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It is entitled:
Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices through Guided Reflection: A Multiple-Case Study of ESL Writing Instructors

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Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices through Guided Reflection:
A Multiple-Case Study of ESL Writing Instructors

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated six college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection. Under a socio-constructivist framework, this study emphasized the sociocultural aspects of how instructors constructed their pedagogical beliefs and developed instructional practices independently and collectively. Three research questions were used to examine the impact of guided reflection on instructors’ belief evolution and practice progression, and to explore instructors’ personal background as influential factors to their pedagogical growth. A multiple-case study design was employed to collect and analyze data from preliminary interviews, class observations, individual reflection interviews, and group reflection discussions. Under the multiple-case study paradigm, within- and cross-case analyses were conducted. Reports of these six instructors’ reflective teaching experiences were presented respectively to showcase the unique path of each individual’s pedagogical growth under guided reflection. Findings from the within-case analysis indicated that guided reflection had positive impact on instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices to different extents and at various paces depending on different instructors’ personal backgrounds. Cross-case analysis pointed out that instructors’ professional, educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and personal traits played an important role in their pedagogical growth. Cross-case analysis also revealed the multifaceted nature of factors such as instructors’ teaching experiences and cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and, therefore, called for in-depth analyses of such factors for future studies in order to develop a more holistic understanding of instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. This study has theoretical and methodological implications for future research, and the findings of this study carry pragmatic significance for the field of ESL and general teacher education and teacher professional development programs.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

I have been an English language teacher for my entire professional life thus far, with combination experiences of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the high school setting in China, teaching English as a second language (ESL) in the American college setting, and educating teacher candidates to be ESL teachers. These teaching experiences together with my research interest in teacher education and second language (L2) writing pedagogy motivate me to explore teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices in English writing instruction.

In a pilot study, I developed a teacher reflection model (TRM) (Appendix A) based on my investigation of three college ESL writing instructors’ evolving pedagogical beliefs and practices. The areas explored in the TRM were: (1) teachers’ personal background, (2) teachers’ pre-existing pedagogical beliefs, (3) teachers’ instructional practices, (4) the relationship between beliefs and practices, and (5) teachers’ enhanced pedagogical beliefs and practices. The TRM demonstrated the interconnection among the five areas, and these connections were revealed through continuous teachers’ guided reflection. Teachers’ personal backgrounds contributed to the construction of teachers’ pre-existing pedagogical beliefs. Teachers realized the connection and contradiction between their beliefs and practices through reflecting on their pre-existing beliefs in relation to their pedagogical practices. In other words, guided reflection elicited the bidirectional relationship between beliefs and practices. With the on-going comparison, self-evaluation, and self-direction of the evolving beliefs and practices, guided reflection further helps teachers enhance the connection between their pedagogical beliefs and practices.
The findings of the pilot study pointed out that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices are influenced by their educational and professional backgrounds as well as their self-perceptions. However, the study also suggested that this influence can be manipulated to some extent when teachers are deliberately engaged in reflective teaching practices. Furthermore, the findings supported the argument that reflective teaching is an on-going process which can (1) elicit the bidirectional interaction between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices; (2) facilitate the evolution of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. However, the implications of the study also pointed to the need of applying the TRM to a more diverse teacher population over a longer period of time and thus have led to the current investigation that focused on the impact of guided reflection on teachers’ evolving pedagogical beliefs and practices in ESL writing instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Reflection, a concept widely discussed in teacher education, is considered to be “a generic component of good teaching” (Korthagen, 2001, p.51). Influenced by different trends and philosophies, the term of reflection has been conceptualized in many ways in the literature and thus the implementation of reflection in teacher education and professional development takes various forms and serves different purposes. After reviewing various interpretations of the concept of reflection and its use in the literature, Korthagen (2001) stated that “reflection is the mental process of trying to structure or restructuring an experience, a problem, or existing knowledge or insights” (p.58). From this point of view, a grounded concept of reflection needs to include critical thinking about both what teachers do and what they know. However, after studying the substantial body of research on teacher reflection, Marcos and Tillema (2006) found a tendency in the existing literature to study teachers’ thinking about teaching rather than how
they actually teach, namely, their instructional practices. Furthermore, there is little solid
evidence to show the effectiveness of reflective practices on teachers’ improved teaching

Teacher cognition research, a field closely related to teacher reflection has the similar
trend to overtly focus on one aspect of the concept, teacher’s pedagogical beliefs, rather than
instructional practices. Even though findings from many teacher cognition studies point out that
teachers’ instructional practices are closely related to their pedagogical beliefs (Gatbonton, 2000
& 2008; Johnson, 1994; Karabenich & Noda, 2004; Peacock, 2001; Richardson et al., 1991),
explicit reports regarding teachers’ classroom practices were rarely found in the existing
literature of teacher cognition research.

There is no doubt that meaningful teaching is context-specific. Accordingly, to fully
understand teachers’ classroom practices, knowledge about the teaching context is essential.
Compared to the large research body on teacher cognition and teacher reflection, fewer studies
have been conducted in relation to specific teaching contexts. It is, thus, understandable why
pragmatic implications from teacher reflection and teacher cognition research were limited.
Nevertheless, the purpose of teacher education research should not only build the theoretical
foundation for teaching, but also point to the clear direction for teachers’ classroom practices.

Therefore, this study addressed the gaps in the research on teacher reflection and teacher
cognition to emphasize both teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and their instructional practices in a
specific teaching context. Reflection was used to facilitate teachers to develop their own
pedagogical beliefs grounding their classroom practices, an approach articulated by Calderhead
and Gates (1993). More importantly, the investigation of teachers’ reflection on their
pedagogical beliefs and practices was conducted in a clearly defined context of college ESL writing classes.

Writing is a complex intellectual process involving high cognitive awareness and appreciation of social and cultural contexts. Writing in a second language (L2) is perhaps even more so. However, L2 writing scholarship, since its start in the mid-1960s, has evolved separately as a subfield of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (Matsuda & Silva, 2001). Obviously, the disconnection between teaching methods and teaching contexts is also a problem in the field of ESL teacher education research. Given the importance of academic writing skill for ESL students’ academic success and the lack of attention to specific teaching contexts in teacher cognition and reflection research, investigating teachers’ pedagogical growth through reflective teaching in ESL writing classes will be of theoretical and practical value.

Built on the results of the pilot study, this dissertation study applied the TRM to a 15-week investigation of the ongoing guided reflective teaching practices of six college ESL writing instructors. Each of these instructors came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and had various educational and professional experiences. In the existing literature of teacher cognition research, many studies have pointed out the connection of teachers’ personal background and their pedagogical beliefs and practices (Busch, 2010; Chen & Cheng, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Gatbonton, 1999 & 2008; Johnson, 1994; Ma, 2012; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Pray & Marx, 2010). However, the investigation of the influential factors to teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices seemed to limit to teachers’ language learning background (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Johnson, 1994; Ma, 2012) or teaching experiences (Busch, 2010; Chen & Cheng, 2012; Gatbonton, 1999 & 2008; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Pray & Marx, 2010). Enlightened by the findings from the pilot study, this study, took a holistic approach to investigate the impact
of teachers’ overall background and experiences on their pedagogical growth and reflective practices instead of viewing teachers’ background as one-dimensional.

Because this study aimed to address the gaps in the existing literature identified above, it was necessary to provide detailed accounts of each participant’s pedagogical growth through guided reflection. The case study method, with its descriptive nature, is well suited for this purpose of the study, because case study inquiry (1) usually applies the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis, and (2) relies on collecting data from multiple sources in a triangulating fashion (Yin, 2009). In addition, “case studies can cover multiple cases and draw a single set of cross-case conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 20).

Following a multiple-case study approach, I conducted semi-structure preliminary interviews, classroom observations and follow-up reflective interviews with each of the ESL writing instructors. Furthermore, group reflective discussions were implemented to represent the social constructivist perspective that contributes to the theoretical framework of the study. This study focused on the impact of continuous guided reflections on the development of college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical believes and practices. Each instructor’s experience with guided reflection was an individual case and therefore was analyzed and reported respectively. However, as both similarities and differences in cultural, linguistic, educational and professional backgrounds existed among instructors, cross-case analysis was applied to investigate how instructors’ various personal backgrounds affected their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflective practices.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework of the study relied on both constructivist and socio-constructivist perspectives. These philosophical underpinnings were determined by the nature of the study. First of all, the approach to case study is based on a constructivist paradigm (Stake,
1995; Yin, 2003). Constructivism claims that each individual can only interpret information in the context of their own experiences, and that what they interpret will, to some extent, be subjective (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, under a constructivist paradigm, the researcher and the participant work collaboratively so as to allow the participant to describe their view of reality and at the same time enable the researcher to better understand the participant’s action. As a constructivist researcher, I believe each person constructs his/her view of the world based on individualized perceptions of it. Therefore, in order to get the best representation of the reality during the research process, I used reflection as a tool to guide the participants to construct their own meaningful and conceptually functional representations of their pedagogical beliefs and practices rather than putting my own interpretation onto their reality.

Another philosophical foundation for the study was the social constructivist paradigm, which “emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding” (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997, cited in Kim, 2001, p.2). A social constructivist view emphasizes the following standpoints: (1) reality is constructed through human activities, (2) knowledge depends on social interaction as well as all aspects of the person, and (3) learning is a social process that occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (Kim, 2001). Furthermore, at the school level, a key implication of the social constructivist paradigm is that teachers should be encouraged to reflect on what they are doing (Beck & Kosnik, 2006). With this understanding in mind, it is clear that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices are culturally and contextually interrelated, and that teachers should be engaged in both individual and collaborative reflection practices in order to achieve pedagogical growth.
This study fits in the social constructivist paradigm because cultural and contextual factors played an important role throughout the design of the research. First of all, in recruiting participants for the study, I took into consideration their cultural backgrounds and experiences as well as their teaching contexts, including the content, students, and the general surrounding of their teaching. Another feature that emphasized the socio-constructivist nature of this study was that I engaged my participants to work as a group to share their understandings regarding the content, the students, their role as teachers, the challenges and successes of their teaching, and their experiences through guided reflection. Moreover, the data analysis used in this study represented the socio-constructive perspective by looking into how cultural and contextual factors impacted participants’ understanding of beliefs and practices in teaching, as well as their responses and reactions to the guided reflection.

Also contributing to the study’s design and analytical frame was the literature on two important concepts, teacher cognition in language learning and teaching (Borg, 2003) and reflective teaching (Calderhead, 1989; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition in language learning and teaching can be derived from what teachers have cognitions about, how these cognitions develop, and how cognitions interact with teacher learning and with their classroom practices. Teacher cognition theory shed light on the framework of the study, which defined teacher cognition in language teaching as teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Teachers’ pedagogical beliefs were defined in this study as: (1) teachers’ knowledge related to the act of teaching (Gatbonton, 2008), and (2) teachers’ perception of the subject matter and their role as teachers (Borg, 2003). Therefore, teachers’ belief system included beliefs about the content of teaching, the manner in which the content is taught, and the teachers’
role in the classroom. The concept of teachers’ practices referred to teachers’ classroom
behaviors and instructional strategies. Teachers’ beliefs and practices were inevitably
influenced by their personal backgrounds, including their educational background, teaching
experiences, and even their personal attributes (Akbari, Behzadpoor & Dadvand, 2010). Thus,
teacher background was an important aspect in the investigation of the instructors’ pedagogical
beliefs and practices. All of these aspects of a teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and practices were
reflected in the TRM which was applied in this study as a methodological tool for data collection
and data analysis.

Another important concept informing the study was reflective teaching, which was used
interchangeably as teacher reflection in this paper. Reflective teaching emphasizes teachers’
cognition and meta-cognition processes of “comparison, evaluation, and self-direction” of
teaching (Calderhead, 1989, p.46). The concept of teacher reflection was applied to the study,
both as a data collection tool and as the subject to be investigated. First, teacher reflection was
carefully guided to represent all aspects in the TRM, and thus served as a data collection
instrument. Second, teacher reflection was viewed through a socio-constructivist lens and was
encouraged as both an individual and a collaborative act (Lee & Loughran, 2000; Manouchehri,
2002), and thus studying the effects of such guided reflection served the purpose of this research
project.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of guided reflection on teachers’
pedagogical beliefs and practices in college ESL writing classes. The study intended to inform
pre- and in-service ESL teachers, as well as ESL teacher educators, of the effects of guided
reflection on teacher’s professional growth in order to arouse their awareness to implement and
promote purposeful reflective teaching in ESL teacher education and ESL teacher professional development.

Using a multiple-case study design, the study examined participants’ reflective teaching experiences in relation to their pedagogical growth and personal background. In order to truly understand what participants experienced in the study, I raised questions dealing with operational links that could be traced over time with each participant. As Yin (2009) pointed out,

“The more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g., ‘how’ or ‘why’ some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant. The method also is relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and ‘in-depth’ description of some social phenomenon” (p. 4).

Therefore, the study intended to answer the following research questions.

1. How does guided reflection affect teachers’ pedagogical beliefs?
2. How does guided reflection affect teachers’ instructional practices?
3. How do teachers’ personal backgrounds affect their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection?

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms are frequently used in the report of this study. The meaning of some terms is more complicated than that of others. Some terms contain multi-dimensional connotations but only specific aspects of the concept are applied in this study. Thus, a definition of each term is needed in order to keep the clarity of the writing.

Teacher cognition: The unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe, and think (Borg, 2003).

Pedagogical belief: Teachers’ knowledge about teaching context, the act of teaching and the
process of learning that inform teachers’ behavior in the classroom (Gabonton, 2008); teachers’ perception of the subject matter and their role as teachers (Borg, 2003).

Reflection: active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends (Dewey, 1933; cited in Calderhead, 1989); a process of becoming aware of one’s context, of the influence of social and ideological constraints on previously taken-for-granted practices, and gaining control over the direction of these influences (Habermas, 1974; cited in Calderhead, 1989).

Reflective teaching: metacognitive processes of comparison, evaluation, and self-direction of teaching practices (Calderhead, 1989); teachers’ critical analysis of their beliefs and classroom practices so that they can become more aware of what they do and why they do it (Farrell, 2008).

Circumstantial bi-/multilingual: those who achieve their multilinguality by growing up in bilingual societies, and/or by emigrating to a new language environment as children or adults, or by being born in a family which speak a different language from the official language used in the country (Ellis, 2004).

Elective bi-/multilingual: those who grow up with one language and begin to learn other languages only during or after their secondary schooling, and by choice (Ellis, 2004).

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

Under a case study design, this research study followed a naturalistic paradigm to investigate six college instructors’ pedagogical growth through reflective teaching practices in ESL writing classrooms. Within the naturalistic framework, trustworthiness of an investigation is the key element to achieve, from the design, data collection, to the data analysis and report of
the findings of the study. According to Guba (1981), there are four aspects of trustworthiness for any naturalistic inquiries to achieve; namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1986) explicated techniques to increase the probability to meet these criteria and to test the extent to which these criteria have been met.

For naturalistic research, the credibility of findings and interpretations using various data sources is an important criterion to achieve the trustworthiness of a research study. There are several ways to increase the credibility at different stages of a study, such as through lengthy and intensive contact with the phenomenon or participants in the field, triangulation of data collection methods, in-depth analysis of salient elements in the study, and member checking the accuracy of researcher’s interpretation with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The current study applied these techniques to establish its credibility. First, the current study is a multiple-case study, and parallel investigation was conducted with each of the six participants. Second, data were collected from four sources at four different time points over a 15-week period of time. In addition, data were analyzed within each case and across all six cases and reported in within-case and cross-case manners. Last, relevant data analysis outcomes and research findings were sent to each participant for member checking to ensure that the researcher’s reconstruction of what she has been told and what she has observed was truth to participants’ reality.

In terms of transferability, the naturalist “does not attempt to form generalization that will hold in all times and in all places, but to form working hypotheses that may be transferred from one context to another depending upon the degree of ‘fit’ between the contexts” (Guba, 1981, p. 81). Transferability can be achieved through thick descriptive data so that other researchers can make judgments about the degree of fit and to what extent findings can be applied elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In this study, findings were reported in two manners: within a single
case and across multiple cases. First, findings of each individual case were reported to answer three research questions in a narrative fashion. Individual case reports incorporated detailed description of each participant’s background and understandings and experiences at different time points of the study. Based on different dimensions of participants’ background, findings from all six cases were compared and synthesized in relation to the existing literature in relevant fields. Through reporting findings in different manners and at several levels, the study provided sufficiently detailed accounts of each participant’s pedagogical growth through reflective teaching for future investigations.

Dependability, from a naturalist’s perspective, refers to the stability of data. However, as naturalistic inquiries usually involve humans as instruments/investigators, researchers have to bear to some extent the instability of the human instruments as a result of evolving insights and sensitivities (Guba, 1981). The dependability of a study can be strengthened through triangulating the data collection methods in such a way that “the weakness of one [method] is compensated by the strengths of another” (Guba, 1981, p. 86). If similar results are found with different methods, the dependability of the study is proved. Another approach to enhance the dependability is to invite an external auditor to examine the processes of data collection and data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The study employed various data collection methods, including preliminary interviews, classroom observations, individual reflection interviews, and group reflection discussions. Data collected from different methods complemented each other to allow for a rounded and profound representation of each participant to be made. For example, while the interviews with each participant shed light on their pedagogical beliefs and insights about classroom practices, data from classroom observation either provided additional confirmation about what was claimed or gave evidence contradicting to participants’ statement.
Furthermore, while observation data represented researcher’s interpretation of participants’ instructional practices, reflection interviews provided opportunities for participants to clarify what was seen through researcher’s eyes. Additionally, if data from individual reflection interviews were limited due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, they were supplemented by data from group reflection discussions in which additional insights were stimulated and produced through the interaction and communication among participants.

Different from dependability’s emphasis on the process of data collection, confirmability concerns about the product; namely, the data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Confirmability refers to the degree to which researchers’ interpretation of data is neutral and without personal biases. Data triangulation, as already discussed above, can serve as a technique to improve the confirmability of a study. Moreover, peer debriefing can “provide researchers the opportunity to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions through interacting with other professionals” (Guba, 1981, p.85). To ensure the confirmability of the study, I carried an ongoing conversation with my dissertation committee chair throughout the data analysis process and answered questions and concerns that might lead to redirection or deviation of the study. Through debriefing with my committee chair, I meant to bring in a fresh eye to help maintain my neutral perspective in data interpretation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is its socio-constructivist approach to investigate teachers’ reflective teaching practices. Despite a large body of research in the field of teacher reflection, few studies have addressed the sociocultural aspects of teachers in relation to their reflective teaching practices (Akbari, 2007). The current study emphasized the possible impacts of teachers’ personal backgrounds on their reflective teaching practices through the lens of
analyzing individual case as well as by conducting a multidimensional comparison between cases. Although the purpose of such comparison was not to generalize teacher reflection practices regarding the descriptive nature of case studies (Yin, 1993), the socio-constructivist approach shed light on future research to consider the complex backgrounds that teachers bring with them to their reflective teaching practices.

Moreover, this study highlighted the pragmatic function of reflective teaching practice by looking into the direct influence of reflection on teachers’ instructional practices. Within the scope of teacher cognition research, teachers’ classroom practice has long been viewed as a by-product of teacher’s pedagogical belief (Borg, 2003). Similarly, research in teacher reflection has overtly stressed what teachers think and believe but has generally overlooked what teachers actually do in classroom (Marcos & Tillema, 2006). As a result, very few studies in teacher reflection research reported teacher practice progression as an outcome of reflective teaching (Akbari, 2007; Korthagen & Wubbles, 2001). Rather than attaching teacher’s instructional practices to their pedagogical beliefs, this study viewed them as two equal components of teachers’ pedagogy system. Thus, the findings of this study carry pragmatic significance for the field of teacher education and teacher professional development.

Additionally, the value of this study also lies in its methodological triangulation that existed in both data collection and data analysis. First, data collection included the use of the observation data, one-on-one conversations, and group discussions as the vehicles for reflection at multiple time points. Moreover, within-case analysis and cross-case analysis were applied to interpret the richness of the data. Therefore, the holistic research design of the current study offered methodological implications for future research.
Conclusion

In seeking answers to three research questions: (1) how does guided reflection affect teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, (2) how does guided reflection affect teachers’ instructional practices, and (3) how do teachers’ personal backgrounds affect their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection, I conducted a multiple-case study that embraced a socio-constructivist perspective to investigate the effects of guided reflection on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices in the context of college ESL writing instruction. Following the conceptual framework described in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 discusses the literature related to the two key concepts framing this study, teacher cognition and teacher reflection. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used in the design of the study and in the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings in relation to research questions in the form of individual cases. Chapter 5 further analyzes the findings in a cross-case manner to highlight the socio-constructivist perspective of understanding teacher’s reflective teaching practices. Chapter 6 discusses the implications that the findings of this study bring to the field of teacher education and teacher professional development.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

In Chapter 1, I discussed the rationale of conducting a study to investigate college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical growth through the lens of their reflective practice. I viewed reflective practice as teachers’ critical reflection on their pedagogical beliefs and practices in the given context (Farrell, 2011). Hence, I introduced two important concepts framing this study: teacher cognition and teacher reflection. Additionally, in this study, teachers’ cognition and reflection were investigated in relation to their knowledge of ESL writing pedagogy. Therefore, in this chapter, in order to build a foundational knowledge of teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and practices and reflective teaching through a clearly defined contextual background of ESL writing pedagogy, I discuss in detail ESL writing pedagogy, the concepts of teacher cognition and teacher reflection, and how these concepts are viewed and implemented in the existing literature.

Research on ESL Writing Pedagogy

It is commonly acknowledged that among four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing, writing is the last and most difficult process for ESL students to attain and the most crucial aptitude for their academic development (Raimes, 1985; Nation, 2009). Therefore, ESL writing pedagogy, as an area of inquiry, has been widely studied since the mid-1960s (Silva & Mutsuda, 2001). This section discusses ESL writing pedagogy at different academic levels. The common practices of ESL writing instruction will emerge through exploring instructional practices applied to ESL writing classes across age and academic levels.

Writing pedagogy for young English language learners. It is commonly assumed that the younger L2 learners are, the easier and faster for them to master the language, and the more likely it is for them to develop a native-like oral and written language competency. However, as writing is a consciously learned skill through schooling, young English Language Learners
(ELL) also need to develop and improve their writing skill through deliberate instruction. Findings of the research articles reviewed for this study indicated that building writing strategies was an effective practice of writing instructions for young ELLs.

Araujo (2002) identified circle reading, journal writing, and phonics handwriting as central to the kindergarten literacy curriculum. In terms of writing development, neither writing accuracy nor writing behavior was the focus for this age range. Instead, it was assumed that children should be free to discuss different topics and express their opinions using extended discourse. The findings of Araujo’s research supported the idea that kindergarten ELLs had control over their writing strategies and could construct personal meanings from stories while working collaboratively.

Similarly, in a yearlong collaborative study, Genishi, Stires, and Yung-Chan (2001) observed 16 Chinese-speaking prekindergarten ELLs who were highly engaged in an integrated writing curriculum. In this curriculum, the teacher did not teach isolated language skills; rather, she guided these prekindergarten ELLs to make meaning of different contexts through a range of symbol-weaving activities with signs and languages, both L1 and L2. The findings revealed that preschool ELLs’ knowledge of alphabetic symbols increased, that they were able to make meaning of the collection of signs, and that they finally produced words in written forms as the outcome of this curriculum when reading and writing were embedded within meaningful social and cultural contexts.

Seda and Abramson (1990) brought up the notion that young ELLs who were learning a written language for the first time shared similar writing experience with English-speaking children. However, the ELLs’ writing development demonstrated individual differences
resulting from personal ability, personality, and style in approaching a new learning environment.

The instructional implication of this study was that interactive journal writing in small groups with learners from diverse backgrounds effectively promoted young ELLs’ literacy development. This result also indicated that teachers of young ELLs needed training in strategies for developing their students’ English literacy proficiency.

MaCarthey, Guo and Cummins (2005) conducted their research with two guiding assumptions derived from research on L1 and L2 studies. With the belief that development of literacy skills in a first language influenced the writing development in a second language and that bilingual education benefited elementary ELLs, the researchers traced the writing development of Mandarin speakers in their L1 and English. Their study findings suggested that Mandarin-speaking ELLs demonstrated different degrees of language loss or maintenance of Chinese writing development after two years of living in the US. On the other hand, the participants’ English writing development improved in all aspects from grammar accuracy and sentence complexity to rhetorical style. The findings from this study highlighted the importance of both home and school writing opportunities towards young ELLs’ writing development in both L1 and L2.

Foulger and Jimenez-Silva’s (2007) study emphasized the significant impact of technology on writing instruction for ELLs. They found that teachers’ instructional practices towards ELLs’ writing development had been greatly enhanced by the implementation of technology. Their research outcome indicated that computer/internet allowed ELLs to have more opportunities and greater motivations to write, enabled them to follow role models while
writing, to reach genuine audience, to acquire useful feedback, and to write in a safe environment where they felt they belonged.

**Writing pedagogy for secondary English language learners.** Compared to research studies about young ELLs’ writing development, writing pedagogy for secondary ESL students has not be given enough attention. With the increasing number of ESL students in secondary classrooms, there is little consistent guidance for their cultural and educational adjustments (Watt, Roessingh & Bosetti, 1996), and systematic instruction towards a certain language skill is even scarcer.

Lam (2000) found that the teenage ELL in his study not only improved his English writing skill but also built on his sense of belonging in the new cultural and academic environment when he wrote in a stress- and discipline-free environment; namely, on the internet. Similarly, findings of Yi’s (2010) research on adolescent multilingual writers’ transitions across writing contexts revealed that the adolescent L2 writer’s writing activities across in- and out-of-school contexts had a positive influence on each other, motivated her to write more, and gave her a sense of being a good writer in both her home language and English. Combined the findings of these two studies indicated that effective learning can be promoted when social contexts are involved.

Tsui and Ng (2000), Olson and Land (2007), and Rooney (2007) conducted studies with clear instructional purposes. Tsui and Ng (2000) investigated whether secondary L2 writers benefited from peer comments. They set up a comparison study of roles of teacher and peer comments in revisions in writing. Through the results shown in a questionnaire survey and analyses of writing samples, Tsui and Ng found that the majority of secondary L2 writers in their study incorporated higher percentage of teacher comments than peer comments, and a few
students showed positive attitude towards peer comments as well as teacher comments. The follow-up interviews revealed that all learners viewed teacher’s comment as high quality guarantee and that peer comments did contribute positively to their writing process.

Following a cognitive strategies approach, Olson and Land (2007) used a quasi-experimental research design to explore reading and writing instruction for ELLs in secondary schools. The findings showed that treatment-group students who received cognitive strategies instruction performed significantly better than the control-group students across multiple measures. Olson and Land’s findings reinforced the importance of having high expectations for ELLs, and explicitly teaching, modeling and providing guided practice in a variety of strategies to help ELLs read and write at a higher level.

In a classroom instruction setting, Rooney (2007) conducted action research with two of her ELL students to determine whether or how consistent free reading impacted L2 writing proficiency and ELLs’ attitude on L2 writing. The findings revealed that free reading had a positive influence on ELLs’ L2 writing fluency and accuracy, and on their reading habits. However, in terms of the change of their attitude of L2 writing, the study was not consistent with those findings overall.

Writing pedagogy for postsecondary ESL students. ESL writing instruction in secondary school focuses on promoting learners’ writing competency in relation to their cognitive developmental stage. In contrast, postsecondary ESL writing pedagogy emphasizes strategic implementation during the writing process. Many researchers have discovered that writing strategies can effectively promote ESL writers’ writing efficacy and quality (James, 2009; Lei, 2008; Mu & Carrington, 2007; So, 2005; Wong & Storey, 2006). While some studies
articulated the strategic intervention imposed in the research, other studies applied strategies approach in a less explicit way.

Wong and Storey (2006) investigated the connection of awareness of writing effectiveness and writing performance. Participants in this study took pre- and post-tests to demonstrate whether they had developed skills of effective writing after receiving a teacher’s deliberate instruction and through peer and self-editing. Results pointed out that there exist positive causal relationship between peer review activities and students’ writing performance.

