teachers (11%) said that they thought student-centred teaching is best for English classes (MOE, 2011, p 12). This approach is, literally translated, 'sentiment-emotion approach', which means an approach to teaching which emphasises motivating and inspiring students, satisfying students' emotional needs, and promoting students' active involvement in English learning. In this thesis I use the term 'student-centred' to express the meaning of the Chinese term, although it is not a literal translation.

*The best teaching method in the English class is pupil-centred teaching. The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests pupil-centred teaching as a good way of teaching English, because it focuses on motivating and inspiring students and satisfying their emotional needs, and getting students actively involved in the English learning process. I think traditional teaching methods - textbook-based teaching - makes teachers very tired and students feel very bored, so, although I have not changed my teaching method yet, I think it is necessary to change my teaching. (Teacher G, from a city)*

*I think the best teaching method in English classes is pupil-centred*



*teaching. Pupil-centred teaching puts emphasis on motivating and inspiring students. I always use some teaching tools and small prizes to stimulate pupils' interest in learning English, and inspiring them to be actively involved in the learning. By using pupil-centred teaching, I always communicate with the students and inspire them. When students do something right or have made progress, timely praise and encouragement is given so that the children can know the value of their existence, improve their self-confidence, and they will enjoy the satisfaction of learning English and be motivated to learn English. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

Section 4.2.2, Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility on the teachers for concentrating on the students' well-being while teaching. The teachers' responses above suggest they have understood the importance of paying attention to students' feelings and inspiring them to want to learn English.

All 18 interviewees were asked: '*Are you teaching in the way you expected to?*' Nine teachers (50%) said they are not teaching in the way they expected to. Then they were asked: '*If no, what factors (external or internal) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?*' Eight said the 'exam-oriented education' prevented them from teaching the way they would like to teach. They are teaching to help students get high marks in exams. Of these eight teachers, three teachers thought that 'exam-oriented education' and 'limited time for English lesson' were the factors preventing them from teaching the way they would like to teach. Take teacher I's opinion as an example:

*Although I said that the communicative language teaching method is the best in English class, CLT cannot ensure students get high marks in exams. I am a new teacher. When The Revised Curriculum (2011) was introduced, I really tried to follow what The Revised Curriculum (2011) asked me to do. I designed and organised some communicative activities to make the class more colourful and enjoyable. But this*

*really consumes lots of time. We have lots of content to teach, but very limited time in the classroom, so it is difficult for us to finish all the teaching tasks, so we do not have enough time left for communicative activities. We must use our limited time to ensure students learn all the content and get high scores in the exams. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Five teachers complained that exam-oriented education and the pressure from their head teacher and students' parents prevented them from teaching the way they would like to teach. For example:

*CLT is the teaching method I expected. I like teaching students in the lower grades such as Grade Three because students in that grade like me, I have communicative activities with them, and they enjoy learning English a lot. However, the more advanced the students, the more they dislike the teachers, the more pressure teachers feel, the higher the requirements and anxiety. The students' exam scores are what concern headteachers and parents most. If we cannot help students get high marks, the headteacher will blame us. I do not want too much pressure, so I must ensure the students get high marks in the exams. This is the reality, which is so different from what was expected. Sometimes we are very confused, the Ministry of Education sets so many guidelines and suggestions that seem impossible for our school with our existing conditions to implement. We do not know how to teach. Parents are only concerned about their children's exam performance; they do not care about the curriculum change. Compared with the past, we have more rural students in our school. When we cannot ensure students get high scores, the parents blame the teachers. We really feel pressured. Curriculum change is rarely practical if it does not fit with the exam-oriented education (Teacher E, from a suburb).*

The interviews above show that the 'exam-oriented education' and the limited time for lesson and high expectations from both headteachers and parents, put great pressure on teachers, which make teachers find it very difficult to adopt

the suggested teaching methods in The Revised Curriculum (2011).

One teacher said that she is not teaching in the way she is expected to because she has been used to textbook-based teaching for a long time, so it is difficult to change her teaching habits.

*Although I think pupil-centred teaching is best, I am not teaching in the way I expected because I have been used to my old way of teaching English based on the textbooks for a long time. It really needs a long process to change my habits. (Teacher G, from a city)*

The other nine teachers (50%) said they teach in the way they expected to. They were asked: ‘*If yes, why?*’ Four of them said that CLT or pupil-centred teaching is how they expected to teach and what they are using now because they believe these two approaches can motivate and inspire students and arouse their interest in learning English. For example:

*I am using CLT and think this is the best teaching method because I think pupils like playing games and communicative activities. They cannot focus their attention on listening to the teacher for too long. Only by doing this are pupils motivated to learn English. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

*I am using CLT and think this is the best teaching method. Without communicating with their students successfully, they cannot finish their tasks successfully. (Teacher J, from a city)*

*I mainly use CLT and think this is the best teaching method. I have certain teaching tasks, but I will put more emphasis on communicating with the students. I think it is meaningless to make the teacher the center of the class. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Three respondents said that textbook-based teaching is what they expected and

what they are using now because they believe this approach can ensure the students get high marks in exams. For example:

*I am using textbook-based teaching and think this is the best teaching method because it can ensure students get high scores in the exams, which is what we are most concerned about. Textbooks have most of the content that will be appearing in the exams. If students learn the textbook well, they can get high scores. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

The interviews above show that some teachers rely a great deal on textbooks, because they believe that understanding textbooks can ensure students get high scores.

Two teachers said that task-based teaching is what they expected and what they are using now because they believe this approach can ensure students get high scores in the exams. For example:

*I am using task-based teaching methods and think this is the best teaching method because it can help students learn English through finishing all the tasks, so students can get high scores in the exams. (Teacher R, from a suburb)*

### **5.9.1.3 How many teaching methods do teachers know?**

All 18 interviewees were asked: ‘*how many teaching methods do you know? Could you give some examples?*’

Seventeen teachers knew about the CLT approach, which emphasises communication with and between students and designing communicative activities to let students practice speaking.

Fifteen mentioned task-based teaching, which mainly helps students learn English through finishing each task.

Seven mentioned textbook-based teaching method, which heavily relies on the

textbooks, teaching mainly or exclusively what the textbook says.

Two mentioned lecture-based teaching, which regards the teacher as the center and the teacher spoon-feeds the students, and students only listens to what the teacher tells them.

Two referred to pupil-centred teaching, which emphasises motivating and inspiring students and satisfying students' emotional needs, and promoting their active involvement in English learning.

Two mentioned the grammar-translation approach, which focuses on grammatical explanations and translation to teach English. One knew about the audio visual approach, which combines visual and audio materials for use in language teaching, to develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing, for example, learning English through movies, TV or the Internet.

## **5.9.2 Teaching objectives**

### **5.9.2.1 How do teachers set teaching objectives?**

All 18 interviewees were asked, '*how do you set your teaching objectives?*' 11 teachers (61%) said that they mainly considered how to improve the students' exam performance when they set their teaching objectives. To teach all the students the textbook contents as much as possible is their main objective rather than taking students' actual situations into consideration. This may be because in many schools, teachers are assessed mainly based on their students' achievement. For example:

*To be honest, I set teaching objectives based on how to improve students' scores. This is the primary principle for me because the assessment of teachers in our school each semester is mainly based on student achievement, I mean, their exam performance, So this forces teachers to primarily focus on teaching all the students the textbook contents as much as possible, the more students remember from the textbooks, the higher the scores they get in the exams. This is what I*

*consider most rather than the students' individual situations. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Teacher L and Teacher R also agreed that they set teaching objectives based on students' scores. In addition, they complained that rural students face more difficulty in improving their scores.

*To tell you the truth, the assessment of teachers in our school is based on students' exam performance. Even though The Revised Curriculum (2011) points out so many new things, in the end, the criterion for judging a school is based on the students' senior high school entrance examination scores. So we primarily focus on how to let students obtain as much knowledge as possible in order to let them get high scores in the exams. What makes our school have difficulty in improving scores is that we are a rural school, rural students' language ability and achievement are much lower than students in city area. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

*I want to consider how to improve all the students' English language ability when I set students' objectives. However, the actual situation is that, our school judges teachers according to our students' achievement, so we set teaching objectives based on how to improve our students' exam performance because we feel pressurised. In other words, students' scores are our teaching objective, consequently, we want to teach the textbook in as much detail as we can to help the students get high scores. However, rural students' English proficiency is not as good as students in urban area; it is difficult for students here to get as high scores as urban students do. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

The Revised Curriculum (2011) exists to broaden the learning of English. Therefore it is not right to evaluate teachers solely based on students' exam success, as it only assesses a narrow range of skills and does not consider how students use English.

These interviews cast some doubt on the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire results (see Table 5.4.1) showed that the majority of the questionnaire participants (88%) agreed that *‘The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’ language proficiency’*. This may be because that they know these are emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not know what it means.

**Table 5.4.1 English teachers’ responses to questions about teaching objectives**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
19. English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’ language proficiency.	City	0 (0)	3 (4)	6 (8)	29 (38)	38 (50)
	Suburb	4 (5)	6 (8)	1 (1)	36 (46)	32 (41)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	40 (56)	28 (39)
	Total	4 (2)	9 (4)	11 (5)	105 (46)	98 (43)
40. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’ language proficiency.	City	1 (1)	1 (1)	8 (11)	46 (61)	33 (26)
	Suburb	4 (5)	2 (3)	9 (11)	45 (57)	19 (24)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	60 (83)	8 (11)
	Total	5 (2)	3 (1)	21 (9)	151 (67)	60 (21)

Furthermore, 89% of the questionnaire participants agreed that it is necessary to *‘set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’ language proficiency’*. This may be because that they know these are emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from the questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not know what it means.

The interviews results also show that some teachers are so concerned with improving students' exam performance when they set objectives, in particular, Teacher L and Teacher Q from rural areas claimed that they found it more difficult to improve students' scores and achieve their teaching objective because they think rural students' English language proficiency is lower than that of urban students. Section 4.2.3 and Section 4.2.4 in Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests that 'schools in different areas (urban area, suburbs and rural areas) should have different expectations in English language teaching according to local situations' (MOE, 2011, p 7). However, the teachers' (above) responses suggest that they only see this as rural students needing more exam-focused teaching because their English levels are lower.

In the interviews, six of the teachers (33%) mentioned that they have different expectations in English language teaching according to different students' English level. For example:

*I set different students' objectives and different teaching tasks according to students' actual English language level. I have higher expectations and more complicated tasks for students with good language ability. For those students with poor achievement in their exams, I have lower expectations and easier tasks for them. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Sharing some common points with Teacher A, Teacher K think that it is necessary to have different expectations in English language teaching according to students' different language levels, while it is also important to consider how to improve students' scores as well.

*We are under an 'exam-oriented education' system, the assessment of teachers is also based on students' achievement, so, how we can improve students' scores is one thing we need to consider when we set teaching objectives. It is necessary to set different students' objectives and design different teaching tasks according to students' actual*



*English language level. I have higher expectations and more complicated tasks for students with good language ability. For those students with low scores in their exams, I have lower expectations and easier tasks for them. (Teacher N, from a rural)*

Teacher A's and Teacher K's responses suggest that they understand that teachers should have different expectations in English language teaching according to students' different situations, which means seeing the students as individuals.

Four of the teachers (22%) mentioned that they will take students' interests into consideration when they set teaching objectives, especially for students in the lower grades (grades 3 to 4) and just starting to learn English.

*I mainly consider two factors when I set teaching objectives. One is students' interest and another factor is students' exam performance. Students in grades 3 and grade 4 and just starting to learn English (English courses start from grade 3), will play games in order to stimulate their motivation to learn English. For older students (from grades 5 to 9), I mainly consider their exam performance and sometimes their interests when I set teaching objectives. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

*For younger students in grades 3 and 4 (English courses starts from grade 3), I mainly consider their interests. For older students (from grades 5 to 9), I consider their exam performance based on their interests when I set teaching objectives. (Teacher I, from a city)*

*I mainly consider pupils' interests when I am setting teaching objectives. (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

The Revised Curriculum (2011) clearly states that: 'the teaching objective for an English course should let students experience the satisfaction of learning English. Teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to students'

actual situations. In particular, for students in primary school, teachers should pay strong attention to cultivate students' interest in learning English, cultivate a positive learning attitude, good learning habits and the ability to use language creatively' (MOE, 2011, p 26). The teachers' responses above suggest that they understand this, although improving their students' exam performance is also very important when setting teaching objectives.

Three of the teachers (17%) mentioned that they set one teaching objective for all the students and disregarded individual's differences. Only when they have finished all their target teaching content will teachers end the lesson. For example:

*I set only one teaching objective for the whole class but the worse students (students with poor English) can never reach the target. I do not know what else I can do. It is necessary to set a teaching objective for each lesson, so I finish all the target content by the end of the class. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*I set only one teaching objective for the whole class. I usually set the teaching objective based on the average students' (students who at the middle level of the class) English proficiency. (Teacher J, from a city)*

The teachers' responses above suggest that some teachers do not understand or find difficult to set different expectations in English language teaching based on students' different language levels, the reasons will be discussed in the next section.

#### **5.9.2.2. Do teachers find setting teaching objective difficult?**

All the 18 respondents were asked: '*Do you find setting teaching objective difficult, if so, why?*'

Eleven teachers (61%) said they found it difficult to set teaching objectives

because they needed to consider many factors. Generally, these teachers set only one teaching objective based on students at the middle level of the class. However, they complained that while it was easy for students with good English to achieve the teaching objectives, it might be too difficult for students with poor English to achieve the same teaching objectives. For example:

*It is difficult to set one teaching objective for the whole class. I should consider many factors when I set the target. There are too many students in the class (around 70 students) and most have a mid-class level of English. So, normally, I set the teaching objectives based on these mid-level students, but the problem is, the good students find the lesson too easy, while students with poor English proficiency may find it too difficult. Basically, the main purpose is to improve most of the students' exam performances. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

*It is very difficult to set one teaching objective for the whole class. Good students find it easy to achieve, students with poor English proficiency find it too difficult to achieve. I teach grade 3 pupils, when the students begin to learn English. However, the students have different English levels even though they have just begun learning English. I found the students with lower English levels are not good at any subjects, which suggests that they may have some kind of learning disorders and/or bad learning habits. So, I do not have any solutions. It is really difficult for me to set one teaching objective for all the students. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Section 4.2.3 and Section 4.2.4 in Chapter Four noted that The Revised Curriculum (2011) places more responsibility on the teachers for setting different teaching objectives for their English language teaching according to actual situations. Teacher E's and Teacher L's responses suggest they did not understand how to put this in place.

Four teachers (22%) said that they thought it was not difficult to set teaching

objectives because they set different teaching objectives for students of different levels of ability. For example:

*I think it is not difficult to set a teaching objective. I treat students of different levels differently. Those students who study harder can master the knowledge better. Lazy students internalize less knowledge. However, we cannot give up on those students with poor English. I will set easier teaching objectives and design easier tasks for these students with lower English ability. In the same way, I set more difficult teaching objectives and tasks for students with higher English levels. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Two teachers (11%) said that they thought it was not difficult for them to set teaching objectives because improving the students' exam performance was their main teaching objective, so they just wanted to teach more content to the students to help them get higher marks in exams. For example:

*It is not difficult to set teaching objectives. I do not consider many factors; instead, I mainly consider how to improve the students' exam performance. So, normally, I set the teaching objective to consider what score the students should achieve and how many units I need to teach over a certain period of time. This is not difficult for me. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

*It is not difficult to set teaching objectives. I mainly consider how to improve the students' exam performance, so I set the teaching objectives to reflect the score the students should achieve. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Only one teacher (6%) said that she thought it was not difficult to set teaching objectives because stimulating students' interest in learning English is her main teaching objective.

*I think it is not difficult to set a teaching objective. My main purpose is to stimulate all the pupils' interest in learning English, so I design different activities so students at all levels get involved. (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

**Table 5.4.2 English teachers' responses to questions about teaching objectives**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
55. Setting realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	7 (9)	21 (28)	42 (55)	6 (8)
	Suburb	4 (5)	4 (5)	26 (33)	37 (47)	8 (10)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	12 (17)	52 (72)	0 (0)
	Total	4 (2)	19 (8)	59 (26)	131 (58)	14 (6)
76. Setting realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is difficult.	City	1 (1)	21 (28)	8 (11)	39 (51)	7 (9)
	Suburb	5 (6)	16 (20)	21 (27)	30 (38)	7 (9)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	4 (6)	48 (67)	8 (11)
	Total	6 (2)	49 (22)	33 (14)	117 (52)	22 (10)

The interview findings illustrate the questionnaire results (see Table 5.4.2), only 64% of the teachers agreed that they were successful in 'setting realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency' (26% neither agreed nor disagreed). Furthermore, 62% of the teachers agreed that they faced difficulties in 'setting realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency', in particular, rural respondents had the highest proportion of

agreement (78%) which shows that rural teachers find this more challenging and difficult. So, the choices in practice are not very consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

Both questionnaire and interview data indicate that most of the respondents found it difficult to set teaching objectives. According to the interview results, large class sizes, lack of understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and pressure from the exams can make it difficult for teachers to set appropriate teaching objectives. This is clearly a challenging area of practice for teachers.

### **5.9.3 Teaching resources**

In the interviews, all 18 interviewees were asked, *'have you changed your resources at all?'* Eight teachers said that they had changed their teaching resources after the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Of the eight teachers, six are from city schools, one is from a suburban and one from a rural school. The eight teachers were then asked: *'What are the factors did you consider when planning your resources before and now? Why?'* All 18 teachers mentioned that they took 'students' interests' into consideration when they were planning resources before; three of the eight teachers mentioned they considered 'whether the resources were available to get hold of', and seven of the eight mentioned they took 'whether the resources were related to the textbook' into consideration when they were planning resources before using The Revised Curriculum (2011). After using The Revised Curriculum (2011), those 8 teachers stated that they now consider more factors such as whether the resources can contribute to good classroom teaching (two of the eight); whether the resources can stimulate the students' interest (all eight); whether the resources are easy for students to understand (two of the eight); whether the resources linked to the textbooks and the lesson content (four of the eight); and whether the resources are more vivid and stimulating (five of the eight). Then, the eight teachers were asked: *'Do you use the new textbooks? What else?'* Of these eight teachers, all are using the new textbooks and multi-media resources.

Teachers from urban schools have multi-media equipment in every classroom, and many of them are using multi-media to teach every lesson, which make the class more lively and interesting for students. For example:

*I have changed the teaching resources I use. Before, I mainly used the textbooks and I always drew pictures on the blackboard to help students understand words when I was teaching vocabulary. Before, the factors I considered when I was planning my resources included whether the resources could stimulate the students' interest, whether they related to the textbook and whether the resources were available to get hold of. After using The Revised Curriculum (2011), I put more emphasis on stimulating students' interests. Now we have multi-media equipment and computers in every classroom. We normally use multi-media equipment every lesson, which includes the content from the new textbooks. The multi-media resources are more lively and stimulating. Students are more interested in this resource. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I have changed the teaching resources I use. Before, I mainly used the textbooks and online resources. The factors I considered when I was planning my resources included whether the resources would interest the students and whether the resources were available from the internet because I needed to download the online resources and bring them to class. After using The Revised Curriculum (2011), I mainly consider whether the resources can interest the students. Now we have TV sets and computers in every classroom, the equipment is much better than before. I do not need to download resources at home and bring them to school. We normally use multi-media equipment to teach English every lesson. The multi-media resources are very convenient now and students like this way of teaching. (Teacher K, from a city)*

Teacher E from a suburban school mentioned that multi-media equipment is available in every classroom, and she uses the new textbooks and sometimes the multi-media resources to teach English:

*I have changed the teaching resources I use. Before, I mainly used the textbooks and online resources. The factors I considered when I was planning my resources included whether the resources would interest the students. After using The Revised Curriculum (2011), I mainly consider whether the resources can interest the students and whether the resources link to the textbook and lesson content. Now we have multi-media equipment and computer in every classroom, I use the new textbooks and sometimes the multi-media resources to supplement them. I use the updated online resources and courseware which support The Revised Curriculum (2011). (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

However, Teacher N from a rural school has a very different experience from urban and suburban teachers. Teacher N said her school had only one multi-media room, which cannot be accessed by every class for every lesson:

*I have changed the teaching resources I use a little. Before, I only used the textbooks because we do not have multi-media resources in our rural school. Since The Revised Curriculum (2011) came into use, we have one public-use multi-media room now. The multi-media resources can stimulate students' interest because they are more lively and colourful. But there are many classes in our school, so we do not have many opportunities to use the multi-media room. So, we mainly use textbooks and sometimes we use multi-media resources. (Teacher N, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses above show that the teachers in city schools use multi-media resources, which include some associated with the textbook content, as the main resource for teaching English. Multi-media equipment availability has improved and has been available in almost every classroom in many urban schools since the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teachers from suburban schools tend to regard multi-media as supplementary resources to support textbooks. However, teachers from rural schools have changed their resource use a little. They still rely on textbooks while



multi-media resources are still not very accessible for them.

Of the 18 teachers, ten said that they have not changed their teaching resources. Those 10 teachers were then asked: ‘*why not?*’

Eight of the ten teachers (five from rural schools, three from suburban schools) said that their schools lack multi-media resources, so they mainly use textbooks (all of them mentioned this), sometimes audio tapes (two of the eight), downloaded online resources (one of the eight) and self-designed pictures (two of the eight). For example, Teacher B from a suburban school said:

*I have not changed the teaching resources I use. We have only two public-use multi-media rooms, we do not have any computers or TV in the classrooms. We only use the multi-media room when we have an open class (demonstration lesson). We do not have good conditions like some urban schools. I think this is what we call ‘regional differences’. So, I rely on textbooks, audio tapes and sometimes I download some online resources related to the textbook content. I plan the resources for the whole class. We have large class sizes (around 70 students), so I cannot take every student’s differences into consideration, it is not realistic. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

All the teachers from the rural schools claimed that they suffered from insufficient resources. This may be because of their relatively poor economic situation compared with urban schools. For example:

*I have not changed the teaching resources I use. Our school is a good school in a rural area. We have one multi-media room but we only use it when we have an open class. Also, we have audio tapes for listening resources. However, the resources our school can provide are fewer and not as good as the resources in urban schools. Our school cannot provide as many expensive multi-media resources for us. (Teacher L,*

*from a rural)*

*I have not changed the teaching resources I use. I also use some pictures made by myself to stimulate the students' interest. Multi-media resources are definitely an effective way of teaching English. Students like this way of teaching English because it is lively and attractive. Teachers feel more relaxed when we use multi-media resources. However, we do not have multi-media resources in our classrooms. We only have one multi-media room which is far more from sufficient because we have so many classes in our school. We do not have good enough conditions to use multi-media resources. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

*I have not changed the teaching resources I use. We do not even have multi-media resources. We only have one multi-media room in our school and we seldom use it because it is not easy for so many classes to arrange a timetable of use, so, we strongly rely on textbooks. We do not have good enough teaching conditions to use multi-media resources. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

A common lack of pedagogical competence and the need to improve their own English proficiency were expressed by Teacher N and Teacher O from rural areas due to their limited formal training, for example, as Teacher O said,

*I graduated from \*\* normal University, but I had no pedagogical training only theoretical teaching and a methodology course in my undergraduate years, but it was not practical at all. I want to use the textbook creatively and plan different authentic teaching resources suitable for students but I do not know the right way to go about this and I do not know how to do this and keep good control of the class. I want to make the classroom more communicative and use activities such as group work but my English proficiency and organising ability are not good enough. (Teacher O)*

It seems that using different kinds of resources and sometimes without textbooks in their hands is challenging, and sets high requirements for teachers' pedagogical competence and English proficiency.

The teachers' responses showed that those from rural schools (above) might find it more difficult to use different resources, especially multi-media resources, because of their schools' poorer economic resources compared with urban and suburban schools. This may force rural teachers to mainly rely on the textbook as a resource, even though some have noticed the advantages of using multi-media resources.

One teacher (10%) said that she does not feel it is necessary to change her teaching resources.

*I have not changed my teaching resources. We have two multi-media rooms in our school and we sometimes use them when necessary. We have a TV set in every classroom, so we can bring a laptop into class and connected it to the TV set if we need to show students some online resources. I do not think it is necessary to change the teaching resources I use. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

One teacher (10%) said that she thought classroom teaching based on the textbook could achieve better teaching outcomes than using multi-media resources.

*I have not changed my teaching resources. We have two multi-media rooms in our school but we seldom use them. We normally use textbooks and audio tapes as teaching resources. I have observed that other teachers use multi-media resources to teach their students English. I found that many students in that class did not concentrate at all. They were just having fun there. Multi-media resources have their*

*advantages: lively and impressive. However, students especially in primary and junior middle schools are very naughty. They just play and cannot focus on acquiring knowledge, so, I prefer classroom teaching which relies on textbooks, I think students then concentrate better. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

The teachers' responses above show that the resources used by urban, suburban and rural schools are very different. Multi-media resources are more widely used and developed in urban schools while in rural schools, they are still very scarce and there is more reliance on textbooks. However, none of those 18 teachers planned different resources for different students as The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests, mentioning this might because of the large class sizes, time-consuming preparation, lack of research ability to plan different resources, and lack of English proficiency and pedagogical competence to use different resources in class, which made it unrealistic to plan different resources suggested by The Revised Curriculum (2011). For example, Teacher B said she enjoyed looking for authentic Internet resources to present the teaching content in innovative ways but found it stressful as well as time-consuming to adapt them so that they could be suitable for her students' level. Teacher B said:

*I like searching for resources online but it takes me lots of time and energy to adapt them to suit my students. I always constantly have to figure out how to plan resources to suit different students' different levels. However, how to plan different resources for different students is very difficult with only a short amount of time to prepare classes. I don't feel like a teacher with good enough research skills to ensure the materials are suitable, or that I have the ability to use these resources properly in my teaching. I cannot do these things well but those aspects are not necessarily within my control anyway. It is still impossible for us to plan different resources for different students. We have more than 70 students in one classroom. It is unrealistic to prepare different resources for these students with different English ability levels.*

*(Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*I constantly have to figure out how to plan resources to suit the students' different levels of ability. However, how to plan different resources for different students is very difficult with only a short amount of time for preparation. I don't feel like a teacher with the ability to do research to ensure the materials are suitable, or have the ability to use such resources properly in my teaching. I cannot do these things well but they are not necessarily in my control anyway (Teacher K, from a city)*

Some teachers said if they could use some core content as a foundation and then adapt it to meet the different needs of the students, which would be helpful but qualified this by saying any core teaching content would require extensive research to ensure the teaching content created was suitable both in terms of language level and of content. For example, Teacher A said:

*It requires lots of time and energy to plan different resources and to teach in class with so many students. I do not think I can figure this out. So, basically, I prepare resources based on the students in the middle in terms of ability, and adapting the materials for different students would cost me lots of time and energy, I also do not have the ability to do such extensive research. As a result, I do not adapt the teaching materials to suit different students. I ask the good students to search for additional teaching resources such as magazines for their independent learning. (Teacher A, from a city)*

These interviews show that none of the 18 interviewees plan different resources for different students, as suggested by The Revised Curriculum (2011), due to the large class sizes, it being time-consuming, teachers' lack of research ability to plan different resources, and teachers' lack of English proficiency and pedagogical competence to use different resources at the same time in class.

**Table 5.5 English teachers' responses to questions about teaching resources**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
25. English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.	City	0 (0)	4 (5)	5 (7)	36 (47)	31 (41)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	5 (6)	45 (57)	24 (32)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	8 (11)	40 (56)	20 (28)
	Total	4 (2)	8 (4)	18 (8)	85 (53)	75 (33)
60. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.	City	0 (0)	1 (1)	10 (13)	54 (71)	11 (14)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	12 (15)	44 (56)	18 (24)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	60 (83)	4 (6)
	Total	4 (2)	1 (0)	30 (13)	158 (70)	33 (15)
57. Planning different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	7 (9)	24 (32)	39 (51)	5 (7)
	Suburb	6 (8)	10 (13)	22 (28)	34 (43)	7 (9)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	32 (44)	28 (39)	4 (6)
	Total	7 (3)	25 (11)	78 (35)	101 (44)	16 (7)
69. Planning different resources and teaching methods to suit different students' situation is difficult.	City	0 (0)	16 (21)	13 (17)	41 (54)	6 (8)
	Suburb	6 (8)	15 (19)	11 (14)	33 (42)	14 (18)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	8 (11)	44 (61)	4 (6)
	Total	6 (3)	43 (6)	32 (33)	118 (55)	24 (3)

However, the questionnaire results (see Table 5.5) show that 86% agreed that teachers should '*plan different resources and teaching methods according to*

*students' different situations'*. In terms of teachers' understandings of The Revised Curriculum (2011) given in the questionnaire, 85% of the questionnaire respondents agreed that *'The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests teachers plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations'*. The results from the interviews are rather more complex than the questionnaire responses and present a rather different picture. This may be because that the teachers know different resources and methods for different students is emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not know how to put it into practice. The choices of practice are not very consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Only 51% of the questionnaire respondents agreed that they were successful in *'planning different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations'*. 35% of them gave neutral responses to this statement, while rural respondents occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (44%). In addition, 58% of them agreed that *'planning different resources and teaching methods to suit different students' situation is difficult'* while rural respondents had the highest proportion (67%). 33% of them gave neutral responses to this statement. It seems that planning different resources for different students is not yet universally accepted or a realistic possibility given teaching background, and there is more work to do. This is a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area, but especially those from rural schools.

#### **5.9.4. Target language in the English class**

In this section of the questionnaire, Items 16, 37, 42 and 75 in Table 5.6 are target language items, so are clustered together.

As shown in Table 5.6, the participants from all areas (city, suburb and rural) shared similar responses to the target language questions in the questionnaire. The responses showed high levels of agreement. However, there were also lots of neutral responses, which indicates respondents were either uncertain,

unwilling to comment or did not understand the item in the questionnaire.

**Table 5.6 English teachers' responses to questions about target language**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
16. Teachers should use target language most of the time in English class.	City	0 (0)	9 (12)	10 (13)	34 (45)	20 (26)
	Suburb	2 (3)	4 (5)	13 (16)	42 (53)	18 (23)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	24 (33)	28 (39)	12 (17)
	Total	2 (1)	21 (10)	68 (21)	104 (46)	50 (22)
37. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises teachers using target language most of the time in English class.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	9 (12)	55 (73)	9 (12)
	Suburb	4 (5)	3 (4)	14 (18)	42 (53)	16 (20)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	16 (22)	44 (61)	0 (0)
	Total	4 (2)	17 (8)	39 (17)	141 (62)	25 (11)
42. Using target language most of the time in English class is successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	10 (13)	23 (30)	38 (50)	5 (7)
	Suburb	9 (11)	12 (15)	29 (37)	23 (29)	6 (8)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	20 (28)	36 (50)	4 (6)
	Total	9 (3)	34 (15)	72 (32)	97 (43)	15 (7)
75. Using target language most of the time in your teaching practice is difficult.	City	4 (5)	14 (18)	19 (25)	31 (41)	8 (11)
	Suburb	4 (5)	14 (18)	20 (25)	32 (41)	9 (11)
	Rural	0 (0)	16 (22)	16 (22)	36 (50)	4 (6)
	Total	8 (3)	44 (20)	55 (24)	99 (44)	21 (9)

The questionnaire results showed teachers' mixed attitudes towards target language use in English class (item 16) and the responses were much more



varied than for other items. 68% of them agreed with '*Teachers should use the target language most of the time in the English class*' and nearly half of the rural teachers (56%) agreed with this statement. 21% of respondents give neutral responses, suggesting lack of understanding, uncertainty or unwillingness to comment. In particular, teachers from rural schools occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (33%). This suggests a real difference between the views and levels of certainty between rural and urban and suburban teachers.

In terms of teachers' understandings of The Revised Curriculum (2011) according to their responses in the questionnaire, they had mixed attitudes towards the requirement of using the target language in English classes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (item 37). Only 67% of the teachers agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises teachers use of the target language most of the time in English classes*' showed that not all teachers had noticed the change in emphasis about target language use in The Revised Curriculum (2011). This was more obvious from rural teachers' responses, with only 61% agreeing with this statement. 22% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed about the target language use in The Revised Curriculum (2011) while rural respondents occupied the highest proportion of neutral responses (22%). Given that this is the very essence of The Revised Curriculum (2011), 67% is a surprisingly low agreement rate.

The choices of practice are consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Data from the questionnaires also revealed teachers' mixed attitudes towards target language use in their teaching (item 75). 50% indicated that '*using the target language most of the time in English class is successful in practice*' and 32% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Target language use is clearly a challenging area of practice, with many teachers feeling they do not achieve this, especially rural teachers.

Data from the questionnaires also showed teachers' mixed attitudes towards the difficulty of using the target language (item 42). 53% chose '*using the target language most of the time in your teaching practice is difficult*' and again, the rural teachers occupied the highest proportion (56%). This is clearly a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area, but especially from rural schools. This was further examined in the interviews.

