Investigating Chinese Junior High School Teachers' Beliefs about the Teaching of Reading in a Time of Reform

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Declaration:

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made. Beyond the parts of this thesis which were presented as my first submission, this revised content has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University, nor to any other institution for a degree, diploma or further qualification.

Signed: Bonny Xiong   Date: April 20, 2023

Abstract

This thesis investigates junior high school teachers' beliefs about the teaching of EFL reading in a second-tier city in China. In so doing, it seeks to shed light on where teachers' beliefs come from in the first place, whether the teachers feel their beliefs are reflected in their classroom practices, and the extent to which their beliefs and practices appear to be congruent with recent educational reforms.

Based on Borg's theoretical framework on teacher cognition (originally proposed in 2003; updated in 2015) and drawing on qualitative data generated from in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine junior high school teachers, ranging from novice to experienced teachers, and covering both rural and urban schools, the study presents an overall picture of the participant teachers' beliefs and stated practices when teaching reading and their underlying rationales. The study reveals the sometimes contradictory and tense relationship between teachers' beliefs and stated practices, arguing that this can be due to factors such as the particular Zeitgeist of their era, their prior learning experiences, their opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as several other contextual dimensions.

Based on its findings, the thesis concludes that the links between theory and practice in China's teacher training programmes have not been made explicit enough. It proposes that in order to get more "buy-in" from teachers, China's curriculum reforms around pedagogy need to be brought more in line with what teachers are taught during their pre and in-service training. It further suggests that curriculum reforms around reading pedagogy need to be better reflected in assessment practices with more joint cooperation between schools and finally, it is argued that teachers themselves need to become more critically aware of their own cognition processes.

Key Words:

teachers' beliefs, Chinese junior high schools, approaches to teaching reading, teacher cognition, Zeitgeist, Chinese curriculum reforms, pre-service education, in-service education, textbook use

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks go out first and foremost to my professors at UNNC, Professor Douglas Bell and Professor Anwei Feng. The completion of this thesis would never have been completed without their ongoing support and patience. I am particular thankful to Professor Douglas Bell, in his role as my Principal Supervisor, for leading me through the past 6 years and always being there to guide me through so many puzzles and confusions in my writing up.

I also want to show my deep gratitude to each of the respondent teachers participating in the current research. I am most thankful to them for sharing their most valuable teaching experiences and thoughts with me. With their friendly co-operation, my research was conducted successfully.

I must also be grateful to my family members, my dear parents and parents-in-law who supported me fully during the past 6 years without any complaint. And my husband is always there supporting me despite his own busy work. Without them, this thesis would be an impossible mission.

I was pregnant with my daughter when I applied for the EdD program in UNNC, and as I now complete my thesis, my daughter has turned 8. There have been many ups and downs in the past few years: my frustration and failure at work, both of my parents' diagnosis of cancer and the proceeding operations and chemo 4 years ago, my own health problems which continue to bother me, issues concerning my daughter's growth... Whenever these things happened, whenever my life was in a mess, writing this current thesis always seemed to be the only thing that could calm me down and lessen my anxiety. It brought me tranquility and peace. It is something that I can have faith and belief in. It is something that will never desert me but will always accompany me and grow with me. There were many moments when I patted and comforted my daughter to sleep with my left hand and scrolled down the readings using the other on my phone; there were

numerous moments when I got frustrated but still carried on with my thesis right after I had wiped my tears off my cheek...

When I look back, this road was a difficult one, but very well worth taking. I've grown stronger, tougher, and it seems that nothing in this world can now knock me down after all the difficult challenges I've been through.

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Key Acronyms

BA   Bachelor of Arts

CLT   Communicative Language Teaching

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ELT   English Language Teaching

GTM   Grammar Translation Method

JHS   Junior High School

SHS   Senior High School

L1   English as the First Language

L2   English as the Second Language

MA   Master of Arts

MOE   Ministry of Education

NECS   The National English Curriculum Standards for Nine-Year Compulsory Education

PEP   People's Education Press

PWP   Pre-While-Post (stages in delivering an ELT reading activity)

TBLT   Task Based Language Teaching

TEM-4 Test for English Majors Band 4

TEM-8 Test for English Majors Band 8

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CHAPTER 1:   Setting the Research in Context

Introduction

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Introduction

The main purpose of this introductory chapter is to set out the research context and provide some general background for my study.

I begin by discussing some of the different drivers and personal motivations, which have together inspired my involvement in this professional doctorate. I then provide some contextual background on the research content, along with an overview of my specific research questions. I close the chapter with a synopsis of the thesis structure, providing a brief explanation of what exactly will be covered in the subsequent chapters.

1.1   My Motivations for Conducting this Research

My main motivation for conducting this research relates to my personal history. Having been a junior high school English teacher in my current workplace for 16 years now, part of which time has also involved me in serving as a mentor for several pre-service or novice teachers, I have become increasingly aware that my interest in ELT has shifted from *what* teachers do in their classroom to *how* and *why* teachers carry out such practices. Over the years, I have observed that some teachers' practices and styles differ considerably, even though they may have all received a broadly similar education and may even be of a similar age. This has triggered my interest in finding out what underlies these differences between individual teachers and what might serve to change their English language teaching practices. These were some of

the personal thoughts and reflections, which first led me to engage with the concept of "teachers' beliefs".

As I have come to appreciate, teachers' beliefs are now widely recognized as being one of the key components within the wider domain of teacher cognition and have attracted a significant amount of interest from researchers in teacher education (e.g., Alexander & Winne, 2006; Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Valcke, Sang, Rots, & Hermans, 2010). Many studies over the last 30 years have confirmed that what teachers think, believe, and value will ultimately have a great impact on what they then do in their classroom teaching (e.g., Flores, 2001; Northcote, 2009; Richards, Tung, & Ng, 1992; Rubie-Davies, 2015).

When I reflect on my own career trajectory, I must certainly acknowledge the very strong influence that my own beliefs about teaching have exerted on both my general academic worldview and also my teaching practice. Graduating as I did from a non-normal university, in truth, I never really intended to be a teacher in the first place, and I must also admit that neither was I initially very well equipped with the basic theories or skills for how to teach EFL. However, despite all of this, I still managed to become a teacher in my current workplace. I think my accumulation of knowledge and beliefs about EFL teaching is mainly based on my experiences in the current workplace, where I was guided by an experienced teacher from my own school, and in due course, finally developed a more coherent set of EFL teaching beliefs of my own.

Interestingly though, I have also come to realize that some of my beliefs about EFL in fact originated from the time when I myself was still a language learner at school. In reaching these conclusions, I must acknowledge that I have no doubt transferred some of my own beliefs and practices about English language learning to my own students, while my growing self-awareness of the role that beliefs play has also helped me to look at my teaching practice in a more objective way. I believe that as part of this journey, I have gradually become a more

self-aware and critically reflective teacher.

Cumulatively, my personal experiences have certainly led to my current strong conviction that it is highly important for teachers to be conscious of their own beliefs in their teaching career (ideally, as early as possible) and to realize the potential influence of their beliefs on their classroom practice. I strongly believe that encouraging teachers to become more conscious of their beliefs will lead to them becoming more critically reflective practitioners. This, in turn, will then also serve to strengthen their ongoing professional development.

1.2   The Contextual Background to this Study

As the social environment where teachers work can influence their beliefs and practices, I feel it is crucial to investigate and situate teacher' beliefs in specific educational settings. Beliefs in this regard are always highly context-specific and are closely tied to the particularities of where people live and work as teachers. Although there may be some common areas in which teachers' beliefs are shared and overlap, we should not assume that the beliefs themselves are always going to be generalizable; in this regard, there is no "one size fits all".

The positioning of English language education for junior high schools in China is crucial because it serves to link the primary and senior high school (SHS) sectors. English learning in junior high schools is mainly intended to get students ready for their English learning in higher education. It is also a critical moment for the learners because this is when they really start to form their learning habits and develop their own critical thinking abilities and worldviews. However, as Gong (2011), President of China's Society of Education for English Language Teaching has argued, many English teachers in both primary and middle school levels in China are currently not capable enough to achieve the requirements laid out by the curriculum. This has led to criticisms in China that the overall quality of English teachers has, generally speaking, not been very satisfactory. Nevertheless, it must still be acknowledged that these "unsatisfactory" teachers remain the

loyal educational foot soldiers who have to shoulder the day-to-day responsibilities of teaching their students English based on their own understanding and interpretation of the curriculum released by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Of the four main English skills (namely, speaking, listening, reading and writing), reading is regarded as a particularly powerful tool which can affect the students' achievement both personally and academically (Bharuthram, 2012; Eskey and Grabe,1998; Nunes & Aidinis, 1999; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) noted that teachers played a key role in stimulating students' interest in reading. Some studies have even indicated that students learn about the importance of reading through modelling their teachers' positive attitudes toward reading (Nathanson, Pruslow, & Levitt, 2008). Returning to my earlier point about teachers' beliefs, many researchers have stated that teachers play an important role specifically in developing their students' reading proficiency (e.g., Perkins & Cooter, 2013; van Kuijk, Deunk, Bosker, & Ritzema, 2016). Teachers' beliefs about these processes are therefore likely to be a highly influential factor in how they approach their practices in teaching reading (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Clark, 2020; Harrison, 2004).

Based on the present situation in China and the significance of understanding teachers' beliefs about the teaching of EFL reading, I believe that this current research is now timely and will serve to fill an important gap. Deciding to explore what beliefs Chinese JHS teachers hold about EFL teaching also fits very well with my professional research interests and my personal motivation.

1.3 Aims of the Study

As I have already stated, understanding teachers' beliefs has become an important area for educational research (e.g., Borg, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2011; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnson, 2006; Northcote, 2009; Pajares, 1992; Speer, 2005). As an essential area of inquiry, it is potentially beneficial for the promotion of the professional development for

teachers and it can also better inform teacher educators of what teachers actually think and do in their classrooms. With this in mind, any attempt to help the improvement of Chinese EFL teaching quality must therefore begin with an understanding of such teachers' held beliefs, as these will form the bedrock which conceptualizes their instructional practice.

The participants for this research are all female. As the researcher, I have made this choice quite deliberately, partly to eliminate any data differences which might be based on gender, but in more pragmatic terms, simply because most of the EFL teachers in Chinese junior high schools these days tend to be women rather than men. In an attempt to link together the bigger picture of ELT in China, the importance of EFL reading and teacher beliefs, and my own personal interests, this current research is principally aimed at addressing the following three research questions:

1. What are Junior High School EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching reading in Ningbo, China?

2. Where did these beliefs originate from, and how have they developed?

3. Are Junior High School teachers' pedagogical beliefs about teaching reading congruent with the expectations outlined in the current Ministry of Education curriculum reforms?

1.4   Structure of this Thesis

Following this opening chapter, Chapter 2 aims to explain the context of ELT in China in which my research has been undertaken. Chapter 3 then represents a traditional Literature Review, in which I highlight the research on several key areas related to my study, such as the relative concept and construct of beliefs and relevant studies on teachers' beliefs specifically in relation to the teaching of EFL reading as well as the framework for the current study.

In Chapter 4, I then justify and explain my research design, the ethical

issues and concerns which were considered, the specific research methods I used and the procedures I adopted for my data analysis. I also discuss what I perceive to be the strengths and limitations of this research, while critically reflecting on my own reflexivity.

Chapter 5 reports on the qualitative data and findings which were generated from the semi-structured interviews with my respondents and also briefly discusses some of the emergent themes.

Chapter 6 attempts to bring together the previous chapters and, by doing so, sets the research findings within a broader, more theoretical and overarching analysis by answering the research questions in the study. I also discuss the significance of my particular findings in correlation to the points I covered in my Literature Review. In addition, I outline some of the wider implications for professional practice and contribution as well as limitation for the current study.

CHAPTER 2:   ELT in the Context of China

Introduction

Teachers' beliefs in general cannot be isolated from their contexts. To understand local teaching practices and the wider effects of such educational endeavours, it is crucial to investigate the educational contexts in which classroom teaching takes place (Harmer, 2003; Hayes, 2009; Levin, He, & Allen, 2013). As this thesis aims to investigate Chinese junior high school teachers' beliefs about the teaching of EFL reading, I feel it is important for me first to explain the context in which the

research will be undertaken.