The findings of Mu and Carrington’s (2007) study on three Chinese students’ English writing strategies showed that there are four types of strategies involved in their writing practice, which were categorized as rhetorical strategies, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/affective strategies. Each category contained several micro-level strategies in relate to different stages during the writing process. However, the three participants had their own preferred writing strategies and used them differently. Further analysis of the findings indicated that all writing strategies but rhetorical strategies functioned positively both in L1 and L2 writing.

In contrast to the cognitive view of writing strategies studied by Mu and Carrington (2007), Lei (2008) followed a sociocultural approach to investigate how proficient ESL/EFL students mediated their writing process with various resources. The students adopted four types of writing strategies; namely, artifact-mediated, rule-mediated, community-mediated, and role-mediated strategies. Findings showed that while writing in L2, students (a) relied on internet sources and literacy work of native speakers to some extent; (b) followed certain evaluation criteria and rhetoric forms to write, and planned their writing schedule; (c) also turned to people
in and out of school for generating ideas of their writing; and (d) were well aware of developing a voice in their writing.

The two examples discussed above reinforced the notion that writing is a strategic process, and that in order to effectively improve ESL students’ writing skill, writing instruction should take into account appropriate use of writing strategies. However, the purpose of ESL writing instruction is not only to improve ESL students’ language proficiency or writing skill, but more importantly, to prepare and support them to succeed in various academic disciplines. From this stance, So (2005) and James (2009) demonstrated through compelling examples that writing ability and learning outcomes were transferable, both from one writing genre to another and from one discipline to another. The findings of their studies reinforced the notion that writing is a strategic process although they did not explicitly discuss using strategies to promote writing skill.

Besides strategies implementation, many studies on postsecondary ESL writing and ESL writing instruction called for increased attention to the impact of L1 use in L2 writing. Regardless of the debate whether L1 use has a negative or positive influence on L2 writing, it is clear that many ESL students use their L1 to some extent while writing in L2.

Wang and Wen (2002) and Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, and Sanders (2009) conducted research on the complex phenomenon of L1 use in L2 writing. While Wang and Wen (2002) focused on the writing behavior of ESL students, Weijen and colleagues (2009) examined the impact of such behavior on ESL students’ writing efficacy. Findings of both studies confirmed the strong tendency of L1 use in L2 writing in ESL students. Data also showed that students used L1 more frequently in generating and organizing ideas while using L2 more often in task-examining and text-generating writing activities (Wang & Wen, 2002). In addition, findings
indicated that L1 use in L2 writing was negatively related to L2 text quality (Weijen et al., 2009). Another common outcome of these two studies was that L1 use in L2 writing decreased as the writers’ English proficiency developed. The findings in these studies also presented valuable instructional implications. Although L1 use impacted the fluency of L2 writing in more or less a negative way, simply excluding L1 in ESL writing instruction was not an appropriate practice. Instead, ESL writing instruction should take into consideration students’ linguistic background in order to better serve their academic needs.

In addition to using strategic and language support, studies on the interrelation between culture and writing also shed light on ESL writing instruction. Uysal (2008) conducted research to investigate the culturally related rhetorical patterns in L1 and L2 writing. The findings showed that different languages (English and Turkish) presented their unique rhetorical patterns in writing, but these patterns were not consistent in certain culture/language but transferable between languages in different categories. The obvious and consistent divergence between writing in L1 and L2 in this study occurred in the location of certain components in specific types of writing (e.g. thesis statement in argumentative essay). The instructional implication from the research findings of this study was that reinforcing students’ awareness of the similarities and differences between different language practices could help develop their strategies in L2 writing.

Summary

This section discussed research studies conducted in ESL writing pedagogy across age and academic levels. Even with various focuses, findings from the studies reviewed led to a common notion: L2 writing is a highly cognitive process that requires the ability to apply specific procedures for planning, organizing, drafting, monitoring, and revising throughout the
writing process and strategy instruction has positive influences on students’ writing abilities and outcomes. Findings in some studies supported the effect of peer review in promoting writing in L2 (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Wong & Storey, 2006). Journal writing was also found to be a successful practice in promoting students’ L2 writing skill (Araujo, 2002; MaCarthey, Guo & Cummins, 2005; Seda & Abramson, 1990). Practicing writing in non-academic contexts and in various genres can increase the motivation to write and lead to the improvement of academic writing (James, 2009; Lam, 2000; So, 2005; Yi, 2010). In addition, taking cultural factors into account in L2 writing instruction is supported by findings of some research (Atkinson, 2003; Genishi, Stires, & Yung-Chan, 2001; MaCarthey, Guo & Cummins, 2005; Uysal, 2008).

**Teacher Cognition Research**

As an important aspect of teacher cognition, teachers’ pedagogical beliefs have aroused considerable interest in teaching and teacher education research. In the literature, a variety of terminologies have been used to interpret teacher belief, including: teachers’ way of knowing and their origins (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991); teachers’ “psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world” (Richardson et al., 1991; Peacock, 2001); teacher cognition (Borg, 2003; Feryok, 2010); pattern of knowledge about teaching and learning (Gatbonton, 2000); teachers’ pedagogical knowledge, “knowledge related to the act of teaching” (Gatbonton, 2008); and teachers’ perception about teaching and learning (Kim & Tan, 2011). Varied as these terminologies are, they all signify that teacher pedagogical beliefs are originated in the understanding of the teaching act; namely, teachers’ instructional practices. In the literature of the past two decades, many researchers have investigated the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices. As a matter of fact, findings from many studies imply that teachers’ instructional practices are closely related to their pedagogical beliefs.
(Gatbonton, 2000 & 2008; Johnson, 1994; Karabenich & Noda, 2004; Peacock, 2001; Richardson et al., 1991). The following sections discuss the existing literature on teachers’ beliefs and practices in various teaching contexts.

**Teacher beliefs and practices in mainstream contexts.** Some studies were conducted in mainstream language classrooms. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) conducted a three-year longitudinal study focused on elementary school teachers’ beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. Thirty-nine teachers were interviewed respectively to talk about their beliefs about the learning and teaching of reading comprehension. Each of the teachers was observed twice when they were teaching reading comprehension. The researchers developed a set of four reading practice categories to analyze the interview and observation data, and to examine the relationship between teachers’ declared beliefs and classroom practices. The result of their analyses shows that most of teachers’ instructional practices can be predicted by their belief statements. Therefore, the researchers concluded that effective practices can be achieved when teachers’ ways of doing match their ways of thinking. Given this conclusion, the researchers suggested that teacher professional development program address knowledge related to teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices in order to bring about authentic changes in their professional growth.

In an attempt to understand teachers’ beliefs about teaching knowledge (knowledge used to facilitate their teaching practices), Buehl and Fives (2009) conducted their investigation with 110 pre- and in-service teachers with various levels of experience from university education courses. Through open-ended teacher beliefs questionnaire, six themes were identified as related to the source of teaching knowledge: formal education, formalized bodies of knowledge, observational learning, collaboration with others, enactive experiences, and self-reflection. On
the other hand, teachers’ answers varied regarding the stability of teaching knowledge in terms of the amount, direction, and quality of knowledge change. The findings of this study provided insights into what teachers believe about their teaching practices, and also pointed out the variation existing in the development of teaching practices.

Along this line, Stephens and colleagues (2011) investigated the changes in teachers’ understanding and practices in literacy instruction through a large-scale professional development program supported by literacy coaches. The researchers conducted two surveys with large samples and a case study with 39 literacy teachers to document teachers’ beliefs and practices and to identify the pattern of teacher changes. This study showed that increasing consistency emerged between teachers’ beliefs and practices in literacy instruction when teachers received deliberate instructional support from site-based and site-selected literacy coaches. This finding indicated that teachers’ beliefs and practices change overtime, and that changes in their beliefs and practices can be guided.

**Teacher beliefs and practices in ESL contexts.** Many studies on teacher beliefs and practices have been conducted in the field of L2 teaching. Some studies focused on the pedagogical growth of pre-service ESL teachers (Busch, 2010; Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Pray & Marx, 2010). Other studies compared novice and experienced ESL teachers’ belief and practice development (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Gatbonton, 1999 & 2008; Mok, 1994). Additional studies looked into the impact of teacher’s language background on their pedagogical knowledge and teaching strategies (Chen & Cheng, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Ma, 2012).

**Pre-service ESL teachers’ beliefs and practices.** Johnson (1994) explored the interrelationship between teachers’ beliefs about ESL teachers and teaching ESL and their perceptions of their instructional practices during the practicum. Data for this study were
collected from four pre-service ESL teachers’ numerous written journals, three classroom observations, post-observation interviews, and oral reflections on one of the observations. After analyzing the data within and across participants, Johnson (1994) identified the obvious impact that teachers’ prior formal language learning experiences had on their perceptions of themselves as teachers, their knowledge about teaching ESL, and their understanding of their own instructional practices. This notion highlighted the shifting nature of pre-service teachers’ beliefs and practices, and at the same time pointed out the complex task ESL teacher education programs confront.

However, Peacock’s (2001) study of the belief changes among 146 pre-service ESL teachers over a 3-year period led to unexpected findings. Among 34 beliefs about foreign language and L2 learning in a published questionnaire, Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1988), pre-service teachers’ answers in three key areas (grammar, vocabulary, and intelligence) were compared to the answers given by experienced ESL teachers. The discrepancy between pre-service and experienced ESL teachers’ beliefs about L2 learning remained surprisingly dramatic over three years: pre-service teachers’ beliefs changed very little during their study in the three-year TESL program. Peacock (2001) then took the findings of this study one step further and developed an instruction package to scaffold the above pre-service teachers to relate theory to experiences in language learning and teaching. Peacock suggested that teacher preparation programs for L2 teachers should embed deliberate instruction focusing on building and guiding pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs at the beginning of the program in order to avoid the development of any deceptive beliefs.

Following Peacock (2001) and other researchers’ leads, Busch (2010) conducted a study in which she investigated the effect of the introductory second language acquisition (SLA)
course on the beliefs of 381 pre-service teachers enrolled in this course over a three-year period. Data were collected from the pre- and post-course surveys using the belief statements in BALLI (Horwitz, 1988) and pre-service teachers’ description of their belief changing experience through the SLA course. Through the statistical analysis of the survey data and the phenomenological analysis of the description, the researcher found out that (1) pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language learning and teaching prior to taking the SLA course were influenced by their past experience in language learning, (2) various activities, such as class discussion about the reading materials, teachers’ presentation, and tutoring ESL students in the SLA contributed to the changes in pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, and (3) the most obvious changes occurred in beliefs that were most likely to be relevant to pre-service teachers’ future teaching context.

A similar approach was taken by Pray and Marx (2010) in their research of how participating in a study abroad course changed pre-service teachers’ beliefs about culturally appropriate language teaching. The study applied a quasi-experimental design to compare answers to pre- and post-course questionnaires of two pre-service teacher groups, study-abroad group and on-campus group. Findings of their investigation showed that study abroad pre-service teachers developed a more empathetic understanding of language and cultural issues affecting students’ language learning than their on-campus counterpart. Additionally, their passion about and confidence in teaching was greatly increased as an outcome of the study abroad experience.

**In-service ESL teachers’ beliefs and practices.** It seems to be a trend that most studies investigating ESL teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices focused on either pre-service and novice teachers or experienced teachers. Although comparison between novice and experienced teachers can be made with findings from different independent studies, Gatbonton (2008) asserted that examining both sets of teachers together in the same study allows the research to
compare them on specific points and thus to identify more clearly the similarities and differences between two groups of teachers. In Gatbonton’s study, four novice teachers’ oral reflection on their classroom teaching videos was analyzed to elicit the categories of their pedagogical knowledge. Given that all the influential factors, such as teaching materials, teaching contexts and students were controlled to be the same as a previous study (Gatbonton, 1999) with experienced teachers, these novice teachers’ pedagogical knowledge categories were then compared to those of the experienced teachers. The comparison yielded unexpected results. Although at the early stage of their career, novice teachers demonstrated similar pedagogical beliefs and practices of experienced teachers regarding classroom language and procedural management. One obvious difference laid in the sensitivity to students negative reactions in class. That novice teachers tended to notice more students’ negative response revealed their lack of confidence in themselves as teachers at this stage of their career. Furthermore, this study pointed to the need of a purposeful teacher training program to support novice teachers’ pedagogical knowledge development.

Also conducting a comparison study, Mok (1994) took a different approach to compare a group of ESL teachers’ changing perceptions of teaching over time. Through analyzing these teachers’ reflective journals during their practicum and their answers to a survey at the time of the study, Mok found out that there were no dramatic cognitive changes over time, but these teachers did develop a widened and more pragmatic view of language learning and teaching, and a greater variety of opinions and solutions to problems through teaching. The findings of this study indicate that teachers reexamine and change their beliefs about teaching as they gain more experience, and the changing beliefs in turn change their teaching practices.
The studies discussed above were conducted to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices about L2 learning and teaching in general. However, some studies focused on specific language skills and specific teaching contexts. Phipps and Borg (2009) conducted a longitudinal study investigating three experienced L2 teachers’ beliefs and practices in grammar teaching. Findings of this study showed that these teachers’ beliefs in teaching grammar were aligned with their classroom practices in general; three areas where tensions/differences occurred between teachers’ beliefs and practices were presenting grammar, controlling grammar practices, and group-work for grammar practice. Through investigating the reasons for these tensions between teachers’ beliefs and practices, the researchers found out that teachers’ core beliefs are firmly grounded in their experiences and thus have a more powerful influence on their classroom practices; beliefs that are derived from general theoretical knowledge were not reflected in their practices and thus these outlying beliefs often lead to the mismatch/tension between beliefs and practices. With these findings, Phipps and Borg (2009) suggested that research on teacher cognition should not only focus on identifying the tensions/differences between teachers’ beliefs and practices, but also attempt to “explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tension” (p. 388). They also pointed out the importance for teachers to reflect on their beliefs, their current practices and the links between them.

Regarding the complex and dynamic features of language teacher cognition, Feryok (2011) proposed a complex system theory as the theoretical framework for studying language teacher cognitions. In this exploratory study, Feryok applied the complex systems theory to re-analyze her previously published case study on EFL teacher’s practical theory. This new approach led to a deeper understanding of what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. For example, looking into the complexity of teacher cognition, the researcher realized that
teachers have cognitions about different subjects, and different cognitions develop from different sources. Their declarative cognitions are based on knowledge learnt from formal teacher education courses while teachers’ procedural cognition is related to their teaching experiences, and thus are more aligned with classroom practices. This finding is consistent with Phipps and Borg’s (2009) study. Besides the complexity, Feryok also pointed out the non-linear, open-ending, and self-organizing features of teacher cognition development. As the name of complex systems theory indicate, the study of language teachers’ cognition in what they believe about what they do in the language classrooms is a complex and ongoing process. Research in this area needs to reach a wide scope to include a variety of teaching subjects and contexts to better represent teacher pedagogical beliefs in language teaching practices.

Impact of language background on ESL teachers’ beliefs and practices. To better understand the complexity of teachers’ cognitive development in language teaching, some studies attempted to look into the connection between teacher’s language backgrounds and their pedagogical beliefs. In an attempt to find out whether possession of another language is a significant contributor to ESL teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, Ellis (2004) interviewed 31 practicing ESL teachers who were monolingual native English speakers, native English speakers who were bi-/multilingual, and non-native English teachers (NNET). Findings of this study pointed out that teachers’ own language learning experience is a powerful resource to their conception of language, language use, and language learning, and that this resource becomes more profound as teachers achieve more language learning experiences and become proficient in more languages.

According to Ellis (2004), possession of another language seems to put NNET in an advantageous position in the teaching of ESL. However, many studies on issues related to
NNET do not necessarily agree that NNETs have advantages over monolingual native English teachers (NET). Debates over native/nonnative dichotomy led to Cheng and Chen’s (2012) investigation on other factors that might influence NNETs’ teaching philosophy and strategies. Through analyzing the interview data of five NNET, researchers identified that the amount of teaching experiences had an impact on NNETs’ self-perception, cultural identity, and teaching styles. Findings point out that NNETs with less teaching experience tend to conceal their cultural identity, and their self-perceptions are more likely to be affected by their perceived language needs and students’ attitudes.

Obviously, students may have different attitudes toward NNETs and NETs. Students’ perceptions also reveal the impacts of teachers’ language background on their teaching. Ma’s (2012) analyses on student perceptions of the advantage and disadvantage of learning English from NETs and NNETs indicate that NNETs sharing the same native language with students have great advantages over their native counterparts. These advantages include NNETs’ proficiency in students’ L1, their knowledge of students’ learning difficulties, teaching style familiar to students, and the ease in communication with students.

**Summary**

The studies discussed in this section represent a small part of the large body of research in teacher beliefs and practices. Some studies attended to the interconnection between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices and called for more attention to study teachers’ practice development (Buehl & Fives, 2009; Richardson, et.al., 1991; Stephen, 2011). Some researchers focused on teachers’ belief changes over time with some emphasizing the pattern of belief evolution (Gatbonton, 2008; Mok, 1994; Peacock, 2001) and still others investigating belief changes through intervention (Busch, 2010; Pray & Marx, 2010). The factors, especially
language learning background, influencing teachers’ beliefs and practices were explored by other researchers (Cheng & Chen, 2012; Ellis, 2004; Feryok, 2011; Johnson, 1994; Ma, 2012).

Among the 14 studies reviewed in this section, most of them were conducted in general teaching context, and only a few emphasized teachers’ beliefs and practices related to specific context, such as ESL grammar teaching (Phipps & Borg, 2009) and mainstream literacy instruction (Richardson, et.al., 1991; Stephens, et. al., 2011).

**Teacher Reflection Research**

Among research studies discussed above, several studies (Gatbonton, 1999 & 2008; Johnson, 1994; Mok, 1994; Phipps & Borg, 2009) applied teacher reflection as a data collection instrument to elicit a deeper understanding of teachers’ beliefs and practices. As a matter of fact, the concept of teacher reflection has been widely discussed in teacher education research since the 1980s and has been frequently applied to teacher training or professional development programs. However, as pointed out by Calderhead (1989), the concept of teacher reflection has been interpreted and defined in various ways, such as reflective teaching, reflective practice, reflection-in-action and teacher as researcher, just to name a few. Therefore, the application of this concept can take a variety of approaches in different studies with various focuses. In this section, I will discuss studies on reflective teaching in both mainstream classes and ESL contexts. Consistent with Calderhead’s (1989) notion, these studies focused on three major areas: pre- and in-service teachers’ cognition, teachers’ knowledge, and teacher training context.

**Reflective teaching in mainstream classes.** Considering reflection as a tool for shaping thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, Swain (1998) applied reflection as a methodology in her investigation of four teachers’ transformation of their belief system and teaching practices. Engaging teachers as co-researchers of the study, Swain guided them to observe others’ and their
own growth through the lens of reflective journals. In the journals, teachers were asked to
describe their understanding of the content of teaching, observation of students’ interaction, their
questions and concerns of their teaching practices, and their classroom successes. Through
recording and reflecting on changes on various aspects of their teaching over time, these teachers
became more cognizant about students’ needs and talents and their own capability of teaching
excellence. More importantly, teachers came to value their reflections as tools for challenging
and clarifying their thinking about teaching.

Taking a similar approach but with a more focused scope, Romano (2006) guided four
in-service teachers to identify and analyze the “bumpy moments” in their teaching. In this study,
teachers’ description and discussion of “bumpy moments” revealed the thoughts, beliefs, and
knowledge that they brought to solving the problematic instances in teaching. Investigation of
these teachers’ reflective process pointed to the fact that many reflections about teaching consist
of teacher’s personal practical knowledge including beliefs about the teaching and learning
process. Regarding the one-on-one approach in this study, the researcher suggested that similar
reflections on “bumpy moments” in teaching should be encouraged individually as well as
collaboratively among teachers so as for teachers to “see their practice through another’s eyes”
(p. 984).

Along this line, both Manouchehri (2002) and Danielowich (2012) focused on teacher’s
reflective practice through interaction and collaboration. Manouchehri investigated two pre-
service secondary mathematics teachers’ reflection experience through peer collaboration during
their practicum. The study lasted 11 weeks, during which these two pre-service teachers met 16
times and went through writing reflective journals, reflecting and exchanging ideas on class
observations of in-service teachers, and commenting on each other’s classroom teaching
practices. The findings of this study indicate that peer interaction has a direct influence on the initial conceptions of the reflective practice. Moreover, peer discussions facilitate a shift in participants’ level of reflection, “moving from describing-explaining to a theorizing and restricting phase” (Manouchehri, 2002, p. 723). A similar approach was taken by Danielowich to study how four high school teachers reflected on their instructional goals and actual teaching practices by observing and responding to each other’s teaching. Results showed that peer group collaboration lead to teachers’ different ways of learning and thinking about their teaching and thus bring teacher’s reflection to a new level.

Reflective teaching in ESL classes. Many studies about teacher reflection were conducted in the ESL context. Defining teacher reflective practice as a cyclical process that involves the action of teaching and critical thinking, Mok (1994) conducted a case study to investigate teachers’ concerns about teaching ESL through analyzing 12 teachers’ reflective writings and teacher interview data. Findings from the data analysis indicated teachers’ capability of analyzing their teaching and teaching situation, and their awareness of the knowledge required for teaching ESL improved as a result of reflection.

Following the concept of “teacher as researcher,” Widodo (2009) reported a self-reflection on the videotaped self-observation of an ESL reading lesson. This self-reflection study focused on issues of ESL reading instruction, class interaction during the reading process, and roles that the teacher, students and teaching materials played in the lesson. In addition to findings contributing to the teaching of ESL reading, this study highlighted the positive effects of using video to facilitate teachers’ critical and focused reflection on their teaching practices.

A similar study was conducted to investigate the effects of teachers’ self-reflection on L2 learners’ writing achievement. Considering students’ learning outcome as the evidence of
teaching effectiveness, Fatemi, Shirvan, and Rezvani (2011) used the reflective teaching instrument (RTI) designed by Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2007) to administer 100 L2 teachers’ reflective practices. These teachers’ students’ English writing competency was attained from their writing scores of their GPAs for the correlation analysis. Findings from the statistical analysis showed that there existed significant correlation coefficients between teachers’ reflection practices and their students’ writing achievement; students of highly reflective teachers seemed to achieve higher writing scores. A follow-up interview was conducted to elicit teachers’ perceptions of teacher reflection practice. Results from the interview data showed teachers demonstrated positive attitudes towards teacher reflection. On the one hand, highly reflective teachers acknowledged the benefit reflective practice had for their career. On the other hand, low reflective teachers, although unaware of the reflective teaching paradigm at the time of the study, expressed strong interests in applying reflection practice to their future teaching.

Looking into the effects of reflective practice from a different perspective, Farrell’s (2011a) study focused on experienced ESL teachers’ professional identities. The core data was contributed by three experienced college ESL teachers’ active and extensive reflection on their teaching practices through 12 group meetings over a two-year period. Through rigorous data analysis, 16 main professional role identities were identified and categorized into three clusters, teacher as manager, teacher as professional, and teacher as ‘acculturator’, a role unique to ESL teachers. Furthermore, this study demonstrated a successful example of using group discussion to organize and facilitate ESL teachers’ reflection practice. In addition to using reflection to promote teachers’ identity awareness, Farrell (2011b) aimed to improve teachers’ instructional practice by guiding them to become more reflective practitioners.
Developing reflection models. As popular as reflective teaching practices in the field of education, there is no ready-made model of teacher reflection that teachers can adopt and apply to improving their instruction. Therefore, attempts have been made by some researchers to create teacher reflection models or framework. Through their extensive review of the literature, Titus and Gremler (2010) proposed a framework to assess teachers’ beliefs and classroom behavior. The framework consists of five elements essential for any given teaching context: content, learner, educator, social setting, and teaching context. After developing the framework, the researchers analyzed it in the context of a college marketing classroom. Although the analysis of the application of the framework revealed both its strengths and weaknesses, the research provided a unifying framework to guide reflective teaching practice and to apply reflective teaching to better understanding teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Using a similar approach, Akbari et. al. (2010) developed an L2 teacher reflection instrument from a comprehensive review of relevant literature. This six-component instrument then was sent to 650 L2 teachers with 308 valid responses for the instrument validation research. Through exploratory and confirmatory data analysis, five out of six components of this hypothetical model were verified to be a valid measure of reflective teaching. Results of this study indicate that L2 teacher reflection encompasses reflections on practical, cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, and critical factors related to teaching and learning.

Summary

In this section, 11 empirical research studies in teacher reflection were discussed. Some studies applied reflection as a tool for teachers to understand their pedagogical beliefs and practices (Mok, 1994; Romano, 2006; Swaim, 1998), to help teachers be aware of their identity (Farrell, 2011a), and to improve their teaching practices (Farrell, 2011b; Widodo, 2009). Other
researchers (Danielowich, 2012; Farrell, 2011a; Manouchehri, 2002) investigated teachers’ reflective practices through interaction and collaboration, and through students’ learning outcomes (Fatemi, Shirvan & Rezvani, 2011). Additional two studies (Akbari, et. al. 2010; Fatemi, Shirvan & Rezvani, 2011) attempted to build reflection models to better understand teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and their classroom practices. Nevertheless, creating models for teachers’ reflective teaching remains an area to be further investigated and developed.

**Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter has demonstrated that teacher cognition and teacher reflection are two interrelated concepts. Reflective teaching occurs when teachers critically reflect on their pedagogical beliefs and practices (Calderhead, 1989; Farrell, 2011b). The review of the literature in teacher cognition and teacher reflection reveals trends as well as the gaps apparent in contemporary research studies in these two areas. First, studies on teacher cognition tend to focus primarily on teacher’s knowledge growth. While progression in teaching practice was often presumed as a result of teacher’s growing pedagogical knowledge, explicit investigation on teacher’s practices remains scarce. Second, teacher reflection was explored in the existing literature as both an individual act and in a collaborative manner. However, studies that incorporated both methods are rare. Third, some studies explored the impact of teacher background on pedagogical development and reflective practices. Nevertheless, most of these studies viewed teacher background as one dimensional, such as language background (NET vs. NNET) or teaching background (experienced vs. novice), and there is a lack of studies taking a holistic approach to understand teacher’s cognitive development and reflective practices. In addition, even though much teacher cognition and reflection research has been conducted with ESL teachers, few studies investigated teachers’ beliefs and practices or teacher reflection
practices in relation to the specific subject they were teaching. Given that ESL writing pedagogy is a major strand in ESL teacher education research, it is critical to understand what teachers believe and do in teaching writing to ESL students.

By reviewing literature in ESL writing pedagogy at different academic levels, common practices of ESL writing instruction emerged. As L2 writing requires high-level cognitive skills, strategy implementation is an obvious trend in L2 writing instruction of all levels. Peer review, journal writing, genre pedagogy, and in- and out-of class writing activities are practices that have been commonly used in the L2 writing classroom and have led to positive learning outcomes.

Therefore, built on the findings of and attempting to bridge the gaps in the existing literature of relevant topics, this study applied a carefully developed teacher reflection model (TRM) (Appendix A) to guide teacher’s reflective teaching process in the specific context of college ESL writing classes.

First, the TRM emphasizes the interconnection between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices and at the same time highlights the independent nature of each concept. Therefore, even though this study viewed pedagogical beliefs and practices as two interwoven elements to understand teachers’ teaching, the investigation of the impact of teacher reflection took different approaches toward teachers’ beliefs evolution and practice progress. This study attempted to provoke more interest in researching teachers’ classroom practices by addressing practices not just as a by-product of pedagogical beliefs but as instead an integral component of the interrelationship between beliefs and practices.

Second, the six teacher participants in this study were not only engaged in in-depth individual reflection, but were also encouraged to participate in group reflection discussions about their beliefs and practices in teaching ESL writing. Individual and collective reflections
were not only two different data sources to the study. Rather, interaction among participants would spark and supplement each other’s thinking of teaching, and as a result, more complete pictures of participants’ reflective practice could be derived through two types of reflection manners.