All 18 interviewees were asked, '*have you changed the language used in the English class?*' Surprisingly, none of the 18 teachers had changed the language used in the English class. They were then asked: '*Why not? What language you are using now?*'

Seven of the teachers (39%), five from urban schools, one from a suburban and two from rural schools said that they used the target language most of the time and teachers regarded their use of mother tongue as acceptable. This means teachers use Chinese) to explain if students cannot understand in English. Those teachers said that they do not need to change because they have been using the target language in class for a long time and students were used to it. They did not think it was necessary for them to change. For example:

*I use the target language in the English class most of the time. I mainly use the English language in the classroom and I use English to teach English as much as possible because I think English teachers should teach English in the English language to help students become familiar with English. I use Mandarin to explain the content when we are learning in the 'reading' section. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I always use the target language as much as possible. If students cannot understand, I will use mandarin to explain to them. Using English to teach students English can help students improve their listening ability as well. (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

*I teach English through the English language and I think this helps to cultivate a positive English learning environment for students. If students cannot understand, I will use Chinese to help them understand what I mean. (Teacher I, from a city)*

*I have not changed the language used in the English class. I teach English in the English language. This helps students get more familiar with English. I will use Mandarin to explain when I am teaching grammar. (Teacher K, from a city)*

*I have not changed the language I use in the English class. I normally use English to teach English. If the students cannot understand some difficult sentences, I will use Chinese (mandarin) to explain them to them. This is better than teaching English in mother tongue because students can learn from their teachers' classroom language and this stimulates them to think and speak in English. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

Of the 18 teachers, nine (50%) mainly used mother tongue to teach English rather than the target language. Sometimes they use very simple, short English classroom utterances. They claimed that they do not teach English through the English language for three reasons. First, six teachers mentioned that students do not have the ability to understand if teachers teach English through English. Students can only understand very simple classroom English. If the target language was used extensively, students would not understand or answer in English, they might feel anxious and lose interest in learning English. Second, Teacher M mentioned that it could slow down or complicate the teaching of the complex grammar necessary to pass the exams and explaining how the examination paper is organised.

*I have not changed the language used in the English class. I mainly teach English through Chinese. Sometimes I use simple English classroom language such as 'Class begins', 'Open your books and turn to page', 'Let's have a break', etc. but I always need to use Chinese to*

*explain what I have said, or some students will not know what I am talking about, what they should do next and cannot answer in English, so they will soon lose interest in learning English or become very worried. This is not good for students' affective states. We have lots of students with poor English proficiency. Teaching English to those students, I can say is like 'casting pearls before swine'. So, it is impossible for rural schools to teach English in the English language; most of the students cannot understand English well enough. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

*I have not changed the language used in the English classes. I mainly teach English through Chinese. I use simple classroom language such as 'Good morning', 'Hello, boys and girls', 'Read after me', 'Read aloud', 'Class is over', 'Good bye', etc. Sometimes I use English when we need to teach students a dialogue. However, we are under exam-orientated education. The exams put strong emphasis on grammar. So we use Mandarin to teach grammar and explain the examination paper in order to help students understand it well. (Teacher M, from a city)*

Teacher L's comments on her concerns about the students' affective state illustrate how teachers perceive and interpret their students' emotional responses to the use of the target language in class. Teacher L's response highlights the challenge that teachers face in making allowances for low-proficiency students with minimal comprehension of the target language.

Two teachers (25%) mentioned that teachers' English proficiency is not good enough to use the target language all the time. For example:

*I mainly teach English in Chinese (Mandarin) and sometimes simple English. When students are in grade 9 (the final year in junior middle school), they need to take exams almost every day, so it is not necessary*

*for teachers to use English to explain the examination paper. For students in grade 8, (second year in junior middle school), we use some simple English classroom language, but we use Chinese to explain the textbook contents or students will not understand. However, to be honest I should mention that, one of the most important reasons is that, as teachers, we are not very familiar with some English terminology, so we tend to teach English in Chinese rather than English because our English proficiency is not good enough. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*I mainly teach English through Chinese (Mandarin). If I use the target language sometimes, I use Chinese to translate it again to help the students understand what I mean. Also, I do not have good English proficiency, so I cannot always use English to teach the students. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 teachers, two said that whether they use the target language depended on the students' grade. Sometimes, I use Chinese to translate three to four, they mainly use mother tongue because the students cannot understand English very well. For students in grades five to nine they use the target language most of the time except for teaching grammar. For example:

*We are in a rural school. The students' English ability is relative poor compared to that of students in urban schools. I try my best to teach students by using the target language. However, it is useless to teach English through English for students in grades 3-4, because they will soon forget what you said. So, I mainly use mother tongue to teach students in low year grades. However, I use the target language as much as possible in class if I am teaching students in grades 5-9 because they can understand more English. However, I still use Chinese to teach grammar. Also, we teach English through the English language if it is an open lesson (demonstration lesson). (Teacher O, from a rural)*

*I have not changed the language I use in the English class. I teach*

*English mainly in Chinese to students in year grades 3-4 because they cannot understand much English. I use the target language most of the time for students in higher grades (grade 5-9) because they can understand English better than students in the low grades but I still use mother tongue to teach grammatical points rather than the target language. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses above show that the target language used in classroom varies between the urban, suburban and rural schools. Of the six urban respondents, four (67%) said they use the target language most of the time in English classes. The percentage of using the target language in suburban and rural schools is much lower: 17% by suburban and 33% by rural teachers. This is clearly a challenging area of practice for teachers, especially rural and suburban teachers. Findings from the interviews support the questionnaire results. This suggests that urban teachers' English proficiency may be better than that of teachers from the other two areas, which enables urban teachers to use the target language more often. Also, from the respondents' interviews, rural students' English ability was said to be not as good as urban students, which makes it difficult to use the target language in class in rural schools.

### **5.9.5 Grammar**

#### **5.9.5.1 How do teachers teach grammar**

All 18 interviewees were asked, *how do you teach the students grammar in the English class?*

Fourteen teachers (78%) said that they let students learn grammar in context rather than only through memorisation. Of those 14 teachers, 12 (86%) said that they teach grammar by giving some sentences as example, then explaining the grammar rules and then the students practice and produce some sentences themselves. For example:

*I first give the students some examples to give them a sense of how the*

*grammar works. Then, I explain the grammar rules and the meaning to students and I always give them examples. Then, I ask the students to make sentences, and we analyse the grammar construction in the sentences together. So, basically, I first give the students a general understanding of the grammar in use and then I explain the detailed grammar rules and the right way of using grammar to students. Last, I ask students to practice to let them learn the grammar in a real context. I have tried to teach grammar by explaining the grammar rules first without letting them have a sense of the grammar, but the students complained that was too boring and not acceptable. They did not know why grammar should be used like that. But the new way of teaching grammar in context can stimulate the students' interest. I think this way is much better. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Teacher I uses very similar way of teaching grammar to Teacher B, however, she complained that she couldn't achieve very good teaching results.

*I do not just tell the students the grammar rules. I create contexts for students to let them use the grammar in context. But students with low English levels still cannot learn grammar well, and I do not know how to teach grammar in a better way. I hope I can have the opportunity to take some training about how to teach grammar. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Teacher I seems to need training and guidance for teaching grammar.

Of those 14 teachers, two of them (14%) said that they do not teach the students grammar rules; instead, the teachers guide the students to find out and summarise the grammar rules by themselves. These two teachers teach grammar by: letting the students do oral practice that includes new grammar examples – letting the students find and summarise the grammar rules – the students then practice and produce their own examples in context. For example:

*I first let the students have some oral practice, then I guide them to discover and summarise the grammar rules. Then, I give the students more practice through group work, conversation drills, behavior performance, etc. to help them learn and understand the grammar in real contexts. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 respondents, 4 rural teachers (22%) said that they taught grammar in a more traditional way, focusing on memorisation rather than learning in context: teach the students the grammar rules – give students more examples – give students a lot of exercises to do to help them remember the rule. For example:

*I do not let the students learn grammar in context. There are many reasons why. First, we have limited time for each lesson (50 minutes), and it is very time-consuming to let students learn and practice grammar in context. Second, students in grades grade 5-9 do not like to answer the teachers' questions or take part in activities. So I do not let students learn to use grammar in context. I teach the students grammar by first telling them the grammar rules, and then I give some example sentences, then I give the students lots of homework to do. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

*I am currently teaching pupils in grade 5 (primary school), students have some basic grammar knowledge because they have learnt English for two years. So, when I teach grammar, I first write the grammar rules on the blackboard, and then I give examples. For students in grade 5, I ask them to take notes and do lots of exercises and homework. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

*I teach students grammar rules and give some examples, and then ask them do lots of exercises and homework until they can remember the grammar rules. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*



Teachers' responses above show that, of the six respondents from rural schools, four (67%) still teach grammar based on remembering the grammar rules rather than in real contexts. This is clearly a challenging area of practice for rural teachers. This suggests that teachers in rural area do not understand or notice that The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that grammar should be learnt in the context of use rather than in the abstract, based on memory.

These interviews cast some doubt on the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire results (see Table 5.7.1 and Table 5.7.2) revealed that the teachers put high emphasis on the importance of learning English in context. 91% of the questionnaire respondents agreed that '*grammar should be learnt in context*'. 84% agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises learning grammar in context*'. This may be because the questionnaire participants knew this area is emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from the questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not know what it means.

**Table 5.7.1 English teachers' responses to questions about grammar**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
21. Grammar should be learnt in context rather than based on memorisation.	City	0 (0)	1 (1)	6 (8)	45 (59)	24 (32)
	Suburb	10 (13)	3 (4)	1 (1)	41 (52)	24 (30)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	64 (89)	8 (11)
	Total	10 (4)	4 (2)	7 (3)	150 (66)	56 (25)
46. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises learning grammar in context.	City	0 (0)	23 (3)	6 (8)	53 (70)	15 (20)
	Suburb	4 (5)	3 (4)	9 (11)	54 (68)	9 (11)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (17)	60 (83)	0 (0)
	Total	4 (2)	26 (2)	27 (12)	167 (74)	24 (10)

### 5.9.5.2. Do teachers find teaching grammar difficult?

All 18 teachers were asked: ‘Do you find teaching grammar difficult and, if so, why?’

Nine teachers (50%) said that they found it difficult to teach grammar for two reasons: first, students think grammar is boring and difficult to remember (89%). For example:

*Teaching grammar is difficult and troublesome. Students cannot tell the difference between different grammar rules. So, I let them use more and practice more, as in the exercise-stuffed method. I do not have any better solutions. (Teacher E, from a suburban)*

Secondly, students do not value grammar learning, they do not think it is useful (11%). For example:

*Teaching grammar is so difficult. Most of the students do not value grammar learning, they do not think it is useful. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Of the 18 respondents, seven (39%) said that they did not find it difficult to teach grammar because the students were used to that way of learning grammar, for example:

*Teaching grammar is not difficult. Students are comfortable with learning grammar in context. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*It was difficult when I used the traditional way to teach grammar, which is focusing on giving grammar rules and remembering them. But now, I have changed my way of teaching grammar, I let students learn grammar in context, now and they are more interested in learning grammar, they are comfortable with learning grammar in context. (Teacher B, from a suburban)*

Of the 18 respondents, two (11%) said the difficulty depends on students’ English level. Teaching grammar to good students is not difficult, but it is very

difficult to teach students with poor English especially rural students. For example:

*It may not be very difficult to teach city students with good English levels grammar, they can accept what the teacher teaches easily. However, it is very difficult to teach grammar to students with poor English like some students in rural areas; they found it boring and difficult to learn. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

The findings from the interview data, that learning grammar in context is difficult for teachers to teach, supports and illustrates the questionnaire result (see Tables 5.7.1 and 5.7.2).

**Table 5.7.2 English teachers' responses to questions about grammar**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
29. Learning grammar in context is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	4 (5)	30 (39)	39 (51)	2 (3)
	Suburb	6 (8)	5 (6)	27 (34)	37 (47)	4 (5)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	20 (28)	48 (67)	0 (0)
	Total	7 (3)	13 (6)	77 (33)	124 (55)	6 (3)
78. Enabling students learn grammar in context in difficult.	City	0 (0)	17 (22)	15 (20)	38 (50)	6 (8)
	Suburb	2 (3)	16 (20)	22 (28)	37 (47)	2 (3)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	8 (11)	56 (78)	4 (6)
	Total	2 (1)	37 (16)	45 (20)	131 (58)	12 (5)

The choices about what is done in practice are not consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and understandings of The Revised

Curriculum (2011). As shown in Table 5.7.2, only half the teachers agreed that *'leaning grammar in context is successful in practice'* (58%). In addition, 63% agreed that *'enabling students to learn grammar in context is difficult'*, in particular, 84% rural respondents agreed with this. 20% of the respondents indicated that they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. This shows that the rural teachers find it more challenging and difficult. This is a challenging area of practice for teachers from any area, but especially from rural areas.

## **5.9.6 Vocabulary**

### **5.9.6.1 How do teachers teach vocabulary?**

All 18 interviewees were asked, *'how do you teach students vocabulary in the English class?'*

Thirteen teachers (72%) said that their students learn vocabulary in an authentic language context. They said that they teach vocabulary in this way: they teach the students how to pronounce the new word – explain what the new word means in Chinese – ask the students to read how to pronounce the word and its definition – let the students learn the new word in context– explain how to use the new word and give some examples – let students make sentences or/and let students do some communicative activities using the new word. For example:

*I learnt from other teachers how to teach vocabulary. First, I teach the students the pronunciation and definition of the new word, and then I ask the students to read the new word and its definition to impress them upon them. Then, I let the students learn the new word in the language context. If the new word has many different uses or this new word is a core word, I explain to students how to use the new word in the correct way. I also give some examples to help the students remember. Lastly, I let the students make sentences or design some games for them to practice the new word. I think multi-media resources can help students*

*memorise new words, but we do not have that equipment in our school.  
(Teacher B, from a suburb)*

*I teach students the pronunciation and definition of the new word, and then I ask the students to read. Then, I let the students learn the new word in the 'reading' section. I explain to them how to use that word and give some examples. After teaching them the new word, I use different ways to guide students to some communicative activities to practice the new word. (Teacher K, from a city)*

Of the 18 respondents, five teachers (28%), three from rural schools and two from suburban schools, said that they teach vocabulary in a more traditional way which focuses on memorisation rather than learning in context: they teach the students pronunciation and definition – let the students read the word – give the students dictation to check their memorisation of the written form. For example:

*My way to teach students vocabulary can be summarised as: I read the word, the students repeat it, and write it down. However, students always forget what the new words are, so I always let them review the words and write them down again (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*I do not let the students learn new words in context. The reasons why I do this are very similar to the teaching of grammar. First, we have limited time for each lesson (50 minutes) and it is very time-consuming to let students learn and practice new words in context. Second, students in grades 5-9 do not like to answer the teachers' questions or take part in activities. So, to avoid being left in silence, I do not let the students learn and use new words in context. I teach the students vocabulary by telling them the pronunciation and definition first, and then I asking them to read after me; lastly I dictate the words to check their memorisation. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses above show that all the urban respondents (100%) teach vocabulary in context, while only four of the six suburban teachers (67%) teach vocabulary in context. Rural respondents had the lowest proportion of teaching vocabulary in context (50%). This higher rate suggests that teachers in rural areas do not understand or note that The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that vocabulary should be learnt in authentic language contexts rather than based on memory alone. This is clearly a challenging area of practice for rural teachers.

**Table 5.8.1 English teachers' responses to questions about vocabulary**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
23. Vocabulary should be learnt in an authentic language context.	City	0 (0)	3 (4)	14 (18)	45 (59)	14 (18)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	4 (5)	56 (71)	15 (19)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (17)	52 (72)	8 (11)
	Total	4 (2)	3 (1)	30 (13)	153 (68)	37 (16)
49. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should create more authentic language contexts to enable students to learn vocabulary in a more true-to-life setting.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	9 (12)	45 (59)	20 (26)
	Suburb	6 (8)	0 (0)	7 (9)	48 (61)	18 (23)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	8 (11)	56 (78)	4 (6)
	Total	6 (3)	6 (3)	24 (10)	149 (65)	42 (19)

These interviews support the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire results (see Table 5.8.1) showed that 94% of the participants agreed that '*vocabulary should be learnt in an authentic language context*'. 84% indicated that they agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should create more authentic language contexts to enable students to learn vocabulary*'.

*in a more true-to-life setting*’ while 10% of them did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment.

#### **5.9.6.2. Do teachers find teaching vocabulary difficult?**

Then, all the 18 teachers were asked: ‘*Do you find teaching vocabulary in context difficult and if so, why?*’

Eight teachers (44%) said that they found it difficult to teach vocabulary, mainly for two reasons: first, students forget the new words (75%). For example:

*Teaching vocabulary is difficult because students will soon forget the new words. So, I must help them review the new words again and again. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

Secondly, students are not motivated to learn and memorise new words (25%). For example:

*Teaching vocabulary is difficult because students do not have the motivation to memorise new words. Memorising new words requires students to work hard, but many of them are lazy. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 respondents, two (12%) said it is difficult to teach vocabulary because they think it depends on students’ English level. Teaching vocabulary to good students is not a problem, but it is difficult to teach students with low levels of English level. For example:

*It is not difficult to teach vocabulary to good students, they are hardworking and cooperative. However, it is difficult to teach students with low English levels if they are lazy and do not want to memorise new words. (Teacher M, from a city)*

Of the 18 respondents, eight (44%) said that it was not difficult for them to

teach vocabulary because students become used to the way the teacher shows them how to learn vocabulary, and they also said that learning vocabulary is easier than learning grammar. For example:

*Teaching vocabulary is not difficult. Students are comfortable with learning vocabulary in an authentic language context. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Teacher B's response has points in common with teacher A's, but she also complained that multi-media equipment can impress new words on students' memories, but their school cannot provide such conditions.

*Teaching vocabulary is not very difficult. Students are comfortable with learning vocabulary in an authentic language context. However, it would be more effective if I could teach students new words using multi-media resources, a better way to capture students' interest. However, our school does not have that advantage. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Teacher B values the importance of using multi-media resources for teaching vocabulary.

The interviewees' responses (above) show that more than half the participants (56%) find teaching students vocabulary in an authentic context difficult. This supports the questionnaire results (see Table 5.8.2):

So, teaching vocabulary in practice is not always consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Only 50% of the questionnaire participants agreed that 'learning vocabulary in an authentic context is successful in practice', more than half of the respondents (62%) agreed that 'enabling students to learn vocabulary in an authentic context is difficult' while rural teachers occupied the highest proportion of agreement (83%). 16% of them gave neutral



responses to this statement, indicating that they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. This is clearly a challenging area of practice, with many teachers feeling they do not achieve the aims of The Revised Curriculum (2011), especially rural teachers.

**Table 5.8.2 English teachers' responses to questions about vocabulary**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
31. Learning vocabulary in an authentic context is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	8 (11)	20 (26)	43 (57)	4 (5)
	Suburb	2 (3)	10 (13)	32 (41)	33 (42)	2 (3)
	Rural	1 (1)	16 (22)	24 (33)	28 (39)	4 (6)
	Total	4 (2)	34 (15)	76 (33)	104 (46)	10 (4)
66. Enabling students to learn vocabulary in an authentic context is difficult.	City	0 (0)	25 (33)	13 (17)	30 (39)	8 (11)
	Suburb	5 (6)	21 (27)	12 (15)	32 (41)	9 (11)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (17)	52 (72)	8 (11)
	Total	5 (2)	46 (20)	37 (16)	114 (51)	25 (11)

## 5.10 Professional development of teachers

### 5.10.1 Reflection

#### 5.10.1.1 Do teachers reflect on their teaching?

All 18 interviewees were asked, 'what do you do after you finish your English lesson (will you reflect on and summarise your teaching experiences?)' Four urban teachers (72%) said that they often reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences after finished their English lessons. All four teachers (100%) mentioned that they found reflection helpful for improving the quality

and outcomes of their teaching. One (25%) also mentioned that it can also help improve the students' exam performance.

*Our school requires teachers to write our teaching reflections after each lesson. I found this very helpful for improving my teaching results and quality. Without reflection, I could not find my weaknesses in teaching and then improve my teaching. I also see the link between improving my teaching and improving my students' scores. When I improved my teaching, I found the students' exam scores improved as well. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I always do reflection and think about where I did not teach well, so I can find out why and improve my teaching. I found it very helpful for improving my teaching results. (Teacher J, from a city)*

*I always reflect. For example, if students' classroom performance is not positive, I will reflect on my actions and find a better teaching method to improve the teaching results. (Teacher M, from a city)*

The teachers' responses above indicate that they value reflecting on lessons.

Thirteen teachers (72%) said that they reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences only occasionally. Seven (54%) mentioned that they only reflected when they found some problems such as ineffective teaching and disappointing students' exam performance because they do not have the time and energy for reflection very often, although they know reflection is helpful for improving teaching quality and students' performance. For example:

*I sometimes do reflection. Our school requires us to always reflect but we do not follow this suggestion. When students get disappointing exam scores, I discuss them with the students and reflect on my teaching. I do not have enough energy and time to reflect after each lesson. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

Of the 13 teachers who do reflect occasionally, three (23%) mentioned that they sometimes reflect because their schools require them to hand out some written reflections to the school leaders each academic semester. For example:

*I sometimes do reflect. Our school requires us to write 4-8 reflections to hand to the leader, so, we have to do this. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Of the 18 teachers, only one rural teacher (6%) said that she never reflects because her school does not check on their reflection notes. She said that they only do what the school checks.

*I never do reflection. Our school only checks our lesson preparation and homework correction. Accordingly, we cope with preparation and homework correction. I am already 48 years old and have taught English for 26 years. Teachers of my age seldom have any motivation to do anything more active (laugh). Basically, I only do what the school require. I seldom have my own opinion. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

Teacher L's response suggests some experienced teachers or older teachers may lack the motivation to change or improve their teaching.

The teachers' responses above show that, of the 6 urban respondents, 4 (67%) do frequently reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences, while other respondents either only reflect occasionally or ignore it. It seems that teachers in urban schools reflect more than respondents from other areas. This is clearly a challenging area of practice for rural and suburban teachers.

#### **5.10.1.2. Do teachers find reflection difficult**

Then, all the 18 teachers were asked: '*Do you find reflection difficult and if so, why?*'

Four teachers (22%) said that they found it difficult to do reflection mainly for two reasons: first, they think it is difficult to find their own mistakes and

weakness (50%). for example:

*Doing reflection is difficult because it is difficult to find my mistake and weaknesses. Only if I cannot communicate with the students well, may I discover where I went wrong. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

The second reason is illustrated by two teachers who claimed that they did not know how to reflect or write about it (50%).

*Reflection is difficult because I do not know how to reflect in a good way (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

*Reflection is difficult because I do not know how to write about reflections. I have discovered some problems when I did reflect but I do not know how to write them in an academic way. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Of the 18 respondents, 14 (78%) said that they did not find it difficult to carry out reflection. 6 respondents (43%) said that they do not find it difficult because they had become used to reflecting. They had formed the habit of reflecting after each lesson.

*When I first did some reflection, I found it difficult, but now, I have developed the habit and reflecting is not difficult for me. I reflect about class design, reaching teaching goals and the students' cooperation. Every time I reflect, I can learn from my reflection, so it is not difficult but an exciting and valuable task for me. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Of the 14 teachers who said it was not difficult to do reflection. Eight (57%) said that they did not find it difficult because they did not do it very often.

*It is not difficult to reflect because I do not do it very often. I feel very tired after each lesson, so I do not have enough energy to reflect. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

## **5.10.2. Communication with colleagues**

### **5.10.2.1. When do teachers communicate?**

All 18 interviewees were asked, ‘*when do you discuss curriculum matters with your colleagues (other English teachers)?*’

Fifteen teachers (83%) said that they often discuss curriculum matters with other English teachers after class, after examination, or when they have some teaching problems.

*I often discuss curriculum matters with my colleagues after examination or when we have teaching issues. Because all the English teachers of the same grade are in the same staffroom, we often discuss with each other after class. The teaching atmosphere is perfect in our staffroom. We learn from each other. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I often discuss curriculum matters with other colleagues when we have some teaching problems or want to learn from others. We also observe other teachers’ lessons so we can learn from each other. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Three teachers (17%), one from suburban and two from rural schools said that they seldom discussed curriculum matters with other English teachers. They only had discussions with colleagues when they had some trouble implementing The Revised Curriculum (2011).

*I seldom discuss curriculum matters with my colleagues. If I really have some difficulties in implementing The Revised Curriculum (2011), I may discuss with others about the best way of teaching something, but this does not happen very often. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*I sometimes discuss curriculum matters with colleagues. To be honest, I had discussions more often with other teachers when I was a new teacher or when I felt confused about using The Revised Curriculum*

*(2011). But now, I have used the revised curriculum for more than one year, so I do not have some many problems that need to be discussed. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

#### **5.10.2.2. What sort of issues do teachers discuss?**

Then, all the 18 teachers were asked: ‘*What sort of issues have you discussed?*’ Of the 18 respondents, 17 (94%) mentioned that they discussed teaching methods and procedures after using The Revised Curriculum (2011). Fifteen (83%) mentioned that they asked other teachers for teaching suggestions. Five (28%) mentioned that they had discussed and shared concerns about their teaching resources. Three (17%) said that they discussed exam results, so they could discover their and their students’ weakness. For example:

*Normally, we discuss curriculum matters about the teaching process, teaching methods, teaching suggestions and resource sharing. For example, if some teachers can make very beautiful course resource, we can use the experience of those teachers for reference, we will learn from them. Another example, we are responsible, if we have just had an examination, we will ask other teachers about their students’ exam scores and compare them with our students’ to find out about our students’ weaknesses (such as in reading, writing, etc.) and where teachers should put more emphasis. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*We always discuss curriculum matters concerning procedures, teaching methods and resource sharing. The new textbook under The Revised Curriculum (2011), is based on topics. Some topics relate to real life closely, but some do not, so we discuss with the other teachers how to introduce this topic to students to make it fit in smoothly. Sometimes we discuss how to teach grammar or vocabulary to make it easier for students to understand. We also discuss which method (such as group work, pair work or individual work) we can use to make students take part in activities. Related to resources sharing, I will share with other teachers, for example, if I have resources about western culture.*

*(Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Only one (6%) mentioned that she discussed students' behavior in class.

*We always discuss curriculum matters about teaching procedure, methods, suggestions and students' matters about teaching procedure, in cl how to make students central, how to make them more active but not undisciplined. (Teacher G, from a city)*

The teachers' responses above show, all the urban respondents often discuss curriculum matters with other English teachers. Of the six suburban teachers, five often discuss issues with others while the rural respondents again had fewer teachers who discussed issues with colleagues (four teachers of the six). It may be that respondents in urban schools have a more established culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry than respondents from other areas. This is a challenging area of practice for teachers especially for rural teachers. This supports and illustrates the questionnaire results (see Table 5.9). 91% agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should form a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry to design appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students*'. Surprisingly, all of the rural teachers agreed with this statement.

Half of the respondents (54%) agreed that '*forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry (communicating and sharing with other teachers), and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students is successful in practice*' while 16% disagreed with this. 30% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand it, or were uncertain or unwilling to comment, while rural respondents again had the highest proportion of neutral responses (39%).

The majority of the respondents (71%) agreed that '*forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry (communicating and sharing with other teachers), and designing appropriate teaching methods that will*

*benefit students is difficult*’ while rural teachers had the highest proportion (78%), which indicates that rural teachers are finding it more difficult to implement.

**Table 5.9 English teachers’ responses to questions about communication with colleagues**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
63. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should form a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry to design appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students.	City	0 (0)	0 (0)	13 (17)	44 (58)	19 (25)
	Suburb	2 (3)	2 (3)	3 (4)	55 (70)	17 (22)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	56 (78)	16 (22)
	Total	2 (1)	2 (1)	16 (7)	155 (68)	52 (23)
58. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry (communicating and sharing with other teachers), and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	9 (12)	18 (24)	43 (57)	5 (7)
	Suburb	4 (5)	12 (15)	22 (28)	31 (39)	10 (13)
	Rural	0 (0)	11 (15)	28 (39)	33 (46)	0 (0)
	Total	5 (9)	32 (14)	68 (30)	107 (47)	15 (7)
38. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry (communicating and sharing with other teachers), and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students is difficult.	City	5 (7)	10 (13)	10 (13)	39 (51)	12 (16)
	Suburb	5 (9)	10 (13)	11 (14)	40 (51)	13 (16)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	4 (6)	52 (72)	4 (6)
	Total	10 (4)	32 (14)	25 (11)	131 (58)	29 (13)
41. English teachers should design teaching methods that are appropriate (both to his/herself and to his/her students) independently without communicating and sharing with other teachers.	City	0 (0)	8 (11)	10 (13)	38 (50)	20 (26)
	Suburb	5 (6)	11 (14)	7 (9)	35 (44)	21 (27)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	20 (28)	32 (44)	8 (11)
	Total	5 (2)	31 (14)	37 (16)	105 (46)	49 (22)



Surprisingly, from the questionnaire data, 68% of the teachers' responses agreed with the statement '*English teachers should design appropriate teaching methods independently without communicating or sharing with other teachers*' while 16% of them neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment on this. This finding casts some doubt on the interview responses, which may be because the questionnaire participants did not know what they mean or do not understand it clearly.

### **5.10.3 Professional development in The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

All 18 interviewees were asked, '*The Revised English curriculum raised the concept of the professional development of teachers. Do you understand this concept?*' I chose this term because this is a key part of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and I asked if they knew what it means and what the changes are.

Fourteen teachers (78%) said that they had never heard of the idea of '*professional development of teachers*'. For example:

*This is the first time I have heard this. I do not have any idea about it.*  
(Teacher G, from a city)

*I have never heard of this concept and it has not  
being translated into action in our school.* (Teacher F, from a rural)

I explained to the 14 teachers that the concept of '*professional development professional development of teachers*' has three main aspects:

- renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency;
- accumulating teachers' subject pedagogical knowledge and improving practical teaching ability constantly;
- carrying out reflective teaching to promote sustainable professional development.

These 14 teachers were asked: *‘what do you think about the idea of professional development? Have you noticed any changes to what is required by your school? Do you find it is difficult and if so, why?’* 11 said that they had not noticed any *‘professional development’* in their schools. They did not notice any changes so and did not know whether it was difficult.

Teacher G said that he had not noticed any teachers’ professional development because he thought teachers should be concerned with teaching rather than theoretical concepts:

*Because we are teachers, we do not put much emphasis on theoretical concepts. We focus on teaching. Sometime we may carry out reflection, but we did not know this was part of the ‘professional development of teachers’. I did not notice any other areas and I did not make any changes. (Teacher G, from a city)*

In common with Teacher G, Teachers D and R complained that there was a big gap between actual teaching practices and the official rhetoric. For example:

*The ‘professional development of teachers’ sounds very good, but it is very different from our actual situation. We cannot implement many of the concepts because the situation in our school makes it not easy to do that. I think I did not make any changes. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Eight teachers (73%) said that they had not noticed any changes in teachers’ professional development because their schools put strong emphasis on students’ examination performance and ignored teachers’ professional development, for example:

*I do not notice this and I do not think teachers’ professional development can be improved in a short time because our school does not pay any attention to teachers’ professional development. To be honest, our school is only concerned with students’ examination*

*performance. I did not make any changes. (Teacher H, from a suburb)*

In particular, two respondents from rural schools complained that the implementation of ‘professional development of teachers’ is worse in rural schools than in urban schools.

*I think the extent of the ‘professional development of teachers’ is different in different areas. In rural schools such as our school, implementation is much worse than in urban school or just ignored. I did not make any changes t. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Teacher I said that she had not noticed any emphasis on teachers’ professional development and her comments suggest she misunderstands the concept: she thinks *professional* means *major*:

*I have not noticed any teachers’ professional development, I do not understand it very well and. I have not made any changes. I think professional development refers to teachers’ majors. In our school, all the English teachers have graduated with English majors, so, we are already professional. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Two teachers mentioned that they had not noticed any teachers’ professional development but think the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) is very important for improving teachers’ professional development.

*I know about reflection, but we just do reflection to cope with the leader. We do not put reflection into practice actually. Renewing teachers’ subject knowledge and improving their practical teaching ability means the opportunity to be sent on a training programme, but only very few teachers get this opportunity. In fact, I did not make any changes. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

Teacher K said that her school carries out many teaching and research activities about the professional development of teachers and asks teachers to attend, but

she had not made any changes.

*Teachers in our school need to attend many teaching and research activities for The Revised Curriculum (2011) but I do not remember anything about the professional development of teachers. I have not made any changes. (Teacher K, from a city)*

Of the 18 teachers, four (22%) said that they had heard about changes to what is involved in ‘*professional development of teachers*’.