2.1 English and the Chinese Education System

2.1.1 The Role & Status of English in China

English has always received a lot of attention in China and the Chinese government has made a strong commitment to the development of English language teaching and learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Since China's opening up and its shift towards a market economy, the senior leadership in China has come to regard English as a critical tool in the modernization and development of the whole nation (Ross, 1992; Adamson & Morris, 1997). It is also believed that achieving proficiency in the English language can result in various advantages in terms of education, social interaction, and financial prospects, as it can provide access to both material resources and what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described as "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 72-76). Together, these all lead to the betterment of personal well-being (Hu, 2005).

Due to the prominence of English and the increasing demands for English proficiency, huge national and individual efforts and resources have been invested and devoted to English language learning (Qiang & Wolff, 2003). The number of English learners in China has reached around 400 million, about one third of China's population (Bolton & Graddol, 2012; Wei & Su, 2015), outnumbering the total population of the UK and the USA.

However, since entering the 21st century, Chinese people's enthusiasm towards the learning of English has also led to some criticisms. People have begun to worry about the learning of their own mother language: Chinese. Doubts have started to emerge, questioning whether the learning of English is threatening Chinese language and culture (Gil & Adamson, 2011; Pan & Seargeant, 2012; Qiang & Wolff, 2007). There have also been some heated debates on whether the required scores for English in college entrance exams should be lowered (Fang, 2018). Though such proposals have not yet been implemented in the current

testing system, these growing concerns about the wider effects of English show a greater emphasis on Chinese people's self awareness of their own language, culture and traditional values, and the debate on the localized use of English in relation to Chinese language and culture seems set to continue (Fang, Hu, & Jenkins, 2017; Wang, 2015; Yang & Zhang, 2015;).

2.1.2   China's Education System

Education has traditionally been highly venerated in China. According to the values of Confucianism (traditional Chinese philosophy), education should be prized. This is reflected in the feudal examination system which was in place to select officials and talents for the government (Zhang, 1995). The tradition of education that prioritizes exams has been ingrained in Chinese society and culture for a significant period (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). The high value on education is also related to one's social status, and therefore, Chinese parents traditionally hold high expectations for their children's education, while poor academic performance has often been associated with personal and even family failure (Davey, De Lian, & Higgins, 2007).

In contemporary China, according to the stipulations of Compulsory Education Law, all students are now expected to receive 9 years of compulsory education (from Grade 1 in primary school to Grade 9 in JHS). After taking the SHS entrance exam in each district, most students are then assigned to different senior high schools or vocational schools, while only very few (usually from rural and under-developed areas) leave education at this stage to start working. After 3 years of learning in SHS, students across the entire country sit for the National College Entrance Exams on the same days, and are then admitted to different universities or colleges with their majors determined by the scores they get.

It should also be noted at this juncture that universities in China have been steadily expanding their student numbers since the early 1980s, making China a country with the largest population of university

students in the world (OECD, 2009). One outcome of this is that in the domestic job market, the number of applicants usually far exceeds the number of available places, and competition is extremely fierce. Graduates from prestigious universities usually have more opportunities and advantages than others, thus the competitiveness of getting into a good university leads to teachers and parents placing more and more emphasis on their children's academic achievements at school, and exam preparation therefore usually begins at an early age.

In terms of the learning of English within China's education system, since 2001, English has been a compulsory course in primary schools in China, and students are required to start learning English from Grade 3 (Wang, 2007). With the English courses first carried out in primary schools, some kindergartens or nurseries, first in modern cities like Shanghai and Beijing, then second-tier cities, have begun to teach even younger children English. At the same time, English proficiency is measured in all forms of tests, from the SHS and University Entrance Exam to the College English Test when students enter universities. What happens in these tests has also created a backwash effect through the whole education system in China (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). For example, university graduates with good English skills as well as competence in their own discipline are more likely to find employment than those who lack such skills. And foreign enterprises, joint ventures and cooperatively run enterprises tend to offer the highest starting salaries (Gao, 2009; Yang, 2005). Outside the education system, the ability to communicate effectively in English is a crucial factor for career advancement, and numerous professionals dedicate significant resources towards improving their English proficiency as it is commonly utilized as a benchmark to evaluate their overall aptitude (Xie, 2004).

It can be seen from the above that, for most students, their academic journey involves a long learning period of English (at least 6 years, some for more than 15 years). In order to stand out from their peers in different forms of competitions, students of different ages need to devote more time and energy to English learning. All of this reflects that English

language has become one of the dominant strands within the modern Chinese education system.

2.2 ELT and Chinese Curriculum Reforms

The formation of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading is closely intertwined with a series of curriculum reforms that have occurred at various time periods in China, as teachers themselves were once language learners who had undergone different forms of ELT, which in turn has a significant impact on teachers' beliefs toward the teaching of EFL reading. The development of ELT has progressed in parallel with these reforms, which have had a significant impact on the field. In this section, an overview of these curriculum reforms will be presented, followed by an examination of their influence on Chinese ELT. By understanding the context of these reforms, we can gain insight into how they have shaped teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching English.

2.2.1 The 1980s: the Gradually Waning Dominance of Grammar Translation

In 1982, after China's policy of Reform and Opening Up, the Ministry of Education issued a White Paper entitled "Advice on Improving Middle School Students". It was proposed in this document that enhancing English language education should become an urgent priority to strengthen the communications between other countries and China, and that ELT would therefore have strategic significance for cultivating talents in social construction and scientific development (MoE, 1982).

Prior to this period, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), a form of language teaching methodology which largely involves the manipulation of sentence structure drills and text translations, had been the most popular language teaching approach in China. Although by the mid-1980s, some Chinese EFL teachers were starting to focus a little more on using informative and interest-provoking supplementary materials, grammar and passive vocabulary development remained the primary emphasis for most Chinese teaching. At this time, English

classes were also still most often taught entirely using the mother tongue of the learners (Zheng, 2015).

2.2.2 The 1990s: the Emergence of Communicative Language Teaching

Starting from the early 1990s, scholars and educators were beginning to consider some means of remedying China's test-driven education system (People's Education Press, 1993, cited in Zheng, 2015). By the late 1990s, researchers who had been influenced by Western educational theories and practices were identifying the problems existing in Chinese ELT (e.g., Wang & Wang, 2000), and the development of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach began to be embraced, primarily as a reaction to the perceived failure of all the previous methods. As the name suggests, CLT focuses on the communicative function of language and on developing the learners' communicative competence, and this soon became a popular term mentioned in ELT approaches and textbooks. The traditional focus on GTM thus began to enter a state of steady decline, largely as a consequence of the continued implementation of CLT.

However, despite the strong advocacy of CLT as the preferred teaching approach, as several Chinese scholars have pointed out (e.g., Wang, 2007) the implementation of the CLT approach in China in fact represents a significant challenge, particularly in more rural areas, as many Chinese teachers are simply not linguistically competent enough to use English language within their own classrooms. Hu (2002) has also noted that despite the lip-service paid to communicative language teaching, in some cases, there seems to have been little change in Chinese students' and teachers' conceptions and practices around effective language instruction. The old habits of teachers relying on grammar translation and focusing on language analysis instead of language for communication evidently die hard. A new metaphorical term was then coined in China to describe EFL learners who were

unable to communicate effectively in English: "deaf and dumb English". It must be acknowledged that, historically, there has been a significant concern regarding the persistence of a lack of practical communicative skills in English among Chinese learners (Lam, 2005, cited in Zheng, 2012; Yu, 2010).

2.2.3 The 2000s: the Rise of Task-based Language Teaching

Entering the 21st century, in 2001, China made it mandatory for elementary school students to study English starting from Grade 3. The Ministry of Education issued a document entitled 'Guidelines for Promoting English Teaching in Elementary Schools', and later in JHS, with a new emphasis on the productive skills for interpersonal communication (MoE, 2001). The 2001 curriculum highly advocated the idea of promoting *"quality education for each and every student"* (MoE, 2001, p. 2). As Yin (2013) has pointed out, globalization has had a profound impact on educational reforms. The focus on interpersonal communication in the curriculum guidelines was in fact significantly impacted by economic globalization forces as China attempted to shape its education system to provide the skills required in the growing global economy (Guo, et al, 2013).

The 2001 curriculum guidelines also particularly stressed the function of English as a tool for communication and in so doing proposed the specification for Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). As a stronger form of CLT, TBLT places its emphasis on engaging learners' natural abilities to acquire language incidentally while they perform tasks (MoE, 2001). It was believed that by adopting this new methodological approach, many of the problems around Chinese learners' poor communicative skills would be resolved.

In 2011, the original 2001 curriculum was renewed and revised based on the findings of the previous ten years of implementation. One of the outcomes of this, was that English textbooks have become more diversified, emphasizing the understanding of different cultures and the need for developing students' all-round abilities.

However, research conducted during this period has also shown teachers' low receptivity toward TBLT. For example, a research study on TBLT conducted at the Chinese JHS level suggested that in contrary to the official documents on how to teach English, many teachers in fact believed that students would learn nothing from engaging in what they perceived as 'noisy' tasks (Qian, 2006). Yang and Hao's (2007) study also indicated that many of the teachers they had surveyed believed that current applications of TBLT are not in fact beneficial for developing students' knowledge of grammar. Zheng and Borg (2014) have since further pointed out that a common failing of a curriculum which advocates the use of TBLT can be that it fails to "*provide a precise definition of what a task is*" (p. 208). Understandably, this might then cause confusion for teachers when trying to learn and understand the specific approach. These findings highlight some of the challenges which English teachers in China have faced when trying to implement TBLT approaches within the curriculum.

In review of the 2001 curriculum reform and its later implementation, it can be seen that despite the numerous efforts the government has made to transform the mode of EFL teaching and learning, the implementation of the curriculum reform remains hindered by issues such as teachers' clinging to their traditional teaching beliefs, and a lack of adequate pedagogical knowledge.

For example, after the 2001 reform had been implemented for more than a decade, a study carried out by Zhang and Liu (2013) suggested that the reforms had not necessarily achieved their expected effects. As these authors highlighted, English teachers' beliefs are not always in step with the ideas and concepts advocated by the reforms and some teachers are simply just not willing to change their pedagogic beliefs in order to accommodate new educational directives. Yu and Wang (2009) have also highlighted that there can be a mismatch between what teachers learned when they were learners and any new curriculum requirements they are now expected to follow. This gap between the old and the new has posed great challenges for teachers

to overcome. In another empirical study. In another empirical study, Yan (2012) also identified an implementation gap between the requirements stipulated in the curriculum and teachers' actual classroom practices. She notes that although teachers were generally positive toward what was being advocated in the new curriculum, they nonetheless felt incapable of implementing such ideas due to external factors such as the pressure from tests, their own students' resistance to certain tasks, and a general lack of school support.

When taken together, these results suggest that pedagogy cannot solely be based on abstract principles written in curriculum documents. In practice, the realities of different teaching situations and contexts must also be taken into account as well as teachers' knowledge and understanding of such principles in curriculum guidelines.

2.2.4 2018 to the Present Day: Cultivating Students' Core Competences

In 2018, China's Ministry of Education carried out a national curriculum reform in SHS Education, in which cultivating a righteous Chinese student was seen as being the main aim of the whole education of English (MoE, 2018). Four years after the issue of this curriculum reform in senior high schools in China, in 2022, the curriculum reform in primary and JHS level reflecting similar themes and ideas was carried out.

Compared with the 2001 curriculum, both the 2018 and 2022 curriculum highly emphasized the function of English in the overall development of China, that is, Chinese students are supposed to learn about the culture of both home and abroad, absorb the essence of those cultures and spread Chinese culture and wisdom through English learning (MoE, 2018; MoE, 2022). This is a reflection of China's booming economy over the past decades and its awareness of its own cultural identity and power in the world over the years.

In the curriculum guidelines, the development of core competences (critical thinking, learning capability, linguistic ability, and cultural awareness) was assigned a high priority (MoE, 2018; MoE, 2022). This has also posed new challenges for ELT in China, because the issuing of the

new curriculum can lead to considerable changes regarding what kind of students to cultivate, how to cultivate such students in classrooms and how to evaluate and assess students' performance in a more holistic and all-around way.

Similar to the approach taken during its previous curriculum reform, China intends to implement changes in a deliberate, synchronized, responsive, and organized manner, incorporating its distinctive "Chinese" methods (Wang, 2019). Such implementation is likely to require teachers to adopt an accelerated framework and integrate diverse teaching approaches. Meanwhile, considering the low receptivity of the previous reforms, applying this top-down system has been seen by some as a double-edged sword (e.g.,Yuan, 2017).