Third, in order to develop a true understanding of teachers’ pedagogical growth through reflective teaching, a holistic approach is needed. Therefore, this study took into consideration the participants’ overall personal backgrounds, including language skills, cultural experiences, educational background, and teaching experiences. And finally, while the majority of the existing studies in teacher cognition and teacher reflection took a broad spectrum that led to general results, discussions of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices would be more focused and purposeful if studied within a specific context of teaching. Additionally, implementing teacher cognition and reflection research in the specific context of ESL writing could bring in a fresh perspective in research in ESL writing pedagogy.

Chapter 3 will introduce the methodology used in the design of the study and in the process of data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This multiple case study followed a social constructivist approach and applied a teacher reflection model developed from a pilot study to investigate the effects of guided reflection on six college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, individual reflection interviews, and group reflection discussions. Data were analyzed within and across cases so as to gain insights of each participant’s unique growth through guided reflection as well as their common approaches to reflective teaching practices.

Research Design

The pilot study. The current study was built on the findings of a 10-week qualitative pilot study that investigated three college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices, and their growth through engaging in a continuous process of guided reflection. In the pilot study, participants’ beliefs about teaching college ESL writing were categorized in three interconnected areas consistent with teacher belief systems (Johnson, 1994; Richardson et. al., 1991): ESL writing, ESL writing instruction, and ESL writing instructor. Additionally, class organization, interaction between the teacher and students, and instructional strategies were three major areas used to direct the observation of teacher’s classroom practices.

Applying continuous guided reflection as a novel methodological tool, the pilot study revealed two major findings: (1) teacher’s pedagogical beliefs and practices were influenced by their educational background, teaching experiences, and their self-perceptions, a factor that is often overlooked in research on teacher cognition and teacher reflection; and (2) there existed a bidirectional relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. On the one hand, teachers’ instructional practices were guided by their pedagogical beliefs. On the other hand, the
consistency of instructors’ beliefs was supported by the successful implementation of corresponding practices. The dynamic interaction between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices surfaced through their deliberate reflection. More importantly, the pilot study highlighted that purposeful reflection needed to be promoted among teachers in order for them to gain explicit awareness of their pedagogical beliefs and, therefore, to achieve improvement in their practices.

The pilot study had implications for future research in several ways. First of all, the pilot study developed a teacher reflection model (TRM) (Appendix A) that showcased the cognitive perspectives of understanding teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and how their beliefs developed as their instructional practices progressed. The TRM took into consideration teachers’ personal backgrounds to analyze their pedagogical beliefs, and also facilitated the dynamic interaction between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices through guided reflection. Furthermore, the successful application of guided reflection in the pilot study indicated that a clearer understanding of teachers’ ever-evolving pedagogical beliefs went hand-in-hand with the recognition of their classroom practices, and that the connection between teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices would not be realized unless teachers purposefully reflected on them in a continuous process. In addition, results from the pilot study presented evidence of the dynamic process which teachers engage in for realizing their pedagogical beliefs and ultimately improving their classroom practices.

Not only the implications but also the limitations of the pilot study shed light on the design of this research study. Frist, the TRM needed to be validated with a larger number of teachers for a longer period of time. This limitation led to a change in the number of participants from three to six and time frame of the study from ten to fifteen weeks period in order to allow
for more progression and/ changes in teaching practices to be observed and derived from the data. Second, all of the three participants in the pilot study were native English speakers with less than two years of ESL teaching experience. The homogeneity of the participants enhanced the findings of the pilot study on the one hand, but on the other hand, this factor also limited the application of the findings. Therefore, this study enrolled participants with diverse backgrounds, such as native and non-native English speakers, monolinguals and bi-/multi-linguals, and novice and experienced ESL teachers in order to achieve more multi-dimensional results. Moreover, the diversity in participants’ backgrounds provided conditions for the study to take a comparative approach to further investigate how each participant’s unique background influenced their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection. Finally, the exploratory nature of the pilot study determined the loose connection between the data collection methods. To enhance the connections between data derived from different sources, this study employed the TRM to guide the design of interview questions, observation guidelines, and reflection guidelines so as to elicit data across more dimensions of the complex construct of teachers’ beliefs and practices, as well as their reflective teaching experiences.

Multiple-case study methodology. The current study employed a descriptive case study design (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2003 & 2009) to better understand six ESL writing instructors’ guided reflection experiences. According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered in several circumstances, such as when the study seeks to answer “how” and “why” questions, when the behavior of research participants cannot be manipulated, when the context of study is important for the phenomenon under investigation, or when there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and context. Furthermore, “if a study contains more than a single case then a multiple-case study is required” (Baxter & Jack, 2009, p.550). As a multiple
case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases, each case needs to be chosen carefully in order for the researcher to predict similar or contrasting results across cases (Yin, 2003 & 2009). The purpose of the current study to investigate how six college instructors’ reflective teaching experience influenced their pedagogical beliefs and practices in the context of ESL writing instruction determined its multiple-case study research design.

Moreover, among the exploratory, descriptive and explanatory purposes of case studies (Yin, 2003), the current study was descriptive in nature. Descriptive designs attempt to gain a thorough understanding of a phenomenon within its context so as to present a complete description of the phenomenon under investigation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2003 & 2009). Following the descriptive design, this study described each instructor’s guided reflection experience and, at the same time, examined the connection between the instructor’s background and his/her reflective practices through a multidimensional comparison by asking three research questions: (1) How does guided reflection affect teachers’ pedagogical beliefs? (2) How does guided reflection affect teachers’ instructional practices? (3) How do teachers’ personal backgrounds affect their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection? These research questions were integrated, in that findings from the first two questions would be able to provide evidence for answering the last question.

Social constructivist influence. Social constructivism plays an important role in the design of the current study, from participant recruitment to data collection and data analysis. Social constructivism values the cultural and contextual influences on the phenomenon under study (Kim, 2010). Therefore, following the social constructivist approach, I took into consideration each participant’s cultural and linguistic background, their learning and teaching experience, and the class context of their teaching when inviting them to participate. Moreover, I
carried this social constructivist influence into the data collection process. I employed group reflection discussion as a data collection instrument to emphasize the social interaction aspect of this paradigm. When analyzing data, I kept in mind the cultural and contextual factors of each participant to understand their unique response and reaction to guided reflection.

**Setting and Participants**

**Setting.** The study was conducted at a major university in a Midwestern city in the US. The university has a large population of international students. At the time of the study, there were approximately 2,700 international students enrolled in 13 different colleges with about 1,800 graduate students and 900 undergraduate students, most of whom spoke English as a second language. The Center for ESL (CESL) at the university offers ESL courses for international students. These courses include a sequence of listening and speaking classes for both undergraduate and graduate students, a sequence of reading and writing classes for graduate and undergraduate students respectively, and some stand-alone classes, such as Improving Pronunciation, American Culture and Communication, and Teaching Skills for International Teaching Assistants. For the ESL undergraduate students, a sequence of six academic reading and writing courses are designed to familiarize students with modes and genres of English academic writing, and to provide support for students to develop sufficient academic writing skills needed to achieve academic success in college. CESL instructors are current Masters or Doctoral students, recent graduates in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) program at the university, and instructors from the English Department with a degree in Creative Writing or English Rhetoric.

**Recruitment.** The participant recruitment of this study followed the stratified purposeful sampling principles (Hatch, 2002). Stratified purposeful samples refer to those that “include individuals selected to represent particular subgroups of interest” (Hatch, 2002, p.98). To align
with the goals of the study, I planned to recruit college ESL writing instructors representing various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, having different educational and professional experiences, and teaching a variety of writing courses.

After reviewing the CESL writing instructor profiles, especially considering instructors’ cultural and linguistic background, educational and profession experiences, and the level of the courses they were teaching, seven instructors remained on the list. I emailed them the information of the study and invited them to participate. With all of them showing interest in participating, I then met with each of them to further explain the research procedures and activities and they all signed the consent form to participate in the study. However, one instructor withdrew after one month into the study due to personal reasons. The remaining six instructors participated in all research activities.

**Participants.** The six instructors who participated in this study were from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Each had various educational and professional experiences. In this study, they were teaching four reading/writing courses representing two different levels. For purpose of confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in this paper.

Amy was a native English speaker but spoke fluent Spanish as she majored in Spanish in college and traveled to Spanish speaking countries. She received a Masters’ degree in English and taught freshmen English composition as a graduate assistant for two years. Although she had experiences tutoring young English language learners and community immigrant adults, it was her first time teaching ESL in an English for academic purpose (EAP) program when participating in the study.

Denise was born in a Chinese immigrant family in America. Growing up speaking Cantonese at home and English at school, Denise was a typical *circumstantial bilingual* (Valdes...
& Figueroa, 1994, cited in Ellis, 2004). She loved to learn languages in the authentic environments and had traveled to Japan and Turkey for a short term and taught in China for four months. Denise started teaching ESL when she was working on her second Masters’ degree on TESL. Most of her teaching experiences were in Intensive English Programs (IEP), teaching immigrants or pre-college students. It was her first time teaching in an EAP.

Ellie was born in Turkey and started learning English in middle school. Ellie received a Masters’ degree in TESL from Turkey. She had taught English to different age groups in Turkey from middle school to college. She had lived in the United States for 15 years and earned a doctoral degree in TESL. She had taught English in many settings in America, including EAP, IEP, and freshmen English Composition at community colleges.

Jessie was a native English speaker and an English monolingual. She had learned French and Spanish but never developed the fluency in either language. She had traveled to other non-English speaking countries but did not feel any language barrier. Jessie received a Masters degree in TESL and had taught in both IEP and EAP. At the time of the study, Jessie was doing her doctoral student in Literacy.

Melinda was a native English speaker and English is the only language she was fluent in even though she could read popular magazines in French and Spanish. She has traveled to some non-English speaking countries and found the language barrier was phenomenal. Melinda received a bachelor degree in English and a Masters degree in education. She had taught various subjects at different levels, from kindergarten to college. The subject she had taught for the longest time was college English Composition. Although having had ESL students in her English Composition class before, it was the first time for Melinda to teach ESL students in a formal EAP class.
Nora was a native Mandarin speaker and could speak English fluently. She was a high school English teacher in China before pursuing graduate education in America. After receiving a Masters degree in TESL, she started teaching at the CESL as a graduate assistant. At the time of the study, Nora was a doctoral student in TESL and had been teaching at the CESL for 3 years.

Among the six participants, there were four bilinguals and two monolinguals with four native English speakers and two non-native English speakers. Among the bilingual participants, three of them were elective bilinguals who grew up with one language and began to learn the other language by choice, and the other was a circumstantial bilingual who was born in a family that speak a different language from the official language used in the country. All participants had at least a Masters degree; two had earned their degree in English and the other four had degree in TESL. In terms of their teaching experience, all participants had taught in other contexts besides ESL. Three participants had no more than three years of teaching experience; one participant had taught more than three years but less than 10 years; and two participants had more than 10 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study, three participants were teaching beginning level of academic writing courses and the other three were teaching advanced courses. Table 3.1 is a summary of the participants’ background information.

Table 3.1. Background Information of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Cultural background</th>
<th>Linguistic background</th>
<th>Educational background</th>
<th>Formal teaching experiences</th>
<th>Class # and levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin-English elective bilingual</td>
<td>M.Ed. in TESL; 3rd year doctoral student in TESL</td>
<td>Three years of EFL; three years of ESL</td>
<td>ESL1067 (beginning level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>American born Chinese</td>
<td>Cantonese-English circumstantial</td>
<td>M.Ed. in TESL; 2nd year doctoral student in TESL</td>
<td>four months of EFL; one year of ESL</td>
<td>ESL1067 (beginning level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>English-Spanish elective bilingual</td>
<td>M.A. in English Creative Writing</td>
<td>three years of English Composition; first time teaching ESL</td>
<td>ESL1068 (beginning level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>English Monolingual</td>
<td>M.Ed. in TESL 2nd year doctoral student in Literacy</td>
<td>Two and a half years of ESL</td>
<td>ESL1070 (advanced level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Turkish-English elective bilingual</td>
<td>Ed. D. in TESL</td>
<td>five years of EFL; 11 years of ESL and English Composition</td>
<td>ESL1070 (advanced level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>English Monolingual</td>
<td>M.A. in English</td>
<td>Over 30 years teaching in various contexts; first time teaching ESL</td>
<td>ESL1080 (advanced level)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

Data collection in this study followed data triangulation principles to employ individual interviews, observations, individual reflection interviews, and group reflection discussions. Data were collected within a 15-week timeframe. Data collection went through four stages, with approximately four weeks between each stage (Table 3.2.). At the preliminary stage, an interview was conducted with each participant to collect information about his/her personal backgrounds and pre-existing pedagogical beliefs. Each of the following three stages consisted of a classroom observation, an individual reflection interview, and a group reflection discussion. After each observed class, participants were asked to reflect on their instructional practices in relation to their pedagogical beliefs. This reflection could lead alternately to the adjustment or continuation of participants’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. Additionally, participants took part in the group reflection discussion at the end of each stage. These reflection discussions
followed different themes to generate supplemental information related to participants’ beliefs and practices and their reflective experiences.

**Table 3.2. Data Collection Instruments and Research Stages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Instruments</th>
<th>Data Collection Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Interview</td>
<td>Preliminary Stage (Weeks 1-4): participants’ pre-existing pedagogical beliefs and personal backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observation #1</td>
<td>Stage 1(Week 5-8): participants’ instructional practices; reflection on practices in relation to pedagogical beliefs; discussion on class activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Interview #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Reflection Discussion #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 (Week 9-12): participants’ constant or adjusted pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices; reflection on practices in relation to pedagogical beliefs; discussion on class routines and instructional strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observation #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Interview #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Reflection Discussion #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observation #3</td>
<td>Stage 3 (Week 13-15): participants’ constant or adjusted pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices; reflection on practices in relation to pedagogical beliefs; discussion on self-evaluation and self-perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Interview #3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Reflection Discussion #3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A teacher reflection model (TRM) was applied to this study as the guideline for designing data collection instruments. The five areas explored in the TRM are: (1) teacher’s personal background, (2) teacher’s pre-existing pedagogical beliefs, (3) teacher’s instructional practices, (4) the relationships between beliefs and practices, and (5) teacher’s enhanced pedagogical beliefs and practices. The TRM highlights how teachers become aware of the connection between their background and their pedagogical beliefs and practices through deliberate reflection, and the impact of continuous reflection on the development of their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Data collection instruments were designed to address the concepts in the TRM and thus led to answering the research questions. Table 3.3 demonstrates how research questions, the TRM as data collection framework, and the data collection instruments are interrelated.
Table 3. Connection of Research Questions, TRM and the Data Collection Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>TRM Concepts</th>
<th>Data Collection Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does guided reflection affect teachers’ pedagogical beliefs?</td>
<td>(2) teacher’s pre-existing pedagogical beliefs</td>
<td>preliminary interview; individual guided reflection interviews; group reflection discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) the relationships between beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) teacher’s enhanced pedagogical beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How does guided reflection affect teachers’ instructional practices?</td>
<td>(3) teacher’s instructional practices</td>
<td>classroom observations; individual guided reflection interviews; group reflection discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) the relationships between beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) teacher’s enhanced pedagogical beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do teachers’ personal backgrounds affect their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection?</td>
<td>(1) teacher’s personal background</td>
<td>preliminary interview; classroom observations; individual guided reflection interviews; group reflection discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) teacher’s pre-existing pedagogical beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) teacher’s instructional practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) the relationships between beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) teacher’s enhanced pedagogical beliefs and practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews.** Interviewing is the most widely used mode of inquiry in social and behavioral science and one of the most essential sources of case study information (Yin, 2009). Interviews are special conversations in which the interviewers try to generate empirical data about the social world by asking the interviewees to talk about their lives, experiences, and opinions (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). As a constructivist researcher, I believe each individual constructs a view of the world based on his/her own perception of it. Therefore, to conduct interviews, I followed a constructivist approach to encourage participants to construct their own meaningful and conceptually functional representations of their personal backgrounds and pedagogical beliefs rather than putting my own interpretation onto their reality.

An Interview Guideline (Appendix B) was created to elicit information about participants’ backgrounds and their pre-existing pedagogical beliefs. According to the TRM,
whereas the teachers’ personal background refers to teachers’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, their language learning and teaching experiences, and their self-perceptions, the teachers’ belief system includes the content of teaching, teaching act, and teacher’s role. Therefore, interview questions were designed to correspond to these areas addressed in the TRM. One individual interview was conducted with each participant at the beginning of the study. Six participants were interviewed in early Fall 2012. Each interview was arranged for one hour in length and took place at locations of the participants’ choice. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed by the researcher.

**Observations.** “Observations serve as another source of evidence in a case study” (Yin, 2009, p. 109). Thus, the current study employed observations as a major data collection instrument. Observation allows observers not only to produce a detailed record of ongoing activities but also to elicit participants’ own explanations, evaluations, and perspectives of what is taking place (Hatch, 2001). In this study, I played a complete observer role (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), attempting to become “invisible” in the classroom and to avoid participating in any discussions or class activities.

A Classroom Observation Guideline (Appendix C) was developed and consisted of a set of questions to address the organization of the class, the interaction between the instructor and students, and instructional strategies applied to teaching. Having specific focuses for the observation ensured the collection of observation data to provide evidence for evaluating participants’ instructional practices. For example, class organization sheds light on instructors’ class management competency. Interaction between the instructor and students reveals instructor’s self-perception. These two focus areas can be observed through instructor’s application of instructional strategies. Three classroom observations were conducted with each
participant during Fall 2012. The three observations of each participant occurred approximately four weeks apart in order to observe instructional progression overtime. The observations were video-taped and later transcribed by the researcher.

**Individual reflection interviews.** Even though it is possible to ascertain the congruence or incongruence of what participants say and their actual behaviors through observation, these accounts are usually produced through the researcher’s eye. As a result, observational data are subject to interpretation by the researcher, who can bring in biases and errors to the data (Hatch, 2001). Nevertheless, the participants’ reflections on their classroom teaching right after the observation can increase the accuracy of the data by clarifying and complementing the researcher’s interpretation of the observation. Oftentimes, participants’ reflections on their own instruction can reveal the gap between the researcher’s subjectivity and interpretations, and the participants’ genuine and insightful interpretations of their experience.

In this study, an Individual Reflection Guideline (Appendix D) was developed to prompt participants’ immediate recall of their classroom instructional practices. The reflection interview was intended to guide participants to connect their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Therefore, questions in the reflection interview were designed to correspond to questions in the preliminary interview and focuses in classroom observation. Figure 3.1 illustrates the connection of interview questions, observation guidelines, and individual reflection interview questions. An individual reflection interview was conducted right after each classroom observation with each participant at a location of participant’s choice. A total of three individual reflection interviews were conducted with each participant. The reflection interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed by the researcher.
**Group reflection discussions.** While the individual reflection interviews were directly related to each participant’s observed classes and their evolving pedagogical beliefs, the group reflection discussions were intended for participants to communicate and exchange ideas about their beliefs and practices in teaching ESL writing. By incorporating group discussions as a data
collection method, I, on the one hand, aimed to create a community where participants can find/give support to each other through informative and thought-provoking discussions. On the other hand, I also wanted to observe how differently or similarly participants reflected on their teaching or whether they would achieve new or different knowledge in the group reflection discussion than if they reflected on their own.

The three group reflection discussions (Appendix E) each followed a theme to guide the discussions among participants. These themes included class activities, classroom instructional practices, and instructors’ self-evaluation and self-perception. Three group reflection discussions took place at the end of each data collection stage and were approximately four weeks apart. Each discussion was arranged for about 90 minutes. The discussions were videotaped and transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

“Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data is ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (Hatch, 2001, p. 148).

Data analysis in this study consisted of two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. A within-case analysis was performed first. Each case was analyzed individually. Within-case analysis focused on each instructor’s belief and practice progress under guided reflection at different time points of the study, and further looked into factors that influenced their reflection practices. Figure 3.2 shows the connections among data sources within each case. The findings of within-case analysis provided data for the cross-case analysis which was
conducted later. Cross-case analysis intended to identify patterns of influential factors among instructors’ reflection practices.

**Figure 3.2. Connections among Data Sources within Cases**

![Diagram showing connections among data sources]

Figure 3.2. Data from preliminary interview are connected with data from classroom observations, individual reflection interviews and group discussions. Data from each data collection instrument are connected through data collection stages. Data from each data collection stage are connected through data collection instruments.

The framework for data analysis in this study was derived from the inductive model articulated by Hatch (2002). Inductive data analysis focuses on patterns of meaning in data in order to make general statements about phenomena under investigation. Under this framework, examination of the particulars within data is the general approach and ongoing reading and revisiting data is the basic technique.

Following the inductive analysis model (Hatch, 2002), data analysis of this study started with a thorough reading of each participant’s data set. This first reading helped me to develop a solid sense of what was included in the data. And then, I reread the data multiple times, and each time of reading brought me new insights. It was through multiple readings and analysis that the salient domains within the data surfaced. I supported the domains with excerpts from the data.
After a systematic comparison among the domains identified, themes of the data emerged and were organized into categories. Categories of each participant’s data set were then analyzed across three data collection stages in order to gain chronological evidence to answer the research questions. The last step for the data analysis for this study was to apply findings from the within-case analysis to conduct a cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis also followed the inductive model (Hatch, 2002) and used the same procedures as the within-case analysis. Figure 3.3 demonstrates the data analysis process of this study.

**Figure 3.3. Data Analysis Process**

Nevertheless, data analysis for this study was, by no means, a linear process. It took continuous reading and re-analyzing to finally let the data speak and the pattern emerge. For example, in developing the data coding system, a parallel design was applied to echo the connection of data collection instruments. One coding system connected the interview and reflection data sources together based on areas in participants’ belief systems under examination. The other coding system connected the observation data and reflection data to highlight the
practice progression within each participant across the same areas measured. The parallel design in data coding, on the one hand, highlighted the core status of the reflection data as for answering the research questions, and on the other hand, made it possible to compare participants’ beliefs and practices emerging at different time points of the study under continuous guided reflection. Furthermore, the parallel design of data analysis illuminated the gaps and connections between what participants said and what they did as well as the gaps between participants’ intention and the researcher’s interpretation. These gaps led to the periodic findings that would then be used in the analysis of data collected from the following stage. Figure 3.4 shows an example of the parallel coding systems in categories from data collected during the first data collection stage.

As shown in Figure 3.4, this participant did not apply all of the practices stated in the preliminary interview to her first observed class. For example, no in-class writing activity was identified in the observation. Most of the pedagogical beliefs remained consistent, although she realized the importance of using examples to teach L2 writing after she applied this strategy in the observed class. Moreover, by evaluating her class instruction, she acknowledged herself for choosing good reading materials for students, and at the same time noticed the class organization needed to be enhanced. These periodic findings would be combined with the data from the next data collection stage for further analysis.

**Limitations of the Study**

Reflection is a constant practice for the teaching profession. It takes a lifetime experience for teachers to make sense of their teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices in relation to their personal background, among other factors. Thus, the 15-week time frame of the current study did not necessarily allow the reflection to take fully effect on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. In addition, the data collection and analysis tool, the Teacher Reflection
Figure 3.4. Parallel Categories in Data Coding across Data Collection Instruments (Case 1)

**Pedagogical Beliefs**  
(Preliminary Interview)  
Category A: Learning to write in L2  
-reading/writing connection  
-frequency of writing  
-make mistakes and learn from them  
Category B: Teaching to write in L2  
-promote in-class writing  
-provide samples and modeling  
-provide and explain expectations  
Category C: L2 instructor characteristics  
-being approachable  
-being patient  
-being resourceful  
-being empathetic

**Instructional Practices**  
(Observation #1)  
Category A: Class organization  
-no overview or introduction  
-no transition between activities  
-no closure or conclusion  
Category B: Interaction  
-called on students to read text  
-checked students’ group work  
-provided feedbacks  
Category C: Instructional strategies  
-handouts or supplemental materials  
-comprehension questions

### Individual Reflection #1

**Category A: Pedagogical Beliefs**  
1. Learning to write in L2  
   - be aware of language convention  
   - learn academic writing structure  
   - learn from examples  
2. Teaching to write in L2  
   - guide students to identify language  
   - encourage group work  
   - teach with examples  
   - explicit with expectation  
3. L2 instructor characteristics  
   - willing to understand student needs

**Category B: Instructional Practices**  
1. Class organization  
   - started with handbook  
   - took too long to go through examples  
   - had to adjust teaching plan  
2. Interaction  
   - greeted students before class started  
   - called on students to participate in class  
   - engaged students to work together  
   - be available for questions  
3. Instructional strategies  
   - used examples to teach  
   - asked comprehension questions  
4. Self-evaluation  
   - need more engaging introduction topics  
   - transition between activities was rough  
   - materials fit students’ level
Model (TRM), was self-developed and piloted only once. There might be other influential factors in the research of teacher reflection and teacher cognition that are not included in this original model. Another factor to take into consideration is my role as the researcher of the study and colleague of the participants in the study. I had been teaching and working alongside the participants when I conducted the study. This relationship may have influenced the study in some way if either I or the participants at times confused our roles in the study with our relationship as colleagues.

**Delimitation of the Study**

Keeping the limitations in mind, I have taken several approaches to diminish the impact of the limitations on the outcome of the study. First of all, I developed the Teacher Reflection Model (TRM) through a pilot study of three college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. The areas explored in the TRM are derived from the existing literature on teacher cognition and teacher reflection. To make up for the limited timeframe of this 15-week study, I took a holistic approach in data collection by including various instruments at multiple time points with each of the participants. I tried to capture each and every subtle change in teachers’ reflective practices by not only triangulating the data collection methods but also applying them at a reasonable frequency. Furthermore, I shared findings of individual cases with each of the participants for member checking in order to represent each participant’s experience in this study as truthfully as possible.

These approaches were aligned with the techniques of establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study articulated by Lincoln and Guba (1986). Methodological triangulation was an important technique applied in this study from data collection to data analysis to achieve the credibility and dependability. First, as a multiple-case study, parallel investigation was
conducted with each of the six participants. Data were collected from four sources at four different time points over a 15-week period of time. Data were analyzed within each case and across all six cases and were reported in within- and cross-case manners. Additionally, the member checking approach ensured the alignment between researcher’s interpretation and participants’ reality. Furthermore, reporting findings in different manners and at several levels enhanced the transferability of the study because it provided sufficient accounts of each participant’s pedagogical growth through guided reflection for future investigations. Finally, to ensure the confirmability of the study, peer debriefing technique was applied to present the study to a fresh eye to ensure the researcher’s neutral perspective in data interpretation.

Conclusion

In order to investigate the effects of guided reflection on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices and factors influencing their reflective teaching practices, I used a descriptive multiple-case research design (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2009) to reveal six college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical growth through guided reflection. Classroom observations, one-on-one interviews, and group reflection discussions were applied as the data collection instruments. Data was analyzed in two ways: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Chapter 4 presents findings from the within-case analysis in relation to the research questions and Chapter 5 will present findings from the cross-case analysis.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter reports findings of each individual case in relation to research questions.

Each participant’s background is introduced first to provide information that will later be applied to answering the first two research questions regarding participant’s belief evolution and practice progression through guided reflection. Reports on participants’ belief and practice progression follow the chronological order so as to create a linear presentation of each participant’s reflective teaching experience over a 15-week period of time at four data collection stages. Discussions related to the first two research questions focus on: (1) progression within each participant’s pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices respectively, such as consistency or variation over time, (2) connections between each participant’s pedagogical beliefs and his/her instructional practices, such as the alignment or contradiction between beliefs and practices, and (3) patterns of change in beliefs and practices in relation to guided reflection. Findings related to the first two research questions are then incorporated with each participant’s background information to answer the third research question.