*The last time I was given a copy of The Revised Curriculum (2011) document, I noted the concept of the ‘professional development of teachers’, but I do not remember anything more detailed (laugh). You know we just copied the document and then soon forget it. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I have heard about the ‘professional development of teachers’ before. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*I have heard of the ‘professional development of teachers’ but I do not know why The Revised Curriculum (2011) proposed this concept. I think teachers are already very professional. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Then, these four teachers were asked: ‘*if yes, can you explain it?*’ However, none of these four teachers could explain the concept of the ‘*professional development of teachers*’. After I explained the concept to them, they were asked: ‘*what do you think about it? Have you made any changes? Do you find it difficult and why?*’ All four teachers showed a positive attitude to the ‘*professional development of teachers*’ in their schools. They also mentioned that they had made some changes in their actual practices. For example, teacher A thought that the professional development of teachers in their school had improved teachers’ teaching ability, English speaking ability and professional level a lot:

*I think the 'professional development of teachers' has greatly impacted on teachers in our school. For example, our school raises higher demands of teachers' professionalism and practical teaching ability. Accordingly, teachers are under more pressure. We have too many things to do, for example, we spend lots of time preparing lessons and reflecting. We also have to cultivate our professional abilities, for example, our school always holds English teachers' speech contests and hires foreign teachers to improve teachers' and students' English speaking ability and broaden our horizons. So, we do not find it difficult because we have improved ourselves a lot and it is practical. (Teacher A, from a city)*

Teachers B and C thought that the professional development requirement had come to their attention. In particular, they noted the need for reflection. They did not notice any other changes in their schools. They did not find any difficulties because they mainly focused on reflection and ignored other areas.

*I think the 'professional development of teachers' is mainly aimed at older teachers (experienced teachers) because it is more necessary for them to renew their subject knowledge and practical teaching ability. As new teachers, we are always renewing our subject knowledge and receiving new information. Our school requires us to reflect on our teaching, which is part of the professional development of teachers. I think the professional development of teachers in our school impacts on us in the reflection area. I do not find it difficult because we do need to reflect. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

Teacher C had similar views to Teacher B:

*I think the 'professional development of teachers' in our school involves us in reflection. Our school is concerned about teachers' reflections. We need to submit our reflections. I do not find it difficult because need to reflects. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Teacher E thinks that the ‘*professional development of teachers*’ is of practical use compared with other suggestions in The Revised Curriculum (2011). She does not find it difficult because professional development is practical and she has guidance and help from her school.

*I think the cal use compared with ont of teachersns in The Revised Curric teachers as it is more practical for us than other suggestions in The Revised Curriculum (2011) because we can improve ourselves following this suggestion and support our sustainable professional development. I do not find it difficult because our school always guides us in the area of teachers’ professional development. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

This suggests that, though The Revised Curriculum (2011) clearly aims for professional development to be a career-long process whereby teachers constantly upgrade their knowledge, skills and reflective ability, this idea is either unknown or only partially shared by these teachers.

**Table 5.10.1 English teachers’ responses to questions about CPD**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
33. English teachers should reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.	City	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (8)	42 (55)	28 (37)
	Suburb	4 (5)	4 (5)	6 (8)	40 (51)	25 (32)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (17)	48 (67)	12 (17)
	Total	4 (2)	4 (2)	24 (10)	130 (57)	65 (29)
71. English teachers need to renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.	City	1 (1)	0 (0)	7 (9)	42 (55)	26 (34)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	5 (6)	39 (49)	31 (39)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	68 (94)	4 (6)
	Total	5 (2)	0 (0)	12 (5)	149 (66)	61 (27)

Of the 18 teachers, 14 (78%) did not know about the '*professional development of teachers*' including 100% of the rural respondents (six teachers). The interviews showed that these terms are new or alien to teachers, casting some doubt on the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire result (see Table 5.10.1) show the great majority of teachers (86%) selected the statements about reflecting on and summarising their teaching experiences constantly but 9% of them neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. Further, 93% agreed that they should '*renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency*' while 100% of the rural respondents agreed with the statement. These teachers are overwhelmingly keen to improve, even if the training they have had has been limited.

**Table 5.10.2 English teachers' responses to questions about CPD**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
45. The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that English teachers should reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.	City	0 (0)	1 (1)	12 (16)	43 (57)	20 (26)
	Suburb	6 (8)	3 (4)	7 (9)	45 (57)	18 (23)
	Rural	0 (0)	2 (3)	8 (11)	52 (72)	4 (6)
	Total	6 (3)	6 (5)	27 (12)	140 (62)	42 (18)
65. The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that English teachers should renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.	City	1 (1)	0 (0)	8 (11)	47 (62)	20 (26)
	Suburb	2 (3)	2 (3)	3 (4)	51 (65)	20 (25)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	48 (67)	20 (28)
	Total	3 (1)	2 (1)	15 (7)	146 (64)	60 (27)

Regarding the raising of the teachers' professional levels in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (see Table 5.10.2), the great majority of teachers (88%)

agree with the statement that The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggested teachers reflected on and summarised their teaching experiences constantly but 12% of them did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. 91% agreed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasised that English teachers should ‘*renew their subject knowledge*’ and ‘*develop their language proficiency*’.

**Table 5.10.3 English teachers’ responses to questions about CPD**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
68. Reflecting and summarising teachers’ teaching experiences constantly is successfully achievable in practice.	City	0 (0)	3 (4)	22 (29)	42 (55)	9 (12)
	Suburb	4 (5)	3 (4)	22 (28)	42 (53)	8 (10)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	64 (89)	0 (0)
	Total	4 (0)	6 (4)	52 (29)	148 (55)	17 (12)
81. Renewing teachers’ subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency is successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	3 (4)	17 (22)	49 (64)	7 (9)
	Suburb	4 (5)	9 (11)	18 (23)	36 (46)	12 (15)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	36 (50)	36 (50)	0 (0)
	Total	4 (2)	12 (5)	71 (32)	121 (53)	19 (8)

Regarding increasing teachers’ professional skills levels in practice (see Table 5.10.3), the majority of teachers agreed that they were successful in constantly reflecting and summarising their teaching experience (72%) but 23% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. 61% agreed that ‘*renewing teachers’ subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency is successful in practice*’ while 32% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, again, rural respondents gave the highest proportion of neutral responses (50%). This may



because that the questionnaire participants knew these are emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from the questionnaire) but the interviews reveal they may not know what is meant.

**Table 5.10.4 English teachers' responses to questions about CPD**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
70. Reflecting and summarising my teaching experiences constantly is difficult.	City	1 (1)	35 (46)	19 (25)	18 (24)	3 (4)
	Suburb	14 (18)	26 (33)	19 (24)	18 (23)	3 (4)
	Rural	0 (0)	16 (22)	8 (11)	44 (61)	4 (6)
	Total	15 (6)	77 (33)	46 (20)	80 (36)	10 (5)
28. Renewing my subject knowledge and developing my language proficiency is difficult.	City	0 (0)	21 (28)	8 (11)	41 (54)	6 (8)
	Suburb	7 (9)	17 (22)	15 (19)	30 (38)	10 (13)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	8 (11)	52 (72)	4 (6)
	Total	7 (3)	46 (20)	31 (14)	123 (54)	20 (9)

The findings from the interview show that only 14 of 18 found the *'professional development of teachers'* difficult in practice. This supports and illustrates the questionnaire results (see Table 5.10.4), where 41% of the teachers agreed that *'reflecting and summarising teaching experience constantly is difficult'*, rural respondents having the highest proportion (67%). 20% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. Further 63% agreed that *'renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency is difficult'* while teachers from rural schools again were the biggest group (78%). The choices in practice were not very consistent with the choices

made about language the learning beliefs and understandings in The Revised Curriculum (2011). This finding suggests that this is a very challenging area of practice for teachers, especially rural teachers.

### **5.11 Happiness and cooperation in teaching English**

From the questionnaire data (see Table 5.11), the majority of teachers agreed with the statements emphasising the importance of happiness and cooperation while teaching in English (89%). Regarding the emphasis on happiness and cooperation in The Revised Curriculum (2011), the majority of teachers agreed that '*English teaching should stress happiness and cooperation*' during the compulsory education stage (89%).

However, the choices in practice are not very consistent with the choices made about language learning beliefs and the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Only 62% of the respondents agreed that they are successful in emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching in compulsory education. However, 28% gave neutral responses, while rural respondents gave the highest proportion of neutral responses (33%).

Data from the questionnaire also revealed teachers' mixed attitudes towards their difficulties in stressing happiness and cooperation in class. Nearly half of the teachers agreed that '*emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education is difficult*' (58%) while rural respondents had the highest proportion (73%), which shows that the rural teachers find it more challenging and difficult. So, what happens in practice is not consistent with the choices about language learning beliefs and understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011) which indicates that this change is difficult for teachers to implement.

**Table 5.11 English teachers' responses to questions about happiness and cooperation**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
17. English teaching during the compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	7 (9)	35 (46)	32 (42)
	Suburb	4 (5)	2 (3)	5 (6)	33 (42)	35 (44)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	36 (50)	32 (44)
	Total	4 (2)	4 (2)	16 (7)	104 (46)	99 (43)
36. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teaching in compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.	City	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (8)	44 (58)	26 (34)
	Suburb	2 (3)	3 (4)	3 (4)	43 (55)	27 (34)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	36 (50)	28 (39)
	Total	2 (1)	3 (1)	17 (8)	123 (54)	81 (36)
53. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	21 (28)	46 (61)	7 (9)
	Suburb	5 (5)	5 (5)	20 (25)	45 (57)	7 (9)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	24 (33)	36 (50)	0 (0)
	Total	5 (2)	19 (8)	65 (28)	127 (56)	14 (6)
43. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is difficult.	City	0 (0)	17 (22)	20 (26)	31 (41)	8 (11)
	Suburb	2 (3)	16 (20)	20 (25)	31 (39)	8 (10)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	8 (11)	48 (67)	4 (6)
	Total	2 (1)	45 (20)	48 (21)	110 (49)	20 (9)

## **5.12. Similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures**

From the questionnaire data (see Table 5.12), the majority of the teachers agreed with the statements of the importance of telling students about English-speaking cultures and the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures (88%).

Regarding the emphasis on understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures in The Revised Curriculum (2011), the majority of teachers (85%) agreed that *‘The Revised Curriculum (2011) states that students should understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures’*, 59% agreed that *‘understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is straightforward in practice’*, 31% neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. In particular, rural respondents gave the highest proportion of neutral responses (43%). This is clearly a challenging area of practice for rural teachers.

The practical choices are not consistent with the options chosen for language learning beliefs and understandings of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Data from the questionnaire also revealed teachers’ mixed attitudes towards their difficulties in helping students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures. Nearly half the teachers (56%) agreed that *‘helping students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is difficult’*, which shows that this is a challenging area for teachers.

**Table 5.12 English teachers' responses to questions about Chinese and English-speaking cultures**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
24. It is necessary for students to know about English-speaking cultures and the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.	City	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (9)	45 (59)	24 (32)
	Suburb	4 (5)	2 (3)	6 (8)	35 (44)	32 (41)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	52 (72)	12 (17)
	Total	4 (2)	2 (1)	21 (9)	132 (58)	68 (30)
59. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that students should understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.	City	0 (0)	1 (1)	10 (13)	54 (71)	24 (14)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	12 (15)	44 (56)	19 (24)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	60 (83)	4 (6)
	Total	4 (2)	1 (0)	30 (13)	158 (70)	47 (15)
32. Understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	5 (7)	21 (28)	44 (58)	5 (7)
	Suburb	2 (3)	4 (5)	25 (32)	37 (47)	11 (14)
	Rural	0 (0)	12 (17)	24 (33)	36 (50)	0 (0)
	Total	3 (1)	21 (9)	70 (31)	117 (52)	16 (7)
67. Helping students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is difficult.	City	1 (1)	21 (28)	18 (24)	33 (43)	3 (4)
	Suburb	7 (9)	18 (23)	15 (19)	30 (38)	9 (11)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (28)	48 (67)	4 (6)
	Total	8 (3)	39 (17)	53 (24)	111 (49)	16 (7)

### 5.13. Putting more emphasis on phonetic skills

From the questionnaire data (see Table 5.13), 87% of the respondents agreed that '*English teachers should put more emphasis on phonetic skills in use rather than phonetic knowledge*' but 10% did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment on this statement. 74% agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) transfers the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability*'. However, 21% of the teachers did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment.

Nearly half of the respondents agreed that they were successful in transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability (51% agreed, 40% neither agreed nor disagreed) while rural teachers had the highest proportion of neutral responses (56%). 67% of the respondents agreed that it is difficult to transfer the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability while rural teachers had the highest proportion (89%). The practical choices are not always consistent with the choices about language learning beliefs and understandings of The Revised Curriculum (2011). This suggests that transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is still something which teachers are adapting to and not all are comfortable with it.

Teachers' responses to their understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011) are related to their language learning beliefs and are important because they establish how consistent teachers are in their views about the curriculum and teaching. Teachers' tended to hold consistent opinions of 'teaching objectives', 'resources', 'target language in class', 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'happiness and cooperation', 'similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures', 'phonetic ability' and 'professional development of teachers'. However, their opinions on 'teaching methods' are inconsistent. In their views of the curriculum (see Section 4.5), most agreed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses designing teaching methods cooperatively, while in their views about teaching (see Section 4.5), more than half agreed with *teachers*

*should design teaching methods independently.*

**Table 5.13 English teachers' responses to questions about phonetic ability**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
20. English language teaching should put more emphasis on phonetic ability rather than only phonetic knowledge.	City	0 (0)	2 (3)	8 (11)	38 (50)	28 (37)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	7 (9)	32 (41)	36 (46)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (11)	52 (72)	12 (17)
	Total	4 (2)	2 (1)	23 (10)	122 (54)	76 (33)
52. The Revised Curriculum (2011) transfers the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability.	City	1 (1)	2 (3)	16 (21)	44 (58)	13 (17)
	Suburb	4 (5)	0 (0)	24 (30)	44 (56)	7 (9)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	8 (11)	56 (78)	4 (6)
	Total	5 (2)	6 (3)	48 (21)	144 (63)	24 (11)
56. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is successful in practice.	City	1 (1)	5 (7)	27 (36)	38 (50)	5 (7)
	Suburb	6 (8)	9 (11)	21 (27)	41 (52)	2 (3)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	40 (56)	32 (44)	0 (0)
	Total	64 (3)	14 (6)	88 (40)	111 (48)	7 (3)
77. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is difficult.	City	0 (0)	19 (25)	11 (14)	40 (53)	6 (8)
	Suburb	5 (6)	22 (28)	10 (13)	38 (48)	4 (5)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	4 (6)	60 (83)	4 (6)
	Total	5 (2)	45 (20)	25 (11)	138 (61)	14 (6)

From teachers' responses to the difficulties they face, it can be seen that the rural respondents always had the highest agreement with all the difficulties in the questionnaire and in the interviews. The results indicate that the respondents from rural area face greater challenges and more difficulties in their teaching compared with other teachers from city and suburban areas.

## **5.14 Teachers' views about teaching and teacher's roles**

### **5.13.1 Teachers' views about good teaching**

I told the interviewees a vignette about what Mr Lin does in his daily English teaching:

#### ***The Vignette***

*Mr Lin leads his class in an animated way. At the beginning of the class, he asks students some questions based on a reading task they have done before and his students give their responses quickly. After the review, he teaches the class new content and he always asks questions to keep students attentive and listening to what he says.*

I then asked 'what do you think about the teaching method Mr Lin used? Is there anything you might do for a good lesson?' Of the 18 teachers, 16 (89%) said that they thought that Mr Lin used a mainly teacher-centred teaching method, the traditional teaching method in the Chinese teaching context. Ten teachers said that they use similar teaching methods in class.

*I think Mr Lin's teaching method is the traditional teaching method. He puts himself at the center of the class and follows this way of 'teaching – students receive – review – students re-receive. I agree with this teaching method and I use this method as well. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

I agree with Mr Lin's teaching method of reviewing the content at the



start of the class, and always ask students questions to make them concentrate. This is very similar to my teaching style in class. (Teacher G, from a city)

Seven of the teachers also used some communicative activities for good teaching.

*I agree with Mr Lin's teaching method. I think reviewing the content from the last lesson is necessary. I teach students like this. Asking students questions is a good way to make students concentrate on what the teacher is teaching. I also involve some communicative activities such as English speaking group competitions to increase students' interest in learning English. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

*I agree with Mr Lin's teaching method. Reviewing the previous lesson is necessary and I teach like Mr Lin does. Sometimes I also have some group activities but not very often because our students' English level is not good enough and we have limited time. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

*Mr Lin's teaching method is a task-based teaching method and also our most commonly used teaching method. Asking students questions is suitable for reading tasks but not good for speaking tasks. In my teaching, I put strong emphasis on communicating with students. I often have some group activities and competitions in class. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Five teachers said that they do not use the same teaching method as Mr Lin but, are more student-centred and use more communicative activities in class.

*Mr Lin's teaching method is the traditional teaching method and puts the teacher at the center of the class. My teaching method is different. My teaching is: warm-up speaking activities – listening practice - -pair work activities – survey – summary. We have lots of communicative activities in class to help the students learn English actively. (Teacher A,*

*from a city)*

*Mr Lin's teaching method is the traditional teaching method. We can review the content if it is related to previous lesson but it is not always necessary. I think the class should be student-centred rather than teacher-centred. Sometimes the students can ask questions instead of the teacher asking the students. Teachers should guide students and let students find problems and solve them by themselves. (Teacher I, from a city)*

Of the 16 teachers, one said that she sometimes used the same teaching method as Mr Lin but she used different kinds of teaching method; she did not have a single, fixed teaching method.

*I think Mr Lin's teaching method is good because he reviewed the lesson and helped the students keep focused. I do not have a fixed teaching method. I always learn from other teachers or online resources and use their teaching methods as well. If I find another good teaching method, I will soon use that one. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

Of the 18 teachers, two said they used different teaching methods according to their students' different levels or grades. Teacher C thought Mr Lin's asking question method was good for high grade students but prefers to put students at the center and have more student-led communicative activities in class:

*I think Mr Lin's teaching method is suitable for students in grades six and seven, but it is too difficult for students to answer questions in grades three and four. Lower grade students can only answer easy questions like 'how are you'. If the questions are too difficult, students do not want to continue concentrating because they do not know the answer. My teaching method is different from Mr Lin's. I stimulate the interests of younger students through singing songs and letting the students have some free talking practice. I do not review the lesson by*

*myself, one student leads the other students to read and review the lesson by themselves. Sometimes I guide the students in performing the textbook content. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Teacher D thinks Mr Lin's asking question method is good for students with a good English level and she prefers to put the teacher in the center of the class and not have many communicative activities in class.

*I think Mr Lin's teaching method is suitable for students with a good English level because asking questions can inspire the students and let them think and learn from focused questioning. They can concentrate more and know what to do in that lesson. However, students with poor English will feel frustrated because they cannot answer the questions or they may even just ignore the questions. It is better to spoon feed the students with poor English ability rather than have any communication with them. In my English class, I am the centre of the class and I want my students to follow me. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

#### **5.14.2 English teachers' views about the teacher's role in the English class**

I gave the interviewees a further vignette about what Mr Lin thinks about his role in the English class. This offers a different type of data and it is interesting to relate it to other data sources.

##### ***The Vignette***

*He sees his role as an initiator, an explainer and a class controller. He thinks his students won't learn English unless the teacher goes over the material in a structured way. He believes it is his duty to teach, to explain, and to show his students how to learn English and how to do tasks.*

*All the 18 teachers were asked: 'what do you think about Mr Lin's views of his role in the English class? Is there another role you think necessary for good*

*teaching?’*

Of the 18 teachers, ten (56%) said that they agreed with Mr Lin’s view of his role as an initiator, an explainer and a class controller in the English class.

*I strongly agree with Mr Lin’s role as an initiator, an explainer, and a class controller in the English class. Good teaching needs teachers to control the class well, and students should be disciplined. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Teacher L and Teacher D thought that English teachers should be initiators, explainers, class controllers, communicators and guides.

*I agree with Mr Lin’s view of his role as an initiator, an explainer, and a class controller in the English class. Only a few students like learning English. Teachers should supervise and push the students to learn. In addition, I think teachers should also be a communicator and guide to motivate students and let them enjoy satisfaction in learning English. Controlling the class is very important. Students should regard the teacher as the center in the class and be disciplined to do what the teachers says. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

Teacher L added that the teacher should also display positive characteristics by being optimistic, lively, and confident and have a sense of humor.

*I agree with Mr Lin’s view of his role as an initiator, an explainer, and a class controller. Controlling the class well can ensure good teaching. I do not think teaching is good if the students are not disciplined, even if the teacher has excellent teaching skills. Classroom discipline is the first and most important thing in class. Good teaching needs teachers to be having a sense of humor, be optimistic, lively and confident so the students listen to him/her with keen interest. In addition, teachers should also communicate with students and guide them to complete all*

*their teaching tasks step by step. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses show that they seem to agree with teacher-centred English teaching and think that teachers' control of the class is important for discipline. The Revised Curriculum (2011) (discussed in Section 4.2.9, Chapter Four) suggests English teachers should be guides, organisers, communicators, designers and reflectors. The teachers' responses above suggest that not all teachers have absorbed this.

Teacher E complained that, although she thought that the roles Mr Lin played are traditional teacher's roles and she knows the suggested roles in The Revised Curriculum (2011), however, local situations (students' and teachers' quality) do not always make it possible to follow The Revised Curriculum's (2011) suggestions.

*I know Mr Lin's role as an initiator, an explainer, and a class controller in the English classroom is the traditional teacher's role in the Chinese context. I also know that The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests English teachers should put students at the center of the class and change our teaching from 'teacher teaches students' to 'students learn by themselves, students help themselves, students examine themselves, students judge students and students communicate with students'. However, the actual situations in our schools or our areas do not allow us to follow The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s suggestion about the teacher's new roles. I visited a school in Nanjing city to observe an English lesson. The students' ability and teacher's ability in that school are totally different from that of students in our school. It is unrealistic to ask schools with lower student and teacher quality like our school to meet the same requirements as schools with good student and teacher quality. Mr Lin's roles in the English class can represent more than 70% (including some excellent teachers that have been trained) of the English teachers' views and behavior in our city. We do not know what*

*else we can do. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

The interviews illustrate and support the questionnaire results (see Table 5.14.1 and 5.14.2): only 52% of the questionnaire participants agreed that *‘student-centred teaching is successful in practice’*. 35% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment while rural respondents gave the highest proportion of neutral responses (35%). This suggests that the emphasis on student-centred teaching in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is still something which teachers, especially rural teachers, are still adapting to and are not at all certain about.

**Table 5.14.1 English teachers’ responses to questions about student-centred approach**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
72. Student-centred teaching is successful in practice.	City	0 (0)	8 (11)	22 (29)	42 (55)	4 (5)
	Suburb	6 (8)	6 (8)	31 (39)	31 (39)	5 (6)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	28 (39)	36 (50)	0 (0)
	Total	6 (3)	22 (10)	81 (35)	109 (48)	9 (4)

Nearly half of the questionnaire participants (46%) agreed that *‘making students the centre of the class is difficult’* while rural teachers had the highest proportion (62%). 25% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, which shows they did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment while rural respondents gave the highest proportion of neutral responses (28%). This is clearly a challenging area of practice for teachers, especially rural teachers.

**Table 5.14.2 English teachers' responses to questions about student-centred approaches**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
64. Making students as the centre of the class is difficult.	City	1 (1)	24 (32)	20 (26)	27 (36)	4 (5)
	Suburb	11 (14)	23 (29)	17 (22)	24 (30)	4 (5)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	20 (28)	40 (56)	4 (6)
	Total	12 (5)	55 (24)	57 (25)	91 (41)	12 (5)

Of the 18 teachers, eight (44%) said that they did not agree with Mr Lin's view of his role in the English classroom. They thought good teaching should be student-centred and English teachers should be guides, communicators and organisers. For example:

*I do not agree with Mr Lin. His teaching is teacher-centred. I think a good teacher is not simply an initiator and explainer but also has other roles. The most important role is to guide students and let them learn. Students should not be the center of the class. It is important to let students master learning skills. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I do not agree with Mr Lin. His teaching is teacher-centred. I think we should let students be at the center and let students speak out more often. We should not make students just follow the teacher and the tape recorder. Teachers will get tired if they keep on talking, students are tired because they follow without motivation. Rote learning should be changed. Teachers should communicate with students rather than control them. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

However, Teacher Q claimed that the big pressure of the exams in China makes it impossible for her to change her teaching to student-centred.

*I do not agree with Mr Lin's teacher-centred method. Students should be the center and teachers should not control the whole class. However, student-centred teaching is very time consuming and does not seem helpful for passing exams. The pressure of exams makes me focus on the role of imparting knowledge rather than being a guide, communicator, etc. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

The teachers' responses to the vignettes (above) show that more than half of the 18 interviewees still agree with teacher-centred teaching rather than student-centred teaching. Although some interviewees expressed the view that English teachers should be the guides, communicators and organisers and the English teaching class ought to be student-centred, they also claimed they had to be knowledge transmitters and class controllers due to the heavy pressure from examinations in China. Consequently, they fall back on the role of imparting knowledge through explanation, reading, writing and giving examples. The questionnaire respondents gave similar responses. From the questionnaire results (see Table 5.14.3), although the majority of the questionnaire respondents (88%) agreed with the statement '*English classes should be student-centred, teachers should not dominate the class*', 19% of the respondents agreed that '*the English teacher's role is only to teach knowledge of foreign languages*' while 9% of them did not understand, were uncertain or unwilling to comment. Regarding the teachers' role in The Revised Curriculum (2011), 19% of the respondents agreed that '*The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should dominate and design all the teaching content, process and assessment criteria. Students do not need to participate*' while 12% of them neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting a lack of understanding, uncertainty or unwillingness to comment. Given that this is the very essence of The Revised Curriculum (2011), 20% is a surprisingly high agreement rate with the opposite statement. Teachers' questionnaire choices about language learning beliefs are not very consistent with their choices about their



understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011). This may be because that they assumed the statements in the questionnaire were also emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (from questionnaire data) but the interviews reveal they may not understand the real meaning. The choices about practice are consistent with those about the understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

**Table 5.14.3 English teachers' responses to questions about student-centred approach**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
26. English classes should be student-centred. Teachers should not dominate the class.	City	0 (0)	4 (5)	9 (12)	35 (46)	28 (37)
	Suburb	4 (5)	2 (3)	2 (3)	53 (67)	18 (23)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (6)	52 (72)	16 (22)
	Total	4 (2)	6 (3)	15 (7)	140 (61)	62 (27)
27. The English teacher's role is only to teach knowledge of foreign languages.	City	17 (22)	37 (49)	5 (7)	14 (18)	3 (4)
	Suburb	22 (28)	33 (42)	12 (15)	9 (11)	3 (4)
	Rural	4 (6)	48 (67)	4 (6)	16 (22)	0 (0)
	Total	43 (19)	118 (52)	21 (9)	39 (17)	6 (3)
62. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should dominate and design all the teaching content, process and assessment criteria. Students do not need to participate.	City	16 (21)	32 (42)	12 (16)	13 (17)	3 (4)
	Suburb	33 (42)	27 (34)	3 (4)	11 (14)	5 (6)
	Rural	4 (6)	45 (62)	12 (17)	12 (17)	0 (0)
	Total	53 (23)	157 (46)	27 (12)	36 (16)	8 (3)

The results from both the questionnaire and the teachers' views of the vignettes suggest student-centred teaching is a very challenging area of practice for teachers. Most teachers did not accept the change in the teacher's role for English language teaching.

#### **5.14.3 Teachers' views about communicative activities and examination performance**

I gave the 18 interviewees the following vignette about what Mr Lin thinks about teaching objectives:

##### ***The Vignette***

*Mr Lin says, 'Communicative activities such as group work should not take too much time in class because passing the exams with high scores is the final teaching goal and the most important thing for English teaching at school.'*

Then, all the 18 teachers were asked: 'what do you think of Mr Lin's viewpoint? Why?' Of the 18 teachers, 12 (67%) said that they agreed with Mr Lin's view that examination performance is the most important reason for learning English.

*I agree with Mr Lin's view that students' examination performance is the most important thing. This is the reality. We have lots of content to teach with limited time. Although teachers want to have more oral drills so students can use English in an authentic context, the reality is that oral drills take too long so we cannot finish the teaching tasks. Parents and school leaders focus too much on students' examination performance. As a result, we regard the examination performance as the first and most important thing. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

*I agree with Mr Lin's view that students' examination performance is most important because of our 'exam-orientated education'. We do not*

*have any other solutions but to focus on students' examination performance. Communicative activities such as group work can focus students more on the knowledge they have acquired, but we do not have many opportunities to do this because lesson time is limited. We have to use up more time focusing on how to improve the students' scores. Actually, teachers are feeling very pressurised. (Teacher K, from a city)*

*I agree with Mr Lin's view that students' examination performance is the most important objective. Group work can be used properly in class. Theoretically, we should not agree with the view that 'passing the exams with high scores is the ultimate teaching goal and the most important aim for English teaching at school'. However, both how we judge students and how the school judges teachers are based on students' examination performance. So, in a real situation, I agree with Mr Lin's view about examination performance. Regarding group work, I think we do not have much time for this because we have lots of content to teach. (Teacher N, from a rural)*

*I agree with Mr Lin's view that students' examination performance is the most important objective. Group work can be used properly in class. Theoretically, we should not agree with the view that 'passing the exams with high scores is the ultimate teaching o the No.1 Senior High School (the best middle school in Yingtian city), what is my purpose and function as a teacher? (Teacher R, from a rural)*

The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks English teachers to do many new things such as including more group work and promoting more communicative use of language (as discussed in Section 4.2.2 and Section 4.2.9 in Chapter Four), but the school leaders and student parents' emphasis on students' examination performance, the 'exam-oriented education' and the limited time for lessons are most important for many teachers. This finding from the vignette is echoed in the interview comments in other sections. So, though the intention of The Revised Curriculum (2011) is to promote more communicative use of English

language teaching, the perception is a tension between the teaching demands of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the exam demands.

Of the 18 teachers, six said that they disagreed with Mr Lin's view that good examination performance is the most important reason for learning English. They thought improving students' English language use is also important or more important than improving the students' examination performance.

*I do not agree with Mr Lin's view. Although examination performance is very important under the 'exam-orientated education', I pay more attention to improving students' English language use ability because I think this is the real purpose of learning English. In my teaching, I use lots of group work to promote more communicative use of the English language. I do not judge students' English ability only according to their exam scores. I also take their English use ability into consideration. Some children can get high scores in exams but they cannot communicate with people using English. I will not think such children possess good English ability. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I think group work in class can motivate students and also improve their examination performance. However, after observing in other teachers' classrooms, I found they do not like using group work in their classrooms. I do not agree with Mr Lin's view that 'passing the exams with high marks is the final teaching goal and the most important thing for English teaching at school' because I think improving students' language in use ability is the most important thing rather than passing exams. However, the reality is that students cannot get into good high schools if they cannot obtain high exam scores. From my point of view, exam scores do not mean everything. I am not the same as many traditional teachers, I have some different views. I think I have conflicting ideas: on the one hand, I want to have more group work and let students learn English happily; on the other hand, I expect students get high exam scores and get into a good high school. (Teacher O, from*

*a rural)*

These teachers may be more attuned to The Revised Curriculum's (2011) demands and the role of teachers it epitomises.

#### **5.14.4 Teacher's and students' roles in a successful lesson**

All 18 teachers were asked: *'Thinking about a successful English lesson you have seen or taught, what you think the role of the English teacher was in that lesson? What do you think the role of the students was in that lesson?'*

Of the 18 teachers, 14 said that the successful English lesson they saw was student-centred. In that lesson, the teacher's role was as a guide, organiser, communicator and designer; the students were very positive and active.

*In that lesson I saw, the students were very good. The teacher communicated with the students very often. The teacher had studied abroad, he taught English by using the English language. His English was very good. He guided the students to think, to learn and to communicate with each other. He also designed some interesting activities to involve the students. The students were learning very happily and actively. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

*In the lesson I saw, the teacher put the students at the center of the class teaching. She guided the students and did not control all the class procedures completely. She conversed with the students to identify the content that needed to be taught in that lesson. The students were very active. I saw many good lessons taught in that way, now I am trying to copy those lessons and put students at the center. (Teacher M, from a city)*

Teacher O mentioned that, in the lesson she observed, the teacher guided the students to be critical thinkers and active creators rather than passive

recipients.

*In the lesson I saw, the teacher was teaching the students 'reading comprehension'. He is not the same as most teachers, who always ask questions and point out the grammar. His lesson was so attractive. From one point, he expanded naturally to other, related points. He communicated with the students so well and designed the whole lesson to be interesting. His notes on the blackboard were not the usual ones; he drew an elephant on the blackboard by using a brain-storming technique with students to practice students' critical thinking skills. If I were a student, I would enjoy his lessons very much. I think the way he taught the lesson fitted the ideals of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the new textbook's purpose very well, concerning how to teach English. The students in that lesson were not passive recipients but active creators and critical thinkers. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

However, teacher G further pointed out that, although the students communicated well and showed high involvement in that lesson, she worried about how much knowledge the students took from that lesson, and whether that kind of student-centred lesson could improve the students' examination performance:

*That successful lesson I saw was an open lesson (demonstration lesson). The teacher played the role of a guide, organiser and communicator. The Teacher did not explain too much knowledge. The students were at the center of the class. The students were very active and learned very happily. However, I think this kind of lesson is only suitable as a demonstration lesson, not for normal English lessons. The students' speaking ability is improved but they cannot acquire much knowledge from that kind of lesson. If we all taught in this way, the students could not get high scores in exams. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Teacher G's response showed that he did not see any link between the

communicative use of language and student performance.