Curriculum change represents a long and gradual process, which will not necessarily ensure that changes take place in real classrooms . How to implement the current curriculum reforms in an effective way thus remains a difficult problem to tackle.

2.3   Reading and Chinese ELT

Reading is widely recognized as a crucial component of English language learning, alongside listening, speaking, and writing (Carrell, 1991; Kliewer & Landis, 1999; Oczkus, 2014; Talebi, 2015). In China's ELT context, reading holds great significance as well (Huang, 2006, 2011). This section aims to provide an overview of the key models and theories pertaining to reading in ELT. Recognizing that teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of reading are closely associated with these models and theories, this section will shed light on how these perspectives influence instructional practices and assessment approaches in the Chinese JHS setting.

2.3.1   Teaching Models in ELT Reading

In terms of teaching EFL reading in China, the most commonly used models of teaching reading are the bottom-up, top-down and interactive models (Huang, 2003). I will discuss how these operate in

more detail.

2.3.1.1 The Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up model, recognized as one of the earliest models for reading, emphasizes that readers need to recognize the letters and words in a given text followed by the sentence structure so as to get the main information (Paran, 1996). This information then becomes "*meaningful when the structures (letters, words and sentences) correspond with the reader's mental lexicon*" (Barnett, 1989, p. 14).

By using this approach, students can overcome some linguistic or lexical difficulties they encounter when reading, and GTM, which had been the go-to method until the 1980s in China, as I stated earlier, is in some ways similar to the bottom-up model of reading. Based on the GTM model, teachers translate the words and sentences into Chinese for the students one by one and everything is then later combined to assist students in making sense of reading texts as a whole. Traditionally speaking, the bottom-up approach has had a profound influence on reading pedagogy in China and is reflected in the way that many teachers focus on discrete vocabulary and grammar items in reading texts, and pay much less attention to aspects of more holistic comprehension (He, 2017a).

2.3.1.2 The Top-down Model

In contrast to the notion that reading only involves a bottom-up process and is text-driven, there is another long-standing model for reading called the top-down approach which sees reading as a more holistic and reader-driven process (e.g., Rumelhart, 1977; Stanovich, 1980). The top-down reading model stresses the reader's contribution to the text, contending that reading proceeds from whole to part and is primarily informed by meaning. Based on this approach, readers are encouraged to use their existing background knowledge when interpreting assumptions, drawing inferences, or understanding the overall purpose of a text (Nuttall, 2005).

The top-down model of reading stresses the importance of reader's background knowledge, since it appears that linguistic knowledge and a process of decoding are not enough to help one fully understand what one reads. While following a top-down approach, rather than reading everything word by word, readers may instead be encouraged to skim and scan their reading texts to get the general gist of things and look for information which matches their expectations, rather than trying to decode the text letter by letter.

In China's ELT context, the top-down model is also utilized by teachers and most people are now very familiar with reading strategies such as skimming and scanning. However, it must be said that an over-emphasis on top-down approaches can pose some challenges for student readers with poor reading proficiency. As He (2017b) has pointed out, if students lack sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, this may then serve as a barrier to their comprehensive understanding of reading texts.

2.3.1.3   The Interactive Model

The third reading model, known as the interactive model, makes use of both the bottom-up and top-down models. According to Eskey and Grabe (1988, p. 224), an interactive model of reading "*assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text*". The interactive model particularly draws on aspects of schema theory, which sees text comprehension as being an interactive process between the background knowledge that a reader brings to a text and the content of the text itself (Adams & Collins, 1979; Rumelhart, 1977).

Since the interactive model consists of "top-down and bottom-up strategies" combined, it suggests that the reading process does not work linearly. Within this model, readers continuously shift back and forth between interpretation and decoding of the reading texts, drawing on their background knowledge for further comprehension. Eskey and Grabe (1988, p. 227) commented that while applying the interactive model in teaching reading, "*both top-down and bottom-up skills and*

strategies must be developed, and developed conjointly" in order for "*successful comprehension of text*" to take place.

The interactive model of reading appears to be quite similar to what is currently being advocated in the curriculum reforms sweeping China i.e, that the teaching of reading should not merely focus on the linguistic knowledge, such as the meaning of discrete words or sentences within the reading text, nor should it attempt to approach the reading text in a top-down manner without focusing on the language itself (MoE, 2022). In the style of reading classes advocated by the 2018 and 2022 curriculum, students are expected to be taught how to read texts interactively drawing on their critical understanding (MoE, 2022).

2.3.1.4 Commonly Used Approaches when Teaching Reading in China

In most traditional reading classes in China, teachers usually follow the PWP approach (pre-, while- and post-) when teaching reading (e.g.,He, 2017a; Ge, 2012; Yu, Bian & Huang, 2022).

In the pre-reading stage, teachers typically get students ready for the reading task by asking them to make predictions on what the text might be about and/or drawing their attention to key lexis or concepts. The while-reading stage usually involves more detailed comprehension of the texts and might ask students to answer questions on the text content or structure. The post-reading stage usually involves students in providing a comprehensive summary of the reading text and encouraging them to relate the content to their own lives, although it must be said that some teachers might continue to focus on grammar and vocabulary in this stage (He, 2017b).

The commonly advocated use of specific reading strategies such as "*activating students' background knowledge, teaching to improve comprehension of reading texts, increasing the speed of reading, verifying and justifying strategies for reading, evaluating students' progress in reading, building up interest and motivation for reading, and choosing appropriate reading materials*" (Anderson ,1999, p. 6) as with ELT practices elsewhere, have also been commonly used in the Chinese

ELT context.

2.3.2 Teaching Reading in JHS in China

2.3.2.1 Requirements and Assessments

As is defined in the 2022 Curriculum, English should be seen as a tool for communication, allowing students to express their thoughts and learn about other subjects, as well as serving to nurture students' cultural awareness, values, patriotism, social responsibilities and aesthetic values (MoE, 2022). The teaching of EFL reading is thus seen as a key way to nurturing students' core competences (He, 2017b; Sun, Wang & Qian, 2017). In terms of the specified objectives in teaching EFL reading, students are expected to be able to extract information from reading texts, develop effective reading skills, learn linguistic knowledge, strengthen their thinking abilities, and expand their cultural horizons(MoE. 2022). There are in fact six stipulated competency statements for JHS EFL reading:

(1) Students can infer new words from the reading context;
(2) Students can understand the logic between sentences;
(3) Students are able to identify the theme of the reading text, as well as the plot of stories and possible development of the stories;
(4) Students can understand genres of different texts;
(5) Students can use reading strategies based on different reading texts.
(6) Students can reach a reading amount of 150 000 words of extra reading materials. (MoE, 2022)

The significance and importance assigned to the teaching of EFL reading is also manifested in English tests. Reading is tested in all the important English examinations in China at all levels, and accounts for a large proportion of what is ultimately assessed in all kinds of English tests. Below is an example of test types in a SHS entrance exam:

Table 2.1 Test type in a SHS entrance exam for English

Part 1	Listening Part	15 points
Part 2	Speaking Part	10 points

Part 3	Cloze	15 points
Part 4	Reading (4 Passages)	30 points
Part 5	Task Reading	5 points
Part 6	Vocabulary	15 points
Part 7	Passage blank filling	10 points
Part 8	Writing	20 points

The overall score is 120 points in the test paper, and it can be seen from the table above that reading alone accounts for more than 35 points, while the testing of cloze and passage blank filling is also assessed based on the comprehension of the reading material. Generally speaking, with the exception of the vocabulary section, all the other parts of the written test take the form of reading passages. There are altogether 8 passages in a test, which shows the great importance assigned to reading and poses challenges for both teachers and students. The extract below shows an example text from the English reading test:

Figure 2.1 Reading passage from 2022 SHS entrance exam for English

(D)

Recently, many people think it's risky to use credit (信用) card numbers online. However, from time to time, we all use passwords and ID numbers on the Internet. We think we are safe, but that may not be true! A new kind of attack (攻击) is being used by dishonest people to steal IDs and credit card numbers from websurfers. This new kind of attack is called "phishing".

Phishing sounds the same as the word "fishing", and it means that a thief is trying to trick people into giving away valuable information. Like real fishermen, phishers use bait (诱饵) in the form of great online deals or services. For example, phishers might use false emails and websites to trick people into revealing (透露) credit card numbers, account usernames, and passwords. They imitate (模仿) well-known banks, online sellers, and credit card companies. Successful phishers may make as many as 5% of the people believe and give away their personal information.

It's really a big problem! Actually, tricking 5% of the online population is huge. Now more than 4.6 billion people have access (进入权) to the Internet, and 75% of those Internet users live in the wealthiest countries on Earth. It has been reported that phishers send more than 40 billion false messages each year. Even by tricking only 5% of the people, phishers can make a lot of money.

Amy, 18, from California, received an email. A man told Amy that she could get a million dollars in her account as a reward if she sent a thousand dollars to him. Amy did as the man said at once. The "thief" used Amy's Social Security number to get credit cards in her name and **transferred** her money.

How can people avoid being cheated online? Above all, they have to learn to recognize the email that has been sent by a phisher. Always be careful with any email with urgent (紧急的) requests for personal information. Phishers typically write upsetting or exciting, but false, statements in their emails so that people will reply right away. Never give out personal information to phishers. And if an offer sounds too good to be true, it is.

27. Phishing is compared to _____ according to the passage.
    A. making money   B. playing games   C. catching fish   D. writing emails
28. Which writing skill is used in Para. 3?
    A. Giving examples.   B. Listing numbers.   C. Raising questions.   D. Using sayings.
29. Which of the following in the dictionary best explains the underlined word "**transfer**" in Para. 4?

> transfer   *v.* (transferred, transferring)
> ① to move from one place, school, job etc to another
> ② to connect the call of someone to someone else's
> ③ to move money from one account to another
> ④ to change from one bus, plane etc to another
> …

    A. ①   B. ②   C. ③   D. ④
30. Besides introducing what phishing is, the writer also tells us how to _____.
    A. help to catch phishers   B. reply to urgent emails
    C. pay by credit card   D. protect ourselves online

It can be seen from this text and the accompanying questions that within one short passage, different strategies in reading and learning are being tested. For example, in Question 27, students are expected to read through the text and extract relevant information; in Questions 28 and 30, students are supposed to summarize some elements of the passage by analyzing the text; Question 29 checks whether students are able to use a dictionary, which is a test of their autonomous learning capacity as well as their ability to infer meaning from texts.

2.3.2.2   Problems in the Teaching of EFL Reading in JHS

Besides the high proportion of reading in reading text, reading in an English language class is often considered as one of the most important activities among all the skills being taught. EFL reading is a process of core competence nurturing, which not only helps students to learn linguistic knowledge but also cultivates their other competences such as respecting differences, raising global vision and criticizing and questioning (Lu, 2017). While students understand, process and interpret reading texts, they not only develop their critical thinking, and experience cultural differences, but also improve their learning and linguistic capacity (Mei, 2018). Therefore, as an integral part in EFL teaching,   how to teach reading plays an important role in developing students' overall language proficiency, as classroom is a crucial platform where students learn about texts, observe, participate in communication and learn cultural knowledge (Shu & Wang, 2004).

However, in review of the situation of EFL reading pedagogy in China, Ge (2012) has drawn attention to some problems regarding teaching modes and their effect. For example, despite the strong and popular advocating of TBLT and student-centered learning, many teachers in China still carry out GTM and bottom-up reading approaches, where they lay great emphasis on the improvement of students' linguistic competence. A further scholar, Yang (2017) has also problematized reading, pointing out that many Chinese teachers fail to set specific goals for their students and lack the knowledge they need to develop their students' overall proficiency in English reading. Other studies also indicated the low effectiveness and students' poor reading efficiency and poor use of reading strategies due to little attention on the training of reading skills (e.g., Zhang, 2008; Zhang, 2009). After the 2018 curriculum reform was carried out, other researchers pointed out that despite the fact that teachers have realized the importance of efficiency in reading classes, many of their instructions still only focus on mechanical drilling with very little creativity and critical thinking (e.g., Mei & Wang, 2019; Gu, 2020).