Case 1 Amy

Background

As a native English speaker, Amy speaks fluent Spanish and can read and write in Spanish as well. She started learning Spanish in high school and further studied the language in college as Spanish major. After briefly traveling to Spanish-speaking countries, Amy realized that the language used in everyday life is very different from what she learned in class. In her opinion, academic writing in Spanish is easier and more cognitive than everyday writing. In graduate school, Amy chose to focus on English creative writing.
Similar to her education path, Amy’s work experience is two-fold. On one hand, as a Spanish major, she tutored Spanish to high school and college American students. On the other hand, with her Spanish skill, she helped Hispanic students with English writing. After getting her Bachelor’s degree in Spanish, she worked in an insurance company for a year as a Spanish translator, basically translating company brochures. During this time, she started tutoring adult English as second language (ESL) speakers in a community setting. Throughout her graduate studies, she taught English Composition to college freshmen for two years as a graduate assistant (GA). While staying involved in language teaching, Amy took education and practicum courses as well as an ESL workshop in order to enhance her instructional skill. Furthermore, she eagerly interacted with experienced colleagues to discuss teaching methods and felt that she learned more from her peers’ experiences and expertise than from classes she took as a student.

At the time of this study, Amy had some teaching experiences in college academic writing and with adult ESL learners respectively. However, it was her first time to teach ESL academic writing at the college level. In the study, she was teaching an intermediate level of ESL academic writing class of 11 students, mostly Chinese. In her opinion, it is important for the instructor to know about students’ previous education regarding the subject matter. Moreover, students’ understanding of the importance of the subject and their willingness to learn and improve is essential to their success.

Effects of Guided Reflection on Teacher’s Pedagogical Beliefs

Amy articulated her pedagogical beliefs during the preliminary interview and individual guided reflections at three time points, and while participating in three group reflection discussions. These beliefs are classified into three categories, including beliefs about learning to
write in another language, teaching to write in another language, and about important characteristics of ESL writing instructors.

**Preliminary interview.** During the preliminary interview, what Amy believed about learning and teaching to write in another language was rather general. Her understanding at this stage might be based on her previous teaching experiences, and thus revealed the fact that it was the beginning of the semester and she had not yet developed a holistic awareness of the content, students, and the dynamic of the specific class she was teaching. Therefore, when she articulated her pedagogical beliefs, there was a lack of consistency across categories. For example, Amy believed that reading is important for learning to write in another language, and it is helpful for students “to see the language in the context in which other people use.” However, in her beliefs about teaching to write in another language, there was no emphasis of reading instruction or reading-writing connection. Nevertheless, there was an underlying coherence in her stated beliefs. For instance, she believed that ESL students should write in the target language as much as possible, and teachers should create opportunities for students to write together in class. Moreover, she suggested that teachers should provide samples for students to learn how to write, and therefore being resourceful is one of the good traits ESL writing instructors should have.

**Individual guided reflections.** Compared with the preliminary interview, Amy’s responses in three guided reflection became more and more focused and consistent each time, and there was a clear progression in her articulation throughout the guided reflections. The consistency in her beliefs may result from the fact that each time she only focused on one class in which she was observed. Furthermore, the progression in her beliefs may have revealed the process of learning and teaching to write in another language as well as the pedagogical growth of an ESL writing instructor.
In the first guided reflection, Amy mentioned that it is essential for students to be aware of the writing convention in English because “these conventions do hold truth no matter what genre is.” One way to achieve this goal is to learn through examples. When reflecting on her teaching, Amy realized that ESL writing instructors need to be willing to understand students’ needs and hence provide students with opportunities to identify language features in the samples while teaching them to write. In the second guided reflection, Amy emphasized the importance for students to learn from relevant samples while learning to write in the target language. Accordingly, she insisted that ESL writing instructors need to provide students with writing samples as well as explicit writing instruction so that they can learn to write certain genres step by step. In the third guided reflection, Amy addressed the frequency of writing as an important factor in learning to write in another language. Along this line, teachers can help students feel safe about writing by providing them with opportunities of in-class writing, and guiding them to write in a focused and purposeful way.

In addition to the consistency in Amy’s stated beliefs across categories, there is a clear progression in her responses in each guided reflection. She started with focusing on the importance of learning the language convention and formats of English academic writing, then emphasized the effects of learning through examples under explicit instruction, and finally pointed out the essential role of frequency of writing in the target language. This progress echoes the process of developing academic writing skills in another language.

**Group reflections.** In addition to the individual guided reflection, Amy shared some information about her pedagogical beliefs in the group reflection discussions. These belief statements demonstrated the same pattern as in her individual reflections, namely, more focused and consistent each time. For example, she mentioned in the first group reflection that
interaction between students promoted improvement, and thus instructors needed to create meaningful and engaging activities for students to interact with each other and with the language. In the second group reflection, she pointed out that instructors needed to be cautious about doing free writing with ESL students. And this belief was supported by her statement in the third group reflection. That is, being explicit with expectation helps students understand the assignment better. However, different from the clear progression in her brief inputs for the group discussions, the progression in Amy’s pedagogical beliefs did not demonstrate obvious connection with her interaction with other instructors and participation in the group reflection discussion.

**Summary**

In summary, guided reflection helped Amy develop deeper understanding of the content and students she was teaching and the teaching-learning dynamic. Therefore, she became more aware of her pedagogical beliefs as regard to the real teaching contexts. Furthermore, her pedagogical beliefs became more focused and consistent, and demonstrated clear progression overtime under guided reflections.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices**

The three class observations focused on organization and interaction of the class, students’ participation in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. In the three observed classes, Amy introduced three different writing genres. Although various class focuses led to slightly different class dynamic, reading activities is a constant component in Amy’s writing instruction.
First observation and guided reflection. The first observation was conducted in the third week of the semester. In terms of class organization, there was no obvious introduction to or overview of the class. After saying “today we are going to talk about introduction, introductory paragraph,” Amy started the class with asking students to open their textbook and went straight into reading the text. During the class, several activities were carried out, such as student reading in silence, reading aloud, and working on the handout with partners. However, no obvious transition between class activities was observed. At the end of the class, Amy assigned writing a journal entry as the homework and explained briefly her expectation on the homework. In the guided reflection, when being asked to review the class organization, Amy mentioned that she usually started the class with the textbook but it was not always easy to do.

We have two textbooks. One thing I struggle sometime is trying to use the two texts together in one class period because one is more principles and the other is more content-based. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/10/2012)

She also mentioned that she had some issues with class planning. After realizing it took too long for students to go through the examples in the handout, she decided to adjust what she had planned to talk about.

With reading as the major class activity, the interaction in the classroom was not dynamic. A couple students were called to read the text aloud. When being asked comprehension questions, few students volunteered to answer, and when they did, the answer was very brief. Although the students were assigned to work in small groups, the verbal communication between students was minimal. In the reflection, Amy also realized that students did not seem comfortable and confident enough to speak out in class and to communicate with each other. She expressed her disappointment, because she intentionally designed the shared
handout for group work to encourage interaction between students. She walked around classroom to check the progress of students’ group work and tried to be available for questions, because she knew “some of them may not even ask me a question unless I am right there.” Not getting much feedback from students in class, Amy planned to read their journal entries to learn more about what and how students have learned in the class.

When reviewing the class, Amy thought she made a good decision at breaking down a long article into workable pieces for students, and she did well in asking purposeful questions to enhance students’ comprehension of the text. Nevertheless, she also realized “there must be more interesting ways to introduce materials” to students. And she agreed that “transitioning from activity to another was a little bit rough, and sometimes having everything progression is a little bit hard for me.”

Second observation and guided reflection. The lesson plan for the second observed class was to teach students how to write a comparison and contrast essay. This time, Amy started the class by briefly reviewing the text discussed in last class as some students mentioned the text was difficult to understand. The first 20 minutes of the class was focused on comprehending the challenging reading in the textbook. Amy guided students to read the text thoroughly, explained complex sentences in the text, and asked comprehension questions at times. After reading through the text as a class, students were asked to work in pairs to do an after-reading exercise on the handout Amy passed out at the beginning of the class. There was no clear explanation of this activity. Some students were idling for a few minutes as if they did not understand what they were supposed to do.

While students were working, Amy used the two presidential candidates to create a chart on the board to demonstrate the organization of a comparison and contrast essay. However, 15
minutes later after students finished the exercise, she went through the answers with students in class, which took another 15 minutes. There was only five minutes left for the class when she directed students’ attention to the chart on the board. And class was dismissed right after Amy briefly went through how to organize information to compare and contrast the two presidential candidates. No homework was assigned and no clear closure was made for the class.

When reflecting on this class, Amy obviously was not satisfied with how it went. She realized she did not explain well to students how to do the exercise and debated when would be a good time to explain the purpose of an activity to students.

I probably should have [explained how to do the exercise.] I disagreed with myself not to do that. Then I said, ok maybe they understand…. I thought maybe I would distract them from doing this task, which was more of a close reading task… I guess that’s why there was the question of doing the purpose at the beginning or at the end, right? (Guided Reflection #2, 10/17/2012)

Furthermore, she also noticed that the time management issues made students loose the opportunity to apply what they learned from reading to analyze the example. She realized she should “spend less time on the text and more time in thinking about application.” However, Amy was lit up by a positive change in class. That is, students were feeling more comfortable interacting with her. Especially after she sat down close to them explaining the text, some students asked her questions for clarification and showed her their work in progress for approval.

**Third observation and guided reflection.** The third class observation took place towards the end of the semester during Thanksgiving season. As she promised, Amy brought in a pumpkin pie to share with students after class. She started the class by showing an internet article about voting for two local restaurants that make the best pumpkin pie. After that, she
asked students to bring out the summary drafts they have composed from previous class and told them to rewrite the summaries. Even though Amy did not explain how she expected students to rewrite their summaries, students started writing without raising any questions. After the 20-minute in-class writing, students were asked to talk about their experiences of writing the summary. This time, more students volunteered to talk and they could convey quite amount of information regarding their understanding of summary writing, challenges while writing, and comment on their own writing. To follow up with students’ discussion, Amy then introduced different approaches to writing a summary, and then asked students to compare their own summary drafts. At the end of the class, Amy directed students to read the textbook section to learn more about the functions of summary. There was no clear summary of the class content and the class ended with pumpkin pie eating.

While reflecting on this class, Amy was not confident about the class organization because “it seemed a little rocky.” Although she had a clear goal for the class as she said “I tried to get them into the writing right away,” she admitted that “I had a hard time figuring out …what I hold this exercise up with when I was planning for this.” In terms of interaction, Amy is generally satisfied, although she would love to see more discussions between students because “I did want to go over to see their reactions of writing a summary and what things they struggle with, just so they know they are not alone.” However,

Sometimes I just don’t call on them because I don’t want them to feel uncomfortable. But I should start using that because that will make them pay attention better. (Guided Reflection #3, 11/21/2012)

Amy was pleased to see all students brought their summary for the in-class writing activity and “it was sort of a victory.” However, she also realized that she needed to provide students with
more explicit instruction to class activities because “it seemed that they didn’t understand right away what I wanted them to do.” In addition, she agreed that she needed to improve time management for class activities.

**Group reflections.** During the group reflections, Amy discussed her instructional practices with others. For example, when another instructor expressed her concern about a challenge writing task, Amy shared what she liked to do is “to write a small version of whatever essay they have to write, eventually for a larger assignment.” In terms of providing feedback on students’ writing, she usually did a combination of both grammatical and contextual feedbacks as “I am used to writing comments in the end [of students’ essays]; I try to give comments to point out to the students which direction they need to go, and it seems to work well.”

Realizing the importance of class interaction towards students’ improvement, Amy said that she used small talks to scaffold students’ comfort zone and was happy that “students are asking more questions.” Nevertheless, she also expressed that she needed help from others to improve class structure.

When students come in, I usually ask them to turn their book to look at what we are going to talk about. And then I start talking about what we are going to do today, not specifically what we are going to achieve, which I need to work on that I think. I would like to work on my class structure a little more. I am always wondering how I am going to apply this [forming a routine that gets across to the students]. (Group Reflection #3, 11/21/2012)

In the second group reflection, other instructors shared their routines to organize the class, such as using Power Point slides, referring to course schedule, and writing down class agenda on board and staying on track. However, Amy did not adopt any of these methods in her third
observed class. Rather, she followed her old routine and later expressed her dissatisfaction with the “rocky” class organization.

Summary

In summary, through guided reflections, Amy gradually realized: (1) class structure is fundamental for classroom teaching; (2) providing students with explicit instruction can assist them to present better classroom performance and to produce better writing outcomes; and (3) students need encouragement as well as time to develop the skill and confidence to participate in class activities (see Table 2.). However, Amy’s instructional practices did not always reflect her pedagogical growth under guided reflection. At the end of the study, Amy made progress in engaging students in class activities, but there was no obvious improvement regarding class organization and progression.

Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices

The effects of guided reflection on Amy’s pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices were discussed in previous sections. Generally, guided reflection influenced her growth in pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices in different ways and at different paces. These differences revealed the connection between Amy’s personal backgrounds and her pedagogical growth under guided reflection.

Connections between personal backgrounds and effects on pedagogical beliefs. Amy is an English-Spanish bilingual. As a native English speaker, she studied Spanish in a formal class setting. However, she was also exposed to various ways of learning the language. In high school, the teacher used Total Physical Response (TPR) method, which “taught words with hand motions.” Even though Amy said her oral proficiency was not good in high school, the TPR
“forces us to write, forces us to engage, and we have to use the language to our needs.” In college, she lived with other Spanish majors in a Spanish house where they had to communicate with each other in Spanish and learned from each other to figure out how to use words in colloquies. That’s when she started developing her oral proficiency and ability to read and write in Spanish. After briefly traveled to Spanish speaking countries, she realized that using the language in everyday life is “very different experience than just speaking Spanish in the classroom,” and “you really know how your vocabulary was when you get in everyday situations.” In Amy’s opinion, “academic writing in Spanish is much easier in some way than everyday writing… because they are far more cognitive.”

The formal education in learning another language obviously provides a foundation for Amy’s understanding of language learning and teaching. Therefore, she presented some concrete ideas about language learning and teaching throughout the study. For example, knowing that learning a language is a process, Amy believed students need to write in the target language as much as possible, and accordingly, teachers need to model students how to write and provide samples. In addition, her belief in group work and in-class writing also reflects her experience of engaging in a close learning community. Furthermore, being patient, in Amy’s opinion, is the most important trait for being an ESL writing teacher. She mentioned that teachers need to give students enough time to feel comfortable with the language and then confident in using the language. She had great empathy on her ESL students as she was once a language learner herself.

Connections between personal Backgrounds and effects on instructional practices.
Compared to the influence Amy’s linguistic and educational backgrounds have on her
pedagogical beliefs, her language learner experience did not show much impact on her instructional practices. It seemed that knowing does not always transform into doing.

Before teaching this ESL writing class, Amy had taught in a variety of settings. The majority of her teaching experiences were in informal settings, as she described “I kind of did some tutoring throughout my college years.” For example, she “did simple reading for the first graders” and “math tutoring for third to sixth graders”; she has “done Spanish tutoring for high school and college level students”; and she “did the ESL teaching, but primarily community adult students.” Amy realized that “my degree program was more theoretical” and “not so much teaching training,” even though she “had a couple practicum courses.” She ended up “learning more from my classmates probably more than from my instructors.” Although she has taken 12 hour ESL workshop, she did not specify how the ESL workshop prepared her to teach ESL population. Overall, the only formal teaching Amy did was when she taught college freshman English for two years as a GA during her graduate study as English major.

Amy’s lack of formal teacher training and her limited ESL teaching experience explained the issues and challenges she had in her class. In terms of class planning, although she understood the importance of structured instruction, she had a hard time applying it to the real teaching context. Therefore, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the class organization. Regarding accommodating ESL students’ needs, she emphasized the need of explicit instruction and explanation, but several times in class, she missed the opportunity to provide students with clear instruction while she was debating in her mind about the timing and clarity. As a result, some well-designed class activities did not reach the expected outcomes.
Summary

In summary, Amy’s linguistic, educational, and professional backgrounds all play a role in her evolving pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices (Figure 4.1.). Her pedagogical beliefs reflect both her linguistic background as a bilingual and educational experience as a language learner. Her classroom teaching experience, although limited, helps her further develop a more focused and consistent pedagogical belief about language teaching. However, the transformation of pedagogical beliefs into instructional practices needs the actual teaching experience as a vehicle. It takes developmental time and deliberate reflections for teachers to demonstrate the progression of their instructional practices.

Figure 4.1. Connections between Amy’s Personal Background and Effects on Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices

- Cultural / Linguistic Background: English-Spanish Bilingual
- Educational Background: Spanish Major
- Professional Background: Informal teaching contexts

Empathy

Pedagogical Beliefs:
language learning process, group work, in-class writing

Inconsistent
disconnect

Educational Background: No teaching training

Instructional Practices:
Lacking organization and explicit instruction, not engaging

No foundation
No connection

Professional Background: Informal teaching contexts
Case 2 Denise

Background

Denise was born in the United States in a Chinese immigrant family, growing up speaking Cantonese at home and English at school. Surprisingly, her cultural background makes her feel less confident as she said, “I don’t belong to any culture because I don’t have any strength in any of them.” However, she admitted that “I am more American than Chinese.” She thinks English is her most proficient language while her oral proficiency in Cantonese is limited in certain domains. Besides these two languages that she picked up naturally, Denise has also studied Mandarin Chinese and Japanese for three and a half years respectively and has taken French lessons for one year. She speaks basic Mandarin and Japanese and can read Japanese better than Chinese. Furthermore, being married to a Turkish husband, her Turkish language is growing.

Denise’s passion about learning languages reflects her contacts with other cultures. She went to Japan for one month for the study abroad program when she was learning Japanese in college. Eager as she was to learn and use the language, it was very difficult for her to be so far away from home and in a very different cultural environment for the first time. After she got married, Denise traveled to Turkey for a couple of weeks with her husband. Then she went straight from Turkey to China to start her four-month teaching in a college near her parents’ hometown, where she met her aunt for the first time. This trip taught her a lot, because “I met new people and I learned to look at my family background.”

Denise’s education did not start with the teaching direction, nor did her work experience. She majored in Public Relations and got a job as a transportation security officer at the airport after college. Then she continued to the graduate study in Communication. During this time, she worked as an administrative assistant for a non-profit organization. After getting her first
Master’s degree, she worked as an international admission officer at a university while studying for her second Master’s degree on TESL. During this time, she voluntarily taught in a community ESL classroom, substitute taught at an Intensive English Program (IEP), taught in a college in China, and returned to the State to teach at another IEP. Most of her teaching experience was working with pre-college international students in IEP settings.

At the time of this study, Denise was a first year doctoral student in a Second Language Studies program and a graduate teaching assistant at the Center for ESL at the University. It was also her first time teaching in an English for Academic Purpose (EAP) program. There were 10 students in her Basic Academic Reading and Writing class, and all of them were from China. In her opinion, reflection improved students’ understanding of what they learn and helps instructor organized and prepared for the future instruction.

Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Pedagogical Beliefs

Denise shared her understanding about learning and teaching to write in another language, and described important characteristics for ESL writing instructors to have. Her understanding evolved at different stages of this study. At the same time, Denise became more communicative and more confident in what she said later in the study.

Preliminary interview. In the preliminary interview, Denise stated that everybody had the potential to write “because everybody can write in one language or another.” However, learning to write well in another language required serious efforts from students. And first of all, students needed to understand the essential of writing in their lives. In terms of writing instruction, Denise emphasized the importance of showing students the reading-writing connection with examples because “when I was growing up, reading was huge for me to learn how to write effectively” and “writing is part of reading…. you need to see it, and you need to
see how it is done.” In addition, her experience of learning to write convinced her that explicit writing instruction was needed and writing instructors needed to be knowledgeable of writing structures in various genres.

I didn’t know a lot of these structures until I was told by my instructors that this is the structure for this kind of writing. (Preliminary Interview, 8/21/2012)

In Denise’s opinion, an ESL writing instructor should not be tough, especially not be a “grammar Nazi.” Rather, they needed to be willing to understand their students’ background “because students’ background can also affect whether they can write effectively or not,” and develop right expectation based on students’ level.

During this stage of the study, although Denise’s stated pedagogical beliefs held truth, there was a lack of coherence in her articulation. What she believed in learning to write in L2 did not seem to be supported by her beliefs in teaching to write in L2. Moreover, the important characteristics she believed for ESL writing instructors to have were not necessarily related to her beliefs about learning or teaching to write in L2.

**Individual guided reflections.** During the three guided reflections, Denise became more consistent in her articulation of her beliefs across categories, and was able to generate more ideas about her pedagogical beliefs each time. In the first guided reflection, Denise pointed out that I don’t think writing is just writing. You have to think about it, you have to process it in your mind, and then you have to even explain to others before you can write. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/20/2012)

Therefore, students need to be engaged in various writing activities in order to learn how to write. Along this line, using what she did in the first observed class as an example, Denise explained that ESL writing instruction needed to incorporate examples to teach different writing
genres and create opportunities for students to practice writing in class. In order to deliver effective instruction for ESL students, a good trait for ESL writing instructors to have was being prepared. In Denise’s view, preparedness allowed some flexibility in the instruction which was essential in teaching ESL.

If I am more prepared knowing what is what I have them do, then I feel I can accommodate time. Like if the students start to just sitting there and I don’t feel like there is any action happening, I can expand the task to something different to add to their movements or to have them actually process something in order to really do this task well. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/20/2012)

In the second reflection, despite her previous belief that ESL writing instructors should not be a “grammar Nazi,” Denise realized that vocabulary and grammar were important elements of good writing and crucial skills for ESL writers to obtain. Students needed to see how words were used in examples and learn to develop the style of writing. To support students’ learning, ESL writing instruction should aim to help students understand the purpose of writing and to arouse students’ awareness of language use and style in writing.

Denise brought up more details in the third reflection. Regarding learning to write in L2, Denise believed that students needed to have the background knowledge of the content in their writing, that sufficient vocabulary was part of the background knowledge and could definitely enhance academic writing. Moreover, frequency of writing could help students sharpen their writing skill so as to convey meaning clearly to readers. At this stage, Denise’s beliefs in teaching to write in L2 were closely connected to the image of an ideal ESL writing instructor in her mind. For example, she realized that “teaching is not for me to stand in front of the class; sitting down with them sometimes is important.” By working with individual students,
instructors could enhance their relationship and at the same time got to know each student’s strengths and weaknesses. This close observation of students could help instructors set the right objectives for each student and adjust teaching pace based on students’ feedbacks.

**Group reflections.** Denise was rather quiet in the first group reflection. Most of the time, she was listening to others’ discussion and made notes at times. The only time she spoke out was when instructors shared challenging moments in their teaching. Similar to how she progressed through the individual guided reflections, she became more involved and confident in the group reflection discussions each time. Most of what she shared with the group was related to classroom practices. However, the most distinctive feature in her instructional practice echoed her pedagogical beliefs regarding good characteristics for ESL writing instructors. That is, being organized. In Denise’s opinion,

> It [being organized] makes me more confident also because if I am not organized with my materials and lesson plans, I don’t feel like I am able to tell students what to do, or even prepare myself. So being organized is also being prepared and giving yourself confidence. (Group Reflection #3, 11/28/2012)

In addition to what Denise shared with other instructors during group reflection discussions, the effects of participating in the group reflection discussion were revealed in her pedagogical beliefs stated during individual guided reflections later in the study. For example, in the first group reflection, some instructors mentioned how they believe good relationship between teacher and students will promote students’ interaction and participation. Denise took this advice and formed the image of the instructor who should be sitting down with students rather than standing in front of them. Another instructor commented on the importance of
having background knowledge in order for students to write well. And this notion was echoed by Denise in her last individual guided reflection.

Summary

In summary, guided reflection helped Denise become more confident in her pedagogical beliefs. This confidence was demonstrated in her more detailed and consistent belief statements in each of the individual guided reflections, and in her increasing participation in the group reflection discussions. In addition, guided reflection helped Denise become more thoughtful about teacher-student relationship. This thoughtfulness was presented in the clear progression in her beliefs regarding ESL writing instructors’ characteristics, from willing to learn about students’ backgrounds to setting the right expectation on their learning outcomes, from willing to learn about their strengths and weaknesses to adjusting teaching style and pace to accommodate students’ needs.

Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices

The three class observations focused on organization and interaction of the class, students’ participation in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. In the three observed classes, Denise guided students to tackle three different writing genres, including summary, narrative essay, and cause-and-effect essay. Accordingly, the three observed classes demonstrated different class dynamic.

First observation and guided reflection. The first observation was conducted in the third week of the semester. After briefly greeting students, Denise started with going through the class agenda on a power point slide. The class activities and objectives were clearly listed with page numbers for students to refer to in their textbooks. The class went on following the agenda
and demonstrated a clear progression and transition between activities. By the end of the class, all objectives were accomplished and Denise wrapped up the class with explicit instruction for students to prepare for the next class and reminders of timeline for homework and assignment.

Regarding this class was the beginning level academic reading and writing, students were quite active and engaged in various class activities. Most of the time, students volunteered to answer questions, read text, and share their work verbally or in written form on the board. When Denise assigned students with an in-class writing task, a couple of students asked for clarification. When they were working on the task, Denise walked around the classroom to check each of their progress, and provided guidance and answers to students’ questions.

In addition to use Power Point slides to present clear class information for students to follow in class, Denise also made explicit written instruction available for students on Blackboard, and demonstrated to students in class how to access different documents for various tasks. For various class activities, Denise provided topics and briefly brainstormed with students on each topic to prepare students for the writing task. Moreover, she used examples and guided students to analyze these examples before they started to write their own. Another distinct feature of this class was that each in-class writing activity had a clear closure with feedbacks and comments.

During the guided reflection, Denise mentioned that she used the Power Point slides as her lesson plan and stepping stone for class instruction. She agreed that using the Power Point keeps her on track of various class activities and allows her time to think. In terms of class participation, Denise felt this group of students was not as participatory as she expected because “they just seem to lack this kind of energy.” However, she acknowledged some active members in the group.
Some of the students are always willing to participate, knowing when teacher wants you to participate. They even push some students sitting next to them and make sure they do do the task. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/20/2012)

Even though she did not prefer to force students to participate, Denise tried to be strategic to encourage students’ interaction and participation. “I always have them work with partners. One thing I did differently was to get them up and write on the board.” However, she agreed that sometimes she had to be forceful, “like this past Tuesday I actually asked everybody to stand up to switch seats” because “There is so much information to cover in a limited time; if they don’t participate, I can’t move the class faster.”

When asked to evaluate this class, Denise felt satisfied with students’ positive feedbacks in class activities and encouraged by students’ active participation and interaction. She also mentioned that she would like to incorporate more writing prompts for students to practice in class. And she was planning to improve in class time management so as to make more time for students to write.

Second observation and guided reflection. There were two clear components on the agenda of the second observed class: lecture on how to write a narrative essay and students working on their drafts. The same as the first observed class, Denise prepared Power Point slides with detailed information to show students what makes an essay narrative and how to compose a narrative essay. When she explained the information, she referred to textbooks or handouts and asked questions to guide students’ comprehension. To prepare students for writing, she directed students to do the textbook exercise to enhance their understanding of the feature of narrative writing. Students spent about 10 minutes to write in class, and they discussed what they have written and how to further developed their essays. Again, Denise wrapped up the class with
explicit instruction and requirement on homework assignments and a brief introduction of the next class.

In this class, students worked with each other and participated in class in various ways. They were paired up to work on the textbook exercises and took turns to answered questions. They brainstormed topics for narrative essay within groups. Some of them volunteered to share their in-class writings with the class and others provided comments. With students being involved in various activities, Denise was more a facilitator in this class than an instructor. She used well designed questions to promote students’ understanding of the narrative essay, provided useful expressions for students to use in their writing, modeled to students how to use long or short sentences to develop a style of writing.

While reflecting on this class, Denise was satisfied that class time was efficient and students accomplished all the tasks very well. She also noticed that “these days when I give them more time to think, I noticed that the class time is longer for me.” In addition to the class organization, she was pleased with the meaningful interaction and discussion in class that day. She felt more comfortable interacting with students “because I know the students; they don’t bite.” She was inspired that besides the volunteers, students were ready to participate when they were called on, and students’ discussion demonstrated more involvement and deeper thinking. When asked to evaluate the class, Denise said the highlight of the class was the focused design and delivery. She also thought about making the class more interesting for students by applying more media and providing more topics for writing.