Of the 18 teachers, four said that the successful English lesson they have seen was teacher-centred. In that lesson, the teacher controlled the class. The students followed the teacher step by step and listened to the teacher very carefully.

*In the lesson I saw, the teacher explained the knowledge in a very detailed way and controlled the class. He guided the students to follow what he said and stimulated the students' interest. He also expanded the content to western culture. He made the students listen to him carefully and they answered the teacher's questions positively. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

*In the lesson I saw, the teacher lead the students very well. The students followed what the teacher said and regarded the teacher as at the center of the lesson. The teaching environment was good, so the students learned English happily. The teacher was humorous, optimistic, lively and confident. He had the ability to motivate the students and make the students follow his teaching. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

The intent of The Revised Curriculum (2011) is to promote student-centred teaching (as discussed in Section 4.2.1; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 4.2.5; 4.2.8; and 4.2.9 in Chapter Four); the responses from the four teachers' above suggest that not all teachers have understood this.

#### **5.14.5 Teachers' opinions of what good teaching is**

##### **5.14.5.1 Teachers' view about good teachers and good students**

All 18 teachers were asked to *'imagine that I invited you to visit and review my English class to help me decide if I was teaching a successful English lesson.*

*What criteria and dimensions of teaching would you look for? What do you expect a good English teacher to do? What do you expect a good student of English to do?’*

Of the 18 teachers, 14 said that they expect a good English teacher to be a good guide, a communicator, an organiser and a designer (design appropriate exercises/activities) for the lesson. A good teacher is expected to control the class properly rather than be completely in control of everything. Moreover, they expect the class to be student-centred and teacher needs to stimulate all the students’ interest. Students are expected to be cooperative and express their opinions actively rather than passive recipients.

*In that lesson, I would expect a good English teacher to motivate all the students. The teacher should have the role of a good guide and communicator. The activities the teacher designed should be useful and interesting to the students. The students in that lesson should be at the center, have the starring role. The students should be actively involved in that lesson and able to express themselves. (Teacher I, from a city)*

*In that lesson, I expect the teacher to motivate all the students and let the students communicate with each other and practice more. The teacher would be only a guide, organiser and supporter. The lesson should be student-centred. The students should be actively involved in that lesson and express themselves often. The teaching and learning environment should be enjoyable. (Teacher Q, from a rural)*

Teacher C expects the Teacher to controls the class properly.

*In that lesson, I expect the teacher to motivate all the students and get every student actively involved in the lesson. The teacher should not keep talking and spoon-feeding the students; instead, the students should be free to actively express themselves. However, I do not expect the students to be overexcited. The teacher should control the class*



*environment properly. The students should be actively involved in that lesson and learn English happily. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Sharing some points in common with the above teachers' opinions on the expected behaviour of teachers and students, Teacher O further mentioned she expects the good teacher not to control the class completely, but to put emphasis on students' humanistic knowledge cultivation.

*I expect a good English teacher to communicate well with the students. The teacher should also have designed the lesson and corresponding activities based on the students' actual backgrounds and levels. In particular, the activities designed for pupils should be interesting and fun. The teacher should not control the class completely but should control it properly. The knowledge he/she focuses on should not only be about what's in the textbooks, but also expand to related knowledge, especially humanistic knowledge. Students in that lesson should not be passive recipients but positively learn English and be actively involved. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

However, the criteria and dimensions of teaching that Teacher B would look for are more detailed. Teacher B puts more emphasis on teachers' teaching manner, positive personality and appearance, English speaking ability, ability to express him/herself, use the appropriate teaching methods, have a clear teaching objective, have proper control of the class and be student-centred:

*Before the lesson, I would ask the teacher 'what is your topic and what is your teaching objective for this lesson'? The criteria and dimensions of teaching that I would look for cover these areas: the teacher's ability to express him/herself well; the teacher's English speaking ability; the teacher's teaching manner (for example, whether he/she dresses properly, whether he/she behaves properly); positive attitude; healthy personality; whether the teacher communicates with the students properly; whether the teaching methods he/she used achieve the objectives (for example, if he/she wants the students to practice*

*cooperatively, I will see whether the group work the teacher has designed achieves this objective); whether the teacher controls the class properly (because the teaching objective cannot be achieved if the classroom is disorganised); who is at the center of the class (I mean the teacher should not spoon-feed the students, students will be very tired and not have time to digest). So, I expect the good teacher to take the role of an initiator, communicator, designer and guide (guide students to find the right direction). When students are involved in the activities, I expect the teacher to be very supportive. I expect students in that lesson not to be passive recipients but actively involved. They should be able to finish all the tasks and activities actively and successfully. This will indicate whether they have understood the teacher and whether the teacher has taught them well. (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

However, in England people would never make personal remarks about a teacher's appearance and would consider it inappropriate to judge someone by their appearance, but the criteria for judgement are different in China.

Of the 18 teachers, four (22%) said that they expected a teacher-dominated classroom. A good teacher is expected to control the class completely so the students follow him/her step by step and listen carefully. All four teachers emphasised the importance of 'bringing the class under control'. For example, Teacher D put strong emphasis on teachers' knowledge and the ability to control the class when judging whether a lesson was a good English lesson.

*Nowadays, a good English teacher is not only expected to teach well and have profound knowledge, but also should possess the ability to bring the whole class under control. The students are expected to be very positive and regard the teacher as the center, and follow the teacher to finish all the teaching goals and tasks. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*A good English teacher is expected to teach knowledge and keep the*

*class under control. S/he has to teach students, lead students and motivate students. Students are expected to be kept under control and not be noisy. They should answer the teacher's question and finish all the tasks successfully and be positively involved in all the activities. (Teacher P, from a rural school)*

Agreeing with the teacher-dominated class, teacher L also focused on the teachers' personality and appearance to judge a good English lesson.

*A good English teacher is expected to make all the students listen to him/her carefully and with keen interest. Students need to follow the teacher's instructions carefully and the teacher needs to bring the class under control. Also, it is better for the teacher to dress properly and look healthy, and to have a sense of humour to let the students learn English in a happy atmosphere. In addition, the teacher is expected to communicate with the students and lead the students to complete their lesson positively. (Teacher L, from a rural)*

#### **5.14.5.2 Teachers' views of activities**

All the 18 teachers were asked: *'are there any teaching activities that you would expect to see but you don't use in your classroom? What are those activities? Why don't you use them? What factors (external or internal) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?'*

Of the 18 teachers, 16 respondents (89%) said that there were some teaching activities that they would expect to see but they don't use in their classroom. The activities teachers mentioned were: multi-media activities (50%), communicative activities (44%) and group work (6%).

The factors the 16 teachers think prevent them from teaching the way they would like to teach included: their school's lack of multi-media equipment (44%); pressure from exams leaving no time or it is not necessary to do other activities rather than focusing on the textbooks (19%); big class size and

limited time for lessons making it too time-consuming to arrange communicative activities (19%); too time-consuming and energy-consuming for teachers to design activities (13%); no related software such as MP3 and video for students (13%); teachers' lack of knowledge and skills (such as the ability to organise group work) (6%); and students' low level of knowledge making it difficult for students to use English for communicative activities (6%).

Seven teachers mentioned that the lack of multi-media equipment prevents them from teaching the way they would like to teach. To take Teacher C and teacher F as examples:

*Some of the activities I want to use but I don't use are multi-media activities. We have TV in each classroom but we do not have computer, so it is not convenient for teachers to involve the students in some multi-media related activities. I heard that some good schools have computers in each classroom. I hope our school can acquire multi-media equipment. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

*We are in a rural area, and our situation here is not good. We do not have enough multi-media equipment so we cannot have multi-media related activities. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

Three respondents mentioned that the pressure of exams allows not enough time to do unnecessary activities, other than focusing on textbooks.

*I only occasionally use communicative activities in class teaching because we are under the 'exam-oriented education' and we will not have enough time to finish the teaching tasks if we use time on communicative activities. We have lots of exams every month, so we also need to explain the exam paper to the students which also consumes lots of time. It is not difficult to involve communicative activities in class but we also need to cope with the exams. Students'*

*examination performance is more important, even though I know The Revised Curriculum (2011) wants teachers to have more communicative activities in class. People will judge the teacher as not good if his/her students cannot get high scores in the senior high school entrance examination, they do not care about students' English speaking ability because the senior high school entrance examination does not test this. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

*Students' examination performance is very important so we do not have much time to think about communicative activities. (Teacher F, from a rural school)*

*The school assesses teachers according to their students' examination performance, so we are under pressure from the exams and do not focus on other activities. We can only focus on teaching textbook knowledge. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Teacher G did not see a link between the students' language use ability and student performance:

*I think communicative activities are not very helpful for improving students' examination performance. They only have fun in the process. I ask them what knowledge they have acquired from that lesson. They remember nothing but having fun. (Teacher G, from a city)*

The teachers' (above) responses show that there is a gap between the curriculum demands for communicative activities and the exam demands which they do not see as pulling in the same direction. While the assessment of teacher remains based on students' examination performance, this will continue to push teachers to concentrate on exams.

Three respondents mentioned that big class sizes make it too time-consuming to arrange communicative activities in class.

*We have lots of students (78) in our class. The large class size and limited time for each lesson make it difficult to have communicative activities in class. (Teacher M, from a city)*

*We will not have enough time for communicative activities because we have too many students (around 80) in my class. (Teacher O, from a rural)*

Two respondents mentioned it was too time-consuming and energy-consuming for teachers to design activities (13%).

*It is too time-consuming and energy-consuming to design some communicative activities. I already feel tired after each day's lessons. (Teacher G, from a city)*

Two teachers mentioned there was no related software such as MP3 or videos for students, which prevents them from adopting more appropriate listening and speaking activities.

*We only have tapes for listening and speaking activities. I think it would be better to have some software such as MP3, video and multi-media to make listening or speaking activities more appropriate and helpful. We do not have a complete lack of equipment, but we lack software. (Teacher J, from a city)*

Teacher B said that the lack of pedagogical competence (especially the ability to organise group work) and yet-to-improve English proficiency and limited time for each lesson prevented her from using more group work.

*The teaching activity that I would expect to see but I don't use in my classroom is communicative activities such as group work. I think group work may be affected by the teacher's knowledge and ability. To take myself as an example, my organization ability is not good, so I*

*normally adopt pair work in my class. I always want to improve the level of participation, so I prefer to have some group activities such as letting six students work together. However, group work may have two disadvantages: first and also the most important problem for me, the class will be disorganised sometimes. I cannot organise it well. Group work would be good if I could organise it step by step very well; second, I cannot always communicate with students in English in their group work because I do not have good enough English proficiency; third, it is time-consuming to organise group work in class (Teacher B, from a suburb)*

One teacher said that students' low knowledge level makes it difficult for students to use English to carry out communicative activities:

*Sometimes I want to organise some communicative activities with the students, but students' English knowledge is very limited. They can only follow the examples I give them and cannot create more, or, they do not know how to use some words in the correct way. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

## **5.15 Training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

### **5.15.1 What training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) had teachers in the study undertaken?**

The questionnaire results and interviews gave some insights into the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) undertaken by teachers. From the questionnaire results (see Appendix 8.1), more than half of the questionnaire respondents (n=143, 63%) had experienced 'a little, but not enough' training as preparation for The Revised Curriculum (2011). Only 5 teachers (2%) agreed that they felt they had done enough training to be prepared for The Revised Curriculum (2011), while the rest (n=79, 35%) had not had any training at all to prepare them for The Revised Curriculum (2011).

Of the 148 teachers who said they had already had some training, their training or guidance had been about ‘the content of the 2011 curriculum’ (n=148, 100%), ‘solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching’ (n=9, 6%), ‘Improving subject knowledge’ (n=18, 12%), and ‘How to undertake research during teaching’ (n=18, 12%). However, they had no training about ‘The assessment reform and how to design tests’ (n=0), ‘school-based curriculum’ (n=0), and ‘How to explore and use resources’ (n=0).

Of the teachers interviewed (see Appendix 8.2), seven teachers said they had experienced a little, but not enough training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) and ten had not had any training at all, while only one teacher felt he/she had had enough training. These are very similar proportions to the questionnaire sample. The issue of training will be discussed in more depth below, in Section 5.14.2.

### **5.15.2 Teachers’ perception of the nature of the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) they had already undertaken**

Training is not uniform in its effect and different teachers may perceive it differently (Vandenberghe, 2002), so the teachers who had undertaken training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) were asked about their perceptions through a set of attitude statements with Likert type responses. There were 6 statements (Statement 14, 34, 35, 50, 51, 74) regarding teacher training asking them to what extent they agreed or disagreed. The results are presented in Table 5.15.

The results showed that participants from different districts (city, suburb and rural) shared similar attitudes towards the teacher training they had had. I combined the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ to calculate the cumulative percentage.

The majority of the respondents showed a positive attitude to the training programme they had already had in terms of it being ‘*linked to actual teaching practice*’ (68% agreed), ‘*helped to develop subject knowledge*’ (73% agreed),



and '*helped to improve teaching practices*' (61% agreed). In particular, the participants from the rural areas reported the highest degree of consensus on these three statements (78%, 67%, and 67% respectively) compared to teachers from the city (59%, 55%, and 60%) and suburban areas (66%, 62%, and 56%), which indicate that they believe the training program they had was helpful to them, especially to the rural teachers.

However, over half of the questionnaire respondents also indicated that the training programme they had already had was '*lecture-based, spoon fed the trainees and lacked interaction*' (66% agreed), was '*short intensive training*' (65% agreed) and '*attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers*' (73% agreed). Questionnaire data also revealed that the participants from rural schools were more likely to agree that they had experienced training which was '*lecture-based, spoon fed the trainees and lacked interaction*' (city: 67% agreed; suburban: 55% agreed; rural: 78% agreed), and the problem of it being '*attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers*' (city: 70% agreed; suburban: 72% agreed; rural: 78% agreed) than the participants from the city and suburban areas. This was examined further in the interviews.

In order to discover teachers' views on their training for The Revised Curriculum (2011), all 18 interviewee teachers were asked '*have you had training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)*', '*If so, what kind*' and '*for how long?*'.

Of the 18 teachers interviewed, four urban teachers, three suburban teachers and one rural teacher had done some training.

**Table 5.15 Teachers' attitudes towards the teacher training for curriculum**

Statements	Location	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
		n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
14. I think the training programme I have already had was closely linked to my actual situation of teaching in practice.	City	1 (1)	13 (17)	17 (23)	39 (51)	6 (8)
	Suburb	6 (8)	5 (6)	16 (20)	44 (56)	8 (10)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	8 (11)	48 (67)	8 (11)
	Total	7 (3)	26 (11)	41 (18)	131 (58)	22 (10)
34. The training I have already had for the 2011 curriculum has helped me to develop my subject knowledge.	City	2 (3)	2 (3)	30 (39)	30 (39)	12 (16)
	Suburb	4 (5)	8 (10)	18 (23)	46 (58)	3 (4)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	24 (33)	44 (61)	4 (6)
	Total	6 (3)	10 (4)	72 (32)	120 (53)	19 (8)
35. The training I have already had for the 2011 curriculum has helped me to improve my teaching practice.	City	0 (0)	9 (7)	23 (30)	42 (55)	4 (5)
	Suburb	3 (4)	13 (16)	19 (24)	41 (52)	3 (4)
	Rural	0 (0)	0 (0)	24 (33)	40 (56)	8 (11)
	Total	3 (1)	22 (9)	66 (29)	123 (54)	15 (7)
50. I think the training programme I have already had was lecture-based, spoon-fed the trainees, and lacked interaction.	City	5 (7)	11 (14)	9 (12)	40 (53)	11 (14)
	Suburb	2 (3)	13 (16)	21 (27)	40 (51)	3 (4)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	8 (11)	52 (72)	4 (6)
	Total	7 (3)	32 (14)	38 (17)	132 (58)	18 (8)
51. I think the training programme I have already had was short intensive training.	City	2 (3)	4 (5)	12 (16)	43 (57)	15 (20)
	Suburb	6 (8)	7 (9)	26 (33)	35 (44)	5 (6)
	Rural	0 (0)	4 (6)	20 (28)	48 (67)	0 (0)
	Total	8 (3)	15 (7)	58 (25)	126 (56)	20 (9)
74. I think the training programme I have already had was attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all teachers.	City	0 (0)	13 (17)	10 (13)	32 (42)	21 (28)
	Suburb	4 (5)	4 (5)	14 (18)	41 (52)	16 (20)
	Rural	0 (0)	8 (11)	8 (11)	36 (50)	20 (28)
	Total	4 (2)	25 (11)	32 (14)	109 (48)	57 (25)

Based on this small sample of volunteers, the teachers in the city are much more likely to have had training in The Revised Curriculum (2011) than their colleagues in rural or suburban areas, reflecting the pattern in the questionnaire results whereby the participants from rural schools were more likely to agree that *‘the training programme they had already had was attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers’* than suburban teachers and city teachers.

In the interview, the 18 teachers were asked: *‘have you had training in The Revised Curriculum (2011)’*, eight teachers (44%) said that they had had some kind of training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) while ten (56%) had not had any training experience for The Revised Curriculum (2011).

Relating to the last question, all the respondents were asked *‘what kind of training have you had for The Revised Curriculum (2011)’* and *‘how much’*, six teachers had had lecture based training, one teacher reported distance learning and one reported self-study.

- **Lecture-based training**

Of the eight teachers interviewed who had had training for The Revised Curriculum (2011), six teachers (75%) said the training programme they had already had was lecture-based, and spoon-fed the trainees, lacking interaction. They also complained that their training was short intensive training, which was far from adequate.

*I had training The Revised Curriculum (2011) for only one day. It was lecture-based training. The expert just spoon-fed the trainees, and we do not have any interaction. The expert taught us about the concepts of The Revised Curriculum (2011). This training was held by the local Education Bureau. It was attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers. Only four teachers from our school were selected to have this training opportunity. We do not get many chances to go on training courses. (Teacher E, from a suburb)*

Other teachers also commented that the lecture-based training they had experienced was quite short and intensive.

*We sat together in a classroom and listened to the teacher teaching us about the concept of The Revised Curriculum (2011). We only had around one hour for the whole training programme. It was very short and did not seem very helpful to me. (Teacher F, from a rural)*

*I had a lecture-based training programme for two days. I do not quite remember what the contents of the lecture were. (Teacher G, from a city)*

*Our school has had a training programme for all the teachers. It was lecture-based and one teacher taught us the concept of The Revised Curriculum (2011). We had this training for maybe three times at the beginning of the semester. We did not have any other training held by the education bureau. (Teacher J, from a city)*

This clarifies the results of the questionnaire. More than half the questionnaire participants mentioned that the training programme they had already had was ‘lecture-based, spoon fed the trainees and lacked interaction’ (66% agreed), ‘short intensive training’ (65% agreed) and ‘attended by teachers on a selective basis and did not cater for all the teachers’ (73% agreed).

#### •Web-based distance learning

Of the eight teachers who had had training in The Revised Curriculum (2011), one teacher (13%) said the training programme she already had was web-based distance learning. Teachers in her school go to the website: <http://teacher.com.cn/> and take The Revised Curriculum (2011) training course online. However, teacher A complained that the online training course was not very helpful:

*In our school, we have a web-based distance learning programme*

*about The Revised Curriculum (2011) which caters for all the teachers. We need to complete this training course every year. But actually, we take this online course only for the purpose completing our tasks; we did not learn much from the training course. (Teacher A, from a city)*

This is only the view of one teacher, but it does allow us to see that web based training may not be the answer on its own.

#### **•Reading and listening by teachers themselves**

One teacher (13%) said the training programme she had already had about The Revised Curriculum (2011) was to read and listen to other teachers in her school.

*In our school, we had training from our English subject team. Our English team leader let all the English teachers sit down together and read The Revised Curriculum (2011) standard in turn, so every teacher there could listen while the others were reading the curriculum. This meant every teacher there was learning The Revised Curriculum (2011) at the same time. We have this training twice a week for almost 45 minutes. The whole training lasts over one semester (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

This technique of reading the curriculum aloud could be a memorisation technique, but it is a very particular view of what it means to understand the curriculum and, taken with the comments above about being spoon-fed lectures, is interesting. This approach to learning the curriculum (reading it aloud) does not suggest training focused on the particular needs of the teachers or the wider implications of the new teacher roles discussed in Section 4.2.9, Chapter Four.

#### **5.15.3 Did they get adequate training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

Related to the last question, all 18 teachers were asked ‘*did you get adequate training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)*’. Only one teacher (6%) from a suburban area said that she had adequate training for The Revised Curriculum

(2011). Then, I followed up by asking her an additional question about her opinion of the training she had had. She complained that although the training seemed adequate to her, she soon forgot what she had learned:

*The training seemed adequate to us if we can learn it carefully. I learnt the concept of The Revised Curriculum (2011) because I read and listened carefully. However, I soon forgot most of what the concept of The Revised Curriculum (2011) was about. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

#### **5.15.4 What training would teachers like?**

From the questionnaire data (see Appendix 8.1), the training or guidance respondents think they need to have urgently was about ‘the content of the 2011 curriculum’ (n=43, 19%), ‘solutions to solve the actual practical problems of English language teaching’ (n=202, 89%), ‘Assessment reform and how to design tests’ (n=39, 17%), ‘school-based curriculum’ (n=39, 17%), ‘How to explore and use resources’ (n=114, 50%), ‘Improve subject knowledge’ (n=166, 73%), and ‘How to undertake research during teaching’ (n=139, 61%). These questionnaire results suggest that the emphasis in the training was on the content of the curriculum, but has not enabled teachers to feel they can understand or address the practical problems they face. These findings were explored in more depth in the interviews with teachers, and the responses suggest that training about the content while valued, has not been fully understood, since they want more. However, most teachers want more help with the substantial issues raised by The Revised Curriculum (2011) - how to operationalise it and improve their own knowledge about teaching. This was further examined in the interviews.

All 18 teachers were asked what training they would like in their interviews. Eight teachers (44%) said that they thought they needed lecture-based training given by education experts:

*I have only experienced the reading and listening training organised by Teacher Colleagues, so I am not sure whether other ways of training would be necessary or not. But I think it would be good if I could have the opportunity to be selected to go for a lecture-based training programme presented by experts, which may be helpful for my actual teaching. (Teacher C, from a suburb)*

Teacher A and Teacher J also mentioned that they believed that it would be more helpful to their English teaching if the training could include some examples of actual teaching practices:

*I think the lecture-based training would be much better than web-based distance learning. I cannot learn much through distance learning. It cannot provide any suggestions for my actual teaching in practical terms. (Teacher A, from a city)*

*I think the lecture-based training that included some actual teaching examples would be more helpful for my teaching. (Teacher J, from a city)*

Teacher D complained that although she preferred lecture-based training, the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) actually is not what concerns her most. She did not see a link between the teacher training and student performance. How to help her students achieve high scores in exams is the most important thing to her.

*I think the lecture-based training is fine. However, I do not think the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) is very important. Although we have the revised curriculum and new textbooks, we still use the old ways of teaching English. We put our emphasis on the exams. We do not care too much about how to improve 'speaking' because we do not have oral tests. Our students need to go to the Yingtan No.1 Middle School*

*(the best middle school in the sample area), how to achieve high scores is what we care the most rather than training. (Teacher D, from a suburb)*

Teacher E had some views in common with Teacher D as she was also very concerned about the exams, and she expected the training to improve teachers' knowledge and consider teachers' actual situations, which suggests she did not see any link between teacher knowledge and student performance:

*I hope the lecture-based training can be more meaningful and helpful. As teachers, our assessment target is students' scores. Therefore, how to improve students' scores is the most important thing for us. Nowadays, primary schools and The Revised Curriculum (2011) set very high requirements for teachers. We really feel pressured. What I really expect from the training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) is that the training can improve our knowledge. Also, it can take our actual situations into consideration, raising scores is the most urgent thing. (Teacher E, from a suburban school)*

Nine (50%) teachers believed that classroom observation would be a more helpful and effective way to carry out revised curriculum training. By observing experts or successful teachersst important thing for us. Nowadays, primary schools and The Revised Curriculums and how to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011) in the suggested way, for example, Teacher J said:

*I prefer to observe experts or any successful teacher's English class. From their class, I can recognise my teaching problems and find a way to solve some of my actual teaching problems. I think classroom observation can offer me suggestions for teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011), which would be helpful and necessary for me. (Teacher M, from a city)*



One teacher said that she preferred to have professional teachers observe her teaching an English lesson, and wanted the professional teachers to give her suggestions based on her actual teaching performance:

*I think it would be very effective and helpful to have professional teachers attend my class and point out my mistakes or problems and also give me some useful suggestions for my teaching. By doing this, I would have a deeper understanding of how to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011) successfully. We cannot teach The Revised Curriculum (2011) very well without helpful suggestions. (Teacher P, from a rural)*

It can be seen that teachers are very concerned about their actual class teaching practices. These findings from the interviews are consistent with the questionnaire results (see Section 4.4.2) and suggest that most teachers want more help and support for the substantial issues raised by The Revised Curriculum (2011) - they want to relate the training to their own teaching practices. They want to learn not only the underlying concepts of The Revised Curriculum (2011) but also how to implement them in their teaching successfully. These comments also reveal that teachers perceive a tension between assessment and the curriculum.

## **5.16 Conclusion**

This Chapter has presented the questionnaire and interview results about The Revised Curriculum (2011) for English, teacher's views of this and the difficulties and challenges the teachers feel they face. The results addressed the issues related to teachers' practical issues- such as understandings about language and training. The results present a picture of change in progress, but also of some confusion. The next chapter of this thesis will discuss these findings, how they relate to existing theories and research and the implications for the future.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters presented the findings from the analysis of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the views of teachers about this curriculum, their roles and their own training and experiences. This chapter will draw together the issues raised from the findings to offer answers to the research questions:

- What challenges does the 2011 new English curriculum pose for teachers?
- What will English teachers need to know and do, to really deliver this curriculum?
- What are the teachers' beliefs about the changes and the challenges?
- How far do they understand their new roles and the demands of teaching this revised curriculum?

The discussion will review the findings reported in the previous chapter in relation to the theories and research in the field identified in the review of the literature as the background to this study. In addition, the implications for teachers and policy makers will also be discussed in this chapter.

This research reports an enquiry into teacher perceptions of, and responses to, The Revised Curriculum (2011), which Chapter Four, the Curriculum Analysis established includes profound changes both to curriculum content and to role of the teacher. The findings presented in the previous chapter show varied levels of understanding of the differences between the previous curriculum and current one and, though, The Revised Curriculum (2011) was supposed to be implemented nationwide by 2021 (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, p 4), it is clear that The Revised Curriculum (2011) cannot be considered to have been fully rolled out yet. Discussion of the existing position of teachers' understanding is, therefore, important in

identifying what future work might best focus on place and what types of activity might be most useful to teachers.

The new approach to teaching English aims at both developing students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and being more student-centred, but seems to pose challenges to teachers and there is more work to do if its key principles are to be realised in practice. Most of the teachers recognised and supported the emphasis on authentic content but found it difficult to use in practice. The majority of the teachers agreed that The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks teachers to take the students' actual situational context into consideration in the planning of the English lessons. Taking students' actual situation into account demands activities, skills and understandings that teachers might not have or be used to using. However, some confusion about the role of the teacher and target language use suggests the new approach is not fully understood or is difficult to realise in practice, because of the teachers' (training and experience, language skills and so on) and schools' situation (class size, available resources, school exam culture and so on). The respondents believed in the need to be reflective and undertake continuing professional development (although their idea of professional development is does not include finding out for themselves, as seems more course dependent), and this will be discussed in Section 6.2.4.2 of this chapter. Moreover, the tension between The Revised Curriculum (2011) and potential exam outcomes seems to make most teachers confused or uncertain about the aspects of speaking and listening (curriculum content) and involving students in the design of activities. In addition, the findings from the data also indicate that teachers from urban, suburban and rural areas face different levels of challenge related to their different beliefs and training for their teaching situation.

This pattern of findings from the philosophy and proposals contained within The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggest the thinking behind the curriculum changes has been influenced by changes in ELT and teacher development worldwide, resulting in emphasis on authentic materials, teachers' professional development, the use of target language for teachers, the new role of teachers,

and the new mixed ability and group teaching methods.

## **6.2 Challenges The Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for teachers**

The introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011) has posed a range of challenges to English teachers in terms of the underlying assumptions made by the authors of the curriculum and the new goals, content, teaching methods, roles of teachers and their professional development and methods of assessment which The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires. These developments identified in Chapter Four do not only require English teachers to change how and what they teach and assess, but also challenge their underlying belief systems. The findings of this study (Chapters Four and Five) show that the key challenges faced by English teachers in implementing The Revised Curriculum (2011) fall into the following areas:

- Challenges surrounding English teachers' understanding of the aims of The Revised Curriculum (2011) with regard to their clarity and complexity;
- Challenges surrounding the teaching resources required for The Revised Curriculum (2011) (their availability, quality and suitability);
- Practical implementation challenges posed by the lack of training to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers' lack of supported professional development in general, the use of target language in teaching, the new role of teachers, and the new mixed ability teaching methods.

The following sections explore the challenges The Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for English teachers using the challenges identified by Snyder *et al.*, (1992); and Fullan (2001, 2007) as the 'characteristics of change' discussed in Section 2.9.5, Chapter Two.

### **6.2.1 Challenges surrounding the ‘clarity’ of the curriculum changes**

As discussed in Section 2.9.5, Chapter Two, according to Fullan (2007) issues surrounding the ‘clarity’ of a change appear in ‘virtually every study of curriculum change’ (p 89). Similarly, this study identified several key challenges which seem to be issues of clarity. These include teachers’ understanding of the word ‘curriculum’ and their understanding of the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011).

#### **6.2.1.1 English teachers’ understanding of the word ‘curriculum’**

In my study, some teachers spontaneously raised the topic of the new textbooks when asked about The Revised Curriculum (2011) (See Chapter Four). They seemed to understand the ‘curriculum’ as the content and structure of the ‘textbook’. This finding suggests that for teachers, the term ‘curriculum’ signified something narrower than the curriculum provided in The Revised Curriculum (2011). As discussed in Chapter Four, The Revised Curriculum (2011) specifies not only what is to be taught but also how to teach it – a syllabus with teaching guidance for teachers. However, in being specific, it also offers more choices and options to teachers than they may have been used to in the previous, more textbook based curriculum. In this way The Revised Curriculum (2011) is both more prescriptive than the old one, in that it specifies teaching methods, but also much less prescriptive because it gives teachers choices.

Teachers’ limited understanding of the ‘curriculum’ may be due to teachers’ lack of subject knowledge, including understanding the wider senses of the term ‘curriculum’. It may be that teachers have never encountered a wider meaning of the term but are used to the curriculum being entirely within the textbook. In addition, some of the interviews indicate that the teachers have limited time to cover everything in The Revised Curriculum (2011). For example, Teacher I in the interview said, *‘We have lots of content to teach, but very limited time in class ... We must use the limited time to ensure students learn all the content and get high scores in the exams’*. This may mean they

tend to choose the content they like, find easy to teach or consider more important (Yero, 2010), which is likely to be textbook based, rather than the speaking and listening or authentic material-based activities the curriculum suggests. As Ramsden (2003) claimed, the assessment is the curriculum, as far as the teachers are concerned. So, teachers will teach what they think students will be assessed on, not what is encouraged by the curriculum, discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.2.1, Chapter Six. This may be another reason why teachers put great emphasis on the textbook and believe it includes most of the necessary content for English teaching. This also indicated that many English teachers are strongly textbook-based, reflecting the findings of studies discussed in the Review of Literature (See Chapter Two) that the traditional teachers' classroom in China is very textbook-based (Adamson *et al*, 2000; Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Gu, 2002; Yan, 2012; Zhang, 2007), and this is partly because textbooks can support and guide teachers to complete the teaching objectives in a safe and easy way and because the textbooks include most of the content required for the exams (Gu, 2002). Given the historical situation discussed in the Review of Literature, it can be seen that the massive expansion of English teaching in recent Chinese history has demanded some resources, and textbooks have a long history in China (Biggs, 1996; Gu, 2002; Jin and Cortazzi, 1996; 1998; 2006; Yan, 2012). However, modern China may now be able to support greater autonomy in the selection of resources.