Another problem facing the teaching of reading in China is the insufficient amount of extra reading resources. Though the required amount in the curriculum is 150, 000 words, most students have little access to extra reading materials. A questionnaire conducted by the China Daily newspaper stated that JHS students' main source of English reading remains their textbooks and language exercises (China Daily, 2014). While discussing the factors that can get in the way of students' active reading of extra materials, Grabe (2009) has reported that some of the constraints of implementing a more extensive reading approach are that it takes time and requires a lot of resources. A further challenge he identifies is that "*teachers are not prepared to radically rethink how reading should be taught and learned, or that they do not have the language and reading skills to spontaneously respond to many types of questions when students need help in class*" (p. 312). In the EFL context of China, extensive reading usually takes place in students' after-class time period, when they are already facing a significant learning burden caused by the tests in their other subjects. These factors limit their time for further appreciation of other English reading materials.

As I hope to have shown above, most reading lessons in China's EFL context are thus still highly teacher-centered and textbook-based, with many teachers engaging in drills and other bottom-up decoding techniques. Part of the reason behind this might be due to the Chinese ideology of learning as a systematic process which involves predetermined stages. Most people in China would still conceive of a competent teacher as being a knowledge transmitter or an expert in terms of subject-matter knowledge (Chan & Rao, 2010). This means that methods which are based on high levels of learner centeredness may be less utilized by teachers.

2.4 Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development in China

Teacher education and continuing professional development in China also hold significant relevance to the formation of teachers' beliefs

regarding the teaching of reading. The Ministry of Education and China's State Council have both emphasized the crucial role that teachers play in the nation's development (Zhou, 2019). The Chinese government has also set forth the grand aim of building the country into a "prosperous nation on education." In the subsequent sub-section, an overview of the current situation regarding EFL teacher education and professional development in China will be presented. By examining the existing landscape, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational initiatives and policies that play a role in shaping the professional growth and belief formation of EFL teachers in the country.

2.4.1   Pre-service Teacher Education

In China, the pre-service education for aspiring EFL teachers is usually a 4-year undergraduate or 3-year diploma course offered by a teacher's college or other university-level organization, covering the foundations of education, psychology, and teaching pedagogy (Zheng, 2015).

There are three main kinds of courses for would-be teachers: the first kind is about English language itself, including basic skills in English and English literature, and American or British culture; the second kind is on teaching theories like curriculum design and different teaching approaches; the third kind involves real-context practice such as internships in local schools. Courses on improving language skills and competence are usually carried out throughout the participant teachers' first year to the third year, when they not only take different courses on English language, but also take different tests like TEM-4 and TEM-8 for English majors. By taking such tests, they could be considered qualified for entering recruitment interviews for English teachers in their area. In many universities, the passing rate of these tests are shown to the public and the passing rate also serves as a means to evaluate the quality of education for the universities.

The history of China's pre-service education can in fact be dated back to about 100 years ago, while education in ELT for pre-service teachers has a much shorter history of about 60 years (Zou, 2009). It was only in

1957 when normal universities in China carried out courses in ELT majors, and the design of these courses was relatively weak (Cheng & Sun, 2010; Zou, 2009). For example, there has been no clear aim or direction for the nurturing of English language teachers, and some normal universities even have the tendency to eliminate the teaching focus, instead of emphasizing the comprehensive and practical mastery of the English language (Zou, 2009).

Besides the insufficient course design to more effectively prepare pre-service teachers for their future career, some researchers (eg., Zou, 2019; Yang, 2016) have also stated that many university teachers lack the self-consciousness of being "teacher educators" and pay little attention to their student teachers' learning. When teaching pedagogical theories, many university teachers tend to use mere transmission of knowledge as their main teaching method and fail to give effective demonstrations for their students in ELT courses. This can result in the students' improper understanding and even the misuse of some teaching theories in their own teaching when those student teachers finally do take on teaching as their career.

One result of the above is that despite having completed four years of pre-service education, many student teachers have improved their linguistic command of English but not necessarily their ability of how to *teach* English. In other words, four years of undergraduate education is more about training "foreign language speakers" than creating "qualified foreign language teachers", as the graduates of such courses have little or insufficient preparation in the practical mechanics of ELT.

Another problem which many normal universities face is whether they can recruit graduates of a high enough calibre and those who are really qualified to be English teachers in the future. As I stated earlier, the College Entrance Exam plays a decisive role in what kind of school and what major college applicants can be admitted to. As students who enter such normal universities tend not to be the ones who get high scores in tests, whether they are capable of mastering the professional

knowledge and teaching theory remains a problem (Zhou, 2019; Zou, 2009). Moreover, as Zou (2019) has acidly commented, a fair number of students choose to become teachers not because of their passion towards teaching per se, but because of the economic burden faced by their families whereby normal universities in China usually only require low tuition fees. Problems of this nature which exist in the recruitment of would-be teachers are another factor which can and does impact the quality of in-service teachers.

2.4.2   In-service Training and Continuing Professional Development

In-service training, as the name suggests, is the formal teacher education which teachers receive after they become teachers, and is perceived as one of the most effective and efficient means of teacher development (Zhou, 2005). China boasts a large number of in-service teachers at the primary and middle school level, and teachers' in-service training is extremely important, as the short-term pre-service training rarely prepares teachers with all the required knowledge and skills which is needed for improving teachers' overall performance (Yang, 2016).

There are various forms of in-service EFL teacher education in China, but their main aims are usually to help teachers in understanding the themes, concepts and requirements posed by the National Curriculum and in so doing contribute to teachers' professional development. In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of how in-service training in China typically works.

For many years, local district-based teaching and research instructors have played a role in the training of in-service teachers (Zhou, 2010). Such instructors are usually elite teachers selected from each region, but nonetheless, their theoretical foundation is usually not as solid as that of professors in universities (Yang, 2016). Their main forms of training are based on lectures and group discussions on how to improve test scores and carry out teaching in a more effective way. In traditional teacher training of this nature, there are often demo class observations

followed by some experts' comments on those lessons. However, this form of top-down knowledge-transmission, though more easily to be accepted, ignores "*a rich, varied, and complex process of learning to teach*" (Freeman, 2002, p. 12), as well as teachers' own initiatives and motivations in self-learning and professional development, which can result in a wide gap between theory and practice. As a result, these forms of training have little effect on truly improving those teachers' theories of ELT teaching and professional development (Yang, 2016).

In addition to the teacher training organized by district instructors, other lectures are also carried out by university professors who try to share teaching knowledge with teachers. However, it must be said that these lectures usually receive little positive feedback. For example, in Yang's (2019) study exploring the teachers' development in teacher training, some of the interviewed teachers harshly pointed out that scholars or educators for the lectures are like generals in heaven, only telling teachers what the big concepts are, while the middle school teachers themselves are more like soldiers who are eager to know *how* to operationalize things on the ground; in other words, "Please tell us HOW to do WHAT, not just WHAT" (p.19).

The reason why some teacher training cannot be fully absorbed by some teachers is that similar to what happens during pre-service training, some teacher trainers don't actually know what teachers really think and what they actually do in their teaching practice. In some training programs, lecturers or teacher educators merely talk about abstract teaching concepts or pedagogical approaches without much interaction between the teachers and the teacher educators. Gu (2008) and Wang (2005) have also stated that many in-service training programs for teachers in China are not sufficiently concerned with teachers' personal experiences and their requirements for work; instead, it seems that most of them are only about teaching theory and have become a mere formality. Moreover, as those kinds of training usually aim to deliver some new teaching method from the curriculum, little importance has been attached to individual teachers' real needs in

their own teaching contexts (Du, 2010). These kinds of training rarely probe into the teachers' inner thoughts; thus, it becomes significantly more difficult to make any lasting changes to teachers' real practices as they do not really know how to apply these pedagogic theories in their classrooms.

Therefore, although teacher training is compulsory in schools in China (if teachers do not take part in such training, they will not be given any credits or awarded more senior titles), a huge gap still exists between the theories advocated in the training and how these theories might then be applied in practice, as teachers can neither fully engage in such forms of learning with the experts, nor can they specifically know how to covert pedagogic theory into action (Wang & Cheng, 2009). Moreover, as most of the in-service training takes place during the school time, some teachers would even purposefully "skip" some training sessions in order to accomplish their daily teaching tasks, leading to some teachers having little enthusiasm and even some reluctance toward completing such programs. Thus, though some teacher education programs may aim to equip in-service teachers with certain skills, for many teachers, this has become an exercise in static knowledge accumulation, rather than a process of active belief or practice transformation.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have sought to present an overview of the ELT context in China. The first section provided a review of the current status of English language learning in China's education system. Despite concerns about the impact of English on Chinese language and culture, English remains a dominant strand within the modern Chinese education system, driven in part by the high value placed on testing by Chinese society.

The second section of the current chapter discussed the curriculum reform in China over the past few decades. Although the Chinese government makes great efforts to reform EFL teaching and prioritize

the development of students' core competences, challenges remain, including teachers' resistance to change and a lack of pedagogical knowledge.

The third section of the text provided an overview of the main models and theories related to reading in ELT in China, and how these theories are connected to the teaching and assessment of EFL reading in JHS. Despite curriculum innovation, most EFL reading lessons in China remain teacher-centered and textbook-based, with many teachers using bottom-up decoding techniques and drills.

The last section listed the literature on the current EFL teacher education and professional development situation in China, and pointed out that in both pre-service and in-service training for teachers, a huge gap still existed between the theories advocated in the training and how these theories might then be applied in practice.

In the next chapter, I will switch my focus to discussing what the literature has had to say about teachers' beliefs and other related concepts.

CHAPTER 3:   Literature Review

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3.2.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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Chapter Summary

Introduction

Although some might argue that it is only during the past 4 decades or so that the study of language teacher education has become a major focus for research (Borg, 2006, Freeman, 2002), it is generally widely acknowledged that understanding what teachers think and feel plays an important role in better understanding the processes of language teaching and teacher learning (Borg, 2003; Kubanyiova, 2012; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). However, when reviewing the literature on what teachers think and feel, perhaps the first thing to be said is that the topic itself can be divided into several slightly different, though sometimes overlapping areas.

3.1 Teachers' Beliefs

3.1.1   Teachers' Beliefs as a General Concept

Some 40 years ago, Fenstermacher (1979) predicted that research on teachers' beliefs would become an important area of inquiry for

teacher education (cited in Pajares, 1992). Commenting a decade later, Pintrich (1990) also suggested that in the field of teacher education, beliefs will ultimately prove to be a most valuable psychological construct (cited in Pajares, 1992). Researchers' interest in teacher beliefs has continued until the present day (e.g. Borg, 2003, 2006, 2011, 2015; Fives & Buehl, 2016; Ham & Dekkers, 2019; Mo, 2020; Skott, 2015).

In defining teachers' beliefs, Pajares (1992) is now widely acknowledged as having provided what was then perhaps the most comprehensive review of the literature available. In her seminal and oft-quoted article on beliefs as a "messy construct", a list of 16 assumptions was identified for researchers to use when investigating teachers' educational beliefs. In this list, belief was identified as "*a system of interconnected substructures, inextricably intertwined with knowledge*" (p. 324), and it was argued that these substructures can strongly affect individual behaviors (Pajares, 1992).

Writing over a decade later, Alanen (2003, p. 65) also defines beliefs as "*a specific type of mediational means*". Therefore, beliefs can be viewed as not only socially derived, but also dynamically and personally shaped by socialization.

Prior to Pajares, definitions of beliefs were usually linked with psychological aspects. For example, an early writer, Rokeach (1968) positioned beliefs as "*any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase, 'I believe that ...'* (p. 113). Another relatively early researcher, Sigel (1985) has written of beliefs as representing "*mental constructions of experience —often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts*" (p. 351). Fast-forwarding twenty years and also focusing on psychological perspectives, according to Peacock (2001), beliefs constituite the psychologically held understandings, or propositions that we consider to be true.

It can be seen from the above definitions that it is has generally been

agreed that "belief" is a subjective state of consciousness rather than an objective one. Beliefs, therefore, can be seen as a phenomenon which subjectively judge and evaluate matters, whether the premises for such phenomenon are right or wrong.

With regard to teacher education, teachers' beliefs are now seen as representing a crucial part of teachers' teaching and learning and have become a critical element in this area of inquiry. As Kagan (1992) has stated, teachers' beliefs "*lie at the very heart of teaching*" (p. 85). Kagan (1992) has even gone so far as to claim that beliefs "*may be the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth*" (p. 85). The above statements indicate the importance of teachers' beliefs in teachers' classroom practices and overall professional development.