**Third observation and guided reflection.** The third observed class was a writing workshop. There were no Power Point slides for this class, but students seemed to be prepared and all had their drafts to work on in class. As planned, Denise worked with each student on
their draft, providing detailed feedback and suggestions. While she worked with one student, other students either continued working on their essay or discussed with neighbors. The class was wrapped up with reminders of due dates of the assignment.

Denise obviously was happy with how the class went. “I think organizing class this way is good because I saw some students effectively turned out good stuff.” By working with individual student, she said “if they come up with something good, I can help them more.” In addition, Denise liked this one-on-one interaction because “it makes me feel better when I see students actually understand the idea.” The first writing workshop turned out to be a success, Denise said that she would have writing workshop more often.

**Group reflections.** Except for being quiet at the first group reflection, Denise was eager to share her instructional practices with others in the latter group discussions. When another instructor expressed the need of help to organize class activities, Denise told the group that her Power Point slides helped her stay organized. “From the beginning I introduce today’s agenda, and then I would make announcements, then I would flow from each activity using my Power Point.” She also mentioned her use of in-class writing as an opportunity to model to students the writing process, and was happy to see students make progress in their writing with the techniques. In terms of engaging students to work with and learn from each other, she shared her strategy.

You can have students share what they write, especially you can point out those who you know have stronger writing, and that demonstrates to the others So I use that as a tool to get them engaged. (Group Reflection #2, 10/31/2012)
In the last group reflection, she was excited to share with the group that the one-on-one writing workshop enabled her to address student’s individual needs and demonstrated positive effects on students’ work.

Other than contributing to the discussion with her inputs, Denise also paid close attention to what others said during the group reflection and applied what she learned from others in her class. For instance, one instructor mentioned that the trust between teacher and students can make a huge difference in students’ classroom behavior and learning outcome. Denise started to use students’ names when addressing them in class and said, “they [students] feel good knowing that I actually know them, remember their names.” Further, the idea of the writing workshop could be inspired by the discussion in the second group reflection, in which instructors all shared ideas how to monitor students’ writing process and provide instant feedback.

**Summary**

In summary, guided reflection helped Denise become more assured about her instructional practices, more confident with her role as the instructor, and more comfortable interacting with students. In the three observed classes, Denise remained highly organized with clear lesson plans. Her practices of organizing various class activities were strengthened after she reflected on each class, and her idea of using PowerPoint slides to guide the class was confirmed, especially after she shared this routine with others during group reflection. Furthermore, her confidence was also demonstrated in the closer relationship between her and her students and in her certainty of devoted the whole class period to a writing workshop. Additionally, guided reflection helped Denise achieve the consistency between her instructional practices and pedagogical beliefs. Her classroom instruction became more student-oriented as she developed more focused pedagogical beliefs.
Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices

The discussion in previous sections has demonstrated that guided reflection has positive effects on Denise’s pedagogical beliefs and practices. Denise became more confident in her beliefs and practices and more focused on students’ individual needs. These positive effects can be furthered investigated by looking into the connections between her personal backgrounds and her pedagogical growth in beliefs and practices.

Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on pedagogical beliefs. Although growing up as bilingual in English and Cantonese, Denise did not feel confident in either of the languages. Although passionate about language learning, she has not developed proficiency in either of the two other languages she has been learning. These language learning experiences were not systematic and thus did not provide her with the theoretical support in the development of her pedagogical beliefs in language learning.

Consequently, her stated pedagogical beliefs in the preliminary interview were rather general and lack of focus. However, describing herself as being “self-conscious” and “a perfectionist,” Denise was eager to reflect and willing to learn. This self-perception explained her dramatic growth through guided reflections in her understanding of learning to write in another language.

Additionally, Denise’s teaching experiences in various contexts have taught her a lot regarding classroom management skills and instructional techniques and have helped her develop precise perception of ESL teacher’s characteristics. For example, after teaching several topics of large classes four months at a college in China, she “actually disliked teaching because of this experience.” However, after she came back to the States and started teaching at a University IEP program, she gradually understood the process of teaching, and she noticed
herself “transition from not knowing to knowing.” Only then, she thought she could be a teacher.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on instructional practices.** The most distinctive feature of Denise’s instructional practices was her linear class organization and explicit instruction. This style was significantly influenced by her personal preference as she was “very organized and particular” and “being prepared has been a huge part of who I am.” Additionally, Denise was very reflective on her teaching practices.

> You will see things that will be happening while you are teaching, and you will be thinking “why they are not getting it”. I should go back to something, research something, and then realize. (Preliminary Interview, 8/21/2012)

On the other hand, her self-consciousness distracted her interaction with students at the beginning because “it (forcing students to participate) also conflicts my philosophy not to be an aggressive teacher.” However, Denise was also determined and willing to “change my style [to meet students’ individual need].” And later she became less uptight with the teacher-student relation and felt more comfortable interacting with students. And these changes greatly contributed to Denise’s successful classroom teaching as well as students’ learning outcome.

In addition, her teaching experiences in various contexts had different impact on her instructional practices. She started from not knowing how “I could teach them” because there are “so many students” to understanding “the structure of teaching, and what it actually meant.” Her first-hand experience in the classroom with students also contributed to her confidence in the current instructional practices. Through teaching, “I saw what mistakes I was making and what assumptions I had before.” Through interacting with students, “I see once you put the efforts into, your students would like ‘teacher, you are really good’.”
Summary

In summary, Denise’s pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices are affected to different extents by her language learning and teaching experiences and her self-perception (Figure 4.2.). On the one hand, she developed her pedagogical beliefs through her language learning and teaching experience. Her insightful reflection on classroom practices helped her develop consistent and focused pedagogical beliefs. On the other hand, Denise’s instructional practices are closely connected to her teaching experiences and her self-perceptions. She learned the structured teaching style from working in the classroom and developed it to a higher level with her preference of staying organized and prepared for class instruction and being flexible with students’ learning process.

Figure 4.2. Connections between Denise’s Personal Background and Effects on Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural / Linguistic Background: circumstantial bilingual, no confidence in either language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No theoretical support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceptions: self-conscious and perfectionist; organized and being prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Beliefs: From general to focused, from abstract to tangible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practices: Highly-organized with lesson plans, increasing meaningful interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepen understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional background: teaching in EFL, IEP and ESL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Backgrounds

Ellie was born in Turkey. She started learning English in middle school and attended a private language school at aged 15. She developed a passion about teaching at early age, and knew teaching English would be her career path when she was 16. Ellie received a bachelor degree in English Language and Literature and a Masters’ degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) from Turkey. She married her French-born British husband and moved to live in the U.S. 15 years ago. During the 15 years in the US, she continued pursuing her education and received a doctoral degree in TESL and has two lovely English-Turkish bilingual daughters just like her. Ellie speaks native-like English and is especially good at writing in English due to her education and career backgrounds.

After graduating from college, Ellie taught English in a middle school for two years. She started to teach English in college after she received her Masters’ degree, where she taught English language skills to Turkish students of various proficiency levels. In the U.S., she has taught English reading and writing mainly at college level to both ESL students and American college freshmen.

Ellie feels that she is better connected to her ESL students because she was once a language learner herself and understands the psychological challenges her students have to face. Moreover, she feels that she has advantages over her native English-speaking colleagues because she can be a role model for her students with her own experience and success in language learning. Ellie keeps a routine to reflect on her teaching after every class because “there is always space to improve for any class.” She also is willing to observe others to see different ways of teaching and to learn more classroom management techniques. At the time of the study,
Ellie was teaching an advanced ESL reading and writing class. There were 11 Chinese students and one student from India in this class.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Pedagogical Beliefs**

Ellie articulated her pedagogical beliefs during the preliminary interview. She reflected on her beliefs after each class observation. Moreover, she eagerly shared her experiences and understandings in L2 learning and teaching during the group reflections.

**Preliminary interview.** Loving students was central in Ellie’s teaching philosophy. She considered connection, awareness, and understanding to be the key characteristics for ESL instructors to have. First of all, she believed that ESL writing instructors needed to be aware of students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She considered students’ writing different rather than mistaken. With that, instructors needed to adjust their teaching methods based on students’ needs. Considering students’ cultural backgrounds, Ellie would like to have a little bit authority in the classroom.

Those students also come from more authoritative educational systems. They want to believe that the teacher knows more; the teacher will teach me more, and then there is respect towards that. (Preliminary Interview, 8/18/2012)

Additionally, she believed that ESL writing instructors needed to be knowledgeable about the subject and be confident with their materials.

In terms of teaching students how to write in another language, Ellie believed that “it is all about thinking.” Instructors needed to teach students how to think in the language and demonstrate to students the correct way of writing in the language. Accordingly, it was important for students to be familiar with the thinking pattern and be aware of the cultural aspects of the language.
Individual guided reflections. In the first guided reflection, Ellie was quite general about her beliefs in learning to write in L2. She mentioned that when learning to write, students needed to develop the sense of audience in their writing. It was important for students to truly understand the task so that they could write with confidence. Accordingly, she believed that ESL writing instructors needed to be aware of students’ limitations and thus choose appropriate tasks and introduce the task to students in simple terms to avoid confusion. In addition, Ellie addressed the importance of guiding students to learn from examples.

Four weeks later in the second guided reflection, Ellie stated her beliefs in learning to write in L2 with emphasis on specifics in various task. She believed that students needed to follow different guidelines for different writing genres. Furthermore, students needed to apply language that was aligned with the writing genres and purposes. Regarding methods of teaching to write in L2, Ellie was consistent with her first reflection. She still emphasized the importance of providing students with precise introduction to the tasks. In addition, she stated that ESL writing instructors could model students how to write by providing constructive feedbacks to help students improve their writings. In order to teach writing effectively, Ellie believed that ESL writing instructors needed to stay organized and be prepared and resourceful for students’ various learning needs.

By the end of the semester in the third guided reflection, Ellie provided more details when describing her overall pedagogical beliefs. She brought up the reading-writing connection in the learning of L2 writing. Another important element in developing academic writing skill was to be aware of the organizational patterns that are used in various writing genres. Echoing her beliefs stated in the second guided reflection, Ellie emphasized the significance for students to build on their vocabulary as to write adequately for various tasks. To fully prepare students
for writing tasks, Ellie believed that ESL writing instructors needed to teach students study skills, such as learning to write from readings. More specifically, ESL writing instructors needed to introduce to students the English academic writing conventions and to provide rubrics that explicitly explain teacher’s expectation on students’ writing.

In articulating important characteristics for ESL writing instructors, Ellie believed “teachers have to be organized and this is true for any kind of teaching situation.” In addition, she believed that ESL writing instructors needed to have a wide perspective to be open to whatever students’ situation was and make adjustment accordingly. She also believed that “instructor’s personality makes a huge difference” in students’ learning outcome. Thus, being able to create a stress-free environment was another important trait for ESL writing instructors to have. More importantly, Ellie emphasized the power a non-native speaking teacher could bring to the classroom because of the similarities shared between students and the teacher.

I want to give them this message that I was just like them; I was in their shoes.

Now I did it and they can do it too…. That is the power, empathy and also trust. (Guided Reflection #3, 11/8/2012)

**Group reflections.** Due to her teaching schedule, Ellie participated in the group reflections via Skype. However, the distance did not influence her enthusiasm of interacting with the group. She was an active participant and contributed positive energy to the group reflection discussions. In the first group reflection, Ellie shared her success in building good relationship with her students.

It is so important to have that trust between you and your students. That makes a huge difference. I always get positive reactions from my students when they realize that I do care about them and it does matter to me how they are doing.
When discussing how to encourage students’ participation in the second group reflection, Ellie emphasized again the trust between students and the instructor. “My students know my real intention, so I don’t get nervous reaction when I call individual student’s name.” But she also agreed that it was a fine line to promote an interactive classroom while giving ESL students enough space and time to feel comfortable. Instructors discussed their beliefs in in-class writing activities during the second group reflection. Through this discussion, Ellie realized that she needed to develop a routine for writing in class among students. The third group reflection focused on instructors’ beliefs about important characteristics of ESL writing instructors. Ellie affirmed her beliefs in the positive impact on students of a good relationship between students and the instructor. She further elaborated that instructors needed to be sensitive to students’ needs so as to find a better match between students’ abilities and writing tasks. Moreover, empathy on students’ learning process, flexibility towards teaching methods, and willingness to learn new techniques were all important traits Ellie valued in her pedagogical beliefs.

Summary

In Summary, through guided reflection, Ellie’s pedagogical beliefs regarding learning and teaching to write in L2 became more tangible, and her articulation progressed from being abstract to more concrete, from being general to more specific. In the preliminary interview, her stated beliefs were general, focusing on the abstract concepts, such as cultural awareness and thinking patterns. Nevertheless, during each of the guided reflections, Ellie shifted her pedagogical focus on more applicable aspects of learning and teaching to write in L2, from understanding writing tasks, learning writing conventions to building vocabulary. This pedagogical progression revealed her expectations on students’ writing development at different
stages. In addition, guided reflection helped Ellie’s pedagogical beliefs become more consistent and coherent across categories. In each guided reflection, her beliefs in and expectations on students’ writing were well supported by her beliefs regarding the ESL teaching methods and teacher qualities.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices**

The three class observations focused on organization and interaction of the class, students’ participation in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. In the three observed classes, Ellie introduced to students three different writing genres and integrated various classroom activities to accomplish these tasks. In the guided reflection following each class observation, she reflected on the classes and evaluated her instruction in each class.

**First observation and guided reflection.** The first class observation took place in the third week. Ellie started the class with checking attendance and collecting homework from students. Then she showed a detailed document on Blackboard and said, “we are going to talk about English rhetoric the whole day today.” This document was thoroughly written with concepts followed by definitions and examples and with the writing task followed by explanation and requirements. As rhetoric is a new concept to all students and the rhetorical analysis essay is the first writing task for the class, Ellie was very precise to walk students through every section of this document, which served as a class agenda. Moreover, she used clear signals to draw students’ attention before moving on with each class activity, such as “are you ready to learn something new?” “are you ready for the example? I am going to read it to you” and “now I am going to talk about rhetorical strategies.” All tasks listed on the document were accomplished
by the end of the class. Ellie assigned homework and provided a brief preview for the next class before dismissing the class.

In spite of the large amount of new information included in the class, it did not seem overwhelming to students. There was interaction and discussion during the rigorous class lecture. Ellie constantly checked on students’ understanding by asking questions and students followed the lecture intensively, attending to questions and making notes. During class discussion, Ellie was very mindful to include an Indian girl, the only non-Chinese student in the class. Therefore, students eagerly shared their in-class writing and verbally commented on each other’s work. In addition to providing explicit introduction and instruction for the rhetorical analysis essay, Ellie applied various strategies to prepare students for the writing task. She created visual on the board to explain important concepts related to the writing topic. She demonstrated to students how rhetoric is relevant in their daily life. Furthermore, she provided examples for students to apply new knowledge in class.

During guided reflection, Ellie expressed her overall satisfaction with the class. Even though she planned a thorough lecture to cover the new writing task, she was able to incorporate some activities for students to practice new knowledge. She was happy with students’ interaction and participation in class. “It was an interactive class because of my questions” and “students feel comfortable and can voice themselves.” Although promoting a lively and stress-free class environment, Ellie expected her students to be serious about their tasks. From Ellie’s perspective, what made this class a success was students’ positive attitude towards new knowledge and a difficult task.

They [students] learned something they have never heard before. But they didn’t have any negative attitude towards this something new, may be
something difficult…. They were open to what I was going to say and I think
they took it really well. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/13/2012)

However, she acknowledged that “there is always a better way of organizing the class.”

**Second observation and guided reflection.** The second class observation took place
four weeks later. The class consisted of two components, a peer review workshop and an
introduction to the idea analysis essay. Before students exchanged papers, Ellie presented the
step-by-step written instruction for the peer review activity. She then guided students to do
exercises related to editing techniques needed for the peer review activity. After reminding
students of the due day for the peer review report, Ellie switched to the second task of the class
and introduced an idea analysis essay. Similar to what she did in the first observed class, Ellie
provided an explicitly written instruction to how to write an idea analysis essay. She also led
students to brainstorm possible topics for this writing task and showed them how to search for
information on the internet. She wrapped up the class by reminding students of the peer review
homework and how to prepare for writing the essay.

Putting two major tasks in one class period obviously increased the intensity of the
instruction, and thus impacted students’ interaction and participation to some extent. Other than
collectively doing the writing exercise and making notes to the instruction, students did not
demonstrate obvious interaction and participation. Ellie asked some well-designed questions but
did not give students enough time to respond. She modeled to students how to brainstorm for
topics and how to search for information on the internet. However, because of the time
constraint, students were not able to practice these techniques in class.

While reflecting on this class, Ellie acknowledged that the class went in an organized
way. She felt the interaction was okay for a writing class. Nevertheless, she also realized that
she did not get much participation today because “I asked students questions but I found myself giving answers more.” Except for lack of participation, Ellie felt confident that students would grasp the writing task by following the explicit instruction handout she made available on Blackboard for students to use after class.

**Third observation and guided reflection.** The third observed class was devoted to the introduction to a synthesis essay. As usual, Ellie checked attendance and collected homework from students before class started. Class started with an overview of the agenda. Ellie once again presented a written document and thoroughly explained to students the writing task and in-class activities related to this task. All activities were connected with one another to enhance students’ understanding of the new writing task. For example, she guided students to recall the previous analysis essay and compare the features of analysis and synthesis. She also included a reading component in the class, using a textbook article as an example to guide students to synthesize it with the techniques they learned in class. With the well-designed activities, students demonstrated good energy in class interaction and participation. They worked in groups with the reading activity. They took turns to respond to questions. They shared their opinions in class discussion. And they asked for clarification of the writing task.

Ellie was very pleased with how the class went because she “stayed organized in class and all tasks were accomplished.” She also praised herself for providing opportunities for students to participate in discussion, and was happy to see that “students were active thinkers today.” Even though some students did not read the article before class, this did not stop them from participating in the discussion. However, Ellie felt some students’ lack of preparation influenced the effect of the class design. The incident in the class reminded her whether a class went well required team work. With this realization, she planned to design more group work to
enhance students’ learning. Additionally, she felt the need to promote students’ participation and vocabulary learning with more creative ways.

**Group reflections.** In addition to reflecting on and evaluating her own instruction, Ellie eagerly shared her pedagogical practices with other instructors during group reflections. In the first group reflection, when discussing how to facilitate students’ writing process, Ellie reminded other instructors that there were writing assistance available on campus and ESL writing instructors needed to familiarize students with various resources and take advantage of them. Regarding introducing students to various writing tasks, Ellie shared her use of explicit handouts to prepare students for class activities and writing requirements. She emphasized that students could use the handouts as study guides for their essay writing. However, Ellie also shared the challenge she had with balancing reading and writing instruction in class.

I have reading and writing questions, but I don’t think I am doing reading well because there is more writing in my class. I feel bad that maybe I should be spending more time on reading, but I don’t have time. (Group Reflection #1, 10/3/2012)

Ellie’s concern provoked instructors’ discussion about how to incorporate reading in writing instruction and how to promote students’ motivation in reading.

Instructors discussed their class routines in the second group reflection. Ellie mentioned her practice of referring to course schedule in the syllabus every class for review and preview. She did this every class so that her students also got into a habit of checking the weekly schedule to prepare for class. Instructors also shared successes and challenges in their practices. Ellie happily shared with the group that her students benefited from the explicit instruction and requirements she provided for each writing task. However, she mentioned that “if there is one
thing I don’t like that I do is I repeat myself all the time. I tried not to, but I ended up doing it again.” A couple of instructors echoed Ellie regarding cutting back teacher talk and creating more opportunities for students’ participation and interaction. Her realization and feedbacks from others set a tone for her future plan that Ellie brought up in the third group reflection. She would incorporate an “oral presentation” component for each writing task in which students would present a blueprint of their essay.

**Summary**

In summary, guided reflections helped an experienced ESL writing instructor like Ellie to develop a fresh perspective on her pedagogical practices. She was able to analyze her instruction purposefully and identified her strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, group reflections provided her an opportunity to reaffirm her successful practices and refine her strategies to overcome instructional challenges.

One the one hand, through sharing her successful practices and getting positive feedback from other instructors, Ellie further affirmed that her explicit instruction was beneficial for students. Therefore, she was very consistent with her practice on providing thorough step-by-step instruction to each writing task and was able to incorporate a variety of class activities to enhance students’ learning. One the other hand, Ellie was open to others’ suggestions to helping her overcome challenges. And she was eager to apply new strategies and better her instruction. For example, she discussed with other instructors about balancing reading and writing activities in class during the first group reflection. Later on, she was able to successfully implement a reading activity in the third observed class and this activity provided students opportunity to practice new knowledge in class. In addition, Ellie paid attention to what other instructors did to promote students’ meaningful participation in class. She decided to apply an oral presentation
component as part of the writing requirement for students to illustrate their writing process. Overall, individual guided reflections helped Ellie to be more analytical with her instruction and group reflections demonstrated more significant effects on Ellie’s instructional progression.

**Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices**

The effects of guided reflection on Ellie’s pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices were discussed in previous sections. In general, guided reflection has demonstrated positive effects on Ellie’s pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices to different extents. These effects are connected with Ellie’s cultural, linguistic, educational and professional backgrounds.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on pedagogical beliefs.** With 15 years of teaching experiences in various contexts and as an ESL learner herself, Ellie has developed a holistic pedagogical belief system regarding language learning and teaching prior to taking part in this study. Moreover, as she described, she was “an observing and self-reflective person.” She must often ponder and refine her pedagogy. Hence, Ellie’s pedagogical beliefs at all stages of the study held truth. She did not identify any mistakenly stated beliefs and rarely needed to correct herself. Therefore, guided reflection did not necessarily help Ellie realize or formulate her pedagogical beliefs. Rather, guided reflection provided her an opportunity to organize and define her beliefs and further build on the consistency between her pedagogical beliefs and practices.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on instructional practices.** After learning and teaching English as an L2 for years, Ellie attained a doctoral degree in TESL. This advanced formal education in language pedagogy enabled her to analyze instructional situations precisely. Her continual teaching in the field of ESL provided
her the hands-on experience to apply theories and eventually developed her own style of teaching ESL.

Therefore, the instructional practices she had demonstrated in this study were matured and consistent, reflecting both the education she received and her teaching experiences. In addition, as she said, “I am open to new ideas and different ways of teaching.” However, Ellie wished she “had more chances observing other teachers and then see what can be done differently.” This willingness to learn from others and eager to better her teaching explained her improvement in practices after participating in group reflections.

Summary

In summary, Ellie came into this study with an established pedagogical belief system and teaching style for ESL academic writing. Through guided reflection, rather than reconstructing her pedagogical beliefs and practices, Ellie enhanced her pedagogical beliefs and strengthened her instructional practices (Figure 4.3.).

**Figure 4.3. Connections between Ellie’s Personal Background and Effects on Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Background: formal education in language pedagogy</th>
<th>Professional background: extensive teaching experiences in various contexts</th>
<th>Cultural / Linguistic background: selective bilingual</th>
<th>Self-perception: observing, self-reflective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Pedagogical Belief System</td>
<td>Matured and Consistent Instructional Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the one hand, her language learning background and teaching experiences enabled her to be analytical with her pedagogical beliefs. And guided reflection helped her stay pragmatic and consistent with her beliefs. On the other hand, her open-minded and eager-to-learn attitude benefited her in the group reflection. She was able to develop new strategies to better her class instruction.

Case 4 Jessie

Background

Jessie always knew she was going to be a teacher because she always wanted to help people improve in their lives. As a native English speaker, Jessie attempted to learn other languages. She learned French in middle school but did not like it; she learned Spanish in college but did not continue but can speak basic vocabulary in Spanish. Jessie traveled to some non-English speaking countries, including Mexico and Eastern Europe, where she found that she could get around with knowing only English “because everyone speaks English, or at least a little bit.”

Jessie initially chose to be an education major in college but for some reason she switched to major in Communication. But later she “was kind of mad at myself because I had to go back to my Masters to do what I wanted.” Majoring in TESL for her Masters, Jessie worked as a GA for the Literacy Center and started teaching at a Community ESL program. In her opinion, “training in Education prepared me greatly and well for what I do now.”

Jessie described herself as a “fun-loving ESL instructor.” Because she was just a few years older than her students, she felt she could relate to them easily and she wanted to form a learning community with her students. “I feel like I am more like a mentor than anything. I want to be more of a community than anything else.”
At the time of the study, she was a doctoral student and GA in the Literacy program and recently got a job as a part-time instructor in a university Intensive English Program (IEP). Furthermore, she had been teaching a variety of academic writing courses at the CESL for two years. In her two and a half years of ESL teaching experience, what motivated her most was to see students want to continue learning English with her. She also had some challenging moments, such as having students with different proficiency levels in one class and students not willing to learn to write.

Jessie constantly pondered ways to better her teaching. She considered reflection to be extremely pertinent to what she did every day in teaching because she wouldn’t be able to provide better education for students without reflection. In this study, she was teaching an advanced ESL reading-writing class with eight students from China and two from Japan.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Pedagogical Beliefs**

During preliminary interview and three guided reflections, Jessie talked about her pedagogical beliefs regarding learning and teaching to write in L2 and important characteristics for ESL writing instructors to have. Jessie was always confident and certain about what she said. She was quick and concise in response but rarely needed to correct herself.

**Preliminary interview.** The preliminary interview took place one week before classes started. Jessie’s articulation of her pedagogical beliefs was generally based on her previous experiences in teaching ESL academic writing. In terms of learning to write in L2, Jessie emphasized the reading-writing connection and thought “in order to have their writing improved, they [students] need improve reading.” She also believed that students needed to be aware of the content and organization in English academic writing. With her previous experience, Jessie found student motivation was a big issue in ESL writing classes. In her opinion, it was vital for
ESL writing instructors to motivate students to learn and to realize writing was a lifelong skill for them. To make teaching more effective, Jessie believed that instructors needed to make teaching plans based on students’ proficiency level. When talking about important qualities for ESL writing instructors to have, Jessie put empathy on top of the list. Because she had “never really lived in other countries”, she felt that

I need to put myself in their shoes and see that they are struggling. They are homesick; there are things going wrong personally. I think that will be my biggest thing in teaching, to understand I need to be more empathetic to what they are dealing with right now. (Preliminary interview, 8/21/2012)

While she considered patience and empathy as important traits, Jessie also felt that she needed to be stern so as to guide students to accomplish their learning objectives.

**Individual guided reflections.** Jessie referred to each of the three observed classes when reflecting on her pedagogical beliefs. Even though the three observed classes had different focuses and demonstrated different class formats, there was clear consistency in Jessie’s articulation of her pedagogical beliefs. The most obvious consistency was revealed in her beliefs regarding learning to write in L2. From Jessie’s perspective, attitude towards learning was the most essential factor in learning to write in L2. In the first guided reflection, she mentioned that students needed to be “passionate about wanting to write” and then they would “have the confidence to write.” She also said, “[students] putting the effort in writing is what I believe.” Later in the following guided reflections, Jessie specified students’ attitude as motivation as she stated in the second guided reflection,

I think you need to be motivated in order to write. I feel like my students are very motivated right now. So the most important thing as what I am looking at
for today’s teaching is motivation. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/8/2012)

Furthermore, by the end of the semester, Jessie confirmed her belief in students’ motivation as she could see the effort students have put in their papers and the progress they have made through one semester.

Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs in learning and teaching to write in L2 went hand-in-hand. As she emphasized students’ motivation in learning to write, she valued ideas of promoting student learning in her pedagogical beliefs regarding teaching ESL writing. Throughout three guided reflection, Jessie articulated various ways to cultivate students’ motivation and there was a clear continuity in her beliefs. For instance, in the first guided reflection, she mentioned that “it is important for instructors to keep it in mind that writing is a process.” She followed up this process theory in the second guided reflection by saying that instructors needed to address that “writing is a lifelong skill.” Explicitness was another theme in Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs toward teaching to write in L2. In the first guided reflection, she emphasized the need to show students what they need to work on in each of the writing tasks. When reflecting on her beliefs four weeks later, Jessie continued addressing her belief in explicitness as “I teach them [students] what I am looking for in their writing.” In the last guided reflection, she further articulated this understanding.