Another issue of clarity in the curriculum changes is the understanding of the 2011 curriculum document as presented to them. The results from the interviews and previous web-forum comments suggest that teachers experienced difficulty understanding specific details of curriculum content such as professional development, student-centred teaching, humanistic value and teachers' new role as developer and creator (See Chapters Four and Five). My study shows that some teachers were confused as what The Revised Curriculum (2011) is did not fit their existing understanding of curriculum. For example, the interviews show that some teachers experienced difficulty understanding the term 'humanistic value' in The Revised Curriculum (2011),

Teacher B said,

*Humanistic value includes cultural infiltration between Chinese culture and western culture in English teaching. Humanistic values means we should pay attention to the differences between Chinese culture and western culture in English class.*

The above comment reveals that what ‘humanistic values’ are did not fit in with Teacher B’s understanding of this term. Spillane (2002) says such dissonance can interfere with teachers’ ability to implement an educational change as it is intended. For this reason, according to Wedell (2005) teacher training for a revised curriculum can be more effective if more emphasis is put on new contents that teachers have not learned before or content which teachers may have difficulty in implementing. In my case, English teachers reported their difficulty in understanding The Revised Curriculum (2011) in many areas, and this also showed that the teacher training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) was inadequate.

#### **6.2.1.2 English teachers’ beliefs about the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

My findings suggest many teachers were trying to teach and understand The Revised Curriculum (2011) as if it were just like the earlier curriculum. For instance, in Section 5.5, Chapter Five, three of the 18 interviewees said they did not find any significant differences between the 2001 earlier curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011):

*I found there was nothing special in The Revised Curriculum (2011) because the previous 2001 curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) are almost the same. No big differences. (Teacher G)*

This indicates that some teachers have either not noticed or not understood the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) and are not in a position to address these changes. However, I argue, based on the comparative analysis of the

2001 curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) in Chapter Four that the two documents have different visions of language learning, different roles for teachers and students, and demand different activities and materials. The Revised Curriculum (2011) aims to create a different relationship between the curriculum and the teacher from the older, prescribed curriculum of 2001. Although some teachers in this study were simply teaching the content of the textbooks, the examination of the curriculum (see Chapter Four and web based work) established that The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the earlier curriculum so different that, even the expression ‘under The Revised Curriculum (2011)’, used by so many of the teachers in my interviews, is not appropriate if they only taught from the new textbooks and changed no other aspect of their teaching practice. The Revised Curriculum (2011) is about teachers creating the curriculum to suit their students’ needs, rather than laboring ‘under’ the yoke of a centrally prescribed programme. One aspect of this change in the relationship between teachers and the curriculum is their level of professionalism and professional development. The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires teachers to take responsibility for their professional development and sets out a very ambitious view of professional development. This also means that offering a new view of professional development entails a new approach to planning and resourcing lessons and greater choice for teachers, hence this curriculum also presents a completely different view of what it means to be a teacher. This is really challenging for teachers. If teachers do not recognise there are new demands, then they are unlikely to develop the practice to address them.

### **6.2.2 Challenges surrounding the ‘complexity’ of the curriculum change**

In Chapter Two, the Review of Literature, I suggested that when teachers are confronted by the need to use new materials, to learn new skills and are expected to alter their existing beliefs regarding teaching and learning, is referred to as ‘complexity’ in the educational change literature (Brummelhuis, 1995; Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2007; Snyder, Bolin and Zumwalt, 1992). These researchers identify complexity to include such new skills and new practices,



which can themselves be seen as barriers to change. The complexity faced by the teachers interviewed in this study were: the pressure of exams, a lack of understanding of The Revised Curriculum (2011) and large class size, all of which made The Revised Curriculum (2011) too complex for them to implement. I will explore these in turn, beginning with a discussion of the pressure of assessment.

#### **6.2.2.1 Conflict between The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the exam system**

Biggs (2003) argues that a good teaching environment is one that is consistent. Teaching, curriculum and assessment practices should be aligned to the aims of teaching. In a poor education system, the assessment and curriculum are not well integrated and tuned to support teaching and learning. In an integrated education system, on the other hand, all aspects of the curriculum and assessment are tuned to support high level teaching and learning (Stiggins, 1994; Valencia, 1990; Wiggins, 1989; Biggs, 2003). Perhaps one of the most significant contextual factors preventing the implementation of the curriculum, certainly in China, has been the mismatch between new curriculum (2011) content and assessment. In my study, most of the teachers claimed the mandated testing fails to test students on what they should be taught according to The Revised Curriculum (2011) and this results in narrowing of the curriculum intentions so that, instead of experiencing the wider, more authentic curriculum planned by the MOE, students actually experience a curriculum narrowed by the demands of tests. For instance, teachers say they do not have time to do speaking and listening, a key part of The Revised Curriculum (2011), because it is not examined (Section 5.13.5.2, Chapter Five). So, I argue that assessment is perceived by these teachers as poorly aligned with The Revised Curriculum (2011) and may not assess what teachers are asked to teach according to what The Revised Curriculum (2011) values. Considering the very important role of the student outcomes in the Chinese context, it is a critical first step to align assessment with the curriculum and test what the curriculum requires taught (Stiggins, 1994; Wiggins, 1989), otherwise, a narrowing of the aims of The Revised Curriculum (2011) or ignoring important

changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) occur. When assessment is aligned with curriculum, both teachers and their students benefit. In that way, teachers would be more able to focus on what The Revised Curriculum (2011) values make the best use of their time and lessen the pressure from the divergent requirements of the exams and curriculum. Because assessment should involve real learning, teachers can integrate continuous assessment into daily English teaching and classroom activities. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages involving more speaking activities and group work (MOE, 2011), so assessment might include a speaking test or assess students on their performance in a presentation or role-play. Students are also more likely to learn and benefit from The Revised Curriculum's (2011) encouragement of more student-centred and communicative teaching because teaching would be more focused, so they could be assessed on what they had been taught and is encouraged by The Revised Curriculum (2011).

However, in my research, what is emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) and assessed in exams seems inconsistent. Assessment focused on testing language knowledge alone is not aligned to the aims of teaching proposed by The Revised Curriculum (2011) where 'the main aim of learning English is to improve students' all-round language use ability and help students develop as a whole person' (MOE, 2011, p 8). But just testing students' knowledge of English language rather than their ability to use the language persists. Teachers consequently now have two main pressures - the exam and the curriculum - which they see as pulling in different directions.

The tension between The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the exam outcomes is most visible in the areas of speaking and listening (curriculum content) and involving students in the design of activities. In China, the prevailing form of assessment for students is written summative assessment (Wu, 2001) and most frequently consists of grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing. Many schools do not assess students' listening ability and most of them do not assess students' speaking ability (Zheng and Adamson, 2003). This form of exam undervalues the importance of listening and speaking

competence and communicative competence (Peng, 2007). As a result, I argue that the assessment format in China does not encourage the teaching of speaking and listening because they are not a compulsory part of the examination assessment.

By contrast, The Revised Curriculum (2011) strongly encourages speaking and listening. The 2001 earlier curriculum (piloted document) stresses the importance of including listening in the mid-term and end of the term exams but does not make this a compulsory part of the exams, also, the earlier curriculum suggests that listening should not be less than 20% of the total assessment (MOE, 2001) but speaking is not emphasised. The Revised Curriculum (2011) changed the wording to ‘The objective of teaching at the end of certain unit determines the content and form of summative assessment and summative assessment can include speaking, listening and writing and language knowledge use’ (MOE, 2011; p 36). Also, The Revised Curriculum (2011) specifies that all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) should be included in English language teaching (MOE, 2011). It can be seen that speaking and listening get more emphasis in this revised curriculum. However, there is still no mandatory assessment of speaking and listening, only optional tests, rather than compulsory, which explains why they are not emphasised by teachers because they are not tested. So, despite the introduction of student-centred, communicative teaching in The Revised Curriculum (2011), students’ English knowledge is still tested by means of a written exam based on textbook content as in the past. This meant the students’ main goal was passing the exam, not mastering the language. With no quantifiable reward for embracing student-centred approaches, teachers in this study tend to feel discouraged from engaging with them.

In addition, The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages formative assessment focuses on students’ language use ability and adds various examples of how to evaluate students using formative assessment and emphasises the function of assessment to promote English learning and student development, (MOE, 2011; Yu, 2012). The Revised Curriculum (2011) gives 41 examples of assessment

methods (25 for primary schools) including formative assessment scales, summative assessment exercises and scoring criteria. The examples are more practical ways of evaluating students' language use ability. According to The Revised Curriculum (2011) standard, the new assessments should reflect the 'student-centred' concept and let students positively participate in the assessment process. New assessment should pay attention to the process of students' all-round language use ability development, the changes and development of students' affective, value and learning strategies. The new assessment should combine both summative and formative assessment, focusing on learning results, but also on the learning process. During the process of designing and implementing the new assessment, the English teachers should adopt reasonable and variable assessment methods (such as student self-assessment, peer assessment, parent assessment and teacher assessment) according to students' levels, age, affective and cognition level, to achieve the combination of summative and formative assessment (MOE, 2011, p 34). Formative assessment can include classroom activities, regular exams, learning portfolios, questionnaire survey and interviews. Under this new assessment regime, students can choose the assessment method which suits their needs, with their teacher's guidance. The basic guideline for formative assessment is 'motivating students' (MOE, 2011, p 35). Teachers should help the students feel successful and confident through assessment which shows their learning progress. Summative assessment could combine oral tests, listening tests and written assessment to examine students' all-round language use ability (MOE, 2011, p 35). The revised curriculum mentions that the big exam at the end of Year 9 (junior middle school final year) should assess students' all-round language use ability rather than just testing students' abstract knowledge of language.

However, despite the rhetoric about more formative assessment and stronger emphasis on speaking and listening, teachers' responses from the interviews in this study indicate that they do not see this. For example, although teachers stated that they believed the new English curriculum looks much easier than the previous one in their interviews, they claimed the exams were becoming

more and more difficult, and this, they felt, forces teachers to use fewer communicative activities. So, though the intent of The Revised Curriculum (2011) is to promote more communicative use of language and student-centred teaching, the perception of a gap between the curriculum and the existing exam demands may well work the opposite way. Teachers feel the need to do more exam practice activities to make up for the reduced textbook content. Teachers stated that they did not bother to teach or rarely had the chance to teach speaking and listening since these are not included in the big exams, especially when they face so many challenges and pressures in involving communicative teaching, student-centred and student-participated teaching in class. As Ramsden (2003) claimed, the assessment is the curriculum, as far as the teachers are concerned. So, teachers will teach what they think students will be assessed on, not what is encouraged by the curriculum. This explained why teachers were so concerned with teaching grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing because they account for more marks in the big exams in China and exams mean more to teachers, students and parents than improving students' language use ability. This is the washback effect of the important exams in the Chinese exam-oriented education system (Dai, Gerbino *et al.*, 2011, Xiao, Sharpling *et al.* 2011). This finding is supported by the literature on English language teaching and learning in China (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a; Sun and Cheng, 2002, Hu, 2002a, Hu, 2002b, Hu, 2005; Halstead and Zhu, 2009, Li, 2010, Pan and Block, 2011, Dai, Gerbino *et al.*, 2011; Xiao, Sharpling *et al.*, 2011) that in the exam-orientated Chinese educational system, teachers focus on grammar, vocabulary and reading skills rather than developing student' language use. Teachers' responses in this study also indicated that they did not see a link between the promotion of communicative use of language and student performance as they had a narrow view of performance as only related to good exam results.

### **6.2.3 Challenges surrounding teaching resources**

This study identifies teaching resources as another challenge for teachers: their availability, their quality and their suitability for different students. The

importance of materials is highlighted in Section 2.9.5 and 2.10 in Chapter Two, and the analysis of the results is the focus of Chapter Five.

The importance of the quality of front-end material (such as teaching and training material) and resources has been confirmed by many studies on the evaluation of successful changes, for instance, Slavin and Madden's evaluation of the Success For All (1998) series, Kearns and Harvey's evaluation of the New American Schools (2000), and the evaluation of National Literacy and Numeracy by Barber (2000) and Earl *et al.*, (2000). All indicate that the quality of necessary materials used for the change should not be underestimated, and, teachers can go further and faster by adopting good quality materials and 'establishing a highly interactive infrastructure of pressure and support' (Fullan, 2001, p 79).

The Revised Curriculum (2011) has been in operation in compulsory education (primary and junior middle school) since 2011. Despite this, the study finds that relevant teaching materials are still in very short supply. Fullan (2007) explains, 'When adoption is more important than implementation, decisions are frequently made without the follow-up or preparation time necessary to generate adequate materials' (p 91). This suggests ambitious innovation programs are frequently politically driven top-down, thus, the period of time between the decision to initiate a change and the actual beginning of its implementation is always too short to consider the quality of the change. Also, when adoption is more important than implementation, decisions are often made without sufficient time to generate essential resources (Fullan, 2007).

The lack of variety of good quality teaching materials is a major criticism of The Revised Curriculum (2011) in the teachers' interviews. When asked to comment on the teaching resources they use, teachers from urban, suburban and rural areas hold very different views. Urban teachers use multi-media

resources which included the same knowledge as the textbooks, as their main teaching resource. Multi-media equipment has been improved and available in almost every classroom in urban schools since the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teachers from suburban schools tend to regard multi-media as supplementary resources to support textbooks. Teachers from rural schools have changed their resources very little; they were uniformly scathing about the lacking of sufficient multi-media resources and equipment in rural schools. Rural teachers tend to more likely rely on textbooks mainly because multi-media resources are still not available them.

Although The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages teachers to ‘actively use multimedia and network resources to enrich the teaching content and the way it is demonstrated, as well as improve the classroom teaching effectiveness’ (MOE, 2011, p 32), this study has shown that, due to the economic imbalances in different areas in China, some underdeveloped and poor - especially rural - areas face the problem of insufficient resources and equipment. This situation is also reflected in an internet survey of 4000 teachers’ views about the 2001 piloted curriculum in 29 national pilot areas (21st century education research institute, 2011) which found that the respondents from rural areas’ key problem is insufficient training and resources. This can partly explain why teachers in rural areas only have limited choices for their teaching resources, or even, only the textbooks as their available resource. Therefore, it is not surprising that rural teachers are so textbook-reliant.

In addition, results from this study also found that large class sizes resources were time-consuming for teachers’ to find and plan, and teachers’ lack of English proficiency and the pedagogical competence to use different resources in class further aggravate their difficulties, especially when trying to plan suitable materials for students of different levels, which is valued by The Revised Curriculum (2011). Planning resources for different students would mean that teachers had to spend considerable time adapting and sorting out

material before they could close to being usable in the classroom and this provided an additional and unnecessary stress for teachers. This finding confirms Yan's (2012) finding that the teachers' lack of pedagogical competence and English proficiency can make experimenting with new resources more difficult. So, it seems that using different kinds of resources and teaching without textbook in hand, appears to be challenging for many teachers, because it makes enormous demands on teachers' pedagogical competence and English proficiency. A common lack of pedagogical competence may suggest that initial training is inadequate and/or in service training is not enough. To improve their English proficiency and research ability, teachers may need to embrace professional development more fully.

Moreover, although multi-media resources and internet materials are widely used among most urban teachers and some of the suburban teachers in this study rather than textbooks alone, the internet resources and multi-media materials used in English lessons still follow the 'transmission' teaching model and serve as an alternative to textbooks, but with extra multimedia effects. This finding confirms the results of Wang and Coleman's (2009) study on 'Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education in China' shows that internet materials are used as a source of information rather than a means of communication. Similar results are found in other researchers' studies (Zhong and Shen, 2002; Liu, Lin and Wang, 2003; Gu, 2006; Wang and Coleman, 2009) that internet resources used in English classes still abide by the transmission-oriented teaching pedagogy and, thus, are no better than a pure delivery of conventional materials through internet platforms. This suggests that although urban participants and some suburban teachers accept The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s expectation that English teachers should adopt modern educational techniques and all available resources such as those on the Internet and multimedia materials for a more authentic language teaching environment (MOE, 2011, p 32), textbooks tend to still remain the predominant authoritative sources of language and culture input in English classes while internet information tools and multi-media resources are normally used as a



complementary means of language input but serve a similar function to textbooks.

Teachers' comments in this study also suggest that many of them agreed it was the teacher's job to search online for multi-media teaching resources but that there were very few resources available for them to adapt; this was more challenging for rural schools with insufficient multi-media equipment. I claimed that the teaching resources for most rural schools could be described just as some participants said, of 'very poor' quality. This conforms to Ping's (2015) study that coping with local constraints such as poor quality teaching resources makes it more difficult for rural teachers to implement the change. As a result, teachers in the same department developed and shared their own resources to exchange materials they had created with colleagues from other schools. This situation suggests The Revised Curriculum (2011) could have taken advantage of a valuable opportunity to create a centralised database for a collection of teaching materials which could greatly assist the English teachers.

The reasons why teachers in China rely so heavily on textbooks for teaching material could be attributable to the cultural and historical factors discussed in Section 2.10, Chapter Two. Cultural factors include the emphasis on 'transmission' which relies on the mastery of knowledge and rote-learning of content (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996); teachers' lack of professional competence and expertise; the continuation of the examination-oriented culture and examinations which test detailed factual knowledge of the English syllabus and the lack of facilities and equipment in some areas may account for the dominant role of textbooks in Chinese teaching. Moreover, from a historical perspective, textbooks reflect the changes in the socio-political context in China as well as being the most important resource for teachers and students to learn English. Consequently, teachers are very reliant on textbooks and regard them as their main teaching resources.

#### **6.2.4 Practical implementation challenges posed by The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

The following sections discuss the key practical implementation challenges posed by The Revised Curriculum (2011) for teachers and teachers' beliefs and perceptions about those changes and challenges. The questionnaires and interview findings reveal that the majority of respondents had a positive attitude to group work (See Chapter Five, Section 5.10 and 5.13), more communicative and student-centred teaching (Section 5.13), more emphasis on phonetic ability (Section 5.12), involving students in the design of activities (Section 5.13), more target language use (Section 5.8.4), grammar teaching (Section 5.8.5) and vocabulary teaching in context (Section 5.8.6) in their English language teaching. The key challenges that most teachers found difficult in The Revised Curriculum (2011) include lack of training, professional skills, the use of target language, the new role of teachers and the demands of teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011), and the new mixed ability teaching methods.

##### **6.2.4.1 Challenges surrounding training for The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

The findings from the questionnaires and interviews suggest that training about The Revised Curriculum (2011) content has been valued, but teachers identified the need for more training to cover the substantial issues raised by The Revised Curriculum (2011) - how to operationalise it and improve their own knowledge for teaching. Furthermore, teachers want a different approach to training. They found the training they already had was '*lecture-based, spoon fed the trainees and lacked interaction*', was '*short intensive training*', '*attended by teachers on a selective basis*' and '*did not focus on the particular needs of teachers*'; most of the teachers claimed that they did not get adequate training (See Section 5.14.3, Chapter Five). The literature suggests that problems relating to teacher training provision in China, particularly the nature of the mainly short intensive courses attended by teachers on a selective basis and which do not cater for all the teachers, has been documented elsewhere

(Vandenberghe, 2002). As discussed in the literature review (see Chapter Two), Chinese teachers' views on teaching are greatly influenced by traditional teaching concepts, while The Revised Curriculum (2011) includes ideas of western origin that had been developed in a different cultural and teaching context. Teacher training programmes, therefore, need not only to update teachers' knowledge but also make huge changes to teachers' existing beliefs, and help teachers to understand and own the innovation (Vandenberghe, 2002). Though the majority of the respondents in this study stated the short courses had a huge impact on them, especially the rural teachers, and they believed the training program they had had was helpful to them, the findings from interviews and questionnaires indicate that teachers are experiencing trouble in understanding the new concepts in The Revised Curriculum (2011) and so they may fall back on their previous teaching experiences and be unable to adopt the innovations. The technique of reading the curriculum aloud used by some teachers might be a memorisation technique, but it is a very particular view of what it means to understand the curriculum and, taken with the comments earlier (see Section 2.6 and Section 5.14.2) about spoon-feeding lectures, is interesting. This approach to learning the curriculum (reading it aloud) does not suggest the training focused on the needs of English teachers to understand, own and see the practical implications of, The Revised Curriculum (2011) (Lin, 2013). Teachers, particularly in rural areas in this study, are willing to confess that they do not understand The Revised Curriculum (2011), but do not seem to feel they should find out about it themselves. This suggests a rather limited view of professional development and may even hint at a passive approach to professional change. This is a slightly speculative conclusion, but the top-down nature of curriculum change discussed in the review of literature, might leave teachers feeling they are 'implementing' change in the curriculum, rather than designing change. The high level of discussion of the textbooks in the interviews seems to suggest that many of the teachers saw the change in the textbooks as the major change, but had not entirely engaged with the key goals of the new approach. The lack of ownership of change by the teachers may also be related to the parts of The Revised Curriculum (2011) that discussed how teachers can develop their professionalism and professional responsibility in

ways which are new to them (see Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four).

Some teachers in this study also mentioned that they suffered a period of high confusion and anxiety because of the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011). Even after more than a year since the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers still had very little sense of what teaching behaviours are related to the underlying rationale of The Revised Curriculum (2011), and why some specific behaviours or skills are related to specific results. For example, Teacher E from a suburban school mentioned that she felt confused and pressured because '*primary schools and The Revised Curriculum (2011) set very high requirements for teachers*'. She said that training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) could help her to improve her teaching knowledge and solve the actual teaching problems she faces, but she also mentioned that she expected the training to help her to improve students' scores, which seemed the most important and urgent thing to her. Teacher E's comments suggests that she did not see a link between teacher knowledge and student performance. This finding is supported by Huberman's (1981) study of an innovative reading program discussed earlier in the review of literature (see Chapter Two), which suggests that changes in teacher beliefs, attitudes, and understanding tend to follow changes in behavior rather than determine it or even, sometimes teachers can change their behavior without noticing any changes in their beliefs and attitudes.

Indeed, some of the teachers did not see the necessity for so much training focusing on the new approaches, because their goals were to improve the students sometimes teachers can change their behavior without noticing any changes in their beliefs and attio appeared as an issue in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011) and teachers' engagement with training. Teachers in this study believed that if the assessment system stays the same, there seems little point in the new content (for example, communicative activities, listening and speaking) as these aspects of language will not be tested in the examinations. Teachers did not see any link between teacher training and

student performance. Enabling students achieve to high scores in exams is the most important thing for many of the teachers.

#### **6.2.4.2 English teacher's beliefs about the nature of teacher professionalism**

Teachers' perceptions about their professional development are a very clear outcome of this study and these results are of particular interest. As discussed in Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four, The Revised Curriculum (2011) raised the concept of 'professional development of teachers' (MOE, 2011, p 32) and clearly points out that: 'The core of implementing new English Curriculum Standard effectively lies in the level of professional development of teachers' (MOE, 2011, p 32). The 'professional development of teachers' reported here includes:

- renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency constantly;
- updating teachers' pedagogical knowledge and constantly improving their practical teaching skills;
- carrying out reflection on their teaching to seek improvement and continually developing their professional knowledge (MOE 2011, pp 32-33).

One of the key outcomes of my study is that underpinning what teachers found difficult to understand was the notion of the teacher as professional does not simply mean 'delivering the curriculum', but includes 'creating the curriculum' for their students. This is the real challenge for teachers. In the implementation process of the curriculum, an important point of disagreement is whether the teachers should be understood as simply the implementers (superficial implementation, no initiative, and limited motivation) of an educational change (Goodson, 2005; Luttenberg *et al.*, 2013) or as joint designers of the change (Spillane *et al.*, 2002; Coburn, 2004), as discussed in Section 2.9 in Chapter Two. In several parts of my Review of Literature, I referred to 'teachers under The Revised Curriculum (2011)' as conceptualised in it, however, one of the

implications of my study is that, if teachers continue to see themselves as just ‘delivering’ a curriculum that exists functionally in textbooks, then they will always have that view of what it takes to be a teacher and so never be ‘teachers under the Revised Curriculum (2011)’ in terms of practice. I suggested in my analysis of the curriculum (see Chapter Four) is that The Revised Curriculum (2011) takes a completely different view of what it takes to be a teacher. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks teachers to:

‘Reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly, so they can both teach and research in the teaching process, improve their knowledge level of teaching theories and practices, and then create and shape their personal way of teaching in the class according to their students’ situations’ (MOE, 2011, p 33).

So, according to The Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers need to make and develop the curriculum rather than simply ‘know’ and deliver it. But in the previous 2001 curriculum, English teachers were simply encouraged to adopt a task-based teaching method. The Revised Curriculum (2011) does not specify any specific teaching method or activity, which should be adopted but encourages teachers to create and shape the methods that suit them, themselves. The teacher is not just an implementer but rather a developer and creator, in this interpretation, with a lot more autonomy. The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires teachers to take more responsibility for their ‘professional development’, to be awareness of their part in the process of creating and shaping the curriculum; to improve their good subject knowledge; to constantly create and develop the curriculum to suit their local conditions (MOE, 2011, pp 32-33). Teachers are thus to be quite autonomous professionals with responsibility for adapting the curriculum to suit their students’ needs, and developing their own knowledge and skills than being nothing more than ‘passive consumers’ of the content of the textbooks. The level of autonomy (deciding which activities are reasonable to design/ too much trouble) can be limited because they seem constrained by the textbooks, large class size, limited lesson time, the exams and the location of the school in terms of the available resources they can tap into. In some ways it is good because it keeps

things aggressive and controlled. , However, teachers are more likely to be positive and dynamically involved in a curriculum they are keen to develop, not one they as bringing more problems and solving none.

Also, because of the lack of qualified teachers in some rural areas (MOE, 2011; Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012), the level of autonomy teachers in rural schools have tends to be lower. This conforms to Ping's (2015) study that there is urgent need for rural teachers to acquire a fair degree of autonomy in classroom decision- making. Hence teachers in rural areas in particular, were more likely to adapt existing activities and materials, rather than positively create and develop the new teaching programmes envisaged in The Revised Curriculum (2011). This is because the economic imbalances in different areas in China (Zhu, 2013) leaves regions with insufficient qualified teachers or resources to 'create a curriculum' which makes higher demands on teachers, students and the local environment.

#### **6.2.4.3 English teachers' beliefs about the use of target language**

Regarding the use of target language in class, there is great variation in the participants. The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages English teachers to use English in the English language (MOE 2011, p 18). The questionnaire findings (see Table 5.6, item 16) show most of the English teachers are aware of the curriculum requirement to use the maximum amount of English in class and that it was very important to use target language to teach English; also, half the teachers interviewed expressed similar opinions and pointed out that teaching English by using the English language is necessary and helpful for students to improve their way of thinking, English speaking ability, English listening ability and also to familiarise students with the English language. Although most of the questionnaires and interview findings agreed that it is useful and necessary to teach English in the English language, only 7 of the 18 interviewees said they used the target language most of the time in practice. Furthermore, only half of the questionnaire respondents stated that they were successful in using the target language most of the time in practice, while more

than half of the teachers claimed they found it difficult to teach English in the English language. Most of the English teachers in this study stated they taught in Chinese most of the class time with the occasional inclusion of 'Good morning', 'Good afternoon', 'Class begins', 'Turn to page', 'Read after me', 'Read aloud', 'Class is over' etc. or such very simple sentences in English (mostly commands/instructions, not interactive). This limits students' daily exposure to speaking and listening in English language (Liu 2007) and is only of a certain type. Teachers' beliefs about target language use in class and their stated classroom practices show an inconsistency, noted in other research about teacher's beliefs and practices (Basturkmen *et al.*, 2004; Desforges and Cockburn 1987; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Galton, Simon *et al.* 1980; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Richards, 1996, 1998, 2001; Olafson and Schraw, 2006; Duffy and Anderson, 1986) discussed in Section 2.5, Chapter Two. Although teachers' beliefs about language teaching are important factors affecting their practice, other factors can also strongly affect and override even strongly held beliefs in actual classroom practice (Borg, 2003; Farrell and Lim, 2005; Richards, 1996). From the interview findings in my study, I can identify three factors which teachers believed affected how much English they used in teaching in the English classroom.

First, the interviews suggest that the students' level of target language proficiency can impact on how much teachers feel they are able to interact with their students through the target language. This research finding is consistent with the findings of other studies (Franklin, 1990; Meiring and Norman, 2002; Oguro's, 2011) that teachers tend to limit their use of the target language with learners whose level of target language proficiency is low. Teachers in my study stated that students' low English language proficiency made it difficult for them to understand what the teacher said and most of the students could not answer in English, so students may lose interest in learning English and feel anxious in the English class which teachers believed was not good for their students' affective learning state. Many studies (Polio and Duff, 1994; Levine, 2003; Littlewood and Yu, 2011; Oguro, 2011; Macaro, 1997) found that there is a relationship between the amount of teacher target language use in English



classes and learners' anxiety. In these studies, some learners feel really threatened and worried if the teachers use too much of the target language. This is consistent with my research findings and might explain why teachers in my study were worried that the extensive use of the English language in English class was not good for students' affective state if their target language proficiency does not allow them to understand much. I suggest that teachers' practices can be influenced by students' affective states and most teachers stated that they were teaching English using the Chinese language. Even when some of the teachers used the target language in class, they further explained that they used very simple spoken English in classes and they sometimes or always translated sentences into Chinese to help students understand.

Second, there is a relationship between the teachers' English language proficiency and the amount of English language used in the classroom. Some teachers in my study stated the reason why they did not use the target language to teach English in their class was because their English proficiency was not good enough. This finding suggests that teachers' lack of English language proficiency affects the amount of target language use in English classes. Kamhi-Stein's (2010) study investigated the relationship between target language proficiency and the actual language used in the classroom by nonnative English-speaking (NNES) teachers in selected schools in Argentina, Pakistan, and South Korea. The results show that the teachers' language proficiency has an impact on the amount of the target language used in the classroom. This is consistent with my findings. So, in order to implement the use of the target language in English classes, English teachers may need to understand and follow The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s suggestions that English teachers '*should constantly update their language knowledge and enhance their English proficiency to contribute to the development of society and language in order to be a good teacher in a modern society*' (MOE 2011, pp 32-33) and '*should have good all-round language ability*' (MOE 2011, p 32). In addition, Phillips (1991) suggests that teachers can participate in a spectrum of formal and informal programs and institutions with specific

missions to upgrade language proficiencies to enhance their practical language proficiency. Strategies such as Saturday workshops (Glisan and Phillips, 1989), video comprehension (Cook *et al.*, 1988), distance learning and online web forums can be helpful to increase teachers' English language proficiency.

Third, the strong emphasis on grammatical points, vocabulary and reading under the exam-oriented education system in China (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a, Hu, 2002a, Hu, 2005) may be another factor which determines the amount of target language used by teachers in English classes. Three teachers in the interviews mentioned that they mainly teach English by using the Chinese language especially when they are teaching grammatical points and other key content that will be tested in exams. The exam-oriented education system in China puts strong emphasis on grammar and reading, and most of the English exams test students' grammar and reading ability rather than their communicative competence (Cortazzi and Jin 1996a, Hu 2002a, Hu 2005; Cheng, 2008; Xiao, Sharpling *et al.* 2011). The result of this is that the teachers and students focused on acquiring linguistic knowledge (Allwright 1979; p168) rather than communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Allwright, 1979) which should be emphasised in foreign language teaching (Richards, 2006). Therefore, I believe that the importance of grammar within the exam-oriented education system could be a factor affecting the amount of use of target language in English classes. The use of L1 is not, of course, unacceptable or unknown in language teaching. Some authors, more recently, have suggested it is more effective and easier to teach English using the Chinese language, especially when teachers need to teach grammatical points and explain the examination papers. Cook's (2001) and Littlewood and Yu's (2011) research findings suggest that the use of mother tongue can be more effective than the target language for teaching grammatical rules, explaining vocabulary meanings, giving instructions etc. This is consistent with my findings.

However, the three reasons discussed here suggest that the issue of English teachers' use of the target language and the L1 in English classes in compulsory education is a complex and challenging for English teachers. The

goal of maximising target language use cannot simply be achieved through teachers constantly using the English language with students and ignoring factors such as the students' and teacher's target language proficiency. English teachers '*should constantly update their language knowledge and enhance their English proficiency*' (MOE 2011, pp 32-33) and '*should have good all-round language ability*' (MOE 2011, p 32) to use target language properly in English classes, but teachers also need an understanding of their students' level of target language proficiency and choose the teaching language and the amount of the target language according to their students' specific language level and characteristics. Teachers need to provide students with opportunities to listen to more extensive uses of the English language in the classroom and try to seek to allay student unease, to reduce student frustrations and to build student confidence (Oguro, 2011).

#### **6.2.4.4 English teachers' understanding of their new roles and the demands of teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011)**

Teachers' perceptions about their new roles are a very real focus of this study and these results are of particular interest. In the implementing process of a curriculum, an important point of disagreement is whether the teachers' role should be understood as simply that of the implementer (superficial implementation, lack of initiative, and limited motivation) of an educational change (Goodson, 2005; Luttenberg *et al.*, 2013) or as a joint designer of the change (Spillane *et al.*, 2002; Coburn, 2004), discussed in Section 2.9.2 in Chapter Two. With taking The Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers need to make and develop the curriculum rather than simply know and deliver the curriculum. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires teachers to:

'Reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly, and both teach and research in the teaching process, improve their knowledge level of teaching theory and practices, and then create and shape their personal way of teaching in class according to their students' needs' (MOE, 2011, p 33).