In defining teachers' beliefs, Porter and Freeman (1986) drew attention to teaching orientations. They proposed that teachers' beliefs are based on teachers' opinions about teaching practices, learners, learning curriculum, teaching contexts, and their roles as teachers (cited in Pajares, 1992). Similarly, Borg (2011) has positioned beliefs as evaluative propositions, defining them as the "*tacit, personally-held practical system of mental constructs*" (p. 370). Writing more recently, Skott (2015) defines teacher beliefs as "*individual, subjectively true and value-laden mental constructs that are of relatively stable results of substantial social experience and that have significant impact on one's interpretations of and contributions to classroom practices*" (p. 19).

Based on the above definitions of beliefs and teachers' beliefs, it can be seen that teachers' beliefs can be viewed as not only socially derived, but also dynamically and personally shaped by socialization. For the purposes of this study, I will argue that teachers' beliefs should constitute psychologically held thinking and conceptions, but also that they should come from each individual within a social context, changed and accumulated through a series of complex social situations and cultural contexts.

Despite this "*messy*" nature of teachers' beliefs, according to

Karabenick and Noda (2004), exploring teachers' beliefs remains an important and worthy area for further inquiry because they believe that "*beliefs affect teachers' motivation to engage with their students, which can, in turn, transform into higher student motivation and performance*" (p. 56). Though exploration of such beliefs in teachers can be challenging due to the fact that each teacher is a unique individual with his or her own experiences, thoughts, and theories, it is still a valid area for investigation within different contexts of teaching and learning.

3.1.2   Teachers' Beliefs and Teacher Knowledge

When talking about teachers' beliefs, many would also use the term "*teacher cognition*" as this encompasses "*what a teacher thinks, knows and believes*" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Expanding on this, Borg (2006) cites several studies on teacher cognition in which he used different terminology such as teacher knowledge.

As a result of this preponderance of different terms, I believe that it is worth distinguishing between teachers' beliefs and teacher knowledge at this juncture because it seems that the literature may sometimes serve to conflate these areas. Writing over 30 years ago now, for example, Nespor (1987) differentiated between these two terms by noting that beliefs generalize knowledge and judge information, pointing out that there is a greater influence of affective and evaluative components in beliefs than in knowledge systems. Unlike knowledge, beliefs are flexible and unbounded, so they do not need to have consensus when it comes to judging their validity and appropriateness. Knowledge, on the other hand, affects beliefs while beliefs themselves can control the process of knowledge acquisition because factual knowledge provides a fundamental basis for individuals to judge subjectively. This means that individuals' beliefs are affective and emotional and might either facilitate or impede one's acceptance of knowledge. Some researchers have even indicated that compared with teacher knowledge, teachers' beliefs would be more likely to dictate teachers' behavior in their classrooms (Blömeke,

Buchholtz , Suh, & Kaiser, 2014; Ernest, 1989). Fives and Buehl (2012) also suggest that beliefs are personal statements that individuals believe to be true, while knowledge involves an objective truth that can be confirmed or validated through external sources or procedures. Hence, some distinctions between beliefs and knowledge can be drawn by examining them from the perspectives of truth, consensus, and external evaluation. In other words, beliefs refer more to suppositions which do not require a condition or evaluation of truth and can be doubted more than facts, while factual knowledge is by necessity based on the consensus.

In order to clarify these key terms, in this current study, teachers' beliefs and knowledge are dealt with as separate, though related, constructs: teachers' beliefs represent the things which they *think* are true (Aguirre & Speer, 2000), whereas teacher knowledge refers to what they *know* (Beach, 1994; Clemente & Ramirez, 2008). Thus, beliefs serve as a mediator between one's knowledge and actions. Of course, these two concepts cannot be seen as entirely distinct; the inter-relationships whereby knowledge affects beliefs and the acquisition of knowledge is impacted by beliefs must also be acknowledged.

3.2   Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

3.2.1 Relevant Studies on Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

Borg (2012) has stated that "*What teachers do is important, but if we want to <u>understand</u> what teachers do, if we want to promote change, we need to look at beliefs.*" (Borg, 2012, p. 88, cited in Birello, 2012). This indicates that teachers' beliefs guide their behavior and inform their practice by providing an interpretive framework through which they make sense of what they do in the classroom.

However, as Freeman (2002) has pointed out, until the mid-1970s, studies on teachers were predominantly related to teachers' behavior instead of with their mental lives. As Freeman (2002) charts, there started to be some dispute with these studies as it was recognized that simply investigating the behavior of teachers in the classroom would still

leave certain questions unanswered. Thereafter, in the aim of understanding teaching better, other studies duly began to look into how teachers' beliefs can have an influence on their classroom practices (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Pajares, 1992). Hence, the mid-70s is considered as a historical milestone in the emergence of studies examining teachers' mental thoughts and cognition.

Since that period, teachers have been increasingly considered as active agents who think and act based on their experiences and teaching and learning knowledge (e.g., Clark & Yinger, 1977; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Kangas & Harju-Luukkainen, 2021; Pajares, 1992). There are also other studies which began to focus on exploring the link between what teachers believe, think and how they actually behave, in the hope that this would help to understand teaching as well as teachers' behaviour in a better way (e.g., Phipps & Borg, 2009; Pischetola, 2022; Woods, 1996). The results of those studies have also demonstrated that teachers' beliefs can make a difference to the ways in which teachers approach teaching. Researchers have hence argued that teachers' behavior or actions need to be understood along with their beliefs.

A number of other studies have been further conducted to show the connection between what teachers say they believe and what they in fact do in their classrooms through a series of analysis on what those teachers' actual classroom practices are and how they then reflect on these practices (e.g. Farrell & Yang, 2017; McCarty, Abbott-Shim, & Lambert, 2001). These research trends not only enhance our knowledge of teachers' inner world, but also shed some light on the different judgments and decisions which are justified in the classroom. Hence it can be concluded that better understanding of teachers' beliefs can thus provide useful insights into teachers' behavior in classroom practices.

When looking into whether teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices are consistent or not, a number of studies have demonstrated

certain evidence that teachers' beliefs are consistent with how they actually carry out their teaching practice in the classroom (e.g., Deford, 1985; Mansour, 2013; Nespor, 1987; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Some other studies indicated inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices (e.g. Brown & Melear, 2006; Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Kang & Wallace, 2005). However, instead of merely focusing on the consistency or inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and classroom practice, some of the earlier research has focused on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices (Foss & Kleinsasser, 1996) by using the term "*symbiotic relationship*" when referring to the interplay between the two (p. 441). Some research has argued that teachers' beliefs and their practice would sometimes show tension and divergence with each other (e.g., Farrell & Vos, 2018; Klein, 2004; Lee, 2009; Mitchell, 2005; Tan, 2007). Other studies have found that consistency and inconsistency often coexist between what teachers say and do (Barrot, 2016; Fang, 1996; Lou & Liao, 2005).

Despite that it might be perceived as a shortcoming to see teachers' departing from their thoughts on the lesson plans, Borg (2003) notes that such departures in fact result from those teachers' constant interactions between pedagogical choices and perceptions of instructional contexts. Northcote (2009) has also pointed out that a lack of congruence between teachers' beliefs and their actual teaching practices is not necessarily a flaw, but a chance for us to understand teaching and learning better, and which also then forces us to consider how beliefs actually relate to practices. Lenski, Wham and Griffey (1998) for example, noticed that when teachers' beliefs are in the process of changing, incongruent beliefs and practices might well occur. These researchers thus come to a conclusion that a "*shift in beliefs may precede actual change in practice*" (p. 7).

In exploring factors that shape teachers' beliefs, studies in educational mainstream research have suggested that a variety of interactive and often conflicting factors shape teachers' beliefs (Bailey, 1996; Burns, 1996; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richards, Ho, & Giblin, 1996; Suwannasom,

2010). For example, according to research by Borg (2003) and Fang (1996), situational constraints can impact teachers' practices, along with other factors such as teacher preparation (Deal & White, 2006) , school context, and learners' academic and social background (Larenas, Hernández, & Navarrete, 2015), and even the textbooks can sometimes either create chances for, or constrict teachers from, implementing their own beliefs in their real practice (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1982).

Additionally, Dan Lortie's "School Teacher: A Sociological Study" (1975) is now widely recognised as a seminal contribution to the existing literature on teachers' beliefs, as it demonstrated that teachers' previous learning experiences can also strongly influence their later beliefs about learning and teaching. Other similar studies have also suggested the considerable influence of teachers' prior learning experiences on their teaching beliefs or cognition (e.g., Bailey, 1996; Gürsoy, 2013; Holt-Reynolds, 1992). As teachers hold personal beliefs about their roles in the classroom, about their students as well as the subjects they teach, whether they have extensive teaching experience or not, these beliefs will inevitably influence their own teaching practices in the classroom.

Thus, when studying teachers' beliefs and practices, it is not always a straightforward task to define the relationship between the two simply in terms of whether they are consistent or not. For example, teachers' beliefs may be conflicted and tensioned, which then has an effect on their actions. As a result, it is more pertinent to understand how different parts of teachers' beliefs interact with their practices rather than focusing on the mere consistency or the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and practice. By exploring the inner workings of how beliefs originate and develop and how they can have an impact on teachers' practice, we may be able to better identify the contextual factors which can cause incongruity between what teachers say they believe and what in fact they actually do.

3.2.2   Empirical Studies on Teachers' Beliefs toward Teaching Reading

3.2.2.1   Relevant Studies in L1 Countries

Since the 1980s, more and more studies on language teacher education have been undertaken to better our understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices in the field of teaching reading (e.g., Deford, 1985; Fang, 1996; Luciano, 1997; Olson & Singer, 1994;). Indeed, the goal of such studies has been to examine how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning reading can impact their decision making and behavior in classrooms, as well as their students' behavior and performance in reading.

Researchers studying first language (L1) reading around the 1980s assumed that teachers held theoretical beliefs about reading, and their teaching practices were also based on their beliefs. An example of this is the propositional inventory developed by Duffy and Metheny (1979) in an attempt to assess beliefs of primary school teachers' concerning basal texts, decoding skills, comprehension of reading texts and some other aspects. A close correlation was found between these beliefs and classroom practices based on observations in the field. Further, Deford (1985) developed an instrument to measure different approaches to teaching reading known as the Theoretical Orientation towards Reading Profile (TORP). Based on a multiple-choice format, this instrument is designed to evaluate and assess teachers' beliefs by examining their attitudes and approaches to issues such as phonics, reading skills, with the results then validated by observation in the classroom. In other studies since then (e.g., Luciano, 1997; Olson & Singer, 1994), the TORP instrument has been introduced and adopted, showing a high correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices.

Other studies in the same period, however, indicated that teachers' beliefs were constrained by some contextual factors. One of the most widely-known studies in this area is Duffy and Anderson's (1986) four-year study. They adopted research methods like inventories and

observations and found that teachers' reading instruction was often constrained by contextual factors like language abilities of students, materials under the curriculum guideline and time limitations. Research methods like inventories and observations were also used. Duffy and Anderson (1986) suggested that despite the teachers' ability to verbalize their beliefs regarding the teaching of reading beyond the classroom context, their practical implementation of reading instruction was found to be affected by the external factors that were mentioned above. Other studies in this period have also pointed out that the complexities of classroom will somehow restrict teachers from implementing their own beliefs in real classroom practice (e.g., Duffy, 1982; Duffy & Ball, 1983). Based on this, it can be concluded that teachers' beliefs may be strongly influenced by contextual factors.

It can also be seen from the above that research conducted around the 1980s was generally large-scale in nature and belonged to a quantitative paradigm, employing methods such as questionnaires in the form of inventories. By comparison, research conducted in the 1990s tended to be smaller in scale (with the exception of Luciano's study in 1997), and more qualitative measures were incorporated into the quantitative measurements. Interestingly, while the methods of these above studies were triangulated and validated, their results still differed. Luciano (1997), for instance, investigated 102 first-grade English teachers' beliefs regarding teaching reading and their actual classroom practice in Florida, USA. Observations of classrooms were conducted with ten teachers who were earlier surveyed using the TORP inventory. It was found that the reading beliefs of those teachers' did not align with the reading instructions they gave in class. Several other empirical studies on teachers' beliefs about reading have revealed some divergences between beliefs and practices partly due to students' poor language proficiency and low learning motivation (Graden, 1996) or time limitations (Farrell & Bennis, 2013).