Over the past semester, I realized I need to be very clear with my instruction and what I want. If I am not clear, they [students] don’t understand. So over this semester, I have been working hard to be clear with the directions and different aspects of the writing that I am looking for in students’ writing. (Guided Reflection #3, 11/19/2012)
Throughout the study, Jessie’s understanding of important qualities for ESL writing instructor was also consistent. Showing patience and having empathy were the most essential qualities in her opinion during the first guided reflection. She also wanted to be approachable to her students. She added another quality to achieve in the second guided reflection, being self-motivated.

Sometimes if you look at their [students’] faces, it is kind of upsetting because you see they just don’t really care with that kind of facial expression. You have to be self-motivated but also you have to not let it bother you.  (Guided Reflection #2, 10/8/2012)

As the semester went on, Jessie kept building on her understanding of good qualities for ESL writing instructor. In the third guided reflection, she realized that it was important for instructors to be humble and flexible with what they were teaching because “not everything is going to work out and not every student is going to be a famous writer”. With this understanding, she wanted to “go into the class as the best I can be”.

**Group reflections.** Jessie was an active participant in the group reflection discussions. Regarding pedagogical beliefs, what she emphasized most was the relationship between students and instructor. She shared her experience of encouraging students to participate in her morning class by buying them bagels, because she believed that “if you show them [students] you care about them, and they are going to show you they care back.” In the second group reflection, she mentioned that the trust students had with her contributed to the positive class atmosphere and interaction. Even a very shy and quiet student would turn to her for help. “It is like being in a camp and you get accustomed being with a group of people.” During the last group reflection, one instructor mentioned that her students often asked her questions irrelevant to class content.
Jessie had a completely different perspective regarding the relevance of students’ questions. In her opinion,

I don’t necessarily think it is that bad if students ask you buzzard questions in Chinese. I wish they asked me how to use dishwasher because they trust me and that’s a good opportunity to build rapport. (Group Reflection #3, 11/28/2012)

Jessie also mentioned that it was a struggle for her as a native English speaker to try to understand students’ needs. “I have no idea what it is like living in another country and learning the language,” thus she believed being empathetic was an important trait for ESL writing instructors to have.

Summary

In summary, there was a clear consistency in Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs regarding learning and teaching to write in L2 and ESL writing instructor’s important qualities through guided reflections. Jessie was confident in what she believed and how she taught. Guided reflection provided an opportunity for her to ponder her pedagogical beliefs. These beliefs were further confirmed after she actively participated in and contributed to the group discussions with other instructors. Thus, her confidence in her pedagogical beliefs was enhanced through guided reflections and by communicating with other instructors. This confidence determined the stability and continuity in her pedagogical beliefs.

Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices

The three class observations focused on organization of the class, students’ interaction and participation in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. In the three observed classes, Jessie presented three different types of
class dynamic. Jessie was rather concise during guided reflections and she talked with obvious confidence. However, she was quite talkative and eager to share during the group reflections.

**First observation and guided reflection.** The first class observation was conducted in the third week of the semester. The lesson plan was to introduce a new concept of “English rhetoric” to students and prepare them to write a rhetorical analysis essay. Jessie warmly greeted every student when they came into the classroom. She started the class with the weekly schedule and reminded students what they would need to do for each of the classes in the week.

To introduce the concept of “rhetoric,” Jessie first asked students to talk about their understanding of the word. As few students could answer, she wrote down the definition on the board and explained each element in the definition. To enhance students’ understanding of this concept, Jessie assigned students to work in groups and gave each group a handout of the home page of different universities’ websites for them to analyze the use of rhetoric. While helping students analyzing each web page, Jessie shared her own experience of selecting universities to attend by browsing their websites. She also walked around the classroom to checked students’ group work. Students seemed to be more ready to talk with her one-on-one than sharing their understanding in front of the class. By the end of the class, Jessie showed students handouts from various media, such as popular magazines, national newspaper, and university student newspaper. Before dismissing the class, she reminded students to be prepared to independently analyze the rhetoric of these sources: “On Wednesday, you will be doing the same thing with a partner, but without me talking.”

While reflecting on this class, Jessie expressed her satisfaction with the class organization.

I organized it with beginning with an introduction: what is rhetoric; how do we
use rhetoric, and then I gave them examples so they could see it in everyday
life. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/10/2012)

She mentioned that she usually went through class agenda with students to help herself stay
organized and keep students informed. Jessie also noticed early in the semester that most of her
students were not used to the interactive teaching style and were too shy to participate in class.
Therefore, she tried to build and expand students’ comfort zone by asking simple questions first
and then giving students enough time to work in small groups before they had to participate in
class discussion.

Second observation and guided reflection. Without too much warm up, Jessie went
directly into introducing an idea analysis essay at the beginning of the second observed class.
She started with reading the definition from the textbook and explaining important elements of
the idea analysis essay. And then she asked students to write down ideas and concepts that they
would like to analyze for this essay. While students were brainstorming for ideas, Jessie walked
around and checked with individual student’s work and provided feedbacks at times. Students
then shared their ideas with the class and Jessie commented on whether or not or how students’
ideas fit into the writing task. After seeing students understand the concept of the writing task,
Jessie went on to read and explain to students the explicit instruction from the textbook on how
to write an idea analysis essay. To enhance students’ understanding, Jessie read through an
article in the textbook and demonstrated to students how to analyze the idea development in the
article.

This class came to an end after Jessie assigned homework for students to create an outline
for an idea analysis essay. It seemed that Jessie spent most of the class reading information from
the textbook. However, she provided examples to help students understand the concept. She
also embedded her expectation and grading rubric of this writing task in her explanation. As there was not much students’ verbal participation and interaction in the class, it was hard to evaluate students’ learning outcome. But as Jessie said in the guided reflection, “I am going to judge them on their outlines they need to submit next class.”

Despite students’ lack of energy in the class, Jessie granted that the class “was pretty well organized” and “I went over a whole class time of what my expectations are for the writing assignment.” Nevertheless, she also admitted that today’s class “wasn’t very interactive” because students in this class “don’t really like to talk.” She realized that students “would feel more comfortable with one another talking if it is just one on one.” Therefore, she decided to incorporate more activities in which she would work with each student individually to build on their confidence and expand their comfort zone. When asked to evaluate the class, Jessie considered letting students pick their own writing topic as the most successful approach. She hoped students would feel passionate about their own topics and thus be more motivated to write this assignment.

Third observation and guided reflection. The third observed class was a peer review workshop. After posting an explicit peer review guideline on projector, Jessie asked students to find a partner and exchange essay drafts with each other. Students all seemed to be familiar with the procedures and started to work with their partners. Jessie walked around the class and worked with every group intensively. She praised students for their good writing, pointed out places in their essay that need to be improved, and referred to the peer review guideline from time to time to show students what they need to work on. There was no lecture in this class. Jessie was able to attend to the last group before the class was over.
During the guided reflection, Jessie acknowledged that this peer review workshop was a success. She agreed that letting students pick their own topic promoted their motivation to write. She was pleased that she was able to provide individual feedback for every student so that they would feel more comfortable to continue working on their papers. While expressing her satisfaction with the class organization and students’ interaction and participation, Jessie also wanted to make the lesson more interesting for students. She realized that she needed to learn more about her students’ culture in order to connect with them better.

**Group reflections.** Jessie was an active participant in the group reflections. She eagerly shared her classroom experiences with the group and offered solution for others’ concerns and questions. During the first reflection, while talking about reading-writing connection, Jessie shared that she motivated students to read by allowing them to pick their own readings. She also shared her creative ways to introduce writing topics and her use of informal writing to build on students’ interest in writing. Jessie always valued every opportunity to connect with students and she was inspired when two of her students asked her to write recommendation letters because she believed that “students know I care about them.” While being confident with students’ progression in her class, Jessie also realized that “class is not being interactive is a big challenge for me.” Having mostly Chinese students in her class, she felt the need to learn more about Chinese school culture in order to better connect with her students.

**Summary**

A clear trend in Jessie’s three observed classes was the class organization, changing from more formally structured with an overview, clear transition and a closure to a full lecture and an open peer review workshop. This change did not necessarily indicate the inconsistency of Jessie’s awareness of class organization. Rather, it revealed her confidence in classroom
management skill as she demonstrated in every guided reflection and in group reflection discussions. Another phenomenon Jessie identified in her class was students’ lack of confidence and willingness to participate in class. Through guided reflections and discussions with other instructors, she realized that she needed to promote students’ participation and interaction with more patience and creativity. The success of the peer review workshop was a proof of this realization. In summary, guided reflections helped Jessie identify strengths and weakness in her instructional practices, and provided her the opportunity to implement new pedagogical ideas into practice.

**Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices**

The previous sections have discussed the effects of guided reflection on Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs and practices. Jessie was confident in her beliefs and practices and was flexible to adjust her practices to accommodate student needs. The following section will further investigate the effects of guided reflection by looking into the connections between Jessie’s personal backgrounds and her pedagogical growth in beliefs and practices.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on pedagogical beliefs.** Jessie was the youngest among the six instructors in this study and was one of the instructors with least teaching experience. However, she was a determined and goal-oriented young woman. Although she has not established a holistic pedagogical belief system at this early stage of her career, she stayed focused on beliefs she has developed. Her past unsuccessful language learning experiences may have an impact on the initial establishment of her pedagogical beliefs. However, as she said, “training in education prepared me greatly and well for what I do now.” Through her TESL education and increasing teaching experiences, she
gradually practiced and proved her initial pedagogical beliefs. During the group reflection discussion, Jessie willingly communicated with other instructors regarding pedagogical beliefs. Nevertheless, she was careful about accepting others’ belief statements without practicing them herself. In her opinion, “teaching philosophy and teaching experience go hand in hand,” and no pedagogical belief exists without instructional practices. Jessie’s reflective teaching practices revealed that guided reflection helped her confirm and become confident in her existing pedagogical beliefs instead of expanding her pedagogical beliefs.

Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on instructional practices. Compared to the conciseness about her pedagogical beliefs, Jessie was eager to share her instructional practices during guided reflections and group discussions. Similarly, despite her subtle cautiousness to accept new pedagogical beliefs, she was open to new instructional ideas suggested by other instructors and applied them to her class. Moreover, she demonstrated great confidence in her instruction, even when she was implementing something new. The effects of guided reflection on Jessie’s instructional practices revealed that she was a very confident individual and more of a hands-on ESL instructor. On the one hand, Jessie’s being close to students’ age enabled her to relate to students easily, even though she sometimes felt that she had to “be a little hard-shelled as a teacher because not everybody is gonna like you.” On the other hand, as a monolingual ESL instructor with no experience in any cultural or linguistic adaptation herself, Jessie felt the need to learn more about students, their cultural backgrounds, their previous educational experiences, and their learning preference. Therefore, this reality encouraged her to be more open-minded and flexible with her instruction. Her eagerness of providing students with better education was also demonstrated in her instructional adaptation.
Summary

In summary, Jessie’s determination and yet-to-develop teaching experience led to the thoughtful development of her pedagogical beliefs through guided reflection. Her lack of exposure to other culture and limited language learning experience encouraged her to be open-minded about students’ needs and thus resulted in her quick instructional progression through guided reflection. A pattern could be identified of the effects of guided reflection on Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs and practices. That is, the development of Jessie’s pedagogical beliefs was built on the foundation of her instructional practices (Figure 4.4.).

Figure 4.4. Connections between Jessie’s Personal Background and Effects on Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices
Case 5 Melinda

Background

A native Ohioan, Melinda has an international marriage with her British husband. She lived in England for a year and realized that English was the common language but at the same time they were divided by English. She has traveled to some non-English speaking countries in Europe and found the language barrier was phenomenal. As a native English speaker, she has learned French from 5th to 12th grades but has forgotten a lot of it. She attempts to speak a little French and Spanish, and can read popular magazines in both languages.

Melinda has a bachelor degree in English and Speech Communication and a Masters’ in Remedial and Diagnostic Education with Reading Endorsement. With an ever-lasting interest in teaching, Melinda has taught different subjects to a wide range of student population in various contexts over nearly 30 years of her teaching career. She has taught high school English for a year after graduating from college. She taught reading to kindergarteners to 4th graders and her best teaching experience was to watch these kids learn to read. She has also taught in middle school as an intervention specialist. And then she received a job teaching English Composition in a community college where she encountered international students in her class for the first time. With various teaching experiences, Melinda felt “right at home teaching writing.”

Although Melinda was learning to teach at the teaching job, she had a wonderful mentor at graduate school. And she has been a mentor for many new teachers, examining their new skills and guiding them through real teaching contexts. In her opinion, mentoring new teachers helped her reevaluate her knowledge and keep up-to-date with the new teaching techniques.

Melinda said, “I have been teaching for a long time but I am still not super at that.” From her perspective, reflection is about growth. Therefore, she reflects on her teaching all the time in
an organized way. At the time of the study, she was teaching an advanced level academic writing class with eleven students from China, Japan and Vietnam.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Pedagogical Beliefs**

During the preliminary interview and three guided reflections, Melinda talked about her pedagogical beliefs regarding learning and teaching to write in L2 and important characteristics for ESL writing instructors to have. She actively discussed with other instructors during the group reflections and eagerly shared her understanding of learning and teaching to write in L2.

**Preliminary interview.** Melinda believed that the trust between instructor and students was the key to achieving good learning and teaching experience. With trust, students would feel comfortable to ask questions, which was important in learning to write in L2. Teaching the advanced ESL writing course, Melinda believed that doing well in L2 reading and having control of the basics for writing were necessary skills for students to keep up in her class. In order to help students develop higher level L2 writing competence, Melinda insisted that she needed to teach writing as a process because “writing is accumulative, and all of those things lead toward task proficiency.” She believed that providing opportunities for in-class writing would help students understand this concept. She also emphasized editing and revision skills in her teaching of writing. In addition, Melinda arranged the one-on-one conference as a way to enhance relationship and to learn more about individual student’s needs, and thus she could encourage students to practice writing with their strengths.

**Individual guided reflections.** Reflecting on her first observed class, Melinda realized that only knowing the nuts and bolts of writing was not enough for students to succeed at this advanced level ESL writing class. She expected students also to be aware of the writing process and to understand that all skills and tasks were related to each other. She also wanted students
“to be able to express their needs in class.” Thus, she was “trying to …learn to take a back seat and let them [students] be more expressive.” Additionally, she felt it critical for students to understand the tasks and perform them. Therefore, she believed it was important for the instructor to stay in touch with students in class and to adjust the teaching pace according to students’ need.

I asked them whether they know what they need to do for assignment. I try to do in a friendly and happy way so that they will know I have faith in them.

(Guided Reflection #1, 9/14/2012)

Melinda emphasized the importance of cultural awareness in her pedagogical beliefs. “With international students, you have to be incredibly respectful.” In addition, she acknowledged that having a sense of humor and being patient were good traits she had demonstrated as an ESL instructor.

My patience is very important, and personally, my sense of humor… That’s the other thing that I know they understand when they laugh at my jokes. You may think that’s silly, but that builds trust between us. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/14/2012)

As the teaching moved on, Melinda’s pedagogical beliefs regarding learning to write in L2 became more detailed. During the second guided reflection, she referred back to what she stated in the preliminary interview and emphasized the importance of reading-writing connection. She believed that ESL students needed to learn from the reading, to respond, analyze, and translate reading into good writing. With this expectation, she described how she would accommodate students’ need, such as to adjust the teaching pace, to teach with examples, to limit the number of tasks, and especially to use explicit instruction.
I really try to be more specific as to my instructions about writing and the assignment, sticking to the overall assignment, and at the same time specifically breaking down tasks they have to accomplish. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/12/2012)

Additionally, Melinda reiterated the importance of building a trustful relationship and creating a stress-free learning environment.

You never want to make an ESL student very nervous because then the student will shut down and not respond at all. So I hope to create an environment of trust where they feel comfortable…I am trying to have them develop trust with those who they are working as a group. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/12/2012)

Moving to the third guided reflection, Melinda confirmed many of the pedagogical beliefs she stated previously. Furthermore, she became more reflective about what she expected students to achieve and how she assisted students in their learning process. She still held the belief that students needed to approach writing as a process. At the same time, she believed that “with international students, I need to explain a little more about not just the process, but about the individual parts, not just say them but explain those concepts behind those parts.”

**Group reflections.** In Melinda’s communication with other instructors, respect and trust were most frequent words she used in describing her pedagogical beliefs. She echoed other instructors’ belief about needing to build a good relationship with students but also acknowledged that “it was a hard balance.” In order to build rapport with students, she believed that instructors needed “to make these kids succeed in my class and feel good about themselves.” Along this line, she also preferred “to communicate with students in a private but effective way” to help them fully understand the class requirements and expectations. As an American teacher,
she especially felt the need to be respectful of students’ background and their courage to live and study in a culturally and linguistically different environment. After working with her ESL students for one semester, she realized that “I have become a better listener.”

I like to talk all the time. I have found that being talkative is not always a good characteristic when you work with ESL students. You have to take something from their culture and use it. And I have much more respect for their calm, nuance behavior in my class. (Group Reflection #3, 11/28/2012)

Summary

Melinda was an experienced college writing instructor and had an established pedagogical belief system regarding the subject. However, having ESL students as a new audience, she actively reflected on her beliefs in the new context and her pedagogical beliefs demonstrated a clear growth through guided reflections. In the preliminary interview, Melinda presented her pre-existing pedagogical beliefs. Although these beliefs were applicable in learning and teaching English academic writing, they did not necessarily emphasize the unique features in an ESL context. During the reflection process, she started to adjust her pre-existing beliefs to adhere the ESL context in the first guided reflection, then expanded her beliefs with more detailed articulation in the second guided reflection, and finally restated her beliefs in the third guided reflection. Furthermore, participating in the group reflection discussion helped her develop her beliefs with confidence via sharing with and learning from others. In summary, through guided reflection, Melinda re-established, further developed, and then confirmed her pedagogical beliefs about learning and teaching ESL writing, and about ESL writing instructors.
Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices

The three class observations focused on organization and interaction of the class, students’ participation in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. Melinda guided students to tackle three different class tasks in the three observed classes and thus demonstrated different class dynamics.

First observation and guided reflection. Melinda’s years of teaching experiences was reflected in her first observed class with clear class organization, carefully designed activities, and well-prepared handouts for students. This class consisted of two main components: (1) the teacher explaining the reading and summarizing assignment, and (2) the students working on the worksheet for implementing signal phrases in their writing. In terms of the class organization, Melinda presented the class agenda to explain to students what they would do and learn in the class and how this class would develop in the following week. During class, Melinda made sure to keep students on track, giving clear signals when moving on from one activity to another, such as “I am going to turn to something else that is related to this topic.”

Melinda realized that “this group of students was serious and I tried to make them feel comfortable.” With this intention, she always gave positive feedback on students’ answers before pointing out the problems, if there were any. Therefore, affirmations such as “I like it,” “that’s a good point,” and “great job, everybody” were frequently used in class. In addition, she noticed that one of the students was lacking confidence in writing, and thus “gave her more time and space to feel secure.”

When reflecting on this class, Melinda gave credit to herself for having a clear and focused lesson plan and therefore “we had fun and jokes in class, and we moved on together with
tasks.” However, she also realized that “I might have talked a little too much about the essay” as “I am very verbal and students’ silence is very hard for me.” With her doing most of the talking, Melinda agreed that she “probably would have made more efforts to get students’ individual response.” Moreover, she noticed herself being distracted when trying to turn on the computer in the middle of the class and thus realized that the decision to use technology should be embedded in the lesson plan.

**Second observation and guided reflection.** The second class observation took place four weeks later. In this class, Melinda used Power Point slides to teach important concepts and strategies to write a critique essay and then guided students to apply new strategies to analyze sample articles. Many features were easily identified as Melinda’s routines. For example, she started the class with going through an agenda, and this agenda related what students would learn in the class to what they would do in the following week. Moreover, she still used clear transition cues to move students from one activity to another and her feedbacks to students were always encouraging. Overall, this class remained organized and focused.

What distinguished this class from the previous observed class was the use of technology and the strategies to promote students’ participation. As Melinda mentioned in the first guided reflection, she wanted to use technology to serve a good purpose for the class and needed to take more effort to engage students in class. She turned her words into action in this class. Melinda prepared a Power Point presentation to introduce an important concept of appeal in essay writing and to show appeals in various writing examples. She used the first part of an article to demonstrate to students how to identify appeals and to write with appeals before she assigned students to work in groups to analyze the article. After discussing within groups, students took turns to share their analysis of the article. Through information presenting, analysis modeling,
and group discussion, Melinda scaffold each student to learn and apply new knowledge. The informative Power Point presentation showed Melinda’s effort to use technology to increase instructional capacity and efficiency. Her strategy of scaffolding students revealed her determination to stimulate students’ learning potential. However, the limitation of using the Power Point was as obvious as its strength. Using the Power Point as the lesson plan, Melinda seemed to feel the pressure to go over everything in the Power Point. Consequently, her lecture covered most of the class time, and there was not sufficient time left for students to have in-depth discussion about the new knowledge.

During the guided reflection, Melinda expressed her satisfaction with the non-threatening learning environment and students’ improvement in class participation.

I thought today went very well with the group discussion even though we did not get to every group, because it was nonthreatening for most of them…Several students corrected themselves while answering the questions. You can see there was critical thinking going on…I felt like it was a fairly representative of their being able to read, analyze, respond orally in the class discussion…I also like how they laugh collectively. That is always a good sign to me that they understand what I am saying and doing and they are not afraid of laughing at me. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/12/2012)

At the same time, she realized that “for today’s class, I probably planned a little too much in terms of the content.” Even though she tried hard to provide opportunity and to encourage students’ participation, she noticed that “I still was a monologist.” In fact, Melinda had taken action to work on preventing her from doing most of the talking in class.

I have been doing some reading on that as well on my professional sources about
how to get students engaged in conversation, discussion with each other and do
some reporting. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/12/2012)

**Third observation and guided reflection.** The third class observation took place
towards the end of the semester in Week 13. Melinda organized a peer review workshop for
students to work on their research paper. Even though it was a workshop, Melinda still
maintained class routines and good practices, such as going through class agenda, providing
clear transition between class activities, and giving students’ positive feedback. Before the peer
review started, Melinda provided each student with a rubric handout and a peer review
worksheet and explained each criterion in the rubric. She also modeled for students how to write
comments on the peer review worksheet. When students were working on small groups
reviewing each other’s papers, Melinda walked around to check with each group’s progress,
answering questions, providing feedback, and listening to students’ discussions. In some groups,
there were discussions about references used in the paper. Around eight minutes before class
ended, Melinda called on students’ attention and showed the university library website on the big
screen to show students how to search valid resources for their research topics.

While reflecting on this class, Melinda explained that the purpose of having a peer review
workshop was for students to understand that writing is a process and required various skill sets.
As for how the workshop turned out, she was very pleased and gave credit to her students.

All of them were incredibly prepared… They are incredibly organized. They
did it methodically and they did it in order as I asked them to. (Guided
Reflection #3, 11/16/2012)

Melinda always emphasized the importance of conducting class activities at students’ comfort
level. In this class, she was impressed by students’ voluntary and intellectual interaction.
I was happy with how they responded to each other...This class has given me a fundamentally interesting and new understanding of what it means to work with international students. (Guided Reflection #3, 11/16/2012)

Motivated by students’ learning outcome from this class, Melinda planned to incorporate more in-class writing tasks in the future.

**Group reflections.** Among the six instructors participating in the study, Melinda had the most experiences teaching college English composition and yet had limited experiences working with a class of ESL students. Therefore, during the group reflection discussion, she was willing to share her experiences and expertise in teaching English academic writing and, at the same time, was eager to learn from others about teaching in the specific ESL context.

In the first discussion, when some instructors mentioned that they had a difficult time encouraging students to read and monitoring their reading ability, Melinda shared her strategies.

One thing that I find always works is I have my students do a summary and list of response of anything they read. The power of it for students being able to decide main ideas versus details. I usually begin with a manageable article, that is related to the writing topic. (Group Reflection Discussion #1, 10/3/2012)

In addition, Melinda found that summarizing what they read could prepare students to participate better in class. “If they generate summary and response, the in-class discussions are more lively and participatory.” Other instructors expressed their interest in applying this strategy with their students. At the end of the discussion, Melinda mentioned that it was nice to learn about how other ESL writing instructors taught, and she looked forward to trying something new with her students.
The second group discussion focused on class routines and good practices. Besides maintaining a routine to help students develop good learning habits, all instructors agreed that it was important to design in-class writing activities to assess students’ actual writing ability. Melinda added that providing a prompt for in-class writing could make the writing more purposeful. When asked to evaluate their progress through reflective teaching over the semester in the final group discussion, Melinda was very happy to share that her students worked much better collectively, and that group work had helped individual student to make progress towards writing their research paper. In terms of teaching strategy, she found that it was important to emphasize the connection of various writing tasks students have to accomplish so that students would be able to apply skills learned in the writing class to writing in other disciplines. For the future, Melinda mentioned she planned to break down each writing assignment into small and manageable portions for students to accomplish, and that she would enhance students’ interaction by creating more group work opportunities in class.

Summary

In summary, guided reflection provided Melinda an opportunity to reevaluate her overall instructional practice as an experienced writing instructor facing new student audience. Melinda was willing to “take students from where they are and prepare them to move forward.” Guided reflection enabled Melinda to observe her students respectively and collectively and adjust her teaching method to accommodate students’ needs. For example, she repeated a lot to make sure students become familiar with the language in various writing tasks. She also chose her handout carefully to include materials that students could relate to. Guided reflection also helped Melinda develop greater cultural awareness in her instructional practice. She realized that “this group of students was serious and I tried to make them feel comfortable.” With that in mind, she
tried to chat with each student before class, showed interest in students’ lives but “not to get too personal,” and was mindful about telling jokes. Acknowledging the cultural differences, Melinda became a “better listener” for her students.

Through guided reflection, Melinda identified her students’ needs and learning style and adjusted her teaching approach to meet their need early on in the semester. This quick adjustment allowed her to focus more on improving her teaching techniques and promoting student learning outcome for the most of the semester. Furthermore, participating in the ground reflection discussions motivated Melinda to learn from her young colleagues to add new ideas and implement new methods in her well established teaching profile. She was a hands-on instructor. Throughout the three observed classes, she was able to use technology to a richer extent in the latter two classes. She also implemented in-class writing activities to help students work in groups, and overcame her talkative character and “let the students take control of the class” by organizing a successful peer-review workshop.

**Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices**

The discussion in previous sections demonstrated that Melinda, an instructor with extensive teaching experience, quickly re-established her pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices in a new context for the new student population through guided reflection. Years of teaching may lead to Melinda’s flexibility and resiliency in new teaching context. Nevertheless, her pedagogical growth through the guided reflection also was connected to her cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, and even her self-perceptions.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on pedagogical beliefs.** Throughout the guided reflection process, Melinda’s pedagogical beliefs
progressed in a systematic way from establishing, further developing to expanding, and reconfirming. This pedagogical consistency was, first of all, a result of her well-established knowledge in teaching English Composition. Even though the teaching context and student audience had changed, what held truth in learning and teaching the subject matter, English Composition, was transferable and thus remained constant in the new ESL context.

Furthermore, as a native English speaker, Melinda had studied French for an extensive period of time but did not continue to practice it. She experienced language obstacles when traveling to non-English-speaking countries. She realized the variation in the English language while living in her husband’s hometown in England. These experiences helped her develop great empathy on her ESL students. Therefore, she demonstrated tremendous understanding of the language learning process and consideration about how to teach English writing to ESL students.

In addition to her empathetic insights, Melinda’s caring character also played an important role in her belief evolution through guided reflection. “Respect,” “trust,” and “sense of humor” were the three most frequent words that Melinda used to describe her beliefs about ESL writing instructors. Respecting students’ cultural background and their courage of studying in a foreign country set a foundation for Melinda to build the trustful relationship with her students. Her sense of humor helped to relief students’ uncertainty and shyness in class and to create a stress-free learning environment.

Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on instructional practices. “I reflect on my teaching all the time in an organized way.” Melinda developed her pedagogical beliefs based on her teaching experience, applied beliefs to classroom teaching, reflected on the instructional practices in relation to beliefs, adjusted her beliefs and applied them to the next class. Her consistent progression in her instructional practices revealed
her reflective practices. Melinda’s teaching background and her reflective and resilient character contributed to this steady instructional improvement.

Melinda’s extensive teaching experience in college English Composition courses had helped her establish a solid pedagogical foundation for teaching college academic writing. However, lack of experience teaching ESL students motivated her to reestablish practices in new context. Through deliberate and systematic reflection, Melinda was able to develop insights of the differences between teaching contexts and student audience, and to quickly adjust her practices accordingly. Additionally, her determination to better her teaching practices and ultimately provide better education for students was the driving force of instructional progress.

Summary

In summary, Melinda’s pedagogical growth through guided reflection was connected to her language learning and cultural experiences, her teaching background, and her self-perceptions. Her extensive teaching experience helped to set up a foundation for her pedagogical beliefs and practices. However, the progression in her beliefs was more closely connected to her language learning experience, cultural awareness, and her self-perceptions. Her teaching background together with her determination enabled her the resiliency to make efficient improvement in her instructional practices (Figure 4.5.).

Case 6 Nora

Background

Nora is an international student from China and has lived in the US for three years. She speaks English fluently and also speaks some French. When she first started learning English in middle school, Nora had the opportunity to travel to Russia for a week and experienced tremendous language obstacles when trying to communicate with local people there.
Nora did not have any interest in becoming a teacher until she entered a Normal University in China as an English major for her undergraduate study. Even though she was more psychologically prepared for the teaching job, the college education improved her English language proficiency rather than developed her teaching skill. In her words, “I learned to teach in the teaching jobs.” After graduating from college, she became a high school English teacher in China. Teaching in high school, Nora “believed students can only learn the language by repetitive practice.” At that time, she also believed in teacher-centered instruction. Two years later, she went to Shanghai to teach in a Language Training Center where she taught English language skills to students with various backgrounds and at different proficiency levels. This experience helped her develop the notion that effective teaching should be based on students’ needs.

Nora continued her graduate study in the U.S. and received her Masters’ degree in TESL. In her opinion, studying in the TESL program better prepared her for the teaching job.
At the time of the study, she was a doctoral student in the TESL program and had been teaching at the Center for ESL for two years. Nora likes to reflect on her teaching while doing lesson plans and after each class. In her opinion, reflection helps her become a better teacher because she is more confident and her lessons become more interesting for students. In this study, Nora was teaching a basic level academic writing course with a group of 11 students, all of whom were from China.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Pedagogical Beliefs**

Nora shared her pedagogical beliefs in the preliminary interview and three individual guided reflection interviews. She also communicated with other instructors during the group reflection discussions about her understanding of learning and teaching to write in L2 and what she believed were good characteristics for ESL writing instructors to have.

**Preliminary interview.** Going through the learning process to develop her English proficiency, when asked what it took to learn to write in English, Nora’s response was surprisingly concise. “I think the important thing in learning to write in another language is to take actions.” However, compared to her brevity in talking about learning to write in L2, she obviously had a lot more to share about how to teach ESL writing as a non-native English speaking instructor. In Nora’s opinion, having experience of learning the language was very important for an instructor to actually understand the overall requirements, basic skills, and detailed steps of acquiring the competence of writing in this language. Therefore, the instructor would be able to share with students his/her insights of learning the language. In addition, Nora believed that teaching through examples was a good technique in ESL writing instruction. Regarding important characteristics for ESL writing instructors, Nora believed that an instructor’s attitude towards teaching was essential, as good attitudes could lead to efforts to
continue learning about the teaching content, to improve teaching techniques, and to accommodate students’ needs.

During this preliminary stage, Nora’s pedagogical beliefs were rather general. The concepts she used in her articulation tended to be abstract, such as taking action, sharing insights, and having good attitude. Although Nora’s stated pedagogical beliefs might be derived from her teaching experience, she did not relate her beliefs to the actual teaching practices. Thus, the lack of pragmatic evidence and connection led to the generality and abstraction of her pedagogical beliefs.

**Individual guided reflections.** During the first guided reflection, Nora’s beliefs about learning to write in L2 were not much different from what she stated in the preliminary interview. She insisted that the frequency of practicing writing in L2 was the key to develop the writing skill. Moreover, she emphasized the motivation to write. “They [students] should know why they need to improve their writing and what they are writing for, what their purposes are.” Along this line, she believed that ESL writing instructors needed to make writing tasks meaningful for students by relating the writing topics “to their prior experiences and to their future use.” In addition, the instructor should not only teach the techniques to write but also demonstrate their way of thinking in English.

Moving to the second reflection, Nora became a little more detailed about her pedagogical beliefs in terms of learning to write in L2. She believed that it was important for students to be familiar with the writing genres, and to know the purpose and structure for specific genres. As much as Nora expected students to be aware of the writing genres, she also believed that ESL writing instructors needed to be knowledgeable about the English writing genres and
more resourceful with examples to support students’ learning. In addition, Nora insisted that ESL writing instructors needed to be well prepared and flexible as class progressed. Regarding teaching to write in L2, she reiterated the importance of motivation. One way to motivate them is to let them know what they are writing is very important for their academic life as well as for their future jobs. [In today’s class,] the topics I prepared are related to their experiences. They all have something to say for each of the topics so they can pick whatever they want. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/17/2012)

In Nora’s opinion, another way to motivate students to write was to scaffold them to gain new knowledge by explicating the connection of what they had learned and what they were learning. [In today’s class], I tried to compare their previous descriptive essay with narrative essay so they know that this assignment is just one step further. It is nothing that you have to do a whole new thing. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/17/2012)

In the third guided reflection, Nora added that ESL writers needed to be reminded to consider the audience while writing an essay. She believed that teaching ESL writing was strategic. Instructors needed to break down each task into pieces and gradually build on students’ writing competence.

I want to break down tasks into smaller pieces so that my students can accumulate certain tasks at each stage and eventually they will come up with a good essay. (Guided Reflection #3, 11/14/2012)

Additionally, because teaching writing is such a complex process, Nora believed being organized was a good trait for ESL writing instructors to have.
**Group reflections.** Although Nora was looking forward to the group reflection discussions, her participation in the discussion regarding pedagogical beliefs was limited. She shared with others her beliefs about important characteristics for ESL writing instructors, namely, being professional, caring, strict, and goal-oriented.

By professional, I mean you should be knowledgeable; you should have the expertise teaching academic writing. Also you should act professionally, like what I said I insisted speaking English with my Chinese students. (Group Reflection #3, 11/21/2012)

She also asked for advice on what she was struggling with. She wasn’t sure whether it was an advantage or an obstacle sharing the same native language with most students in her class. She was frustrated when some students relied on their native language to communicate with her, and she did not know whether or not to answer students’ nonacademic questions, such as how to use dishwasher and how to cook noodle. Surprisingly, her concerns and frustration were viewed very differently by some other instructors. They agreed that Nora could be a good role model for students’ language learning as she had successfully gone through what students were experiencing. Moreover, they believed that having personal conversations with students at times could enhance teacher-student relationship and thus was helpful for teaching and learning.

**Summary**

In summary, throughout the preliminary interview and three guided reflections, Nora’s stated pedagogical beliefs moved from being general and abstract to more detailed and contextually relevant. However, there was a lack of coherence in her belief statements of different categories within each stage, and there was no obvious consistency in her belief evolution across different stages. This tendency indicated that Nora had not developed a
systematic way of thinking about the learning and teaching of ESL writing and characteristics of ESL writing instructor in relation to the actual classroom teaching practices.

**Effects of Guided Reflection on Teachers’ Instructional Practices**

The three class observations focused on organization of the class, students’ participation and interaction in the class, and instructional strategies. One section in each of the three individual guided reflections resembled this pattern to elicit instructor’s reflection on these areas of the observed classes. In the three observed classes, Nora presented three types of class, such as teaching reading comprehension, guiding students to brainstorm of the writing topics, and commenting on students’ presentation of essay outlines. In the guided reflection following each class observation, she reflected on the classes and evaluated her instruction in each class.

**First observation and guided reflection.** In the first observed class, Nora guided students to read through an article in the textbook that was related to their writing task. Nora’s teaching style was very organized. Before class started, she showed students how to submit their homework through Blackboard. Then she started by giving a clear verbal introduction to the class agenda.

Today we are going to start a new unit. Did you do your reading? We are going to do a lot of discussion about this topic today. You are going to brainstorm your prior experiences that are related to this topic. (Class Observation #1, 9/14/2012)

Between various class activities, there were clear transition cues, such as “first I want you to turn to page 47 and look at the two pictures,” “now I want you to look at the statements in Page 48 and discuss with your partner whether you agree or disagree with them,” and “let’s move on with our reading.” At the end, Nora wrapped up the class by providing brief preview of the next class, assigning homework, and reminding students of the due dates for their writing assignment.
In order to help students understand the reading material, Nora asked some comprehension questions to lead them in the article and drew a chart on the board to show students how the ideas were organized in the article. Students were then divided into small groups for further discussion. When students worked in groups, Nora did not interrupt or check on their discussion, until the end when she joined one of the groups and provided some feedback. Referring to the chart Nora created earlier, a couple of students volunteered to briefly share their understanding of the topic in the article, which was followed by Nora talking about her personal experience related to the topic of the article.

When reflecting on this class, Nora was pleased that she accomplished all the tasks as planned, even though she always planned “one more activity in the end” for students who finished the assigned task and could move on. She was pleased with students’ active participation in class discussions, but also realized that she should have called on some students to participate. However, she had a way to promote students’ interaction in class by changing their seats every class. In her opinion, “if you [students] are too comfortable with somebody you will become lazy.” While giving students credits on their interaction and discussion, Nora was honest with her hesitation to interact with students.

Actually there was one moment I doubted whether I should join students’ group discussion… I was trying to get closer to one of the groups but eventually I decided not to because I really don’t want to get them nervous. (Guided Reflection #1, 9/14/2012)

Moreover, she agreed that she as the instructor needed to be better prepared for answering students’ questions, and be more creative to engage students with new knowledge.
Second observation and guided reflection. The second observed class started with Nora explaining a written class agenda on the projector. This agenda included various class activities for that class and the detailed instruction of writing a narrative essay. Going through the document item by item, Nora explicitly explained to students what a narrative essay was about, guided students to read and analyze some samples of narrative writing, assigned students to create an outline for their own narrative essay, and discussed with students about their writing topics. In this class, Nora maintained her structured style of moving students from one activity to another and accomplished all tasks with a clear closure for this class meeting and a brief preview for the following class.

Even with a busy class agenda, the class was quite lively and there were frequent interaction among students and between Nora and students. Although Nora rarely called on students to speak out in class, many students volunteered to analyze the writing samples. While students were working on their essay outline, Nora walked around to check with each of the students. Students then took turns to share their thesis for the essay of their chosen topic, and Nora was able to provide feedback for each of the students to improve their thesis.

During the guided reflection, Nora expressed her satisfaction with how this class went, especially with the class organization. Moreover, she thought it was very important that “they [students] did some work in class immediately after they learned new knowledge.” This success was derived from lessons of Nora’s attempt of doing peer review with students.

I used to encourage them to give their peer’s feedback whenever they shared their opinions and answers. But I don’t think my class did well on this. They [students] don’t have any knowledge to retrieve…. This approach [peer review] should be used with students with high motivation, high level skills; they [students] should have
some basic writing skills ready to talk about their meta-thinking process. (Guided Reflection #2, 10/17/2012)

Although peer review was a commonly applied technique in ESL writing instruction, Nora believed that not all students could benefit from it. Students’ active participation in this class confirmed that her attempt of having in-class writing activities and giving instant feedback was a better approach for low-level ESL writers than peer review. While acknowledging the successful features of this class, Nora was honest about things needing improving, such as “I should have given them [students] more time to think and respond before I gave them answers;” “I should give them a topic first and let them brainstorm [before we did it as a group];” and changing the order of class activities might have provided students more opportunities to practice.

**Third observation and guided reflection.** The third observation was conducted on a presentation day when four students signed up to present their outlines for the cause-and-effect essay. Before the presentation, Nora briefly explained that she expected other students to ask questions about and to comment on the presentation. Among the four students presenting their essay outlines, one student demonstrated the essay outline by creating a flow chart on the board and another student prepared a thorough Power Point to show the essay outline and detailed information to support the outline. The other two students gave oral presentation of their outlines. After each presentation, questions, comments, and suggestions were raised by other students about the topic, structure, and content before Nora gave the final feedback, which mainly focused on the organization of the essay.

Nora acknowledged her students’ careful preparation and active participation for a successful presentation class. “I think my students were very active. They tried their best to offer
suggestions and comments to their peer’s presentation. I also think they learn from each other a lot.” At the same time, she gave herself credit by giving students detailed feedback in prompt to help students improve their writing. Nevertheless, she noticed that she needed to take more effort to engage each and every student in class activities and to encourage them to be active learners.

**Group reflections.** When talking about instructional practices, Nora obviously had more to share with the group. In the first group reflection, she talked about how she introduced reading/writing topics to relate to students’ real life experience so as to promote students’ interest and confidence. When it came to the discussion about how much feedback instructors should give to students’ writing, Nora shared that she usually had students write part of their essay in class and provided them feedback face-to-face to make sure that students understood the feedback and made revision accordingly. This approach was well accepted by other instructors. In addition to sharing routines and good practices, Nora was not shy about her struggle and asked others for help.

Some students keep quiet in my class in discussion. They are reluctant to think, to write and they turned in late homework and even till the end of the term. So I really don’t know how I could do to motivate them. (Group Reflection #1, 10/3/2012)

Several instructors agreed that it was very important to build the rapport with ESL students. One instructor said instructors should be caring about students’ overall success and once students realized “if you want them to do well, they will respond well.” The other instructor suggested helping students understand the expectation and requirement in a respectful way.

In a later group discussion, when some instructors talked about using in-class free writing as a tool to get students into the habit of writing, Nora expressed different opinion.
In my class, students have to do all designated writing assignment. I try to break down big writing task into small ones, and they build on each other. So my students are not encouraged to do free writing. (Group Reflection #2, 10/31/2012)

Nora added that breaking down an essay into small pieces for students to work on one part at a time helped her students to feel more confident in writing and eventually accomplish the task. This notion was supported by others. Instructors agreed that they needed to create more opportunities for students to write part of their essay in class, which allowed the instructor to observe students’ writing process and provide more deliberate guidance.

Summary

In summary, guided reflection reassured Nora that her organized and structured teaching style enabled her to guide students to accomplish various writing tasks. In the three observed classes, Nora presented clear lesson plans and fulfilled every task in the plan. Guided reflection also helped her realize the purpose of teaching was not only at instructor’s delivery but also at students’ intake. Therefore, she started putting more effort to engage each and every student in class. In addition, through discussions with other instructors, she also came to understand the instructor’s role was more than teaching, and that giving students personal attention and support would supplement the what instruction could not do.

Connections between Teacher’s Personal Backgrounds and Effects of Guided Reflection on Their Pedagogical Beliefs and Instructional Practices

The discussion in previous sections focused on the impact of guided reflection on Nora’s evolving pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices. Through guided reflection, Nora gradually related her beliefs to actual classroom teaching practices and thus developed more contextually relevant pedagogical beliefs. Guided reflection and group discussion also helped
Nora become a more engaging instructor in the ESL writing classroom. The following section will look into the connections between Nora’s personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on her pedagogical beliefs and practices.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on pedagogical beliefs.** As a Chinese-English bilingual, Nora started to learn English in middle school, majored in English at college, and continued studying in the field of TESL in graduate school. On the one hand, this extensive language learning experience allowed her to have the first-hand knowledge of what it took to develop the language proficiency. Therefore, throughout guided reflection, she constantly emphasized motivation and taking action in her beliefs about learning to write in English, and highlighted the importance of making writing tasks meaningful for students when teaching ESL writing. On the other hand, learning English as a foreign language in China, what Nora mostly went through was rote learning and rule memorization. This experience explained her pre-existing pedagogical beliefs in “teacher-centered instruction” and that “students can only learn a language through repetitive practice.” This perception was very different from what she was later exposed to in the TESL program. Nora was in the process of adjusting her previous pedagogical beliefs and developing pedagogy that fit in the new learning and teaching context. This transition explained the incoherence in her pedagogical beliefs.

In addition to her language learning and teaching experience, Nora’s cultural background also played a role on her evolving pedagogical beliefs through guided reflection, especially on her understanding of the instructor’s role. “You need to set a model for your students. That’s how my culture influences me to be a good ESL teacher.” She had high expectations for herself as well as for her students. “My culture also trains me to be meticulous. I am loving but strict.”
At the same time, Nora was aware that students from different cultural backgrounds might have different learning style or preference.

    I think that Asian students tend to like me more because we are from similar culture and similar background. Students from other cultural backgrounds may not benefit as much from my teaching. (Preliminary Interview, 8/30/2012)

Later in the guided reflection, she realized that “you need to care students from different cultures” when talking about how to engage the only non-Chinese student in her class. At the time of the study, Nora had lived and studied in the U.S. for three years. She was at a transitional stage of maintaining her own cultural background as well as adapting to the new culture influence. Nora’s belief evolution through guided reflection revealed the conflicts and connections of two cultures she encountered.

**Connections between personal backgrounds and effects of guided reflection on instructional practices.** A clear trend in Nora’s instructional practices throughout guided reflection was her organized and linear class structure. Moreover, she mentioned in every guided reflection that all tasks in the lesson plan were accomplished and used this as one of the principles to evaluate her instruction. This was a result of her goal-oriented character. “I strictly follow rules, like the syllabus, and repeatedly remind my students of their tasks and keep them on track.”

One obvious advancement Nora made in her instructional practices through guided reflection was her interaction with students. She began from being hesitant about interacting with students in the first observed class and needing help with how to respond to students’ non-academic questions to later successfully engaging every student in the class discussions. This change reflected her adaptation from her Chinese culture background to the American culture.
she was living in; from valuing the serious, strict, and distant Chinese traditional teacher’s image to appreciating the enthusiastic, laid back, and engaging American teacher’s characteristics.

Summary

In summary, Nora’s pedagogical growth in both beliefs and practices through guided reflection revealed her transitional stage from her own cultural upbringing to the new cultural environment (Figure 4.6.). On the one hand, her pre-existing belief system and instructional practices carried obvious influences from her Chinese culture. On the other hand, she was adjusting her pedagogical beliefs and practices to the new cultural environment. She was trying to find the harmony of two cultures in her understanding of teaching and in her actual teaching practices.

Figure 4.6. Connections between Nora’s Personal Background and Effects on Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices
Conclusion

This chapter presented research findings in the form of individual cases. Through thorough analysis of each participant’s personal background and the progression of their pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices through guided reflection over the 15-week research period, detailed reports were made regarding how guided reflection influenced each participant’s pedagogical growth and how this pedagogical growth was related to his/her personal background. Each participant’s reflective teaching experience in this study was a unique case. They all brought with them unique cultural, linguistic, educational, professional, and personal factors into the reflective teaching process, and thus, they all demonstrated a distinct path in their pedagogical growth. In the following chapter, I will apply the findings in this chapter to conduct a cross-case analysis. Comparison of participants’ reflective teaching practices will be made among participants sharing common backgrounds. Results of the comparison will be discussed in relation to the existing literature.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In Chapter 4, I presented findings of the six instructor participants’ reflective teaching experiences, respectively. In all six cases, the data indicated that guided reflection positively impacted the instructors’ pedagogical growth. However, the pedagogical growth of each participant revealed a unique path and followed his/her own pace under guided reflection. Moreover, factors such as linguistic and cultural background, professional and educational experiences, and self-perceptions influenced different participants’ pedagogical growth under guided reflection to various extents. Therefore, in this chapter, I applied the findings from each individual case to the analysis of influential factors for participants’ reflective teaching experiences in a cross-case manner.

Professional Background

Among all of the influential factors, professional background--especially participants’ teaching experiences--seemed to play a very important role on their pedagogical growth. In the cases of Ellie and Melinda, they both had extensive teaching experiences in various contexts. Ellie taught English at a middle school and then a university in Turkey. After she moved to the U.S., she taught ESL in a university English for academic purpose (EAP) program, language courses in an intensive English program (IEP), and First-year composition in a community college. Melinda taught English reading and writing at various academic levels, from kindergarten to college, and worked with students with various learning needs, from dyslexia to developmental writing. These experiences enabled these teachers to establish a grounded pedagogical belief system (in Ellie’s case) or to quickly adapt their established pedagogical beliefs and practices to the new teaching context (in Melinda’s case). Furthermore, Ellie and
Melinda’s years of teaching experiences also led to the consistency between their beliefs and practices and the flexibility they demonstrated in practice progression after guided reflection.

In addition to the years of teaching, the experience in various teaching contexts also made a difference in participants’ pedagogical growth. Among the four less experienced instructor participants, Denise and Jessie had experiences teaching in IEP, EAP, and community ESL programs, and Denise even taught EFL at a university in China for a semester. They gained various experiences while teaching in different contexts. Teaching in a community ESL program gave Jessie first-hand experience of feeling rewarded by students’ determination to learn. She understood how motivating it was for students to know the teacher cared about them and their success. She also realized positive interaction with students helped to create effective learning/teaching environment. Through teaching in various contexts, Jessie gradually built up her confidence for and developed her own style of teaching for ESL.

In Denise’ case, teaching at the university in China was overwhelming with the intensity of teaching load, student population, and lacking instructional support. As she revealed, that experience almost destroyed her dream of becoming a teacher. Fortunately, when she taught in an IEP, she learned skills to plan lessons, to manage classes, and to provide feedback through collaborating with and observing colleagues. This experience helped her re-establish her faith in teaching and enabled her to reflect on her pedagogical knowledge systematically. In short, experiences of teaching in various ESL programs with diverse student population of different needs not only deepened Denise and Jessie’s understanding of language learning and teaching, but also strengthened their instructional practices.

Nevertheless, various teaching contexts did not guarantee the positive transfer of knowledge and practices. In some cases, instructors’ previous teaching experience could be a
distraction to what they should do in a new teaching context. Before becoming an ESL teacher, Amy had tutored students at different age and academic levels with various subjects. The tutoring format gave Amy opportunities to interact with students but did not provide her with the hands-on experience of organizing a formal class. The influence of such teaching experience was reflected in the loose structure of her class. Later, Amy taught First-year composition as a graduate assistant for two years. However, this experience enabled her to develop the expertise in teaching English academic writing, but did not seem to help her with the techniques of teaching.

Nora, on the contrary, had five years of EFL teaching experience in China before teaching ESL in the U.S.. On the one hand, teaching experience in formal settings helped Nora develop a structured and explicit teaching style. On the other hand, teaching in China, Nora often faced more than 50 students in one class. This reality limited the one-on-one interaction between the teacher and students. Moreover, in order to accomplish mostly test-driven teaching/learning objectives, teacher-centered instruction in China was unavoidable. However, Nora faced a completely different situation while teaching at the CESL. Class sizes were small and frequent interactions among students and between the teacher and students were expected; learning and teaching were skill-oriented and thus, students’ participation and engagement in class activities was essential. These conflicting teaching experiences required Nora to adjust her previous pedagogical beliefs and practices to fit in her teaching reality. Such adjustment needed developmental time. After two years teaching at the CESL, Nora gradually adjusted her prior pedagogical beliefs and practices to the new teaching contexts. However, her developing comfort level to interact with students and the inconsistency in her pedagogical beliefs and
practices at times revealed the transitioning stage she was going through from one teaching context to the other.

Through comparing the six instructor participants’ pedagogical growth, it becomes apparent that when looking at teachers’ professional background as an influential factor to their pedagogical beliefs and practices, both the number of years spent in teaching and the various teaching context need to be taken into account (see Figure 5.1.). However, in the existing literature, most studies investigating teachers’ professional background only focused on one dimension of this factor, that is, the years of teaching. For example, Mok’s (1994) study pointed

**Figure 5.1. Professional Background as an Influential Factor of Instructors’ Pedagogical Growth**
out that as teachers gained more experience in teaching, they developed a widened and more pragmatic view of language learning and teaching, and they became more skillful at coming up with solutions to various problems. The result of my study echoed findings from Mok’s study. Participants with longer teaching experiences, such as Ellie and Melinda, did present a better grounded pedagogical belief system and demonstrated more flexibility and resiliency in their practice progression than others who had not been teaching for long, such as Jessie, Denise, Nora, and Amy.

Focusing on non-native English-speaking teachers (NNET), Chen and Cheng (2012) stated that the amount of teaching experiences had an impact on NNETs’ self-perception, cultural identity, and teaching styles. They further pointed out that NNETs with less teaching experience tend to conceal their cultural identity, and their self-perceptions are more likely to be affected by their perceived language needs and students’ attitudes. The evidence in my research study supported Chen and Cheng’s claim. Ellie and Nora were both NNETs in this study, but they revealed different attitudes about their cultural identities. Ellie, while having Western features and native-like accent, was more outspoken about her Turkish cultural and linguistic background on various occasions, with students in class, with the researcher during interview and reflections, and with her colleagues during group discussions. She not only showed empathy to students but also presented herself as a role model for students’ language learning. Compared to Ellie, Nora rarely explicated her cultural and linguistic background in front of her students although she did share her struggles in language learning and teaching with the researchers and trying to help students learn the language with her first-hand experience. There might be several reasons for Ellie’s and Nora’s different attitudes about their cultural identity, and one could be what Gatbonton (2008) pointed out that novice teachers tended to be more concerned about how
students perceived them. This self-consciousness revealed their lack of confidence and could lead to incorrect or untruthful self-perception.

Overall, findings from my research study regarding influence of teachers’ professional background are consistent with the published studies on the notion that teaching experience is an influential factor on teachers’ beliefs of language learning and teaching and on their instructional practices in language classrooms. In addition, my research study demonstrated evidences that teaching context was an essential element in teachers’ overall teaching experiences and thus should not be overlooked. However, while data suggested that teachers’ knowledge about the learning and teaching of the subject matter and their teaching expertise improved as their years of teaching increased, such a conclusion should not be made without considering the teaching contexts. As discussed above, involvement in more teaching contexts does not necessarily lead to more pedagogical knowledge or better instructional practices. With its influence on teachers’ pedagogical growth, teaching context is a multi-faceted factor and needs to be analyzed within the scope of each individual case.

**Linguistic and Cultural Background**

ESL teachers’ linguistic and cultural background was another influential factor to their pedagogical growth. Figure 5.2 demonstrates the six participants’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, personal language learning experiences, and their contact with other cultures. Among the six participants, Amy, Denise, Jessie, and Melinda were native English Speakers (NES) while Ellie and Nora were non-native English speakers (NNES). Jessie and Melinda were English monolinguals while Amy, Denise, Ellie, and Nora were bilinguals with English as the common language and various second languages. However, the language(s) participants spoke was not the only factor to consider; their successful or unsuccessful language learning
Figure 5.2. Linguistic and Cultural Background as an Influential Factor of Instructors’ Pedagogical Growth

Cultural / Linguistic Background

Contact with other cultures

Traveling abroad

Living abroad

Language learning experiences

Monolingual

Bilingual

Circumstantial bilingual

Selective bilingual

Cultural / Linguistic Origin

NES

NNES

Amy: Mexico

Denise: Japan

Jessie: Mexico, East Europe

Melinda: East Europe

Nora: Russia

Long term

Nora: Russia

Nora: 3 years in U.S.

Denise: 4 months in China

Melinda: 1 year in England

Short term

Cultural / Linguistic Origin

Amy

Denise

Jessie

Melinda

Ellie: Turkish

Nora: Chinese

Jessie: Spanish; didn’t continue

Melinda: French & Spanish; basic R/W

Denise: Cantonese/English

Amy: English + Spanish

Ellie: Turkish + English

Nora: Chinese + English
experiences also impacted their understanding of language learning and teaching. Furthermore, although linguistic backgrounds indicated participants’ cultural origins, their contact with other cultures could influence their cultural awareness as well.