One of the most challenging aspects of The Revised Curriculum (2011) is the culturally unfamiliar practice of student-centred teaching. The findings in the questionnaire indicate the majority of teachers agreed English classes should be student-centred and teachers should not dominate the class (Chapter Four, Statement 26). However 20% agreed that the role of the English teacher in the language classroom was only to teach knowledge of the foreign language (Chapter Four, Statement 27), whereas 20% agreed that *'The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should dominate and design all the teaching content, process and assessment criteria. Students do not need to participate in'* (Chapter Four, Statement 62). Almost half of the respondents agreed that student-centred teaching is successful in practice (Chapter Four, Statement 72) while half claimed it was difficult for them to implement student-centred teaching (Chapter Four, Statement 64). The interviews with teachers revealed that most of the interviewees saw the roles of the English teacher in classroom were as initiator, explainer and class controller. Those teachers advocated teacher-centred and teacher-led English teaching rather than student-centred teaching and thought that teachers should control the class, supervise and push students to learn. Students were best disciplined to follow what the teacher said. This might indicate that many teachers were not sure about or reluctant to accept the changes to the teacher's role in English language teaching and the demands of teaching The Revised Curriculum (2011); the implementation of student-centred teaching is also a very challenging area of practice for English teachers. Some confusion about the role of the teacher suggests the new approach is not yet fully understood or embraced.

This is not a surprising finding because the teachers' views are confirmed by the literature in the traditional teaching context in China and reflect the views of Confucius discussed earlier in Chapter Two. Here I argue that the perceived dominant role of the teacher in the classroom in a traditional Chinese teaching context might be one of the reasons making it difficult for teachers to change their roles following The Revised Curriculum (2011). Teachers in a traditional context dominate the teaching process (Rao, 1998) and should already have

mastered a profound body of knowledge and have correct answers (Brick, 1991), and control over the class at all times (Tang and Absalom, 1998). In this traditional teaching environment, teachers are seen as far exceeding students in terms of level of knowledge and moral development (Scollon, 1999; Yu, 1984), thus teachers have the absolute right of initiative and are seen as the initiators of knowledge while students can only be passive recipients (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996). However, the expected teachers' roles documented in The Revised Curriculum (2011) put more emphasis on communicative language teaching, and what that implies for the use of language, student autonomy and development (discussed in Chapter Two). The Revised Curriculum (2011) challenges the dominant role of teachers in the traditional teaching context in China and teachers' revised roles are as good guides, organisers, cooperators and communicators (MOE, 2011, p 20, pp 25-26) rather than as dominators. The Revised Curriculum (2011) promotes student-centred and autonomous learning, and encourages students' communicative performance in English classes. However, because of the perceived dominant teacher role in a traditional Chinese teaching context and the influence of teacher beliefs and experience, it is very difficult for English teachers to change their roles and put themselves on a par with their students thus detracting from their authority, hence has not been successful.

In particular, it is against Chinese behavioural expectations to adopt areas of the The Revised Curriculum (2011) that may put teachers at risk of losing face (Scollon, 1999). In this connection, teachers may find The Revised Curriculum (2011) highly threatening and face challenges in switching from the dominant role in the traditional context to the roles under The Revised Curriculum (2011) which encourages CLT and advocates learner-centred teaching methods.

Although some teachers in the interviews expressed their views that English teachers should be the guides, communicators and organisers in English teaching and the class ought to be student-centred instead of teacher-centred, they further claimed that they had to be knowledge transmitters and class

controllers due to the great pressure of the examinations in China, so they fell back on the role of imparting knowledge through activities such as explanation, reading, writing and giving examples. Teachers' responses showed that they did not see any link between promoting the communicative use of language and exam performance. This means that the pressure the examinations exert can be one of the main factors that prevent some teachers from accepting the changing role of teachers in English language teaching. Having demonstrated that The Revised Curriculum (2011) has new roles for teachers as guides, cooperators, organisers and communicators in the classroom rather than being the dominant actors, however teachers do not necessarily see teaching and teachers in the same way as The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests.

#### **6.2.4.5 English teachers' beliefs about student-centred teaching in the English class**

This section discusses the challenge posed by the student-centered teaching in The Revised Curriculum (2011), teachers' beliefs about this change and challenge, and what will teachers need to know and do to implement this in practice.

As discussed in Section 4.2.1, Chapter Four, 'humanistic values' in The Revised Curriculum (2011) means putting students at the center of learning, putting students' development first, teaching English to encourage students to be global citizens and develop a whole persons. Here I use the term 'student-centered' as I believe this best expresses the meaning of the Chinese term.

The findings of interview show that less than half the teachers stated that they were using teaching methods to help students experience happiness when learning English through more communicative activities, and to learn English to be global citizens and develop as well-rounded persons (see Section 5.13, Chapter Five). Teachers' stated behaviour conforms to the key principles of 'humanistic' teaching which I translate as 'student-centred teaching' and

‘communicative language teaching’ as suggested by The Revised Curriculum (2011) standards for the use of language and student development. The new teaching method requires teachers to change their dominant teaching role and put students at the centre, which means teachers need to organise communicative classroom teaching activities that develop students’ English language knowledge and language abilities to achieve the purpose of effective teaching (MOE, 2011, p 20); English teachers need to include more oral practice and create more authentic language contexts for students (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26); English teachers should contribute to students' lifelong development by nurturing new learning strategies and skills they can adapt to new learning contexts (MOE, 2011, pp 1-2); The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests that English teachers should let students take pleasure in learning English (MOE, 2011, pp 25-26); English teachers should create a pleasant, democratic and harmonious learning atmosphere and promote students’ positive affective learning and attitude (MOE, 2011, pp 2-5). This is a huge task, especially in some of the large classes the teachers discussed in their interviews. Making the classroom more student centred calls upon all the aspects of change discussed above - clearly understanding the curriculum, having autonomy in decision making about lessons and resources and the availability of resources which interest students.

Although the questionnaires indicate that most teachers were successful in adopting various kinds of language teaching methods (see Section 5.8.1, Chapter Four), the interviews showed that most teachers said they were still following a more traditional approach that focused on teacher-dominated, textbook-based teaching, grammar-translation teaching and task-based teaching methods without or with very few communicative activities in English classes. This implies that in practice, many teachers’ teaching was still teacher-led. This is in line with many researchers’ findings that although teachers claimed to follow a more communicative teaching approach, most still use traditional teaching methods rather than communicative teaching in class (Long and Sato, 1983, Guthrie, 1984a, Nunan, 1987, Mitchell, 1988, Walz, 1989,

Kamaravadivelu, 1993, Hu, 2001, 2005; Ye, 2007). This implies that the student-centred teaching and communicative language teaching suggested by The Revised Curriculum (2011) standards is not yet fully understood or embraced.

Many obstacles may prevent the adoption of CLT which The Revised Curriculum (2011) advocates. CLT has not been very successful in China since its very introduction (Hu, 2001, 2005; Ye, 2007), that is, CLT has not received widespread support or is often paid lip-service, and the traditional teaching method is still dominant in many classrooms (Hu, 2001, 2005; Ye, 2007). The question is why some teachers have not adopted CLTs encouraged by The Revised Curriculum (2011), and what challenges prevent teachers from changing to student-centred teaching?

My study (Section 5.8.1, Chapter Five) claims that the factors such as lack of understanding or knowledge of The Revised Curriculum (2011), exam-oriented education, large class size, limited time for each lesson, and the traditional teaching teachers are used to, make it difficult to change the teaching method teachers use. This is supported by in the literature on changes in teaching methods that many researchers both in China and Western countries (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby and Sun, 1989; Cortazzi and Jin, 2006; Li, 1984; Liao, 2004; Rao, 1996; Wang, 2001; Hu, 2001, 2005; Ye, 2007) discuss about the constraints preventing the adoption of CLT in the Chinese context; these include large class sizes, lack of the necessary resources, limited time for each English class, teachers' lack of language proficiency and sociolinguistic competence, pressure from examinations, and cultural factors. These factors can make it difficult for teachers to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011) advocating a CLT approach. Teachers face big challenges when they take a more student-centred and communicative teaching approach, hence, English teachers are encouraged to improve their level of professionalism through constant learning in a number of areas (see Section 4.2.7, Chapter Four,) and teachers should constantly update their language knowledge and proficiency in order to be competent to use more effective teaching method such as CLT.



### **6.3 The adaptive and enactment perspectives of the implementation of The Revised Curriculum**

In Section 2.9.2, Chapter Two, I discussed the perspectives of curriculum change. Having examined the documents and heard the views of teachers, I discuss the evidence. I argue that The Revised Curriculum (2011) tends to take both the ‘mutual adaptation perspective’ and ‘curriculum enactment perspective’ for a number of reasons. First, The Revised Curriculum (2011) puts strong emphasis on the importance of ‘experiencing the curriculum’, which means that both teachers and students should participate in the process of creating and developing the curriculum rather than teachers just implementing a pre-defined curriculum created by experts. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) suggests, ‘English teachers should adopt various kinds of teaching methods which attach equal importance to the process and outcome (such as task-based teaching methods) to improve students’ language use ability’ (MOE, 2011, pp 26-27). But in the previous 2001 curriculum, English teachers were only encouraged to adopt task-based teaching methods. The Revised Curriculum (2011) admits not only task-based teaching but also other teaching methods (See Section 4.2.6, Chapter Four) to be used in the classroom, and encourages teachers to actively explore new teaching methods to improve their teaching effects. In this context, the teacher is no longer just an implementer but rather, a developer and explorer. The Revised Curriculum (2011) does not specify any teaching method or activity to be adopted, but encourages teachers to create and shape their own. This new concept requires teachers to be strongly aware that they are taking part in the process of creating and shaping the curriculum, thus they should constantly improve their ability to construct, explore and adapt the curriculum to suit to local conditions (MOE, 2011). See Suggested Teaching Case 1 and 2 (Appendix 1.1 and 1.2).

Second, The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that teachers are required to be the reflectors and researchers of the change process, which regards teachers as automatically, jumping into the role of the makers and developers of the curriculum. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks teachers to

reflect on and summarize their teaching experiences constantly, which can contribute to both teaching and research into the teaching process, improve their knowledge level of teaching theories and practices, and then create and shape their personal way of teaching in class (MOE, 2011, p 33). This is a new requirement for teachers and relates to their need to develop as reflective practitioners. Moreover, teachers should establish teaching teams to work with in an atmosphere that encourages sharing material and experience, promotes communication, cooperative learning and cooperative exploration (MOE, 2011, pp 32-33). See Suggested Teaching Case 2 (Appendix 1.2).

Third, The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages students take initiatives to experience/ master/ summarise English language skills, knowledge and rules by themselves through ‘experience, practice, participation, exploration, and cooperation’ with their teachers’ guidance (MOE, p 26). In this way, students are the key actors, teachers are guides. The curriculum is created within the classroom experience and the teacher-student interaction process and is co-constructed by students and teachers rather than pre-existing, external, or static. The curriculum enactment perspective can stimulate both teacher and students’ motivation (Kristin and Felicia, 2005; Zhang and Li, 2011). However, it demands high requirements from teacher, students and local school conditions. Because The Revised Curriculum (2011) takes an enactment perspective to some extent, English teachers need to develop their skills and knowledge in different ways in order to implement this innovation successfully (MOE, 2011). Teachers need:

- Good subject knowledge and better professional development (专业能力) (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, p 19): subject knowledge encompasses both the knowledge of the subject matter itself and the knowledge of how students learn (Alexander et al., 1992). The Revised Curriculum (2011) requires teachers to constantly renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, p

19; MOE, 2011, pp 32-33);

- Strong awareness to participate into the process of creating the curriculum: teachers need to ‘continually reflect and adjust themselves’, and can ‘both teach and research in the teaching process, improve the knowledge level of teaching theories and practices’ (MOE, 2011, p 33), and actively take part into the curriculum creating and shaping process (MOE, 2011);
- Good curriculum enactment ability: including the ability to understand the curriculum materials; the ability to observe and analyse students’ behaviour; the ability to manage and process the curriculum recourses; the ability to seize the valuable incidental situations and leading to a better teaching effect; the ability to reflect themselves and the ability to do an educational research in order to adjust teachers’ enactment behaviours and improve their enactment efficiency (MOE, 2011; Zhang and Li, 2011). For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) asks teachers ‘creatively use their own experiences and students’ learning experiences and examples to enrich the teaching content’ (MOE, 2011, p 32);
- The ability to use abundant curriculum resources appropriately: resources include all the available resources that could be used for school courses, such as the finances, teaching and learning material, equipment and time demanded by the change. For example, The Revised Curriculum (2011) encourages teachers to adopt modern educational techniques and all the available resources (such as network resources, multimedia teaching resources, library, broadcasts) to enrich teaching content and the media of expression, as well as improve the classroom teaching effectiveness (MOE, 2011).
- Need a broader range of teaching skills: including curriculum design skills, instructional design and implementation skills, and the ability to control the class (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, p 19).
- The ability to undertake research into teaching: English teachers are

encouraged to constantly reflect and summarise their teaching experiences and can both teach and research through the teaching process, improve the knowledge level of teaching theories and practices, and then create and shape their personal way to teach in the class (Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012, p 19; MOE, 2011, p 33).

Although the examples mentioned above show that The Revised Curriculum (2011) tends to take a more ‘creative perspective’, there are also some features that indicate The Revised Curriculum (2011) takes a ‘mutual adaptation perspective’ to some extent. For instance, under The Revised Curriculum (2011), English teachers can modify the curriculum according to local conditions (of the school, learners, expected learning outcome and students’ requirements) without affecting the curriculum’s integrity, framework and continuity. Also, because of the lack of qualified teachers in some underdeveloped regions (MOE, 2011; Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standard Revision Group, 2012), teachers need to make the most of the available distance education resources to improve their English language teaching (MOE, 2011). In this way, teachers, especially in rural areas, may implement The Revised Curriculum (2011) through adapting existing practices and materials, rather than actively developing a new programme. I argue this is because the economic imbalances in different areas in China make it difficult for regions with insufficient qualified teachers and resources to take a ‘creative approach’ which makes high demands on teachers, students and local resources. In my study, I considered the issues from the point of view of conditions in urban, suburban and rural areas because the teachers in these three different areas may have different perceptions and problems relating to The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The Revised Curriculum (2011) makes greater demands of teachers in terms of skills, knowledge and roles (will be discussed in this thesis as well). Teachers therefore would need to adopt to follow the suggestions to bring about the

successful implementation of the innovation.

#### **6.4 Questions about whether teachers learned phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology**

I asked specific question about whether teachers had learnt phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge in a systematic way but looking at the results of their questionnaires, there seem to be little difference between those teachers who had and those that had not. When I asked this question, I wondered whether it made a difference, but I cannot say that it actually does.

#### **6.5 Methodological limitations of the study**

In discussing the findings of my study, I believe it is very important to be clear about the limitations of the study so that the reader can consider them in evaluating the validity of the conclusions.

Perhaps the most interesting limitation arose during the interviewing and analysis of the questionnaires. As discussed in Chapter Five, the high level of agreement, very high level of neutrality and relatively low level of disagreement in the questionnaire data is a very pronounced pattern. Most questionnaire responses are positive but the interview findings suggest these results are not as simple as they seem. Whilst positive views can be inferred from *agree* and *strongly agree* responses, there are far fewer negative views indicated by *disagree* and *strongly disagree*. However, for methodological and cultural reasons, I suggest that the lack of disagreement does not necessarily show they agree more than disagree. The results may show widespread agreement but also show that teachers used the neutral category, either to opt out or they are unsure or to show mild disagreement. The high percentage of neutral responses may express uncertainty, lack of comprehension or unwillingness to disagree. There are two compelling reasons to suggest this conclusion. Firstly, the questionnaire in my study was sanctioned by the schools' management and I got a very high return rate - rather higher than

expected, in fact, based on return rates in the literature. This might indicate exceptionally willing respondents, high levels of compliance or unwillingness to be seen NOT to complete it. The same might be true of the 'disagree' statements. Respondents might not have wanted to seem negative and, rather than disagree, made neutral choices.

A second reason for this tentative suggestion is that the different cultural setting means that teachers in China are more likely to go for neutral responses and avoid negative responses in particular, and I believe this is culturally-related and might be due to the collectivist culture in the Chinese context. Studies that include Asians and Asian Americans suggest that they are more likely to select neutral options and avoid extreme responses on Likert scales. Lee *et al.* (2002) studied a group of Chinese, Japanese, and Americans recruited at ethnic or general supermarkets, and found the Chinese and Japanese respondents selected neutral options more often on items that involved admitting to a positive emotion. Chen *et al.* (1995) compared East Asian and North American students' response styles, and found students from the two collectivist cultures (Chinese and Japanese) demonstrated a greater preference for neutral and less preference for extreme values than those from the individualist cultures, especially the U.S. students. In another study of college students, Grandy (1996) found Asian American students tended to endorse neutral options and avoid extreme responses on a five-point Likert scale more than European American students did.

Social scientists do not agree about why Asians or Asian Americans prefer neutral options and avoid extreme responses, but most believe it is a cultural characteristic. East Asian cultures emphasise the need to fit in with others and avoid conflict in society. Hoy (1993) has referred to this 'aversion to the spotlight' as 'cultural shyness.' Johnson *et al.* (2005) discuss two cultural orientations - individualism and collectivism - and suggest that a neutral response style fits the cultural norms and imperatives of persons living in collectivist cultures, since collectivism is associated with a greater emphasis on interpersonal harmony and puts less emphasis on individual opinions (Triandis

*et al.* 2001). Therefore, I assume that people living or growing up in East Asian countries such as China and who share similar cultures tend to behave modestly and politely and maintain harmony in social relationships and avoid expressing extreme opinions, especially negative responses, hence may prefer to use a neutral category to opt out, remain unsure or even show mild disagreement. The above researchers' findings might explain the very high level of neutrality and relatively low level of disagreement in the questionnaire data and, indeed, the very high completion rates. They also represent a limitation of the study. Although this cannot be avoided, readers should recognise this limitation as possibly affecting the validity of the conclusions.

Another limitation is about the instrument for collecting data in this study. This study is largely based on self-reporting questionnaires and interviews where the teachers give their views and their understandings, and as such, it suffers from the limitations of all self-reporting research that the answers given by the respondents may not be always true as they may not answer every question carefully and patiently or reflect what they actually do in practice. Despite the questions in the questionnaire and interview being planned and piloted, and the questions being evaluated carefully through the pilot study to minimise any limitations, it was not possible to avoid limitations completely.

Also, the sample area is only one area of China, so the findings cannot be generalised to the whole of China. However, the validity of this study is based on the transparency of the presentation of the data collected and there was no intention to generalise from these findings. This study focused on one area – Jiangxi, not a picture of all the English teachers in compulsory education in China. Despite this, this study aimed to shed light on and provide insights into other, related studies.

Having discussed the limitations of this study, the reader will be able to keep

these in mind when considering the issues discussed above and the exploration of some of the reasons for them.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has interpreted the study's key findings in relation to the research questions, highlighting some of the challenges teachers face in the implementation of The Revised Curriculum (2011). The final chapter explores the implications of this study in further detail and provides recommendations for future research.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

#### **7.1 The implications of this research**

The primary aims of this study were twofold. The first aim was to understand the challenges The Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for primary and junior high school English teachers. On the basis of this, the second aim was to understand English teachers' beliefs about The Revised Curriculum (2011) and what challenges they identified.

In this study, three examinations as the first Phase of the work showed The Revised Curriculum (2011) is not simply about changing teaching methods; it is about very profound changes in the goals, methods of English teaching and huge changes to the role of the teacher. In the second part of Phase one, from the web forum, it was clear that teachers are engaged this process of reviewing how to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011), but their understandings are not complete, and, my study demonstrates that teachers face various challenges with some fundamental issues such as the shift to student-centred teaching and learning and the new role of the teacher. A major issue is what affects the shift to student-centred teaching and learning apart from the need for new methods is the tension between assessment and The Revised Curriculum (2011).

My study has identified that The Revised Curriculum (2011) presents a completely different vision of English teaching, a new, wider definition of the curriculum and a broader role for English teachers, as discussed in Chapter Four. It specifies not only what is to be taught but also a broader framework within which it is to be taught and the values behind that teaching. It specifies how students should feel about learning and what teachers' roles should be - it

is a syllabus, but also broader teaching guidance for English teachers. The data from the web forums, questionnaires and interviews has shown that The Revised Curriculum (2011) and its aims challenge teachers in terms of how far they understand its intentions, the pressure of assessment and local school situations such as class size, teaching resources (their availability, quality and suitability), teachers' research ability, and teachers' English proficiency and pedagogical competence, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

The implications this study has identified are the lack of clarity of The Revised Curriculum (2011) in terms of teachers' understanding of the word 'curriculum' and teachers' understanding and beliefs about the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011). My study suggests these teachers were finding it difficult to understand the notion of the teacher as professional who is more than a figurehead who simply 'knows' and 'delivers' the curriculum in the changed new curriculum processes, but the teacher is now regarded as 'designing' and 'creating' the curriculum for their own students.

This study also identified an urgent need to consider the nature of the assessment system. The results from the comparative study between the old and The Revised Curriculum (2011) (as discussed in Chapter Four) show that what is emphasised in The Revised Curriculum (2011) is not consistent with what is assessed in the exams. The tension between The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the exams show up most in the areas of speaking and listening, involving students in the curriculum designing process, and more formative assessment (as discussed in Section 6.2.2.1, Chapter Six). As a result, English teachers teach what will be assessed in the exams (such as grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills) rather than teach what is outlined and valued by The Revised Curriculum (2011).

The results of this study bring to light the complex nature of Chinese primary

and junior middle school English teachers' beliefs at a time when the 2011 curriculum innovation meets the Confucian heritage culture and existing teaching practices. The data from the web forums, questionnaires and interviews has shown that English teachers' beliefs are complicated. On the one hand, most teachers show a positive attitude towards many new concepts in The Revised Curriculum (2011), such as student-centred teaching, teachers' new roles such as designers, which asks teachers to create and shape The Revised Curriculum (2011) themselves, etc. They are supportive of these concepts not only because these are encouraged by the policymakers and school head teachers, but also because they are beneficial to students' all-round development and communicative ability improvement. On the other hand, the teachers also hold very traditional beliefs and in practice, tend to teach students in a traditional way, for example, their teaching is teacher-centred, teacher-dominated and textbook-based; their English teaching strongly emphasises grammar, vocabulary and reading skills; teachers focus mainly on examination performance; teachers tend to show their authority and always emphasise the importance of controlling the class. These traditional beliefs have been valued in the Chinese educational context for a very long time (Cortazi and Jin, 1996; Rao, 1998; Run-hua, 2006), but other beliefs are affected and constrained by local teaching conditions, such as inadequate teaching resources, students' low English proficiency, the pressure of knowledge-based assessment, as discussed in Chapter Six. Holding both new and traditional beliefs simultaneously suggests that some teachers seem to be flexible, practical and be able to embrace the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) and fit them to their own teaching context so they can choose and create a suitable way to teach the English that puts them and their students in an appropriate place between the local teaching reality and The Revised Curriculum (2011)'s requirements. Others may embrace some of The Revised Curriculum (2011) ideals at a conceptual level, but not see them as practicable, while others do not see any changes, apart from the new textbooks, as being either necessary or desirable.

My study has also shown how great the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices can be. Despite teachers' seemingly strong beliefs about the importance of some of the key changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) (such as involving more communicative activities, using target language in class, student-centred teaching), there can be great differences between beliefs and teaching practices of teachers. I have explored the training background of the teachers, but it is unclear how teachers' beliefs are shaped by their training and, given that many of the teachers shared beliefs in this study, it may be that the theoretical content of most training courses about English language teaching and learning may be somewhat similar. This was outside the scope of this study, as was the duration, method and intensity of such training. However, my study showed that, despite holding similar teaching beliefs, English teachers may behave in different ways. This may relate to the way training content was delivered to teachers, and also may be constrained by policy and assessment factors, teachers' length of teaching service, pre-service training and how recent this was. I believe this is an interesting area where there is an important need for future research to explore the training of teachers about how to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011), to see how training (and what kind) shapes teachers' beliefs and practices.

The study has identified some deficiencies but also some possibilities for the professional development of these teachers and I hope this information can contribute to China's continuing quest to create an English language curriculum for the global era.

## **7.2 The contributions of this research**

When I began this research, I reviewed all the accessible literature about The Revised Curriculum (2011) changes in China. I found that the nature and extent of the changes in The Revised Curriculum (2011) was unexplored in the west and it was unclear how far or to what extent these changes were understood by teachers or researchers in China. There is currently no study focusing on The Revised Curriculum (2011) and the accompanying challenges

that teacher may face. Having undertaken this study, I can now draw some cautious conclusions not only about the challenges The Revised Curriculum (2011) poses for English teachers in the sample area and English teachers' perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011), but also how it contributes a unique, in-depth examination of what they do and what they believe about the changes and challenges of The Revised Curriculum (2011). The results obtained from this study contribute to insights into the teachers' problems, roles and demands and could be the basis for future studies related to the curriculum area or interventions for teacher, for example. Moreover, while this study has identified some deficiencies, it has also indicated some possibilities for the professional development of these teachers and I hope this information can contribute to China's continued journey with the curriculum.

The limitations of this research have been discussed in detail in Chapter Six, Section 6.4.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

Even though there are 9,089,800 full-time English teachers in China and 282,000 schools at the compulsory education stage (data from <http://teacher.eol.cn>), and we are only four years into the process of The Revised Curriculum (2011), some clues about how it might be best tackled in practical implementation terms result from the work concerning teacher development and considerable concerns about the training people had or did not have, so although suggestions about improvement have already been made, I will make some additional recommendations.

On the basis of this study, the ideal might be to give teachers specific training and further (longer) interactive guidance maybe on a workshop basis, about the nature of formative assessment and ideally include the assessment of listening

and speaking in the school examination process although due to the large number of students, this may not be realistic to achieve in the short term except for authentic taped listening tests and tick box responses. Some more achievable recommendations relate to the professional development of teachers. The study has identified the deficiencies but also some possibilities for professional development for these teachers and I hope this information can contribute to China's continually journey to work into the curriculum. These teachers are recommended to engage in learning about the curriculum by training programmes or self-learning, but they need to have their eyes opened to new ways of learning things like taking more responsibility, about reflection leading to action. Teacher educators need to help teachers to be aware of the possible gaps between their own beliefs and the new changes and challenges posed by The Revised Curriculum (2011) and help them find the middle ground that fits their local teaching conditions, so that teachers can make the appropriate decisions in their teaching practice about how to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011). For policymakers, ideal recommendations might be to make them aware that teachers' beliefs are an important factor affecting their teaching practice. Teachers' beliefs may be in conflict with the curriculum concepts and traditional education context; policymakers need to find the reasons for this inconsistency and find possible solutions for teachers. Some important related issues such as the compatibility of curriculum changes with the local teaching conditions, and the relationship between continuity and innovation should also be properly considered before any curriculum innovation can achieve its intended goal, and this is also an area which needs future work.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1.1: Teaching Case 1 in The Revised Curriculum

#### Classroom activity 1

(MOE, 2011, pp 100-101):

1. The teacher presents these words by pointing at the place on the map: school, playground, classroom, office, art room, music room, computer room, library, toilet.

The teacher needs to guide the students:

- (1) speak out the words when they see the map;
- (2) recognise the words and know the meaning of them.

- The teacher gives an example first, and then encourages the students tell the class what he/she know about the places of school, dose he/she know the name of them?
- The teacher divides the students into groups of 4-5 (group members need to form a round). The teacher sends out one map and one set of cards to each group, and asks each group stick the card on the map at the right location.
- The students need to introduce the places on the map to other group members by turns, for example, 'This is the playground. The music room is here'. The teacher encourages the students to use the learned words and sentences creatively, for example, 'It is small, but I like it'.
- The students work in groups and design their ideal school and draw it on the paper. Then, the students stick the cards on the map, and introduce their

ideal school to the whole class. The class should choose the best group according to its rationality and veracity of expression.

## **Appendix 1.2: Teaching Case 2 in The Revised Curriculum**

### **(for level 3-4)**

(MOE, 2011, pp 112-115)

#### **Teaching aim:**

- (1) Students can use the learned sports-related vocabulary items to inquire and describe one's athletic ability;
- (2) Students can use the learned quantifiers to report the result of all the classmates' athletic abilities;
- (3) Students can use the right quantifiers to complete the sentences according to the the information in the diagram;
- (4) Students should be actively involved in the activity, express themselves boldly, be willing to cooperate with others, help each other, and cooperate to achieve a shared task, listen to others carefully and intently and enhance mutual understanding.

#### **Teaching content:**

- (1) Learn these words: 滑冰 (skate)、滑板 (skateboard)、冲浪 (surf)、跳水 (dive)、打网球 (play tennis);
- (2) Learn these pronouns or phrases: all, most, some, a few, none;
- (3) Learn how to report the result.

#### **Teaching process:**

1. Warming up.

The teacher and the students exchange greetings first. Then, the teacher and the students review what they learned last lesson by the way to ask questions, for example:—— Excuse me. Can I ask you something?

—— Yes.

—— What sports can you play?

—— I can swim.

## 2. Present and acquire new knowledge.

The teacher shows some slides to the class including some sports items and phrases; requires students read after the teacher when they have established a foundation of understanding.

The teacher gives a demonstration first by asking the students: ‘Can you surf?’, ‘Can you dive?’, ‘Can you play tennis?’ The students can give their response according to their actual situation: ‘Yes, I can.’ or ‘No, I can’t.’

Students work in pairs and do activities following the above example.

## 3. Practice and organise the knowledge.

- (1) The teacher plays the record for 2-3 times, the students tick Yes or No in the lists ‘Robbie’ and ‘Jenny’ after listen to the record.

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Robbie</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Your friend</b>
Can you skateboard?	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No
Can you surf?	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No
Can you dive?	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No
Can you play tennis?	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No
Can you skate?	Yes      No	Yes      No	Yes      No

- (2) The teacher gives a demonstration by asking questions in the third person form, the students ask each other and check the information. During this process, the students take the third person form to talk to others, for example, ‘Can Robbie skateboard?’
- (3) The teacher demands the students work in pairs and asks questions to each other and complete the list ‘Your friend’ in the table.
- (4) The teacher arranges the chain dialogue activities which requires every student participate in two rounds of dialogues.

① The first two students ask each other a question taking the second person form such as: ‘Can you surf?’

② The next two students ask each other a question by using the second person form according to the previous two students’ actual situation, for example, ‘Can ... skateboard?’ Then, this two students repeat what the first two students do. The teacher should give positive evaluation.

(5) The teacher guides the students to summarize what they have learned.

4. Learn to use these quantifiers or phrases (all, most, some, a few, none) to report the result.

(1) Students work in groups of four, they ask other group members questions about their athletic abilities and record the results. The sport activities are: push-ups, run 400-meter, climb a rope, skateboard and surf. The teacher observes and make a tour of the class.

(2) Every group chooses a representative to report the results to the class, the teacher record the results and do the arithmetic operations with the students together. Then, the teacher use the quantifiers (all, most, some, a few, none) to describe the results.

Sport	Number (total 47)	Describing results
Run 400-meter	47	all
Do five push-ups	40	most
Climb a rope	19	some
Skateboard	7	a few
Surf	0	none

The teacher guide all the students use these five quantifiers to report their results.

The teacher offers the following diagram and asks the students complete the sentences according to the given information in order to help the students to review what they learned. Then, the students check answers together.

Number of students who can:	
Play table tennis	
Play volleyball	
Play tennis	
Play baseball	
Dive	

\_\_\_\_\_ of the students can dive.

\_\_\_\_\_ of them can play baseball.

\_\_\_\_\_ of them can play volleyball.

\_\_\_\_\_ of them can play table tennis.

\_\_\_\_\_ of the students can play tennis.

The teacher guide the students reflect and summarize what they learned this lesson by showing the slides to the class.

##### 5. Moral education.

① The teacher plays the English song: *I Believe I Can Fly* to the class and asks the students write some sentences by using the sentence patterns they have learned this lesson. There's no limitation to the content and quantity.

② The teacher observes and make a tour of the class.

③ The teacher encourages and praises the students after the students have finished the task. The teacher invites two students to read aloud what they have written and should be spirited up by the whole class.

④ The teacher shows the slides that including the sentences with the word 'can', for example, 'If we can dream, we can do it'. The teacher explores the meaning of the sentences, encourages the students to build up their confidence and ideal.



## **Evaluation on case 2:**

This activity requires the teacher to face to all the students, presents the new knowledge on the basis of the students' experience, provides the opportunity for students to learn and use English by the ways of observation, practice, exploration and cooperation. The teacher organises the teaching process and teaching content carefully in order to allow students of different learning background learn cooperatively and actively. During the teaching process, the teacher makes the new teaching content easier, ocular and vivid by giving a demonstration first, then, the teacher guides the students to cooperate with others, help each other, and cooperate to achieve a shared task. Also, the teacher asks the students to do the reflection together in the teaching process, it improves the knowledge level of teaching theories and practices.