Nonetheless, similar research methods may not necessarily yield the same results. For example, to analyze the beliefs and practices of 20

teachers in the USA in teaching reading, Olson and Singer (1994) adopted different means of research tools such as self-report instruments including the TORP, in conjunction with classroom observations, and their conclusion was that teachers hold beliefs that which are congruent with their classroom practices in general. Also worth mentioning here is Grisham's (2000) 3-year longitudinal study, a qualitative research project conducted over a 3-year period in which he revealed some alarming findings for teachers and researchers. Using a case study approach and a qualitative design, he examined 12 teachers' beliefs regarding teaching reading and their influence on their classroom practices. According to the results, the teachers' training programme initially had some impact on these teachers' practices, but then their teaching practices were more influenced by the context in which they taught. The results also suggested that those teachers' own beliefs toward reading would also have an influence on their students' perceptions toward reading. For example, in Grisham's (2000) research findings, some teachers even acknowledged that they are in fact slow readers. It therefore seems quite probable that when teachers lack confidence in their reading abilities, their students will tend to think the same.

Entering the 21st century, few studies on teachers' beliefs toward L1 reading can be tracked. One study examined and described the changes in four teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching reading and assessment of reading and revealed an inconsistent relationship between teacher' beliefs and their classroom practice as well as uncovering the factors which had caused the inconsistency (Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006). Blair, Rupley and Nichols (2007) argued that teachers hold a prominent position in ensuring successful reading instruction. The authors also observed that, in addition to the typical instructional components, skilled reading teachers have confidence in their teaching capabilities and have high expectations for their students' accomplishments. Anders and Evans (2019) trace changes in teachers' beliefs about reading comprehension and text, and also

changes in their teaching of reading comprehension and use of text. Results indicated that teachers' changes of beliefs could lead to remarkable changes in their classroom practices.

Upon reviewing these relative studies on teacher beliefs in L1 reading instruction, it is evident that the past 40 years have seen a shift in research on teachers' belief and their teaching practices in L1 reading from large-scale research to relatively smaller scale research, from quantitative methods to qualitative or mixed methods, from the extensive use of self-reported inventories like TORP to purely qualitative measures. The time measured in these empirical studies have been growing longer as well.

It can thus be concluded that researchers in this area have gradually come to realize that, due to the complex nature of teachers' beliefs, relying solely on quantitative research methods are not likely to help offer deep insights into the complex correlation between teachers' beliefs and their classroom instructions. To explore teachers' beliefs in terms of teaching reading and the factors that might influence teachers' classroom practice, we can see that more in-depth and qualitative research methods have been combined over time.

3.2.2.2 Relevant Studies in L2 or EFL Countries

For most ESL or EFL learners, reading is regarded as an important learning objective (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). Although teachers' beliefs are said to have a significant impact on reading instruction, the number of studies carried out on teachers' beliefs regarding EFL or L2 reading instruction has been relatively small.

Among the few research studies on teachers' beliefs about reading from the 1990s, one of the most notable ones is Johnson's (1992) investigation of 30 ESL teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and how their beliefs matched their teaching practice. The findings of her research suggested a congruent relation between these teachers' beliefs about reading and the instructions they provided. Graden (1996) also examined teachers' beliefs and classroom practice about reading

instruction through classroom observation, and concluded similarly to Johnson's (1992) in that teachers' beliefs and classroom teaching practice about reading instructions were generally consistent.

In contrast to the limited research in the last century, more studies have been conducted on teaching reading in more ESL and EFL countries since the new millennium. For instance, Lau (2007) studied the beliefs of Chinese teachers in Hong Kong concerning reading instruction and his findings suggested that teachers' beliefs and instruction in reading were highly congruent. In Lithuania, Kuzborska (2011) examined beliefs and classroom practices of 8 teachers for EAP learners in terms of the teaching of reading and concluded that those teachers' beliefs were generally consistent with their practices, but for the majority of them, reading instruction was not sufficiently understood and most teachers had not been exposed to it. In Iran, Karimi and Dehghani (2016) compared certified and uncertified teachers' theoretical orientations towards EFL reading and their reading practices, and their research findings showed divergence in different teacher group's correlation of beliefs and practice. The latest research relevant to this topic in China has been conducted by Mo (2020) who examined Chinese college EFL teachers' beliefs toward reading from a sociocultural perspective. The research findings showed a general congruence between teachers' beliefs about teaching EFL reading and their actual reading instructions, but also highlighted a number of external factors which evidently constrained teachers' classroom practice.

Compared with the studies that have showed a consistent relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, some other studies have revealed their incongruent relationship. Wu (2002) and Liao (2004), for instance, examined Taiwanese teachers' beliefs toward reading instruction and classroom practice and a great deal of discrepancy was found. Through interviews and classroom observations, Chou (2008) from mainland China and Khonamri and Salim (2010) from Iran examined teachers' beliefs and their relations with teachers' actual teaching practices. The results of both studies showed that teachers'

stated beliefs differed greatly from their actual reading instructions. Chou (2008) also investigated the participating teachers' particular preferences regarding reading strategies and concluded that those teachers were not well equipped with relevant theories about teaching reading. Karimi and Haghighi (2014) studied teachers' beliefs from a slightly different angle. In their studies, teachers with high and low efficacy in reading were compared based on their beliefs about reading and teaching practices. Observations and inventories were used and research findings revealed little congruence between teacher beliefs and orientations in both groups.

From my review of the literature in both L1 and L2 or EFL contexts, it can be seen that there is a great need for teachers to be studied in relation to their beliefs about teaching reading. On the one hand, while research on L1 reading has been ongoing for more than 3 decades, and a number of tools for methodological research have been developed and adopted in different research settings, studies in EFL or L2 contexts are relatively underdeveloped, and findings in this area are also scarce. On the other hand, it must also be pointed out that the existing studies on teachers' beliefs and practices usually focus on either a group or more than one group of teachers teaching in one school context instead of teachers from various school contexts (e.g., Mo, 2020; Zheng, 2015).

In China, similarly, little research has been carried out to examine teachers' beliefs in junior high schools (with the exception of Zheng's research on teachers' general beliefs about ELT in 2015), especially in the field of teaching and learning of EFL reading.

In summary, the literature review suggests that despite the wealth of research on teachers' beliefs of reading instruction in English L1 and L2 settings, there remains a scarcity of studies conducted in the Chinese EFL context. Therefore, I believe that investigating teachers' beliefs towards teaching English reading is critical to enhancing our comprehension of their instructional approaches in the classroom.

Apart from the research gap I have just identified, when looking at the researchers who have conducted these research projects, it can be seen that the majority of the research was either conducted by scholars from universities or institutions of education or by students who were attempting to complete their degree theses. Such investigations can be classified as "outsider" research, in that the researchers are outsiders from the research context and are thus likely to view the process of research objectively and holistically. Adopting an "insider" research orienatation, on the other hand, might present a different angle of looking at the same issues since the "insider" is more familiar with the research contexts and able to empathize more with the participant teachers. It might be argued that this sense of empathy may encourage teachers to be more open when sharing their thoughts.

3.3 Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Reforms

Educational reform is regarded as being at the core of educational development and quality improvement. Therefore, such reforms are expected to bring about changes regarding the content and organization of what is taught to satisfy social conditions (Sahlberg, 2006). As teachers play a decisive role in constructing and adjusting their beliefs when they respond to classroom situations under the requirements set by the curriculum (Freeman, 1992; Freeman & Richards, 1996), it follows that the implementation of new curriculum reforms requires consideration of teachers' beliefs.

In the following section, I will therefore review the existing literature on how teachers' beliefs may impact the implementation of curriculum reforms and the factors that may contribute to the impact.

3.3.1 Relevance of Teachers' Beliefs to Curriculum Reforms

In the field of studying teachers' beliefs, relevant research on curriculum reform and teachers' beliefs only started in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Perhaps the first scholar to link curriculum reform with teachers' beliefs was Fullan (1993), who has suggested that researchers ought to give

more attention to the beliefs held by teachers as a crucial factor influencing curriculum implementation, particularly in light of the notable frequency of unsuccessful educational innovations. In an earlier paper, Fullan and Stegelbauer (1991) also stated that the likelihood of teachers being able to modify their instructional approaches without undergoing a transformation in their values and beliefs is very low (cited in Alidemaj, 2019), indicating the difficulties of effectively implementing curriculum at teachers' level.

Despite high expectations for teachers to support educational reform, it is possible that their existing beliefs may not align with the principles underlying the reforms, and consequently pose a significant barrier to the implementation of the curriculum reform. For example, Burkhardt, Fraser and Ridgway (1990) suggested that the adoption of proposed innovations are likely to suffer if teachers have conflicting beliefs or encounter obstacles in implementing them, which may result in low rates of accepting the curriculum principles and compromised effectiveness. Hart (1992) also noted that if teachers perceive new tasks as insignificant or superficial, their trust in other innovations may also be undermined.

Later studies in the 21st century are more convinced that teachers are the principal agents who put instructional reforms into practice(Donnell & Gettinger, 2015) and that teachers, as those ultimately responsible for enacting policy decisions, hold beliefs which can either facilitate or impede the successful implementation of educational reforms (Fives & Buel, 2012). This also indicates that if teachers already hold beliefs which are compatible with any proposed innovations, then acceptance will be more likely to occur.

In summary, as teachers' beliefs can have an effect on teachers' decision making around the curriculum reform and their approaches to teaching, carrying out an in-depth exploration into teachers' beliefs during a time of reform can help researchers to learn more about how such reforms can be most effectively implemented.

3.3.2 Factors Influencing Teachers' Implementation of the Curriculum Reform

Curriculum reform in fact involves a long and gradual process, and this will not necessarily ensure equal changes to take place in teachers' beliefs and practices. In the field of education, the intended curriculum, implemented curriculum, and attained curriculum often do not align with each other (Cuban, 1993). Moreover, studies examining the response of teachers to national educational reforms also reveal limited or gradual adoption of curriculum reforms by teachers in low to mid-income countries (UNESCO, 2014; Westbrook, 2013, cited in Ham & Dekkers, 2019).

In explaining reasons for such slow and ineffective implementation for reforms, there have been several studies which highlighted an implementation gap in curriculum reforms (e.g., Fullan & Miles, 1992; Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Gitlin & Margonis, 1995). Other studies have also stated such an implementation gap can be a common feature in the reform process (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Bantwini, 2010; Weinbaum, Cole, Weiss, & Supovitz, 2008).

There have also been a series of empirical studies conducted to investigate the nature of such implementation gaps in which several factors have been identified, such as school leaders' poor management of change, teachers' insufficient comprehension of curriculum change, and lack of collaboration between teachers (Tong, 2010); inadequate resources, teachers' conservative resistance in the exam-oriented education system and lack of teacher enthusiasm (Adamson & Yin, 2008; Dello-Iacovo, 2009); teachers' inadequate English proficiency, insufficient training and inadequate resources (Canh & Barnard, 2009; Prapaisit & Hardison, 2009); teachers' reliance on their own teaching experiences (Liu & Feng, 2005); intercultural tensions (Waters & Vilches, 2008) and teachers' insufficient knowledge or misunderstanding of the curriculum (Carter, 1990).

It can also be seen from the above studies that teachers remain the

deciding factor in the implementation of reforms. But teachers of different experiences may also show variances in assimilating ideas from curriculum reforms. For example, Johnson (1992) stated that more experienced teachers tend to hold on to their own beliefs and resist changes while younger teachers are more open and flexible to changes, and teachers of variant features may hold different beliefs toward the same curriculum guidelines. Similarly, Lasky and Sutherland (2000) and Liu (2020) stated that teachers with less than ten years of teaching experience held fewer negative beliefs about the recent reforms compared to those with more than ten years of experience.

When introducing educational reforms, it is common for new requirements to be placed upon teachers, which can either further exacerbate their existing concerns or confirming their current practices. The literature review presented earlier indicates that extensive research has been conducted on curriculum reforms, highlighting its prevalence and significance as a central issue in educational reforms across different countries. But still, many evaluations of teachers' teaching practices and reforms still "*tend not to take into consideration teachers' beliefs and the role that teachers' beliefs play in teachers' response to reform*" (Ham & Dekkers, 2019, p. 1).

In retrospect of China's previous implementation in curriculum reforms, while EFL teachers in China were expected to be familiar with the ideas proposed in the previous reforms, a number of studies have indicated a lower receptivity toward the curriculum reforms for JHS teachers as was stated in the previous chapter (e.g., Yin, Lee, & Jin, 2003; Hu , 2002; Lam, 2005; Qian, 2006; Yang & Hao, 2007; Zhang & Liu ,2013).