In the field of teaching English as a second language (TESL), there has been a long existing assumption that NESs are inherently better language teachers than the NNESs (Reis, 2011). Denise was under the influence of such assumption. Even though she was born in America and growing up speaking English, she did not consider English her native language as her family language was Cantonese. She became a circumstantial bilingual because of her family immigration background, but she did not felt confident in either of the languages. For her home language, Cantonese, she did not think she was fully proficient because “I can only do [speak Cantonese] in certain domains, cannot use it so much like in science or math.” Although rating English as her most proficient language,

Sometimes just because I am a bilingual, I feel like I am disadvantaged compared to a white monolingual, because I feel like they are the authority of the language. (Denise, Preliminary Interview, 8/21/2012)

While Denise’s case is unique to her experiences, it points to the tacit notion that NESs are the authority of the English language.

Although debates over native/nonnative dichotomy still go on, this assumption has been challenged by findings from numerous research studies. For example, data from Moussu’s (2006) dissertation study indicated that non-native English teachers (NNET) had advantages over their native counterparts on their multicultural awareness and their understanding of students’ challenges and needs during the language learning process. Ma’s (2012) investigation drew similar conclusions, and further pointed out that NNETs sharing the same native language with
students could benefit students’ language learning with their proficiency in students’ L1 and knowledge of students’ learning difficulties.

In my study, the two NNES participants, Ellie and Nora, expressed their privilege of having the first-hand language-learning experiences as their students. Ellie said, “Once a language learner, I am better connected to my ESL students; I am good at detecting student needs.” However, Ellie felt that not knowing students’ L1 caused difficulty to solve problems for them. Similarly, Nora believed that with knowledge from her own language learning, she could prevent students from “taking detours” in their learning. Moreover, she admitted that sharing students’ language or cultural background made a noticeable difference in the effectiveness of instruction, as she stated, “Asian students may benefit from my instruction better than others as we shared similar backgrounds.” The privilege of NNES instructors can be the frustration of NES peers. Although feeling proud of having strong relationships with her students, Jessie wished she knew students’ culture better or spoke their language so that she could “really relate to my students.”

Nevertheless, being a NNES is not the only way to develop empathy for ESL students. NES instructors’ other language learning experiences also are valuable resources for the development of their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Among the four NES participants, Amy was a selective bilingual, as were Ellie and Nora. She started to learn Spanish from high school and developed proficiency in this language in all aspects. Amy’s extensive language learning experiences gave her the profound understanding of what it takes to master another language. The consistency in her belief evolution through guided reflection clearly revealed this invaluable experience.
However, empathy for ESL students can not only be developed from successful language learning experiences but can also be derived from unsuccessful experiences. Melinda started to learn French from grade school. Although she achieved fluency of this language at one point, she “forgot most of it” due to lack of practice. This experience helped her understand the challenge to attain proficiency in a language and thus she developed “great respect to my students” and acknowledged students’ every effort in learning the language. In Jessie’s case, her attempts to learn French and Spanish did not yield rewarding outcomes. Still, she was able to relate the challenge she once faced to students’ learning difficulties, and thus developed empathy. Nora, a circumstantial bilingual growing up with two languages, “always had a love for language” and had been taking effort to learn Mandarin and Turkish that represented her and her husband’s culture origins.

Impacts of ESL teachers’ own language learning experiences have been widely discussed in the literature. Findings from published research and this study are consistent on the notion that ESL teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices are closely related to their prior language learning experiences. For example, both Johnson’s (1994) and Busch’s (2010) studies pointed out the ESL in- and pre-service teachers’ formal language learning experiences influenced their self-perception as teachers, their pedagogical beliefs and their understanding of their own instructional practices. Ellis (2004) argued that teachers own language learning experience was a powerful resource to their conception of language, language use, and language learning, and this resource became more profound as teachers achieve more language learning experiences and become proficient in more languages.

Language and culture are interrelated. Findings from Pray and Marx’s (2010) investigation demonstrated that study abroad pre-service teachers developed a more empathetic
understanding of language and cultural issues affecting students’ language learning than their on-campus counterpart. Smolcic’s (2011) study of a teacher-learner’s language/culture immersion experience yield similar results. Further, Smolcic claimed that ESL teachers’ acknowledgement of personal histories, values and identities may lead them to become more culturally responsive to other cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In this study, participants’ contact with other cultures also was an important factor in shaping their pedagogical beliefs and practices in language learning and teaching. Jessie, with limited experiences travelling abroad, admitted that “I had never really lived in other countries.” Because of this limitation, she felt that

I need to put myself in their shoes and see what they are struggling. They are homesick. There are things going wrong personally. I thing that will be my biggest thing in teaching, to understand. I need to be more empathetic to what they are dealing with right now. (Jessie, Preliminary Interview, 8/21/2012)

Other participants experienced cultural differences and language obstacles when traveling to other countries. Denise felt extremely homesick when she went to Japan for a study abroad program. Amy noticed that the Spanish she learned in class was different from how local people spoke when she traveled to Mexico. Melinda realized tremendous language barrier and cultural differences when she traveled to East Europe. Nora attempted to communicate in English when she traveled to Russia but did not succeed. Learning and teaching English in Turkey for many years, Ellie was frustrated that she could not understand native English speakers when she first moved to live in the U.S. These experiences in different cultural and linguistic environments, although happening at different times and under various circumstances, allowed participants to develop a more empathetic perspective when working with ESL students.
In summary, findings of this study echo what has been discussed and proved in the literature that ESL teachers’ cultural and linguistic background plays an essential role in their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Furthermore, my study highlighted the multifaceted nature of the concept of cultural and linguistic background. That is, participants’ cultural and linguistic background is not merely their native language and their culture of origin. Rather, in order to truly understand cultural and linguistic background, participants’ knowledge of other languages, language learning experiences, and their short-term or long-term contact with other cultures should all be taken into consideration.

**Educational Background**

In a longitudinal study of belief changes among 146 pre-service ESL teachers, Peacock (2001) found out that pre-service teachers’ pedagogical beliefs changed very little over a 3-year period. This finding pointed to the need for ESL teacher preparation programs to embed deliberate instruction to guide pre-service teachers’ pedagogical belief development while at the same time pointed out the important role that teachers’ education background has on their pedagogical beliefs and practices.

In my study, six participants received their college education from different countries in various majors, and their areas of study in graduate school also divided into TESL and non-TESL majors (see Figure 5.3). Different educational backgrounds influenced participants’ pedagogical beliefs, especially their instructional practices to various extents. In general, participants receiving formal education in TESL program or having a background in the field of education felt more confident in their teaching and thus demonstrated more steady progression in their practices. Moreover, participants having college education in another country than the U.S. tent to bring the cultural value and practice in their beliefs and practices.
Among the six participants, Amy was the only one without receiving formal training in the field of education. This feature of her educational background was revealed in her unstructured class organization and her difficulties in transferring theory to practice. Although

**Figure 5.3. Educational Background as an Influential Factor of Instructors’ Pedagogical Growth**

Melinda did not study in TESL, her graduate study in education provided her with the skill set for managing a class. Therefore, she was able to quickly adjust her teaching techniques to fit in the new teaching context and accommodate new student population. The other four TESL-major participants expressed that the preparation in TESL program was necessary and essential for their teaching. As Childs (2011) argued, L2 teacher preparation program should aim to move pre-service teachers beyond their tacit notions of teaching and guide them to develop a
pedagogically sound and explicit conception of L2 teaching. With proper pedagogical preparation, participants with a formal background in education did demonstrate more flexibility and consistency in their instructional practices than participants without this formal training.

Another factor pertaining to the participants’ educational backgrounds that should not be overlooked is the education they received before coming to the U.S. In this study, Ellie and Nora received their college education in China and Turkey respectively. Their pedagogical beliefs and practices revealed connections to their cultural values and practices. For example, Ellie believed that teacher should be the authority figure in the classroom. She knew that she could share this cultural value with her Chinese and Indian students, “because like myself, my students also come from more authoritative educational systems. They want to believe that the teacher knows more, and there is respect towards that.” While Ellie was aware that her culturally-preferred practices would not necessarily happen in American class because “in American classroom, teacher and students are the same; they [students] see teachers are just a tool,” she considered her culturally-preferred practice “an advantage.”

In Nora’s case, she used to believe in “teacher-centered instruction” and that “students can only learn a language through repetitive practices.” These beliefs were likely influenced by the education she received in China. After two years studying in the TESL program and teaching at the CESL, Nora’s pedagogical beliefs evolved and her practices changed. Even though she didn’t want to call it “student-centered, because I am still in control,” she realized “students are given more opportunities to say what they need and what they want” and she was willing to “adjust my syllabus and lesson plans accordingly.” It seems plausible that there existed disconnection between Nora’s education and experience in China and the TESL program in the U.S., and that she was trying to make the transition through reflecting on her pedagogical
beliefs and practices. Nora’s experience was not an isolated case. In examining the experiences of five East Asian women before and during their TESL program, Park (2012) highlighted the disconnectedness between their experience in home countries, their TESL program, and their student teaching experience. This disconnection led to Park’s proposal for the TESL program to conceptualize culturally-embraced curricula.

**Self-perceptions**

In the literature of teacher cognition and teacher reflection, many factors have been examined to understand teachers’ pedagogical underpinning, but personal traits were oftentimes an overlooked and underestimated factor. In this research study, evidence showed that teachers’ self-perceptions had a significant impact on their reflective practices as well as their pedagogical growth. Among the six participants, only one participant, Amy, did not show strong evidence in personality-related reflective practices or pedagogical growth. With each of the other participants, however, there were obvious connections between their self-description, their stated pedagogical beliefs, and their observed instructional practices (see Figure 5.4.).

Denise described herself as a perfectionist: “I would say I am a very organized and particular person.” This self-perception and preference was reflected in Denise’s beliefs statements. She believed that in order to teach ESL writing, instructors needed to know the structure of writing and to be explicit in instruction. Later in the guided reflection, she extended this belief from focusing on instructors’ knowledge to empathizing their actual teaching practices; that is, from knowing the structure to teaching students’ the structure of academic writing, and from being explicit to providing students with explicit writing instruction. Not only did Denise’ reflections define this belief, but she also practiced what she believed. In every observed class, Denise prepared a Power Point with clear class agenda and step-by-step
instruction to achieve class objectives. Using the deliberately prepared Power Point, Denise
guided students to accomplish various class activities to build their knowledge and competence
in writing. As she said, “being prepared has been a huge part of who I am.”

Figure 5.4. Self-perceptions as an Influential Factor of Instructors’ Pedagogical Growth

Always wanting to be a teacher, Ellie said, “Loving students was central in my teaching
philosophy.” With this love and dedication to teaching, she made close observations of her
students and was confident to say “I know my students well and I know their strengths and
weaknesses.” Therefore, in her class, she could put a student on the spot, knowing he/she would
not get embarrassed; she knew who to work together in a group because they could learn from
each other’s strengths; and she knew who needed to be reminded of homework and requirement
and who did not. Ellie encouraged her students to know each other well so that “they can be a
better learning community.” In her class, it was often observed that the whole class laughed
collectively or had a heated discussion on certain topics. In addition to being attendant to her
students’ needs, Ellie stated that she was a “self-reflective” person. Reflecting on her teaching practices, she realized “I need to cut back my teacher talk,” and took effort to overcome this trait. In the later observed classes, Ellie intentionally asked students to explain the written instruction to the writing assignment she prepared and followed up instead of taking on the role of being the solo speaker. When students worked in group, she checked with each group and provided feedback instead of repeating the instruction and requirement again and again while students were working on the group project. As she aimed to do at the beginning of the class -- “I need to improve the efficiency in my teaching” -- Ellie did it.

“I always knew I was going to be a teacher. I always want to help people better in their lives,” said Jessie, a 26-year old “fun-loving ESL instructor.” Jessie’s confidence, although never overtly stated, was easily observed from her concise and precise belief statements, the consistency of her instructional practices, and in the fact that she allowed students to pick the topic of their writings and it turned out to be a successful motive for students to write. She felt that she was “more like a mentor to my students than anything else.” She knew that, in order to form a learning community, she needed “to be understanding and stern at the same time.”

Considering her age and limited teaching experiences, Jessie confidence was rare.

“Patience is my biggest virtue,” Melinda said. She understood ESL students’ fear as writers, and tried to encourage and coach them “without treating them as babies.” With her patience, she worked with this group of “quiet and serious” students to develop the trustful relationship among them. With Ellie’s diligent work and sense of humor, students felt more comfortable working together as a group and they even could laugh about Melinda’s jokes collectively. Melinda said: “I enjoy new tasks. And I am very resilient.” Melinda demonstrated
her resiliency through critical reflection on her instruction and successful implementation of technology and new instructional techniques.

“Loving but strict” was how Nora described herself as an ESL instructor. In her belief statements, she repeatedly emphasized that students needed to develop a good attitude towards learning to write and that they needed to practice writing as much as possible. While she insisted that she did not speak Chinese with her Chinese students and avoided non-academic conversations, she always tried to provide feedback to each individual student in and out of class because “I don’t want any of them feel they didn’t have a chance or they are not supported.”

The character analysis of participants in this study revealed a close connection between the instructors’ self-perceptions and their instructional practices. As Farrell (2011b) argued, more reflective teachers tend to improve their instructional practices faster. Involving ESL instructors in purposeful reflections on themselves in their teaching contexts will help them become more reflective teachers.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented and discussed findings using a cross-case analysis approach. Applying findings from the within-case analyses, the six participants’ professional backgrounds, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, educational backgrounds, and their self-perceptions were analyzed collectively in relation to their pedagogical growth. First, findings of the cross-case analysis pointed out that while instructors’ professional, cultural and linguistic, and educational backgrounds can impact their pedagogical beliefs and practices through guided reflection, instructors’ self-perceptions are also factors that should not be overlooked. Second, this study’s findings also revealed the multifaceted nature of each of the influential factors that were typically viewed as one-dimensional in the extant literature. In addition, findings from the cross-case
analysis highlighted the notion that clear understandings of instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and practices can only be achieved when each instructor is viewed as a multi-dimensional individual.

The following chapter will summarize findings discussed in this and previous chapters, address implications of these findings for the field of ESL teacher education and teachers’ professional development, discuss the limitations of this study, and make recommendations for future studies.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Chapters 4 and 5 presented and discussed findings from within- and cross-case analyses. This chapter will summarize findings of this research study, address the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of this study, discuss limitations, and make recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study Findings

This multiple-case study conducted within- and cross-case analyses to address three research questions regarding the impact of guided reflection on each of the participants’ pedagogical growth and the influential factors for their reflective teaching experiences. Findings of the within-case analysis pointed out that guided reflection had positive impact on all participants’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices. Some participants started with very general and abstract understandings about the learning and teaching of ESL writing and their roles as an ESL writing instructor. Through deliberate reflection, they develop more focused and tangible pedagogical beliefs that were consistent with the specific context of ESL writing. At the beginning stage of this study, some participants’ instructional practices did not seem to align with their stated pedagogical beliefs. After reflecting on their beliefs and practices, however, they gradually achieved more consistency between their beliefs and practices. In short, guided reflection (1) helped instructors develop focused, tangible, and context-specific pedagogical beliefs; (2) helped instructors improve the overall structure of, as well as specific techniques for, their instructional practices; and (3) helped instructors achieve greater consistency between their pedagogical beliefs and their instructional practices, either using beliefs to guide practices or using practices to generate beliefs.
The within-case analysis also revealed each participant’s unique pedagogical growth under guided reflection due to their distinctive professional, education, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and even their self-perceptions. The cross-case analysis of this study highlighted the influence of instructors’ self-perceptions on their belief evolution and practice progression, and also pointed out the multifaceted nature of concepts that are often viewed as one dimensional in the literature, such as teaching experiences or cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Findings from the cross-case analysis indicated that participants’ teaching experiences and cultural and linguistic backgrounds had marked impact on shaping their pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices and that educational background and self-perceptions also influenced participants’ pedagogical development. In terms of teaching experiences, findings showed that (1) instructors who taught for many years in various contexts tended to present a more established belief system and thus demonstrated more flexibility in applying new teaching strategies and adapting to new teaching contexts; and that (2) experiences in various teaching contexts could have both positive and negative influences on instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices, depending upon the transferability to different contexts.

Regarding cultural and linguistic background, the study indicated that (1) NES instructors were not necessarily in advantage in teaching ESL writing while NNES instructors explicated their privilege of having empathetic understanding of student needs in language learning; (2) language learning experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, contributed to establishment and development of instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices; (3) contact with other cultures, either long-term or short-term, enabled instructors to develop cultural awareness in their instructional practices; and (4) the extent of instructors’ cultural adaptation indicated their ability of transforming culturally-specific instructional practices.
Relative to the analysis of participants’ educational background, findings suggested that (1) formal education in English language provided theoretical support for instructors to develop pedagogical beliefs; and (2) formal training in education gave instructors the principles in teaching and thus strengthened their confidence in instructional practices. Analysis of participants’ self-perception revealed that (1) self-perception, among other factors, influenced how instructors define good teaching and good teachers and thus had a direct impact on their instructional practices; and (2) a reflective teacher could clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses in his/her teaching, and thus was able to improve his/her instructional practices faster and better than a less reflective teacher.

**Implications**

This study has implications for future research in several different ways. In the theoretical aspect, this study revealed the multifaceted nature of concepts widely applied in teacher cognition and teacher reflection research, such as teaching experience and teachers’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In the extant scholarship, these concepts were often examined one-dimensionally. For example, teaching experiences were often viewed as being equivalent to years of teaching, and the contexts in which teaching occurs were often overlooked. In this study, however, instructors’ teaching experience referred to both the years and contexts of teaching and strong evidence indicated that the context of teaching and years of teaching are equally important in shaping instructors’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices. In addition, regarding ESL teachers’ linguistic background, existing studies emphasized the comparison of NES and NNES teachers, and very little attention was given to ESL teachers’ own language learning experiences. In contrast, this study illuminated the interrelation of culture and language, and thus viewed teachers’ cultural and linguistic background as a multi-dimensional
concept, to include the teachers’ cultural and linguistic origin, their language learning experiences, and their contact with other cultures, either long-term or short-term. The thorough analysis of ESL teacher’s background in this study provides future research with a broader and more holistic perspective.

This study further challenged the conventional understanding of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices. In the extant literature, teachers’ practice was viewed as being attached to their pedagogical beliefs and changes in instructional practices were considered to be a natural step after teachers altered their pedagogical beliefs. While acknowledging the inseparable connection of beliefs and practice, this study considered instructional practices as an equally important component in teachers’ pedagogy system as beliefs are. Findings of this study indicated that pedagogical belief does not necessarily take the dominant position; rather, the interaction between beliefs and practices is bi-directional. In some cases, instructional practices were guided by pedagogical beliefs; in other cases, the development of pedagogical beliefs was an outcome of teachers’ purposeful reflecting on their instructional practices. This interpretation of the bi-directionality of the beliefs and practices relationship points to a new direction for the future research.

Regarding its methodological aspect, this study not only triangulated the data sources but also applied parallel design to developing data collection instruments. For example, data were collected from preliminary interviews, class observations, reflection interviews, and group reflection discussions. Reflection interview guidelines were designed to represent one section of the interview questions as well as the observation guidelines. This parallel design made it possible to conduct comparisons within each participant at different time points of the study, and thus enabled the data to show progression and continuity of each participant’s pedagogical
beliefs and practices. As a result, findings from data collected through this research design were strengthened.

Furthermore, the use of group discussions as a supplement to teachers’ individual reflection was another attempt to triangulate data sources and enhance the credibility of the study. The group reflection discussions were intended for participants to communicate and exchange ideas about their beliefs and practices in teaching ESL writing. In addition to serving as a data collection instrument, incorporating group discussions created a community among participants where they could seek or give support to each other through informative and thought-provoking discussions. As group discussion guideline did not adopt the same parallel design as in other data collection instruments, such as interview, observation, and reflection, no direct comparison could be drawn in terms of how differently or similarly participants reflected on their pedagogical beliefs and practices in solitary or in a collective manner. However, data showed that participating in group reflection discussion did help participants become more confident in articulating their pedagogical beliefs, more assured about their instructional practices, and more aware of new pedagogical knowledge and practices. Therefore, the novel approach of applying group reflection discussion in this study demonstrated both methodological and practical value for future teacher reflection research as well as for teacher education and professional development programs.

In addition, this study has practical implications for teacher education and teacher professional development program by presenting strong evidence that purposeful reflection can help develop and enhance teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices in a given context. As indicated in the Teacher Reflection Model (TRM) applied to this study as a guideline to design data collection instruments, deliberate reflection requires teachers (1) to be
aware of the influence of their personal background on their pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices, (2) to understand the interactive relationship between their pedagogical beliefs and practices, (3) to monitor the changes of their pedagogical beliefs in relation to instructional practices, and vice versa, and (4) to enhance the positive progression of beliefs and practices. Therefore, the TRM can be implemented as a practicum or student-teaching course component in ESL teacher education programs as a model to help pre-service teachers develop their pedagogical beliefs as they learn how to teach in a given context. Moreover, the TRM can also be employed in teacher professional development programs in TESL or other teaching contexts to deepen in-service teachers’ knowledge of the ever-changing teaching contexts and student populations, to examine their self-perceptions, and to improve their teaching strategies.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study is, of course, not without limitations, and can be improved in following areas. First of all, reflection, as a constant practice for the teaching profession, constitutes a lifetime experience for teachers to make sense of their teaching philosophy and pedagogical practices in relation to their personal background, among other factors. Thus, the 15-week time frame of this research study does not necessarily allow the reflection to take full effect on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices. Future studies on teacher reflection or teacher cognition may want to consider using a longer research time frame. Doing so will allow participants to develop a deeper understanding of their beliefs and practices as well as their reflective teaching experiences through a longer period of time, and at the same time will allow the researcher(s) to observe more participants’ cognitive and behavioral changes. With more data generated, findings of the study would be enhanced.
Secondly, findings of this study showed that guided reflection had positive impacts on all participants’ pedagogical growth. Various means were applied in this study to enhance the credibility of the findings, such as triangulation of data collection methods, in-depth analysis of salient elements in the study, and member-checking the accuracy of researcher’s interpretation with participants. However, all the data were collected from instructor participants or from observations of the participants. Thus, the fact that conclusions were drawn mostly based on participants’ self-reports limits the credibility of findings. In order to further strengthen the credibility of the findings, future studies may want to consider bringing in a data set collected from other sources, such as students’ sample writings, student surveys, and student focus group discussions.

Additionally, considering meaningful teaching is context-specific, this study was conducted in the context of college ESL writing classrooms. While the analysis of participants’ pedagogical beliefs and practices highlighted features of ESL writing pedagogy, the examination of participants’ reflective teaching practices did not necessarily emphasize the context of ESL writing. As the study mainly focused on the impact of guided reflection on the progression of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices, the elaboration on ESL writing became secondary in the report of findings of the study. Thus, this study did not present the strong connection of teachers’ reflective teaching practices and the context of their teaching. To overcome this limitation, future studies need to investigate effective ways to better incorporate the teaching context in the study of teachers’ reflective teaching practices so that more pragmatic implications can be made to the teaching contexts where reflective teaching takes place.
Conclusion

This chapter presented concluding remarks of the investigation of six college ESL writing instructors’ pedagogical growth through guided reflection through a 15-week period. Findings from within- and cross-case analyses were presented and summarized to address the three research questions. Theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of this study were discussed to address the contributions of this study to the ever-growing field of teacher cognition and teacher reflection research, and to ESL teacher education and teacher professional development programs. The limitations of the study were analyzed and these limitations provide ideas and suggestions for future research.
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APPENDIX A
A TEACHER REFLECTION MODEL

1. Teachers’ Personal Backgrounds
   Educational background: academic degree, language learning experience, etc.
   Professional background: years of teaching, teaching level, etc.
   Personal Traits: personalities, hobbies, etc.

2. Teacher’s Pre-existing Pedagogical Beliefs (TPPB)
   --content of teaching
   --teaching manner
   --teacher’s role

3. Teacher’s Instructional Practices
   --correspond to TPPB
   --contradict TPPB

4. Relationships between Teacher’s Beliefs and Practices

   Continuous Guided Reflection: constantly comparing, self-evaluating, and self-directing pedagogical beliefs and practices

5. Teacher’s Enhanced Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices
   Enhanced connection between beliefs and practices
APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Background (Cultural, Linguistic, Educational, Professional)
1. Could you tell me where you are from and what language(s) you speak? How did you learn to speak another language? How proficient are you in this language? Have you traveled to or lived in other countries? Could you tell me about this experience?
2. What did you study in college? What kind(s) of job did you work before/after you graduated?
3. When and how did you become interested in teaching? How do you think your college/graduate education prepared you for the teaching job?

Student audience
1. What subject(s) have you taught at what level?
2. What is your most successful experience with students?
3. What is the biggest challenge you have had with your students?
4. What are your expectations on your students?
5. Please tell me about your teaching experience with college (ESL) students.

Pedagogical Beliefs
1. What do you think is important in learning to write in another language?
2. What do you think is important in teaching writing in another language?
3. What do you think are important characteristics of ESL writing instructors?
4. How do you think your language/cultural background helps you become a good ESL writing instructor?
5. What role does your teaching experience play in your teaching philosophy?
6. How differently will you work with ESL student writers at different levels?
7. How do you think of yourself as a college (ESL) instructor?

Reflection Practices
1. How often do you reflect on your teaching?
2. How do you reflect on your teaching? (e.g. alone or with peers; thinking aloud or writing journals)
3. How does reflection help you in your teaching?
APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Class Organization
1. How is the class organized?

Teacher-Student Interaction
1. How does the teacher interact with the students?
2. How does the teacher encourage students’ participation in class activities?
3. How does the teacher encourage students’ interactions with each other?

Strategy Implementation
1. How does the teacher introduce topics of writing (reading) and types of writing (reading)?
2. How does the teacher facilitate students’ writing (reading) process?
3. How does the teacher monitor students’ writing (reading) outcomes?
APPENDIX D
GUIDELINES FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION INTERVIEW

1. What do you believe is important in learning to write in another language? What did you do in today’s class that represent/misrepresent your beliefs about learning to write in L2?

2. What do you believe is important in teaching writing in another language? What did you do in today’s class that represent/misrepresent your beliefs in teaching writing in L2?

3. What do you believe are important characteristics of ESL writing instructors? What did you do in today’s class that represent/misrepresent your beliefs in ESL writing instructors’ good characteristics?

4. How do you think about the organization of today’s class?

5. How do you think about your interaction with the students in today’s class?

6. What is really good about today’s class?

7. What would you do to make today’s class better?
APPENDIX E

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP REFLECTION DISCUSSION

I. FOCUS ON CLASS ACTIVITIES

1. Please share with the group how you usually organize the class.

2. Please share with the group how you usually interact with the students in class.

3. Please share with the group how you usually encourage students’ participation in class and interaction with each other.

4. Please share with the group how you usually introduce topics of writing and types of writing.

5. Please share with the group how you usually facilitate students’ writing process and monitor their writing outcomes.

6. Please share with the group your successful practices in this class so far.

7. Share your challenging moments in this class so far.

8. Which of the following categories do you think you do well? Please share your routines/strategies/experiences with the group. Class organization, classroom management skills, class activities, timing/pace, interaction with students

9. Please share with the group any questions you may have about teaching college ESL writing.
II. FOCUS ON CLASS PRACTICES

1. Please share with the group your routine in each class if you have any.
2. Please share with the group the good things that have happened so far in this class. These can be your instructional practices or students’ performance.
3. Please share with the group the challenges you still have in this class. These can be your instructional practices or students’ performance.
4. Is there anything you need help with? Are there any questions you want to discuss with the group?

III. FOCUS ON PROGRESS AND SELF-PERCEPTION

1. Please share with the group the progress you have made in your class so far, which can be related to your instructional practices and students’ performance. How did this progress happen? How did you learn you need to improve on this aspect?
2. Please share with the group the biggest challenge you have overcome in your class so far, which can be related to your instructional practices and students’ performance. How did you overcome the challenge? How did you learn the strategies?
3. Please share with the group what you think are important characteristics for ESL writing instructors to have based on your experience so far. How did you learn about these characteristics?
4. If you taught this class again, how differently would you teach it?