The teacher designs this activity based on students' individual differences, creates a relative authentic context for students and take advantage of teaching materials (slides, diagrams, etc.) in a correct, reasonable and purposeful way in order to explore students' potential and stimulate students' interest. This activity puts stronger emphasis on students' own life experience, stimulates students motivation and encourages their participation by the way of make a survey, enables the students learn how to carry out a census and report the results, provides more diversified space for students' development, achieves the efficient teaching result and combines the language learning and using together. This activity emphasises the cultivation of the students' all-round ability, humanistic quality and moral education. In the meantime, this activity encourages students to build up confidence, cultivates the willpower to overcome difficulties, guides students to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and it is an important reflection of the core concepts of The Revised Curriculum (2011).

## **Appendix 1.3: Teaching Case 3 in The Revised Curriculum**

**(for level 3-4)**

(MOE, 2011, pp 115-120)

### **Teaching aim:**

Students can read with purpose and obtain information in their reading process;

Students can compare things and find the differences according to the information they obtained from reading and their prior background knowledge;

Students can introduce their school's conditions to others via letters.

### **Teaching content:**

Learn some words relate to school places: canteen, playground, office, gym, music room, library, art room, secondary school;

Learn the expression of how to compare different things, for example, the school is not as big as those in China; The classes are much smaller than those in China.

### **Teaching activities:**

Let the students do the prediction and discussion before the reading activity;

Obtain information from the reading material;

Do the expression in verbal and written forms on the basis of reading.

### **Teaching process:**

1. Warming up.

(1) The teacher guides the students do the prediction activity before reading. The teacher can raise these questions to the students: Do you know anything about schools in England? Do you think schools in England are all very big? Can you guess how many students there are in a class?

The students can give their responses by guess or according to their actual situations. The teacher does not need to give evaluation or correct the students' mistakes during this process, but only encourages more students to answer the questions. The teacher can raise more questions according to the students' responses at appropriate situations, for example:

Student —— I think their schools are all very small.

Teacher —— Why do you think so?

(2) The students are divided into groups of four, they need to list the differences between the schools in China and the schools in England according to guess or their prior knowledge. Every group needs to list at least three differences.

(3) Every group chooses a representative to report what differences they have wrote. During the reporting process, the students may use some means to express the differences. The teacher can get the students notice these expressions, and repeat the expressions in the right way if there are some mistakes.

## 2. Reading activity.

(1) Students need to read the text (see below) and judge whether the following statements are true or false. When most of the students have completed the task, the teacher lets the students check answers in pairs, and then check answers with the whole class.

### **Reading text**

Lily is a Chinese girl living in England. She moved there with her parents last year. Now Lily is studying in a secondary school. Below is part of a letter that Lily wrote to one of her friends in China.

Dear Xiaofang,

How are you these days? I hope everything is fine with you.

In your last letter, you asked me about my new school, so let me tell

you more about it. Our school is called Hillside Secondary School. It's just like a junior middle school in China. It is in the town centre, not far from my home. The school is not as big as those in China. There are about 10 classes and 200 students. So the classes are much smaller than those in China. There is only one building for the classrooms and the teachers' offices.

Besides the classrooms, there is also an art room and a music room. There is a playground, a small library, and a gym. There are all kinds of books in the library. There is a lot of free time, so we often go to the library to read or borrow books. I really like the library.

Oh, I almost forget. There is also a canteen in our school. During the weekdays, we eat our lunch there. Although I'm a new student here, the teachers and students are very friendly to me. They are trying to teach me English, so my English is getting better and better. I hope you are also making progress in English.

...

True or False

Lily and Her New School

	True/False
1. Lily's school is as big as those in China.	
2. There aren't many students in each class.	
3. The classrooms and the teachers' offices are in the same building.	
4. There is a playground, but no gym.	
5. There is a room for learning music.	
6. There are many books in the library.	
7. Lily doesn't like her new school.	

(2) The students need to know the situations of their school such as the number of students in this school, the number of classes and grades.

Read the text again, and let the students find the differences between the schools in China and the schools in England. Then, fill in the blank with some key words.

	Schools in England	Schools in China
1	<i>Called 'secondary school'</i>	<i>Called 'middle school'</i>
2	<i>Schools are not big</i>	<i>Schools are big</i>
3	<i>Small classes</i>	<i>Big classes</i>
...	...	...

- (3) Students work in pairs and compare their answers in the blank.
- (4) The teacher chooses several students to talk to the whole class about the differences between the schools in China and the schools in England.

### 3. Post-reading activity.

- (1) Vocabulary learning: the teacher lets the students find the words that relate to school places in the text and give simple explanation to the class, for example:

Student: gym

Teacher: What do you do in a gym?

- (2) Let students do the following gap filling activity.

### Gap filling

Complete the following sentences with the words given in the box.

canteen	gym	art room
playground	music room	secondary school
office	Library	

- ① If we want to have meals in the school, we go to the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ② If we want to read or borrow books, we go to the \_\_\_\_\_.

- ③When teachers finish their classes, they often go back to their \_\_\_\_\_.
- ④During the break or after class, students often play at the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⑤In Britain, a middle school is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⑥A \_\_\_\_\_ is a large room where people go to do physical exercises or get fit.
- ⑦Students learn drawing and painting in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ⑧Students often practise singing in the \_\_\_\_\_.

(3) Grammar learning: let students read the text again and find the way to express the similarities, differences and changes, for example:

It's just like a junior middle school in China.

The school is not as big as those in China.

So the classes are much smaller than those in China.

So my English is getting better and better.

The teacher guides the students to notice the underlined parts and give simple explanation and practices when necessary.

(4) Writing task: The teacher lets the students write a letter to the school magazine (in English) and introduce what they know about the basic conditions of the schools in England such as the facility, the number of the grades, classes, students and courses. Or, they can compare the differences between the schools in England and their own school (try to use the expression of how to make contrast). Before writing, the teacher can let the students discuss the content in pairs. If there is sufficient time, the teacher can let the students write the letter in class, do the modification and exchange (or show) to others.

### **Evaluation on case 3:**

Traditional English teaching mainly focus on the explanation of the words and phrases in the text (Ministry of Education, 2011, p 120). This activity puts its emphasis on the cultivation of students' ability to obtain and process information, helps students comprehend the Chinese and foreign culture differences, develops students' ability to communicate in different cultures.

This activity integrates reading skill with other skills (speaking, writing, vocabulary learning and grammar learning) in an efficient and reasonable way. Also, the teacher uses a variety of teaching methods successfully to cultivate students' cultural awareness.

## **Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet: For teachers**



School of Education

The University of Nottingham

### **Participant Information Sheet: For teachers**

#### **Project title**

A revised curriculum for English teaching:

teacher's perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011)

#### **Researcher**

PGR student Man Lei, School of Education

#### **Introduction**

You are invited to consider participating in this research study. This study 'A revised curriculum for English teaching: teacher's perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011)' is a Doctoral study undertaken by Man Lei (Student No 4215147) at University of Nottingham, UK. This study is designed to examine the perspectives of English teachers regarding the English curriculum. This sheet describes the purpose and nature of the study and your rights as a participant. You can decide whether you participate or not. If you decide to participate, please sign your name the last line on the consent form.

#### **Explanation of the study**

As part of the study, you will complete the questionnaire first. If you agree to take further interview to give the researcher more in-depth information, you can tick the box 'I agree to take interview' and sign your name the last line on the questionnaire and also tick on the consent form. For the interview, you will meet with the researcher for a short interview. The questionnaire will take you around 10 minutes and the interview will take you no more than 40 minutes. Your participation in the interview will be audio-recorded.

#### **Confidentiality**

All information collected in this study will be treated with strict confidentiality and will



only be used for academic purposes. Your information will be kept anonymously. Your answers are completely confidential and will not be shown to anybody. The data will be stored on a computer and kept for three years, and only the researcher will have access to it.

### **Your participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary and any individual may withdraw at any time. If you have any questions about this research, you can contact the researcher by email. You can also contact Dr. Jane Medwell, who supervises the study. If you wish to complain about the study as a result of your participation, please contact the School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator. Thank you very much for your kind help!

### **Contact details**

**Researcher:** Man Lei

Email: [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Supervisor:** Jane Medwell Email: [Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk)

**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**

[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

### Appendix 3.1: Participant Consent Form (English Version)



School of Education  
The University of Nottingham  
**Participant Consent Form**

**Project title**

A revised curriculum for English teaching:  
teacher's perceptions and needs in relation to The Revised Curriculum (2011)

**Researcher's name** \_\_Man Lei\_\_  
**Supervisor's name** \_\_Jane Medwell\_\_

**The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself.**

	Tick where appropriate
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions.	
I have received enough information about the study.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	
I understand that any information I provide will be kept anonymously. My answers are completely confidential and will not be shown to anybody and only accessed by the researcher.	
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	
I agree to take part in the questionnaire.	
I agree to take part in the interview.	
I agree for my interview to be audio recorded.	
I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.	
Participant Signature .....	Date
Researcher Signature .....	Date

**Contact details****Researcher:** Man LeiEmail: [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk)**Supervisor:** Jane MedwellEmail: [Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk)**School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:**[educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 3.2: Participant Consent Form (Chinese Version)



The University of Nottingham  
Jubilee Campus  
Wollaton Road  
Nottingham  
NG8 1BB  
United Kingdom

日期: 2014年2月26日

研究项目: 关于义务教育阶段英语教师对于英语新课改的看法和需求

博士研究生: 雷曼

您好,

雷曼是在英国诺丁汉大学进行课题研究的博士研究生, 她的博士生导师是Dr. Jane Medwell。她的研究课题旨在调查义务教育阶段英语教师对于2011年全日制义务教育英语课程标准的理解 and 需求。该调查研究的数据来源主要来自于鹰潭市的200名英语教师。

作为该研究课题的一部分, 该研究者希望您能百忙之中抽空完成问卷, 如果您同意的话, 她还希望进行后期的采访。该研究所得的所有信息都将会受到严格的保密, 而且仅用于学术目的。参与者以及参与学校的信息和名字都将会以匿名方式处理。

如您对该研究有任何疑问, 请随时通过邮箱联系研究者。您也可以联系该研究者的博士生导师Dr. Jane Medwell。如果您参与该研究后有任何不满, 请联系诺丁汉大学。非常感谢您的帮助!

导师签名:

*Jane Medwell Dr J Medwell*

学校盖章:



联系方式

研究者: 雷曼

邮箱: txml22@nottingham.ac.uk

博士生导师: Jane Medwell

邮箱: Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk

诺丁汉大学: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

## Appendix 4.1: Piloted questionnaire (English Version)

### Questionnaire about English teachers' views on the new (2011) PRC *English Language curriculum standard for Full-time Compulsory Education*

A researcher from the University of Nottingham wants to find out what English teachers think about the new (2011) PRC *English Language curriculum standard for Full-time Compulsory Education*. You are very important people and have been chosen to help. To answer these questions, you will need to choose or write the answer which best shows the way you feel. It may take you 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your information will be kept anonymously. Thank you very much for your kind help!

#### Section One: Background Information

Please tell me more about your teaching background. The information you provide is ONLY for categorizing and analysing survey data. You will be kept anonymously and not be identified personally. Thank you for completing this survey!

1. Gender: A. Male    B. Female    C. Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age:

A. Under 29            B. 30-39            C. 40-49    D. above 50

3. Years of English teaching experience:

A. under 5 years    B. 6-10            C. 11-15            D. 16-25            E. above 26

4. Education background:

A. technical secondary school or below    B. junior college

C. undergraduate                                  D. Master

5. What is your major?

A. English    B. Else

6. Have you ever learnt phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge systematically?

A. Yes    B. No

7. You are teaching at \_\_\_\_\_:

A. primary school                                  B. junior high school

8. What is your job title?

A. normal teacher                                  B. core teacher

C. Discipline leader D. Else: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Your school is located in \_\_\_\_\_:

A. city (Key schools) B. city (normal schools) C. rural-urban fringe zone

D. Rural area

10. Are you teaching the 2011 curriculum?

- A. No
- B. Yes

11. Have you had training already about the 2011 curriculum for English?

- A. No
- B. A little, but not enough
- C. Enough

12. What kind of training or guidance do you think you need to have? (Multiple choice)

- A. The content of the 2011 curriculum
- B. Solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching
- C. The assessment reform and how to design tests
- D. School-based curriculum
- E. How to explore and use resources
- F. Improve subject knowledge
- G. How to undertake research during teaching

**Section Two: Questionnaire about the new 2011 English curriculum**

Please tick the option that best describes your real opinions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
13. You think the training programme you have already had closely linked to the actual teaching practice.					

14. The role of English courses in compulsory education combines both instrumental value (learning English for future use or economic purposes) and humanistic value (enrichment of the self and development of a new world view).					
15. Teachers should use target language most of the time in English class.					
16. English teaching during the compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.					
17. English learning has the feature of gradualness and continuity.					
18. English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency.					
19. English language teaching should put more emphasis on phonetic ability rather than only phonetic knowledge.					
20. Grammar should be learnt in context rather than based on memorisation.					
21. English teachers should only adopt task-based teaching method.					
22. Vocabulary should be learnt in an authentic language context.					

23. It is necessary for students to know about English-speaking cultures and the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.					
24. English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.					
25. English classes should be student-centred. Teachers should not dominate the class.					
26. The English teacher's role is only to teach knowledge of foreign languages.					
27. Renewing my subject knowledge and developing my language proficiency is difficult.					
28. Learning grammar in context is successful in practice.					
29. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasising both process and results is successful in practice.					
30. Learning vocabulary in an authentic context is successful in practice.					
31. Understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is successful in practice.					



32. English teachers should reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.					
33. The training you already have had about the 2011 curriculum helps you to develop your subject knowledge.					
34. The training you already have had about the 2011 curriculum helps you to improve your teaching practice.					
35. The Revised Curriculum (2011) defines the role of English course as the combination of instrumental value and humanistic values.					
36. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises teachers using target language most of the time in English class.					
37. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry, and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students are difficult.					
38. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teaching during the compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.					
39. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’					

language proficiency.					
40. English teachers should design teaching methods that appropriate (both to his/herself and to his/her students) independently without communicating and sharing with other teachers.					
41. Using target language most of the time in your teaching practice is difficult.					
42. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is difficult.					
43. Ensuring gradualness and continuity in English language teaching in different stages is difficult.					
44. The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that English teachers should reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.					
45. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises learning grammar in context.					
46. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should design and adopt various kinds of language teaching methods, which put emphasis on both process and result, such as					

task-based teaching method.					
47. Teaching English for both developing students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and improving students' all-round humanistic quality is successful in practice.					
48. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should create more authentic language contexts to enable students to learn vocabulary in a more true-to-life setting.					
49. You think the training programme you already have had has the problem of lecture-based teaching method, spoon feed the trainees, and lacks of interaction.					
50. You think the training programme you already have had is short intensive training.					
51. The Revised Curriculum (2011) transfers the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability.					
52. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is successful in practice.					

53. Progress and continuity in English language teaching in different stages is successful in practice.					
54. Setting realistic teaching objective according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is successful in practice.					
55. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is successful in practice.					
56. Planning different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations is successful in practice.					
57. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry, and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students are successful in practice.					
58. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that students should understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.					
59. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.					
60. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that students should be the centre of the class.					

61. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should dominate and design all the teaching content, process and assessment criteria. Students do not need to participate in.					
62. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should form a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry. Designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students.					
63. Making students as the centre of the class is difficult.					
64. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.					
65. Enabling students to learn vocabulary in an authentic context is difficult.					
66. Helping students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is difficult.					
67. Reflecting and summarising teachers' teaching experiences constantly is successful in practice.					
68. Planning different resources and teaching methods to suit different students' situation is difficult.					

69. Reflecting and summarising my teaching experiences constantly is difficult.					
70. English teachers need to renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.					
71. Student-centred teaching is successful in practice.					
72. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English language teaching has the feature of progress and continuity.					
73. I think the training programme I already have had is attended by teachers on a selective basis and do not cater for all the teachers.					
74. Using target language most of the time in English class is successful in practice.					
75. Setting realistic teaching objective according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is difficult.					
76. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is difficult.					
77. Enabling students learn grammar in context is difficult.					
78. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasising both process and results is difficult.					

79. Teaching English for both developing students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and improving students' all-round humanistic quality is difficult.					
80. Renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency is successful in practice.					

81. In order to better understand your survey responses, I might need to contact you to ask some additional questions. May I contact you for further information? (Optional)

If Yes, please give your contact email or other contacts: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions or views about me or this survey, please do not hesitate to write below or contact me via email. Thank you! My email address is: [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time !

## Appendix 4.2: Piloted questionnaires (Chinese Version)

# 英语教师关于新课改的看法的问卷调查

一位来自英国诺丁汉大学的博士研究者想要了解义务教育阶段英语教师对 2011 年义务教育英语课程标准的一些看法。您被选为这次调查的对象，您的回答对我非常重要。您可以选择或填写最能代表您想法的选项或内容，您的信息将会以匿名处理。填写这份问卷大概需要花费您十五分钟时间。非常感谢您的参与！

## 第一部分 教师背景信息

填写说明：请根据您的实际情况，选出您认为最符合您的一项或根据实际情况在直线上填写。

- |                               |                 |         |                 |               |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. 性别:                        | 男               | 女       | 其他(请注明): _____  |               |
| 2. 年龄:                        | 29 岁及以下         | 30-39 岁 | 40-49 岁         | 50 岁及以上       |
| 3. 教龄 (仅指教授英语课):              | 5 年及以下          |         | 6-10 年          | 11-15 年       |
|                               | 16-25 年         |         | 26 年及以上         |               |
| 4. 最高学历:                      | 中专及以下           | 大专      | 本科              | 研究生           |
| 5. 所学专业:                      | 英语专业            | 其他专业    |                 |               |
| 6. 您是否系统地学过语音学、语言学、教育学和心理学知识: | 是               |         |                 | 否             |
| 7. 您目前所任教的学段是:                | 小学              |         | 初中              |               |
| 8. 您目前的职务是 (可多选):             | 普通教师            |         | 骨干教师            | 学科带头人         |
|                               | 其他 (请注明): _____ |         |                 |               |
| 9. 您所任教的学校属于:                 | 城区重点中小学         |         | 城区普通中小学         | 城乡结合部学校 农村中小学 |
| 10. 您是否在使用 2012 年修订版新目标英语教材:  | 是               |         |                 | 否             |
| 11. 您是否接受过有关 2011 年新课改的培训:    | 培训很充分           |         | 有一点培训, 但培训不够 没有 |               |
| 12. 您认为目前您急需哪些方面的培训 (可多选):    | 新课改理念           |         | 解决教学中的实际问题      |               |
|                               | 设计试题            | 设计校本课程  | 开发教学资源          | 提高专业知识进行教学研究  |



## 第二部分 关于英语课程的看法

填写说明：每题都有五个选项，从‘非常不同意’至‘非常同意’，请依照您的真实想法，选出您认为最符合您的一项，每题仅选 1 个选项。

	非常不同意	不同意	既不同意也不反对	同意	非常同意
13. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，培训内容与教学实际紧密联系。					
14. 义务教育阶段的英语课程具有工具性和人文性双重性质。					
15. 在课堂上，英语教师应该用使用英语来教授英语课。					
16. 在义务教育阶段，英语教学应当尤其强调让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性。					
17. 英语学习具有明显的渐进性和持续性特点。					
18. 英语教师应该根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
19. 义务阶段的英语教学应当更注重培养学生的语音能力而不仅仅是语音知识。					
20. 在语法学习中，英语教师应该让学生能在特定语境中运用语法。					
21. 在义务教育阶段，英语教师仅需要采用任务型教学法。					
22. 英语教师应该让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					

23. 让学生了解到中外文化异同，和加深对中国文化的理解是非常必要的。					
24. 英语教师应该因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					
25. 在课堂教学中要以学生为中心，教师不应该统治整个课堂。					
26. 英语教师的角色仅是传授学科知识。					
27. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到去不断地更新自己的学科专业知识，和提高自己的语言素养是困难的。					
28. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生能在特定语境中运用语法。					
29. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了采用各种强调过程与结果并重的教学途径和方法。					
30. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					
31. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生了解到中外文化的异同，并且加深了学生对中国文化的理解。					
32. 英语教师应该不断地开展教学反思，总结经验。					
33. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，拓宽和加深了学科专业知识。					
34. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，帮助您改进了您的教学。					

35. 新课标将义务教育阶段的英语课程的性质界定为具有工具性和人文性双重性质。					
36. 新课标强调了英语教师应该用使用英语来教授英语课。					
37. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师加强交流，主动分享，并逐步提炼最适合自己的和有利于学生的教学方式和方法是困难的。					
38. 新课标强调了在义务教育阶段，英语教学应当尤其强调让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣和与同学合作的重要性。					
39. 新课标强调了英语教师应该根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
40. 英语教师应该完全独立地逐步提炼出适合自己并且有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
41. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到英语来教授英语课是困难的。					
42. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性是困难的。					
43. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到保证英语课程的渐进性和持续性是困难的。					
44. 新课标强调了英语教师应该不断地开展教学反思。					
45. 新课标强调了英语语法学习应该让学生理解语法项目并且能在特定语境中使用。					

46. 新课标倡导英语教师在义务教育阶段应该设计、采用各种强调过程与结果并重的教学途径和方法，如任务型教学法等。					
47. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了既培养学生的基本英语素养，发展了学生思维能力，又提高了学生的综合人文素养。					
48. 新课标强调要创设语境，让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					
49. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，主要形式是讲座式，将内容灌输给接受培训的教师，缺乏交流互动。					
50. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，主要是短期高强度培训。					
51. 新课标从强调语音知识转为强调语音能力。					
52. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性。					
53. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了保证英语课程的渐进性和持续性。					
54. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
55. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了将重心从学生的语音知识的培养转移到语音能力的培养。					
56. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					

57. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了做到通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师加强交流，主动分享，并逐步提炼出最适合自己的和有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
58. 新课标强调学生应该关注中外文化异同，和加深对中国文化的理解。					
59. 新课标强调了英语教师应该因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					
60. 新课标强调在课堂教学中要以学生为中心。					
61. 新课标强调英语教师需要统治整个课堂，并且要独立设计课堂内容和评价方式，不需要学生参与。					
62. 新课标强调英语教师应该通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师主动分享，加强交流，逐步提炼最适合自己的并且有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
63. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到以学生为课堂的中心进行教学是困难的。					
64. 新课标强调英语教师应该不断更新自己的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					
65. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇是困难的。					
66. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生了解到中外文化的异同，和加深学生对中国文化的理解是困难的。					

67. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了不断地进行教学反思。					
68. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）是困难的。					
69. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到不断地进行教学反思是困难的。					
70. 英语教师应该不断更新自己的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					
71. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了以学生为课堂的中心进行教学。					
72. 新课标强调了英语课程的渐进性和持续性。					
73. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，只选取部分教师参与培训，不能满足所有教师的需要。					
74. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了使用英语来教授英语课。					
75. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标是困难的。					
76. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到将重心从学生的语音知识的培养转移到语音能力的培养是困难的。					
77. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生能在特定语境中运用语法是困难的。					

78. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到采用各种强调过程与结果并重的教学途径和方法对您来说是困难的。					
79. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到既提升学生的综合语言语用能力，又提高学生综合人文素养是困难的。					
80. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了不断地更新您的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					

81. 为了更好地理解您的答案，我可能需要联系您询问一些其他问题。如果愿意接受采访，请您务必留下邮箱或其他联系方式。

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如果您对我或本问卷调查有任何疑问，建议或想法，请在下方留言或随时通过邮件联系我，谢谢！我的邮箱地址是 [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk)

谢谢您的作答！

## Appendix 4.3: Revised questionnaire (English Version)

### Questionnaire

A researcher from the University of Nottingham wants to find out what teachers think about the English course. You are very important people and have been chosen to help. To answer these questions, you will need to choose or write the answer which best shows the way you feel. It may take you 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your information will be kept anonymously. Thank you very much for your kind help!

#### **Section One: Background Information**

Please tell me more about your teaching background. The information you provide is ONLY for categorizing and analysing survey data. You will be kept anonymously and not be identified personally. Thank you for completing this survey!

1. Gender: A. Male    B. Female    C. Other, Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Age:

A. Under 29            B. 30-39            C. 40-49    D. above 50

3. Years of English teaching experience:

A. under 5 years    B. 6-10            C. 11-15            D. 16-25            E. above 26

4. Education background:

A. technical secondary school or below    B. junior college

C. undergraduate                                  D. Master

5. What is your major?

A. English    B. Else

6. Have you ever learnt phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge systematically?

A. Yes    B. No

7. You are teaching at \_\_\_\_\_:

A. primary school                                  B. junior high school

8. What is your job title?

A. normal teacher                                  B. core teacher

C. Discipline leader                                  D. Else: \_\_\_\_\_



9. Your school is located in \_\_\_\_\_:

- A. city (Key schools)    B. city (normal schools)    C. rural-urban fringe zone  
D. Rural area

10. Are you teaching the 2011 curriculum?

- A. No  
B. Yes

11. Have you had training already about the 2011 curriculum for English?

- A. No  
B. A little, but not enough  
C. Enough

12. What kind of training or guidance you already have had? (Multiple choice)

- A. The content of the 2011 curriculum  
B. Solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching  
C. The assessment reform and how to design tests  
D. School-based curriculum  
E. How to explore and use resources  
F. Improve subject knowledge  
G. How to undertake research during teaching

13. What kind of training or guidance do you think you need to have? (Multiple choice)

- A. The content of the 2011 curriculum  
B. Solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching  
C. The assessment reform and how to design tests  
D. School-based curriculum  
E. How to explore and use resources  
F. Improve subject knowledge  
G. How to undertake research during teaching

**Section Two: Questionnaire about English course**

Please tick the option that best describes your real opinions.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

14. You think the training programme you have already had closely linked to the actual teaching practice.					
15. The role of English courses in compulsory education combines both instrumental value (learning English for future use or economic purposes) and humanistic value (enrichment of the self and development of a new world view).					
16. Teachers should use target language most of the time in English class.					
17. English teaching during the compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.					
18. English learning has the feature of progress and continuity.					
19. English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency.					
20. English language teaching should put more emphasis on phonetic ability rather than only phonetic knowledge.					
21. Grammar should be learnt in context rather than based on memorisation.					
22. English teachers should only adopt task-based teaching method.					

23. Vocabulary should be learnt in an authentic language context.					
24. It is necessary for students to know about English-speaking cultures and the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.					
25. English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.					
26. English classes should be student-centred. Teachers should not dominate the class.					
27. The English teacher's role is only to teach knowledge of foreign languages.					
28. Renewing my subject knowledge and developing my language proficiency is difficult.					
29. Learning grammar in context is successful in practice.					
30. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasising both process and results is successful in practice.					
31. Learning vocabulary in an authentic context is successful in practice.					
32. Understanding the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is successful in practice.					

33. English teachers should reflect on and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.					
34. The training you already have had about the 2011 curriculum helps you to develop your subject knowledge.					
35. The training you already have had about the 2011 curriculum helps you to improve your teaching practice.					
36. The Revised Curriculum (2011) defines the role of English courses as the combination of instrumental value and humanistic value.					
37. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises teachers using target language most of the time in English class.					
38. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry, and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students are difficult.					
39. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teaching during the compulsory education period should stress happiness and cooperation.					
40. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should set realistic teaching objectives according to local teaching needs and students’					

language proficiency.					
41. English teachers should design teaching methods that appropriate (both to his/herself and to his/her students) independently without communicating and sharing with other teachers.					
42. Using target language most of the time in English class is successful in practice.					
43. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is difficult.					
44. Ensuring progress and continuity in English language teaching in different stages is difficult.					
45. The Revised Curriculum (2011) stresses that English teachers should reflect and summarise their teaching experiences constantly.					
46. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises learning grammar in context.					
47. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should adopt task-based teaching method only.					

48. Teaching English to develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and to improve students' all-round human qualities is successful in practice.					
49. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should create more authentic language contexts to enable students to learn vocabulary in a more true-to-life setting.					
50. You think the training programme you already have had is lecture-based, spoon feed the trainees, and lacks of interaction.					
51. You think the training programme you already have had is short intensive training.					
52. The Revised Curriculum (2011) transfers the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability.					
53. Emphasising happiness and cooperation in English teaching during the compulsory education period is successful in practice.					
54. Progress and continuity in English language teaching in different stages is successful in practice.					
55. Setting realistic teaching objective according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is successful in practice.					

56. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is successful in practice.					
57. Planning different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations is successful in practice.					
58. Forming a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry, and designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students are successful in practice.					
59. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that students should understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures.					
60. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should plan different resources and teaching methods according to students' different situations.					
61. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that students should be the centre of the class.					
62. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that teachers should dominate and design all the teaching content, process and assessment criteria. Students do not need to participate in.					

63. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should form a culture of cooperative learning and cooperative inquiry. Designing appropriate teaching methods that will benefit students.					
64. Making students as the centre of the class is difficult.					
65. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English teachers should renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.					
66. Enabling students to learn vocabulary in an authentic context is difficult.					
67. Helping students understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English-speaking cultures is difficult.					
68. Reflecting and summarising teachers' teaching experiences constantly is successful in practice.					
69. Planning different resources and teaching methods to suit different students' situation is difficult.					
70. Reflecting and summarising my teaching experiences constantly is difficult.					
71. English teachers need to renew their subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency.					



72. Student-centred teaching is successful in practice.					
73. The Revised Curriculum (2011) emphasises that English language teaching has the feature of gradualness and continuity.					
74. You think the training programme you already have had is attended by teachers on a selective basis and do not cater for all the teachers.					
75. Using target language most of the time in your teaching practice is difficult.					
76. Setting realistic teaching objective according to local teaching needs and students' language proficiency is difficult.					
77. Transferring the focus from phonetic knowledge to phonetic ability is difficult.					
78. Enabling students learn grammar in context is difficult.					
79. Adopting various kinds of language teaching methods that emphasising both process and results is difficult.					
80. Teaching English to both develop students' basic English knowledge, skills and thinking ability, and improve students' all-round humanistic quality is difficult.					

81. Renewing teachers' subject knowledge and developing their language proficiency is successful in practice.					
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82. In order to better understand your survey responses, I might need to contact you to ask some additional questions. May I contact you for further information? (Optional)

If Yes, please give your contact email or other contacts: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions or views about me or this survey, please do not hesitate to write below or contact me via email. Thank you! My email address is: [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk)

Thank you for your time !