Teachers under the reform context may not only lack the motivation to implement changes due to their limited involvement in the formation of the reform agenda but may also lack confidence in their ability to implement the reform in their classrooms. This lack of confidence stems from the requirement to abandon their familiar ideas and skills, which can result in reduced confidence levels and hesitancy towards the

proposed changes (Liu & Feng, 2005; Zhao & Hu, 2008). Consequently, many teachers may have retained their original beliefs and practices and are likely to prefer using a curriculum and pedagogy that is better suited to their own school setting (Zhao & Hu 2008). The gap between teachers' beliefs and practices is further exacerbated by the hierarchical nature of curriculum reform in China, which is predominantly implemented through a top-down approach (Liu & Feng, 2005).

Liu and Feng (2005) also indicated that the mismatch between what teachers have learned as learners and the new requirements from the NECS when they become teachers has also posed additional challenges for them to overcome. A further issue is that there are notable cultural conflicts between Western and Chinese pedagogies observed in various critical areas, such as teaching philosophy, teacher-student relationships, advocated learning strategies, desired student attributes, and qualities associated with a "good" teacher (Zhu & Zhang, 2008).

Although the literature above makes valuable and insightful contributions regarding the implementation of curriculum reform, it has limitations regarding its geographical and cultural scope. For example, the studies on China's curriculum reform have primarily focused on pioneering provinces and well-resourced regions such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Hong Kong. But there is significant variation in responses to the implementation of new curriculum reforms across different regional contexts(Sargent, Chen, Wu, & Chen, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to broaden the research scope to encompass a more diverse range of regions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the realities of curriculum reform in China. Less developed and other second-tier or third-tier cities or regions warrant equal attention in the face of educational reforms.

This means that to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum reform in China, given its vast and diverse cultural and

educational landscape, further research is essential. Investigating how Chinese teachers in different regions respond to the ongoing wave of curriculum reforms in their daily teaching practices would enable the identification of contributing factors to the implementation gap commonly reported across different regional contexts. Such research would add value to the existing literature by enriching our understanding of the realities of curriculum reform in China.

3.4 Borg's Framework for the current study

In conceptualising the field of language teacher cognition, Borg's (2006, 2015) framework (see below), which was first proposed in 2003 then updated in 2015, provides a useful model. In this model, Borg (2015) identifies the key dimensions involved in the study of language teacher cognition. These dimensions include schooling (which encompasses both pre-service education and professional development), classroom practice, and contextual factors. I believe it to be a useful structure for me to upon which base my analytical framework and my key components of forming my interview questions.

Figure 3.1 Borg (2015)'s framework for the study of language teacher cognition
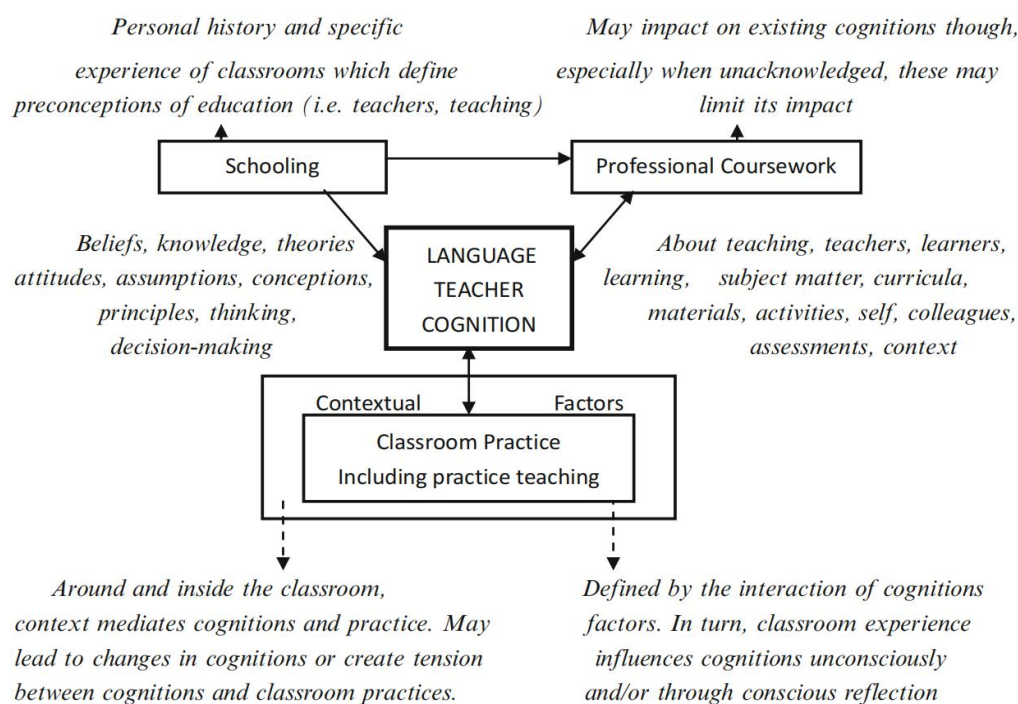
According to Borg (2006, 2015), the importance of this framework lies in

its role in highlighting '*key themes, gaps and conceptual relationships*' in the research of teacher cognition. This model also highlights the central role of teacher beliefs in their teaching as stated below:

"Teachers' beliefs play a major role in defining teaching tasks and organizing the knowledge and information relevant to those tasks. But...the contexts and environments within which teachers work, and many of the problems they encounter, are ill-defined and deeply entangled, and that beliefs are peculiarly suited for making sense of such contexts. (Borg, 2006, p. 324)

Based on the statement above, being a central element in teacher cognition, I believe that teachers' beliefs can be a good starting point to adopt this framework.

It can be seen from the above framework that the initial factor that shapes a teacher's early cognition and perception of their training is their own educational background. Their past learning experiences can create influential and potent impressions of what teaching should entail, which can strongly influence their future perspectives (Borg, 2006). Borg (2015) also states that although professional training programs do have an impact on shaping the cognition of student teachers, programs that overlook the pre-existing beliefs of trainee teachers may not be as effective in influencing their beliefs.

The impact of past educational experiences has also been widely discussed and explored in academic literature, underscoring the significance of taking into account an individual's prior knowledge and experiences when analyzing their current beliefs and behaviors (e.g., Attia, 2014; Borg, 2003; Carter, 1990; Decker & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008; Johnson, 1994; Mohammadabadi, Ketabi & Nejadansari, 2019; Mori, 2011).

Another key dimension in the framework is the professional coursework or the teacher education that teachers undergo. Such coursesork involves teaching strategies, student characteristics, subject matter, curricula, materials, and instructional activities and so on, which can also have a significant impact on their cognition. Other studies also support the idea that professional coursework can have an impact on

teachers' beliefs (e.g. Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000; Richards, et al, 1996). As teachers inherit philosophies and teaching approaches from their teacher educators and engage in interactions with their peers, cognitive change and growth among teachers can be attributed, at least in part, to the influences of their professional coursework.

Additionally, the framework suggests a reciprocal relationship between teachers' cognition and practices, which is influenced by various contextual factors. The extent to which teachers are able to align their teaching practices with their beliefs is dependent on external factors in their teaching context. For example, Andrews (2003) stated that not only the "*macro-culture of society (and such factors as the syllabus, the textbooks, the examination system, the expectations of parents,and student characteristics)*", but also the "*micro-culture of their particular institution*", can have a significant impact on teachers' beliefs and the instructional choices they make in their classrooms (p. 372). Grisham (2000), Tsui (2003), and Flores and Day (2006) have also found that events that occur in the classroom have the potential to impact teacher cognition and prompt a reconstruction of initial beliefs about language teaching, which makes classroom practice and experience an inevitable element in the study of teacher beliefs.

In summary, Borg's (2006, 2015) framework has underlined the correlation between teachers' beliefs, schooling, coursework as well as contextual factors, implying their mutual influence on each other and has significant implication for the study of teachers' beliefs. The framework also focuses more on factors that build, develop and transform teachers' cognition, making it applicable for my research area and serves as an effective reference as I intended to explore the other possible factors that also inform teachers regarding their beliefs and teaching reading practices. The above key dimension in the framework also helped to develop my set of interview questions, which I would state in the later part.

Based on the statement and analysis above, I believe this framework fits well with my research purpose: to explore and dig into the personal history of the teachers, as well as provide useful insights to look into different perspectives, as it provides background knowledge and conceptual structure of language teachers' beliefs, and points to the key aspects of language teachers' beliefs.

Chapter Summary

The current chapter first examined the key concept of beliefs and teachers' beliefs. It then considered what the literature has had to say about the distinctions between teacher belief and teacher knowledge to clarify the definition of teachers' belief.

In the second section, the complex and sometimes contradictory relationship between teachers' beliefs and teachers' classroom practice was discussed. I also provided an overall review of the existing empirical studies related to L1, L2 or EFL teachers' beliefs toward the teaching of reading. I concluded by bringing together both of these previous discussions to consider the importance of a further inquiry into teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching EFL reading in China.

In the third section, I provided an overview of some of the relevant studies on teachers' beliefs in relation to the curriculum reforms as well as factors and problems identified in teachers' implementation of curriculum reforms. In the final section, the theoretical framework for the research was provided with highlighted key themes which serve as my main guidance for the development of interview questions and basis for data analysis.

In my review of the relevant academic literature, I hope to have shown that examining Chinese JHS English teachers' beliefs in teaching EFL reading is a topic worthy of more detailed investigation.

CHAPTER 4:   Research Methodology

Introduction

4.1 The Research Paradigm

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    4.1.3 Methodological Choices

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Chapter Summary

Introduction

In this chapter, I present an overview of the methodological approaches which have underpinned my research for this thesis. I discuss the overall design of my study, the ontological and epistemological perspectives which informed my choice of methodological approaches, the specific procedures I adopted for data collection and analysis and also the ethical issues that I considered as a result of these choices. I also consider my role as a researcher and critically reflect on what I feel I have learned from this process, as well as the methodological limitations in this study.

4.1 The Research Paradigm

4.1.1 Research questions and research aims

A research paradigm, defined by Bryman (2008), essentially amounts to a set of beliefs based on some fundamental principles. These principles are the guidelines which determine how we select and then define particular issues for inquiry, and how we then approach such issues in an appropriate way.

Before I set out to specify my choice of research paradigm and relative methodological approaches, it is important for me first to restate my research questions and overall aims. As I described in the introductory chapter, this study has set out to investigate teachers' beliefs and reported practices around EFL reading, evaluating whether such beliefs are in alignment with China's current curriculum reforms. This is captured by the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' beliefs and reported practices about teaching reading?

2. Where did these beliefs originate from and how have they developed?

3. Are the teachers' beliefs and reported practices congruent with China's recent curriculum reforms?

The first research question relates specifically to teachers' beliefs about teaching EFL reading. In addition, it also seeks to elicit teachers' reported practices, so as to better understand the ways in which teachers reportedly turn their beliefs into practices. The second question focuses on the development and origin of teachers' beliefs, as I was interested in finding out why and how teachers had formed their current beliefs. I also wanted to uncover any key factors which had either contributed to or inhibited change in teachers' beliefs. My last research question aimed to evaluate the level of congruence between teachers' beliefs and their reported practices in the light of China's current curriculum reforms. My intention was that by exploring this dimension, I would be able to gain a deeper perspective on the relative reasons for success or failure of the implementation of reforms.

4.1.2 An Interpretivist Stance

Perspectives on ontology and epistemology are very important for researchers because they can help us to define what we consider to be true and also inform the ways in which we construct our knowledge about the world. Every individual has a unique concept of existence and reality that is shaped by their history and the context within which they find themselves (Birks & Mills, 2022).

With regard to the study of beliefs, in her landmark contribution, Pajares (1992) stated that research can only be viable and rewarding when certain beliefs are operationalized, a proper methodology is selected, and a design is carefully planned. I feel, therefore, that it is of great importance for me to make my ontological and epistemological stances clear from the outset, as the particular paradigms I have chosen underpin and inform my entire study. It is safe to say that different research questions may lead to different choices of research paradigms and a very common binary here is the distinction that researchers draw between positivist and interpretivist paradigms.