## Appendix 4.4: Revised questionnaire (Chinese Version)

## 英语教师问卷

一位来自英国诺丁汉大学的博士研究者想要了解义务教育阶段英语教师对英语课程的一些看法。您被选为这次调查的对象，您的回答对我非常重要。您可以选择或填写最能代表您想法的选项或内容，您的信息将会以匿名处理。填写这份问卷大概需要花费您十五分钟时间。非常感谢您的参与！

## 第一部分 教师背景信息

填写说明：请根据您的实际情况，选出您认为最符合您的一项或根据实际情况在直线上填写。

- |                               |                |         |                |         |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| 1. 性别:                        | 男              | 女       | 其他(请注明): _____ |         |
| 2. 年龄:                        | 29 岁及以下        | 30-39 岁 | 40-49 岁        | 50 岁及以上 |
| 3. 教龄 (仅指教授英语课):              | 5 年及以下         |         | 6-10 年         | 11-15 年 |
|                               | 16-25 年        |         | 26 年及以上        |         |
| 4. 最高学历:                      | 中专及以下          | 大专      | 本科             | 研究生     |
| 5. 所学专业:                      | 英语专业           |         | 其他专业           |         |
| 6. 您是否系统地学过语音学、语言学、教育学和心理学知识: | 是              |         | 否              |         |
| 7. 您目前所任教的学段是:                | 小学             |         | 初中             |         |
| 8. 您目前的职务是 (可多选):             | 普通教师           |         | 骨干教师           | 学科带头人   |
|                               | 其他(请注明): _____ |         |                |         |
| 9. 您所任教的学校属于:                 | 城区重点中小学        |         | 城区普通中小学        | 城乡结合部学校 |
|                               | 农村中小学          |         |                |         |
| 10. 您是否在使用 2012 年修订版新目标英语教材:  | 是              |         | 否              |         |
| 11. 您是否接受过有关 2011 年新课改的培训:    | 培训很充分          |         | 有一点培训, 但培训不够   |         |
|                               | 没有             |         |                |         |
| 12. 您已经接受过哪些方面的培训 (可多选):      | 新课改理念          |         | 解决教学中的实际问题     |         |
|                               | 设计试题           |         | 设计校本课程         |         |
|                               | 开发教学资源         |         | 提高专业知识         |         |
|                               | 进行教学研究         |         |                |         |
| 13. 您认为目前您急需哪些方面的培训 (可多选):    | 新课改理念          |         | 解决教学中的         |         |

实际问题      设计试题      设计校本课程      开发教学资源      提高专业知识  
进行教学研究

## 第二部分 关于英语课程的看法

填写说明：每题都有五个选项，从‘非常不同意’至‘非常同意’，请依照您的真实想法，选出您认为最符合您的一项，每题仅选 1 个选项。

	非常不同意	不同意	既不同意也不反对	同意	非常同意
14. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，培训内容与教学实际紧密联系。					
15. 义务教育阶段的英语课程具有工具性和人文性双重性质。					
16. 在课堂上，英语教师应该用使用英语来教授英语课。					
17. 在义务教育阶段，英语教学应当尤其强调让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性。					
18. 英语学习具有明显的渐进性和持续性特点。					
19. 英语教师应该根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
20. 义务阶段的英语教学应当更注重培养学生的语音能力而不仅仅是语音知识。					
21. 在语法学习中，英语教师应该让学生能在特定语境中运用语法。					

22. 在义务教育阶段，英语教师仅需要采用任务型教学法。					
23. 英语教师应该让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					
24. 让学生了解到中外文化异同，和加深对中国文化的理解是非常必要的。					
25. 英语教师应该因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					
26. 在课堂教学中要以学生为中心，教师不应该统治整个课堂。					
27. 英语教师的角色仅是传授学科知识。					
28. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到去不断地更新自己的学科专业知识，和提高自己的语言素养是困难的。					
29. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生能在特定语境中运用语法。					
30. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了采用各种强调过程与结果并重的教学途径和方法。					
31. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					
32. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了让学生了解到中外文化的异同，并且加深了学生对中国文化的理解。					
33. 英语教师应该不断地开展教学反思，总结经验。					

34. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，拓宽和加深了学科专业知识。					
35. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，帮助您改进了您的教学。					
36. 新课标将义务教育阶段的英语课程的性质界定为具有工具性和人文性双重性质。					
37. 新课标强调了英语教师应该用使用英语来教授英语课。					
38. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师加强交流，主动分享，并逐步提炼最适合自己的和有利于学生的教学方式和方法是困难的。					
39. 新课标强调了在义务教育阶段，英语教学应当尤其强调让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣和与同学合作的重要性。					
40. 新课标强调了英语教师应该根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
41. 英语教师应该完全独立地逐步提炼出适合自己并且有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
42. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到英语来教授英语课是困难的。					
43. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性是困难的。					
44. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到保证英语课程的渐进性和持续性是困难的。					

45. 新课标强调了英语教师应该不断地开展教学反思。					
46. 新课标强调了英语语法学习应该让学生理解语法项目并且能在特定语境中使用。					
47. 新课标倡导英语教师在义务教育阶段仅需使用任务型语言教学法。					
48. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了既培养学生的基本英语素养，发展了学生思维能力，又提高了学生的综合人文素养。					
49. 新课标强调要创设语境，让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇。					
50. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，主要形式是讲座式，将内容灌输给接受培训的教师，缺乏交流互动。					
51. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，主要是短期高强度培训。					
52. 新课标从强调语音知识转为强调语音能力。					
53. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地让学生体会到英语学习的乐趣以及与同学合作的重要性。					
54. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了保证英语课程的渐进性和持续性。					
55. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标。					
56. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了将重心从学生的语音知识的培养转移到语音能力的培养。					

57. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					
58. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了做到通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师加强交流，主动分享，并逐步提炼出最适合自己的和有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
59. 新课标强调学生应该关注中外文化异同，和加深对中国文化的理解。					
60. 新课标强调了英语教师应该因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）。					
61. 新课标强调在课堂教学中要以学生为中心。					
62. 新课标强调英语教师需要统治整个课堂，并且要独立设计课堂内容和评价方式，不需要学生参与。					
63. 新课标强调英语教师应该通过合作学习和合作探究的机制与其他教师主动分享，加强交流，逐步提炼最适合自己的并且有利于学生的教学方式和方法。					
64. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到以学生为课堂的中心进行教学是困难的。					
65. 新课标强调英语教师应该不断更新自己的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					
66. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生在近似真实的情境中学习词汇是困难的。					



67. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生了解到中外文化的异同，和加深学生对中国文化的理解是困难的。					
68. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了不断地进行教学反思。					
69. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到因材施教（根据不同学生的不同学习特点和个体差异，去选择适合每个学生特点的学习方法和资源来进行有针对性的教学）是困难的。					
70. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到不断地进行教学反思是困难的。					
71. 英语教师应该不断更新自己的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					
72. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了以学生为课堂的中心进行教学。					
73. 新课标强调了英语课程的渐进性和持续性。					
74. 您接受的有关新课改的培训，只选取部分教师参与培训，不能满足所有教师的需要。					
75. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了使用英语来教授英语课。					
76. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到根据所在地区的教学需要和学生的现有水平制定切合实际的教学目标是困难的。					
77. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到将重心从学生的语音知识的培养转移到语音能力的培养是困难的。					

78. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到让学生能在特定语境中运用语法是困难的。					
79. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到采用各种强调过程与结果并重的教学途径和方法对您来说是困难的。					
80. 在您的实际教学实践中，要做到既提升学生的综合语言语用能力，又提高学生综合人文素养是困难的。					
81. 在您的实际教学实践中，您成功地做到了不断地更新您的学科专业知识，提高自己的语言素养。					

82. 为了更好地理解您的答案，我可能需要联系您询问一些其他问题。如果愿意接受采访，请您务必留下邮箱或其他联系方式。

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如果您对我或本问卷调查有任何疑问，建议或想法，请在下方留言或随时通过邮件联系我，谢谢！我的邮箱地址是 [ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ttxml22@nottingham.ac.uk)

谢谢您的作答！

## **Appendix 5.1: Piloted interview questions (English Version)**

### **Curriculum Comparison**

1. Have you taught the 2001 old curriculum?
2. Are you teaching the 2011 new curriculum?
  - *If yes, how are you finding it?*
3. Did you get adequate training about the new curriculum?
  - *If yes, What do you think about the training you already had?*
    - *What training would you like?*
    - *Do you feel you understand the new curriculum well?*
    - *Do you feel well prepared to teach the new English curriculum?*
  - *If no,*
    - *Do you feel you understand the new curriculum well?*
    - *Do you feel well prepared to teach the new English curriculum?*
    - *What training would you like?*
4. Do you find the new curriculum very different from the old curriculum?
  - *What do you consider are the main differences?*
  - *The new curriculum has redefined the functions of English course, do you know what are they?*
    - *If yes, can you explain them? How do you think about them?*
    - *If no, they are the instrumental value and the humanistic value, how do you think about them?*

### **Teaching Practices**

5. What changes
  - *have you made to your teaching because of the introduction of the 2011 new English curriculum? (such as teaching approaches=Q6, teaching objectives=Q7, resources=Q8, target language in class=Q9, grammar=Q10, vocabulary=Q11, reflection=Q12, communication with colleagues=Q13)*
  - *would you like to see in your English teaching?*
6. Have you changed your teaching approaches?
  - *If yes, Why? what are those teaching approaches you were used and you*

*are using now? (such as grammar-translation; audio-lingualism; PPP 'present practice production'; CLT)*

- *If no, Why not? What are those teaching approaches you are using?*
- *What teaching approaches do you think are best in English classes? Are you teaching in the way you expect to?*
  - *If yes, why?*
  - *If no, what factors (teacher's location, gender, education qualification, teaching experience, or training experience, etc) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?*
- *How many teaching approaches do you know? Could you give some examples? (grammar-translation; audio-lingualism; PPP 'present practice production'; CLT)*

7. How do you set teaching objectives before and now? (What are the factors you will consider when you are setting teaching objectives?)

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

8. Have you changed your resources at all?

- *If yes, What are the factors you will consider when you are planning your resources before and now? Why?*
- *If no, why not? Do you find it difficult and why?*

9. Have you changed the language used in the English class?

- *If yes, Why? what language you were used and what language you are using now?*
- *If no, What language you were used and what language you are using now?*

10. How do you teach students grammar in the English class?

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

11. How do you teach students vocabulary in the English class?

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

12. What do you do after you finished your English lesson (will you reflect on and summarise your teaching experiences?)

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

13. When do you discuss curriculum matters with your colleagues (other

English teachers)?

- *What sort of issues have you discussed?*

14. The new English curriculum raised the concept of 'professionalisation of teachers'. Do you understand this concept?

- *If yes, can you explain it? How do you think about it? Have you made any changes to it?*
- *If no, 'professionalisation of teachers' mainly includes three aspects: renewing teachers' subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency; accumulating teachers' subject pedagogical knowledge and improve practical teaching ability constantly; carrying out reflective teaching and promote the sustainable development of professional construction. How do you think about it? Have you made any changes to it?*
- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

### **Teachers' Beliefs**

15. What do you consider are the main features of English language learning?

- *How do you think about the gradualness and continuity?*
- *Do you find it difficult in practice and why?*

16. Look at the example case talking about what Mr Lin does in his daily English teaching, how do you feel about it? Please justify your answer (*Use Vignettes*).

### **The Vignette**

Mr Lin leads his class in an animated way. At the beginning of the class, he asks students some questions that based on the reading task they have done before and his students can give their responses quickly. After the review, he teaches the class new content, he always raises some questions to keep students attentive and listening to what he said.

He sees his role as an initiator, an explainer and a class controller. He thinks students won't learn English unless the teacher goes over the material in a structured way. He believes it is his duty to teach, to explain, and to show students how to learn English and how to do the task.

He says, 'it is more practical to set the same teaching objectives for the whole class. Interactive activities such as group work should not take too much time in class because passing the exams is the final teaching goal and the most important thing for

English teaching at school.'

- What do you think about the teaching approach Mr Lin adopted? Is there anything else you might do for good teaching?
- What do you think about the role Mr Lin played in English class? Is there another role you think necessary for good teaching?
- What do you think about Mr Lin's viewpoint? Why?

17. Thinking about a successful English lesson you have seen or taught,

- *What do you think the role of the English teacher is in this lesson?*
- *What do you think the role of the student is in this lesson?*

18. Imagining that I invited you to visit and review my English class to help me decide if I was teaching a successful English lesson, what criteria and dimensions of teaching would you look for? Please justify your answer.

- *What do you expect a good English teacher need to do?*
- *What do you expect a good student of English need to do?*
- *Are there any teaching activities that you would expect to see but you don't use in your classroom?*
- *What are those activities? Why don't you use them?*
- *What factors (external or internal) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?*

19. What else could you tell me about your experience of the new curriculum?

### **Background Information**

20. Can you tell me about your educational life?

- *Which university were you graduated from?*
- *What was your degree?*
- *How many years have you been teaching?*
- *Are you teaching in primary school or junior middle school?*
- *Is your school located in city area, or suburb, village and town area, or rural area (including mountainous area)?*
- *Why did you choose to become an English teacher?*

## Appendix 5.2: Piloted interview questions (Chinese Version)

### 新旧课程比较

1. 您曾使用过 2001 年的英语课程标准吗？
2. 您现在在使用 2011 年新的英语课程标准吗？
  - 如果是的话，那您觉得新课标怎么样？
3. 可以告诉我您接受的有关新课标的培训吗？
  - 您认为你接受了充分的培训吗？
  - 您希望接受什么样的培训？
  - 您觉得您了解新课标吗？
  - 您觉得对于教新课标您准备的怎么样？
4. 您觉得新课标与旧课标有什么不同吗？
  - 您觉得最大的不同是什么？
  - 新课标重新定义了英语课程的性质，您对此了解吗？
    - 如果了解的话，您可以解释一下英语课程的性质吗？您对新课标定义的英语课程的性质又有什么看法呢？
    - 如果不了解的话，新课标定义英语课程具有工具性和人文性双重性质，您对此有什么看法呢？

### 教学实践

5. 随着 2011 新课标的引入，您因此对您的教学做了什么改变呢？  
(比如：教学法=Q6, 教学目标=Q7, 教学资源=Q8, 课堂目的语=Q9, 语法=Q10, 词汇=Q11, 教学反思=Q12, 教师交流=Q13)
6. 您改变了您的教学方法吗？
  - 如果改变了的话，为什么？您以前用的是什么教学方法，新课标引入后，您用的是什么教学方法呢？(比如：语法翻译法；听说法；任务型教学；交际教学法)
  - 如果没有改变的话，为什么？您在用什么教学法呢？
  - 您认为在英语课堂上什么用教学方法最好？您是用您期望的方式进行教学吗？
    - 如果是的话，为什么？
    - 如果不是的话，什么因素（内部或者外部）阻碍了您用您期望的方式进行教学？
  - 您知道多少种教学方法？您能举例吗？(比如：语法翻译法 听说法

任务型教学；交际教学法)

7. 您是怎么制定教学目标的？（您在制定教学目标的时候会考虑什么因素）

- 您觉得制定教学目标对您来说困难吗？为什么？

8. 您改变了您的教学资源吗？

- 如果改变了的话 您以前是怎么准备教学资源的，会考虑什么因素？现在又是怎么准备的？会考虑什么因素？为什么？
- 如果没有改变的话，为什么？

9. 您改变了您的课堂目的语（教课所使用的语言）吗？

- 如果改变了的话，为什么？您以前用什么目的语现在用什么目的语？
- 如果没有改变的话，为什么？您现在在用什么样的目的语？

10. 您在英语课上是怎么教学生语法的？

- 您觉得教语法对您来说困难吗？为什么？

11. 您在英语课上是怎么教学生词汇的？

- 您觉得教词汇对您来说困难吗？为什么？

12. 您在结束一堂英语课后通常会做些什么？（您课后会反思、总结您的教学经历吗？）

- 您觉得课后需要做的活动对您来说难吗？

13. 您什么时候会和别的英语教师交流？

- 您一般都和别的英语教师讨论什么样的问题？

14. 新课标提出了‘教师专业化发展’的概念，您了解这个概念吗？

- 如果了解的话，您可以解释一下这个概念吗？‘教师专业化发展’又有什么看法呢？您为此有做什么改变吗？
- 如果不了解的话，‘教师专业化发展’主要包括三个方面：一是更新学科专业知识，提高语言素养。二是不断积累学科教学知识，提高教学实践能力。三是开展教学反思，促进可持续发展。您对此有什么看法呢？您为此有做什么改变吗？

**教师信念**



15. 您觉得英语学习有哪些主要特点？

- 您对渐进性和持续性的特点有什么看法？
- 您觉得实践起来困难吗？为什么？

16. 现在想和您描述一个案例，这是林老师平日里上的一堂英语课，我大概和您描述一下，您听完以后告诉我您的看法好吗？

### 情景

林老师上课气氛很活跃。在课的开始，他会根据上堂课的所学内容问学生一些问题，帮助学生复习，学生可以很快的给出回答。复习上堂课的内容后，他教学生新的内容时，他总是提出一些问题好让学生去认真听讲。

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师的教学方法有什么看法？为了好的英语课堂教学，您觉得还有什么别的您可以做的？

林老师认为他的课堂角色是传授者，讲解者和课堂控制器者。他认为学生不会去主动地学习英语，除非老师很系统地去教。他认为去教课，和学生讲解，教学生如何学习英语如何做习题都是他的责任所在。

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师的在英语课堂上的角色有什么看法？您觉得角色是一个好的英语教师需要扮演的吗？

林老师说，‘给全班设置同样的全班教学目标是更为实际的。一些互动活动，比如学生的小组活动不应该占用太多课题时间因为通过考试才是最终的教学目标，同事这也是学习的英语教学最重要的事情。’

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师说的这些话有什么看法？为什么？

17. 请回想一下您教过的或者见过的一堂成功的英语课，

- 您觉得那堂课上的老师是扮演什么角色？
- 您觉得那堂课上的学生是扮演什么角色？

18. 设想一下，我邀请您来参观、检查我教的英语课，并请你来帮我判断我教的是否是一节成功的英语课，您会依照什么标准来判断呢？请解释一下您的答案。

- 您期望一个好的英语教师应该做些什么呢？
- 您期望一个好的学生在英语课上应该做些什么呢？
- 有什么教学活动是你希望看到但你在自己教的英语课中却没有用到的吗？

- 您指的是哪些活动呢？
- 为什么您不采用这些活动呢？
- 你认为什么因素（内部或者外部）阻碍了你像你期待的那样去进行英语教学？

19. 对于您实施新课标的经历，您还有什么想补充的吗？

### **背景信息**

20. 您能告诉我您的教育经历吗？

- 您毕业于什么学校？
- 您的学历是？
- 您的（英语）教龄有多少年？
- 您是在小学任教还是初中？
- 您所任教的学校是在城市，郊区、乡镇，还是农村？
- 您为什么会选择成为一名英语教师呢？

### **Appendix 5.3: Comments from pilot interview**

Two of them found all the questions clear. Another one told me that she couldn't understand some of the items in my questions because she is not familiar with the meaning of the items which were proposed by The Revised Curriculum (2011). So, I explained most of the questions by saying 'I mean....' to make the questions more clear and understandable;

One of them complained that she was a little impatient because she needed to hold the mobile phone for so long. I think that could be the reason why she gave such short and simple answers to most of the questions;

One of them reminded me that some teachers in rural area or suburb area may not know the content of The Revised Curriculum (2011) neither the introduction of The Revised Curriculum (2011);

One of them told me that Yingtan city is not that developed, so the training programme is not available to many of the teachers. It is mainly short intensive teacher training programme in Yingtan city and is attended by teachers on a selective basis which do not cater for all the teachers. So those not trained teachers can only take online training course if they need guidance or do not attend any kind of training programme. However, teachers think that online training lacks of communication, therefore, the training is always not that effective. It is even worse in rural area because teachers there do not have sufficient training and they lack of teaching materials and equipment.

One of them reminded me that she taught English from 2011 till 2014, she was not aware of the difference of the 2001 earlier curriculum and The Revised Curriculum (2011) because she was using the same series of textbooks since 2010 till now. This is because she was teaching the Grade one students in middle school from 2010, and the old series of textbooks must be used continually until those students were graduated. So this reminds me that some young teachers may be not quite familiar with The Revised Curriculum (2011), and they may not find it difficult to implement The Revised Curriculum (2011).

One of them recommended that I carry out my main study after late February in China since teachers are more available at that time to be interviewed (after winter vacation).

## **Appendix 5.4: Revised Interview questions (English Version)**

### **Curriculum Comparison**

1Have you taught the 2001 old curriculum?

2Are you teaching the 2011 new curriculum?

- *If yes, how are you finding it?*
- *If no, what do you think need to be changed?*

3Have you had training about the new curriculum?

- *What kind? How much?*

4Did you get adequate training about the new curriculum?

- *If yes, What do you think about the training you already had?*
  - *What training would you like?*
  - *Do you feel you understand the new curriculum well?*
  - *Do you feel well prepared to teach the new English curriculum?*
- *If no,*
  - *Do you feel you understand the new curriculum well?*
  - *Do you feel well prepared to teach the new English curriculum?*
  - *What training would you like?*

5Do you find the new curriculum very different from the old curriculum?

- *What do you consider are the main differences?*
- *The new curriculum has redefined the functions of English course, do you know what are they?*
  - *If yes, can you explain them? How do you think about them?*
  - *If no, they are the instrumental value and the humanistic value, how do you think about them?*

### **Teaching Practices**

6What changes

- *have you made to your teaching because of the introduction of the 2011 new English curriculum? (such as teaching approaches=Q7, teaching objectives=Q8, resources=Q9, target language in class=Q10, grammar=Q11, vocabulary=Q12, reflection=Q13, communication with colleagues=Q14)*
- *would you like to see in your English teaching?*

7Have you changed your teaching approaches?

- *If yes, Why? what are those teaching approaches you were used and you are using now? (such as grammar-translation; audio-lingualism; PPP 'present practice production'; CLT)*
- *If no, Why not? What are those teaching approaches you are using?*
- *What teaching approaches do you think are best in English classes? Are you teaching in the way you expect to?*
  - *If yes, why?*
  - *If no, what factors (external or internal) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?*
- *How many teaching approaches do you know? Could you give some examples? (grammar-translation; audio-lingualism; PPP 'present practice production'; CLT)*

8How do you set teaching objectives? (What are the factors you will consider when you are setting teaching objectives?)

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

9Have you changed your resources at all?

- *If yes, What are the factors you will consider when you are planning your resources before and now? Why?*
- *Do you use the new textbooks? What else?*
- *If no, why not?*

10Have you changed the language used in the English class?

- *If yes, Why? what language you were used and what language you are using now?*
- *If no, Why not? what language you were used and what language you are using now?*

11How do you teach students grammar in the English class?

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

12How do you teach students vocabulary in the English class?

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

13What do you do after you finished your English lesson (will you reflect on and summarise your teaching experiences?)

- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

14. When do you discuss curriculum matters with your colleagues (other English teachers)?

- *What sort of issues have you discussed?*

15. The new English curriculum raised the concept of 'professionalisation of teachers'. Do you understand this concept?

- *If yes, can you explain it? How do you think about it? Have you made any changes to it?*
- *If no, 'professionalisation of teachers' mainly includes three aspects: renewing teachers' subject knowledge and develop their language proficiency; accumulating teachers' subject pedagogical knowledge and improve practical teaching ability constantly; carrying out reflective teaching and promote the sustainable development of professional construction. How do you think about it? Have you made any changes to it?*
- *Do you find it difficult and why?*

### **Teachers' Beliefs**

16. What do you consider are the main features of English language learning?

- *How do you think about the gradualness and continuity?*
- *Do you find it difficult in practice and why?*

17. Look at the example case talking about what Mr Lin does in his daily English teaching, how do you feel about it? Please justify your answer (Use Vignettes).

### **The Vignette**

Mr Lin leads his class in an animated way. At the beginning of the class, he asks students some questions that based on the reading task they have done before and his students can give their responses quickly. After the review, he teaches the class new content, he always raises some questions to keep students attentive and listening to what he said.

He sees his role as an initiator, an explainer and a class controller. He thinks students won't learn English unless the teacher goes over the material in a structured way. He believes it is his duty to teach, to explain, and to show students how to learn English and how to do the task.

He says, 'it is more practical to set the same teaching objectives for the whole class. Interactive activities such as group work should not take too much time in class because passing the exams is the final teaching goal and the most important thing for English teaching at school.'

- What do you think about the teaching approach Mr Lin adopted? Is there anything else you might do for good teaching?
- What do you think about the role Mr Lin played in English class? Is there another role you think necessary for good teaching?
- What do you think about Mr Lin's viewpoint? Why?

18. Thinking about a successful English lesson you have seen or taught,

- *What do you think the role of the English teacher is in this lesson?*
- *What do you think the role of the student is in this lesson?*

19. Imagining that I invited you to visit and review my English class to help me decide if I was teaching a successful English lesson, what criteria and dimensions of teaching would you look for? Please justify your answer.

- *What do you expect a good English teacher need to do?*
- *What do you expect a good student of English need to do?*
- *Are there any teaching activities that you would expect to see but you don't use in your classroom?*
- *What are those activities? Why don't you use them?*
- *What factors (external or internal) do you think prevent you from teaching the way you would like to teach?*

20. What else could you tell me about your experience of the new curriculum?

### **Background Information**

21. Can you tell me about your educational life?

- *What is your major?*
- *Have you ever learnt phonetics, linguistics, pedagogy and psychology knowledge systematically?*
- *What was your degree?*
- *How many years have you been teaching?*
- *Are you teaching in primary school or junior middle school?*
- *Is your school located in city area, or suburb, village and town area, or rural area (including mountainous area)?*
- *Why did you choose to become an English teacher?*

## Appendix 5.5: Revised Interview questions (Chinese Version)

### 新旧课程比较

1. 您曾使用过 2001 年的英语课程标准吗？
2. 您现在在使用 2011 年新的英语课程标准吗？
  - 如果是的话，那您觉得新课标怎么样？（比如对实际教学有什么影响，语法之类的改变？
  - 如果不是的话，您觉得旧课标有哪些觉得需要改变的地方吗？
3. 您接受过有关新课标的培训吗？
  - 什么样的培训形式呢？培训多吗？
4. 您认为您接受了充分的培训吗？
  - 如果充分的话，
    - 您觉得您接收的培训怎么样？
    - 您希望接受什么样的培训？
    - 您觉得您了解新课标吗？
    - 您觉得对于教新课标您准备的怎么样？（您觉得需要针对新课改有变化的地方您需要做些准备工作吗？）
  - 如果不充分的话，
    - 您觉得您了解新课标吗？
    - 您觉得对于教新课标您准备的怎么样？（您觉得需要针对新课改有变化的地方您需要做些准备工作吗？）
    - 您希望接受什么样的培训？
5. 您觉得新课标与旧课标有什么不同吗？
  - 您觉得最大的不同是什么？
  - 新课标重新定义了英语课程的性质，您对此了解吗？
    - 如果了解的话，您可以解释一下英语课程的性质吗？您对新课标定义的英语课程的性质又有什么看法呢？
    - 如果不了解的话，新课标定义英语课程具有工具性和人文性双重性质，您对此有什么看法呢？（工具性主要强调英语课程培养学生运用能力的实用功能和英语课程的实践性特点；主要是突出对学生综合语言运用能力、创新精神和实践能力的培养；关注学生知识的积累运用。突出了英语是公共交流



工具、学习工具、思维工具的特征。英语课程的人文性着重于英语课程对学生思想感情熏陶感染的文化功能和课程所具有人文学科的特点；强调关注学生的心灵成长，心智发展，人格升华，体现德育为先。）

## 教学实践

6. 随着 2011 新课标的引入，您因此对您的教学做了什么改变呢？

（比如：教学法=Q6，教学目标=Q7，教学资源=Q8，课堂目的语=Q9，语法=Q10，词汇=Q11，教学反思=Q12，教师交流=Q13）

7. 您改变了您的教学方法吗？

- 如果改变了的话，为什么？您以前用的是什么教学方法，新课标引入后，您用的是什么教学方法呢？（比如：语法翻译法；听说法；任务型教学；交际教学法）
- 如果没有改变的话，为什么？您在用什么教学法呢？
- 您认为在英语课堂上什么用教学方法最好？您是用您期望的方式进行教学吗？
  - 如果是的话，为什么？
  - 如果不是的话，什么因素（内部或者外部）阻碍了您用您期望的方式进行教学？
- 您知道多少种教学方法？您能举例吗？（比如：语法翻译法 听说法 任务型教学；交际教学法）

8. 您是怎么制定教学目标的？（您在制定教学目标的时候会考虑什么因素）

- 您觉得制定教学目标对您来说困难吗？为什么？

9. 您改变了您的教学资源吗？

- 如果改变了的话 您以前是怎么准备教学资源的 会考虑什么因素？现在又是怎么准备的？会考虑什么因素？为什么？
- 如果没有改变的话，为什么？

10. 您改变了您的课堂目的语（教课所使用的语言）吗？

- 如果改变了的话，为什么？您以前用什么目的语现在用什么目的语？
- 如果没有改变的话，为什么？您现在在用什么样的目的语？

11. 您在英语课上是怎么教学生语法的？

- 您觉得教语法对您来说困难吗？为什么？

12. 您在英语课上是怎么教学生词汇的？

- 您觉得教词汇对您来说困难吗？为什么？

13. 您在结束一堂英语课后通常会做些什么？（您课后会反思、总结您的教学经历吗？）

- 您觉得课后需要做的活动对您来说难吗？

14. 您什么时候会和别的英语教师交流？

- 您一般都和别的英语教师讨论什么样的问题？

15. 新课标提出了‘教师专业化发展’的概念，您了解这个概念吗？

- 如果了解的话，您可以解释一下这个概念吗？‘教师专业化发展’又有什么看法呢？您为此有做什么改变吗？
- 如果不了解的话，‘教师专业化发展’主要包括三个方面：一是更新学科专业知识，提高语言素养。二是不断积累学科教学知识，提高教学实践能力。三是开展教学反思，促进可持续发展。您对此有什么看法呢？您为此有做什么改变吗？

### **教师信念**

16. 您觉得英语学习有哪些主要特点？

- 您对渐进性和持续性的特点有什么看法？
- 您觉得实践起来困难吗？为什么？

17. 现在想和您描述一个案例，这是林老师平日里上的一堂英语课，我大概和您描述一下，您听完以后告诉我您的看法好吗？

### **情景**

林老师上课气氛很活跃。在课的开始，他会根据上堂课的所学内容问学生一些问题，帮助学生复习，学生可以很快的给出回答。复习上堂课的内容后，他教学生新的内容时，他总是提出一些问题好让学生去认真听讲。

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师的教学方法有什么看法？为了更好的英语课堂教学，您觉得还有什么别的您可以做的？

林老师认为他的课堂角色是传授者，讲解者和课堂控制器者。他认为学生不会去主动地学习英语，除非老师很系统地去教。他认为去教课，和学生讲解，教学生如何学习英语如何做习题都是他的责任所在。

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师的在英语课堂上的角色有什么看法？您觉得角色是一个好的英语教师需要扮演的吗？

林老师说，‘给全班设置同样的全班教学目标是更为实际的。一些互动活动，比如学生的小组活动不应该占用太多课题时间因为通过考试才是最终的教学目标，同事这也是学习的英语教学最重要的事情。’

（停顿，问老师看法）

- 您对林老师说的这些话有什么看法？为什么？

18. 请回想一下您教过的或者见过的一堂成功的英语课，

- 您觉得那堂课上的老师是扮演什么角色？
- 您觉得那堂课上的学生是扮演什么角色？

19. 设想一下，我邀请您来参观、检查我教的英语课，并请你来帮我判断我教的是否是一节成功的英语课，您会依照什么标准来判断呢？请解释一下您的答案。

- 您期望一个好的英语教师应该做些什么呢？
- 您期望一个好的学生在英语课上应该做些什么呢？
- 有什么教学活动是你希望看到但你在自己教的英语课中却没有用到的吗？
  - 您指的是哪些活动呢？
  - 为什么您不采用这些活动呢？
- 你认为什么因素（内部或者外部）阻碍了你像你期待的那样去进行英语教学？

20. 对于您实施新课标的经历，您还有什么想补充的吗？

### **背景信息**

21. 您能告诉我您的教育经历吗？

- 您毕业于什么学校？
- 您的学历是？

- 您的年龄是？
- 您的（英语）教龄有多少年？
- 您是在小学任教还是初中？
- 您所任教的学校是在城市，郊区、乡镇，还是农村？
- 您为什么会选择成为一名英语教师呢？

## Appendix 6: The characteristics of the questionnaire respondents

### The characteristics of the questionnaire respondents (n=227)

Statistics	School		Location			Gender		Education Qualification				English Teaching Experience (Years)					Training Experience		
	Primary English teachers	Junior middle school English teachers	City	Suburb	Rural	Female	Male	Technical secondary school or below	Junior college	Bachelor	Master	<5	6-10	11-15	16-25	>26	Enough	Not enough	No
<b>n</b>	104	123	76	79	72	209	18	0	41	175	11	50	57	91	18	11	41	106	80
<b>%</b>	46	54	33	35	32	92	8	0	18	77	5	22	25	40	8	5	18	47	35

## Appendix 7: The characteristics of the interview respondents

Statistics	School		Location			Gender		Education Qualification				English Teaching Experience (Years)					Training Experience		
	Primary English teachers	Junior middle school English teachers	City	Suburb	Rural	Female	Male	Technical secondary school or below	Junior college	Bachelor	Master	<5	6-10	11-15	16-25	>26	Enough	Not enough	No
Total Number in Yingtian*	522 (47%)	597 (53%)	377 (34%)	391 (35%)	351 (31%)	996 (89%)	123 (11%)	0 (0%)	235 (21%)	806 (72%)	78 (7%)	190 (17%)	246 (22%)	492 (44%)	123 (11%)	68 (6%)	56 (5%)	436 (39%)	627 (56%)
Expected number in interview	8 (47%)	10 (53%)	6 (34%)	6 (35%)	6 (31%)	16 (89%)	2(11%)	0 (0%)	4 (21%)	13 (72%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	4 (22%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)	7 (39%)	10 (56%)
Actual number in interview	8 (47%)	10 (53%)	6 (34%)	6 (35%)	6 (31%)	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	5 (27%)	12 (67%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	4 (22%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)	7 (39%)	10 (56%)

(\*: Source from Yingtian Education Bureau, [www.yteduy.gov.cn](http://www.yteduy.gov.cn))

## **Appendix 8.1: English teachers' responses to questions about training for The Revised Curriculum (Questionnaire Responses)**

### **English teachers' responses to questions about training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) (Questionnaire Responses) (n=227)**

Questions	Responses	Number (%)
Have you had training already about the 2011 curriculum for English?	No	n=79 (35%)
	A little, but not enough	n=143 (63%)
	Enough	n=5 (2%)
What kind of training or guidance you already have had?	The content of the 2011 curriculum	n=148 (100%)
	Solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching	n=9 (6%)
	The assessment reform and how to design tests	n=18 (12%)
	School-based curriculum	n=18 (12%)
	How to explore and use resources	n=0
	Improve subject knowledge	n=0
	How to undertake research during teaching	n=0
What kind of training or guidance do you think you need to have?	The content of the 2011 curriculum	n=43 (19%)
	Solutions to solve the actual practical problems in English language teaching	n=202 (89%)
	The assessment reform and how to design tests	n=39 (17%)
	School-based curriculum	n=39 (17%)
	How to explore and use resources	n=114 (50%)
	Improve subject knowledge	n=166 (73%)
	How to undertake research during teaching	n=139 (61%)

## **Appendix 8.2: English teachers' responses to questions about training for The Revised Curriculum (Interivew Responses)**

### **English teachers' responses to questions about training for The Revised Curriculum (2011) (Questionnaire Responses) (n=18)**

Questions	Responses	Number (Total N=18)
Did you get adequate training about The Revised Curriculum (2011)?	No	n=10
	A little, but not enough	n=7
	Enough	n=1