Positivists believe that there is a direct link between what happens around us and our perceptions, and as a result, they aim to develop a generalizable understanding of such occurrences which can then be claimed as the ultimate truth. As an extension of this way of thinking, positivists also seek to explain and generalize cause and effect relationships between tightly controlled variables, so that generalizations, predictions, and confirmations can be made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). The positivist paradigm can therefore be helpful when researchers seek to confirm or refute particular hypotheses, as the underlying ontological assumption is generally that there is a tangible truth out there and researchers are thus responsible for finding it. For those who subscribe to an interpretivist paradigm, however, the ontological stance is quite different.

For interpretivists, as the name suggests, the underlying ethos becomes one of interpretation. Rather than seeing "the truth" as an absolute,

and fixed commodity just waiting to be uncovered, interpretivists view things in much more relative terms and in so doing acknowledge that there can actually be a variety of "truths", depending on one's individual perspective and standpoint. This indicates that different incidents and events will always be open to different interpretations (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Arghode, 2012). The underlying causes for such interpretations may be rooted in the culture or individual personalities of those being researched. Getting to grips with these other dimensions lies at the heart of qualitative methods.

In the case of this particular research project, I have therefore deliberately chosen to base my approaches on an interpretivist paradigm. My specific reasons for doing so are elaborated below.

One of the primary reasons for adopting an interpretivist stance in my research is to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and nuanced nature of teachers' values and beliefs. While it is true that beliefs can be studied quantitatively, such an approach may not capture the intricacies and subjective interpretations that underlie these beliefs. By employing an interpretivist perspective, I aim to delve into the underlying meanings, interpretations, and contexts that shape teachers' values and beliefs, which may not be fully captured through quantitative measures alone. As Willis (2007) has pointed out, the goal of interpretive inquiry is to comprehend the various perceptions conveyed by individuals within a specific setting. In this regard, adopting a positivist ontological stance would be too limiting and also unrealistic, relying as it does on research results being repeatable and generalizable. As Pring (2000) has cogently pointed out, *"persons cannot be the object of scientific enquiry"* (p. 32), as by their very nature, they are inherently open to different interpretations (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013). The interpretivist paradigm acknowledges and therefore opens, rather than restricts, the possibilities for this.

A second reason for me basing my research on interpretivist ontology is that this allows me to give more voice to the participants in my study.

Teachers' beliefs are highly personal and are rooted in their everyday lives and experiences. Furthermore, the main importance placed on comprehending the experiences of individuals involved in a specific situation is to provide information and improve the current practice within that situation (Willis, 2007; Kankam, 2019). Grounding my data in the interpretative paradigm thus allows such uniqueness to be more faithfully captured.

As I hope to have now shown, from ontological and epistemological perspectives, taking an interpretivist stance is particularly well-suited to the nature of this research.

4.1.3   Methodological Choices

4.1.3.1   Case Study

According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a small number of people and cases. Under the interpretivist paradigm, the case study approach can increase the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied.

According to Yin (2003), "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Yin (2014) also states that the case study deals with how something is occurring, which fits well with the complex and dynamic feature of beliefs.

Although case studies have limitations such as the challenge of generalizing findings and the possibility of the researcher's bias, they remain valuable because they offer tangible examples of people in real-life scenarios. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), case study data is strong in reality, which helps researchers to understand ideas more clearly. Besides, case study focuses on individuals and their understanding of events as it allows an interpretive way in "*seeing the situation through the eyes of participants*"(Cohen et al, 2007, p. 253), and the detailed information it provides can be '*step*

to action' by suggesting solutions or providing practical implications (Freebody, 2003, p. 83). Yin's (2003) definition of a case study also points out that case studies rely on multiple sources of evidence to address the situation. Recognising that '*the uniqueness of each context does not entail uniqueness in every respect*' (Pring, 2000, p.119), the case study methodology can therefore offer instances and implications that are relevant to the broader field. Punch (2009) and Liu (2016) further add that the case study can provide understanding of the important aspects of the research area and conceptualise them for further study.

Based on these reasons, a case study approach has been selected to investigate teachers' beliefs in a comprehensive way, seeking to provide a contextualised account of where one teacher's beliefs originate, how their beliefs develop and how they are related to individual's practices.

4.1.3.2   Qualitative Interviewing

Based on my interpretivist stance as was stated earlier, I believe that the most appropriate approach to my study falls under the banner of qualitative interviewing because my primary research questions were about *"what"* and *"how"* rather than "how many" (Silverman, 2010, p. 118) and such questions seek to explore, describe, and explain experiences and meanings. Merriam (2009) characterized qualitative interviewing as a way to reveal significance, with researchers being curious about comprehending individuals' interpretations of their experiences, how they build their realities, and the significance they assign to those experiences.

The purpose of such qualitative interviews is to engage participants in in-depth conversations, which entail two levels of speaking: about the participants' experience and their perceptions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). It is worth me saying a little more, however, on why I felt that qualitative interviewing would be a particularly useful tool.

First of all, as I have already argued, issues of teachers' beliefs and practices are complex in nature and relying on surveys or

questionnaires does not provide sufficient room for depth. In-depth interviews are rooted in an interest in understanding the lived experience of others and their interpretation of that experience (Seidman, 2013; Saunders, 2018). As I am interested in understanding teachers' beliefs and the origin and development of such beliefs, I believe that interviews, especially in-depth qualitative interviews, can provide me with a tool to probe into the participants' living experiences, as well as enable them to discuss how they perceive the world and how they see various things from their own perspectives.

Furthermore, as I also discuss the participants' changes and development in their beliefs during their academic and career trajectory in this study, taking a qualitative approach better suits my overall research purposes. Approaching the research in this way could thus help me to trace and track the progress of teachers' beliefs, and better understand the complexity and dynamics of how such beliefs evolved.

Based on the above reasons, I decided that the major method of inquiry for my study should be qualitative interviewing, which principally seeks to explore, describe, and explain experiences and meanings.

There are various types of interviews open to researchers, such as one-on-one, focus group, telephone, and electronic e-mail interviews (Bailey, Hutter, & Hennink, 2020; Creswell, 2012), and they range from highly structured to completely non-structured, and from non-directive to focused interviews (Cohen, et al., 2007). Among these different forms of interviews, semi-structured interviews have become a commonly used technique in qualitative research, because unlike highly structured interviews, which can often become little more than a verbal questionnaire, semi-structured interviews are sufficiently flexible and open-ended to allow for digressions and expansions, as well as the opening of new lines of inquiry (Cohen, et al., 2007).

I believe that semi-structured interviews were therefore not only the best match for my research purposes but would also potentially allow my

participants a reasonable degree of freedom in discussing the issues which they themselves felt to be important. With semi-structured interviews, questions can be asked flexibly and more in-depth while also providing some space for varying or changing the interview questions as the interview proceeds. As Harding (2018) has pointed out, a further benefit of semi-structured interviews is that by the end, there would be a number of topics on which every respondent will have made some comment.

However, relying heavily on qualitative interviews also has its own limitations. The first issue is the nature of human personality in that not all people are equally articulate or perceptive (Bogdao & Biklen, 2003; Kolb, 2012). Despite that some teachers' reported practice in the interviews might not be their real practice, other measures like observing teachers' classroom practices would also cause some other complications. For example, it is difficult to measure teachers' practice within one or few observations. Also, some teachers may behave differently when there are observers at the back of the classroom. Based on these considerations, I believe that semi-structured interviews represent a valid methodological approach for investigating teachers' beliefs and their claimed practices.

All in all, the purpose of the research is not to test or measure teachers' practices, but to explore their underlying beliefs. My hope is that in gaining a deeper understanding of these areas, the results can be used to inform the future implementation of curriculum reforms and teacher development for teachers. I will discuss the validity of my approach in a later section of this chapter.

4.2 Research Sample

Having decided to conduct my research by following the interpretivist paradigm and using qualitative interviews as part of a case study approach, one of the earliest considerations I then had to face was the matter of which criteria I should use for the selection of the participant teachers in my research.

I decided early on that as my research was seeking to understand teachers' values and beliefs, perhaps the most useful way for me to explore this would be through a process of qualitative interviews with individual teachers. Though limited in the breadth of its scope, this approach to data gathering would allow me to explore matters in more depth than a questionnaire would have done. It also allowed for a more finely-grained consideration of who my research participants should actually be.

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of teachers' beliefs in teaching reading, and most importantly, based on my own research setting, I decided that my participant sample should consist of English language teachers of different ages and backgrounds in different districts within the city of Ningbo, China. At this point, it is worth me briefly elaborating on why I have chosen this particular context for the study.

Ningbo is a coastal city in Zhejiang Province. It is the world's fourth largest port city and one of the top 15 central cities in China. As the neighboring city to Shanghai and Hangzhou, Ningbo not only enjoys the denomination of municipality with independent planning status, but also boasts a strong economy. In terms of quality of education, a survey conducted in 6 cities along Yangtze Delta River (cities along Yangtze Delta River are usually considered strong in terms of economic development), Ningbo ranks top in terms of contributions to education (students' academic achievement and number of patents approved) but second last in teaching resources (teachers and teaching scale) (Zhang, 2016). This indicates that despite its highly laudable achievements in education, Ningbo is still relatively under-resourced in terms of teachers and teaching quality. When taking a closer look at English teachers in Ningbo, unlike other major cities in China, where the teachers come from a range of provinces, most teachers in Ningbo are either local to Ningbo, or studied in Ningbo when they were language learners. Those teachers, whether from public schools, private schools, or schools in more rural areas, are all guided by the national curriculum

at all levels.

As one of my major objectives in this research was to capture multiple perspectives on the teaching of EFL reading from difference districts and different schools, I decided that the participants who would be involved in my research should be varied in terms of their age, school and academic qualifications. Therefore, based on the principles of research sample selection and the needs of my research aims, I decided to group my participants into 3 groups according to their years of teaching experience: Group 1: novice teachers (1-5 years); Group 2: proficient teachers (year 6-15 years); Group 3: experienced teachers (year 16+ years). Within these three groups, the participant teachers should be selected from different kinds of schools and have different educational backgrounds.

In terms of the specific selection of participants for the study, a mix of both purposive and convenience sampling was adopted. As the name suggests, purposive sampling involves the researcher purposefully selecting individuals who are considered to be capable of providing an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2004; Cohen, et al., 2007). For this study, purposefully selecting teachers of different age groups and from different schools with different educational background was considered crucial as my objective in the research was to examine teachers' beliefs about EFL reading in Ningbo.

To gain access to the participants who could fit this profile, it was convenient for me to contact local schoolteachers I know and also supervisors of ELT in different districts in Ningbo. This latter point meant that some of the participant teachers in my study were selected based on recommendations from their principals and their peers, and were considered to be representative of the other teachers in their region. Two of the participants were known to me personally and I knew from my previous dealings with them that their practices and ideas would be a good representation of teachers from their particular age group and

school type. While I must acknowledge the inherent danger of some subjectivity here - a point I will return to in a later discussion in this chapter- I felt that the potential negatives in this regard were cancelled out by the positives of these teachers being a good match with the aims of my study.

I must also confess to there being a practical convenience element at play here. From the outset, I was painfully aware that getting participants for my research was always going to be a big task as it would require them to spare a huge amount of extra time and effort. Being able to draw on some participants whom I knew I could rely on for this therefore seemed like a sensible choice. Among the possible candidates I had first approached for my research, some of them gladly said yes (especially the novice teachers); others were initially quite reluctant until they came to be aware that confidentiality was assured, while still three or four teachers immediately turned me down, saying that they were simply too busy and could not spare the time.

The table below provides an overview of the final research participants. To protect their privacy, a pseudonym has been assigned to each individual participant. A more detailed description of each participant's profile is provided in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1 Basic information of participants for the study

Participants	Age	Years of teaching	Degree	Working place
Wendy	24	1	BA	Rural
Carol	27	1	MA	Private
Tina	29	4	MA	Typical
Yolanda	29	7	BA	Typical
Hebe	34	11	BA	Private
Zola	37	12	MA	Rural
Zoe	37	15	BA	Typical
Lucy	45	21	BA	Rural

Helen	47	26	Junior College	Private

As can be seen from the table above, 9 teachers were selected from 9 junior high schools in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province. A number of similarities could be found between these schools. All of them were administered by the Bureau of Education in Ningbo. NECS was the main teaching guidelines in these schools for EFL teachers. The same textbook, *"Go for it!"*, was also used as teachers' main source of teaching material and is also one of the most widely used textbooks in China. The number of teaching hours allocated to English in each institution represents 5-6 hours per week and on average, there are altogether 20 weeks in a semester.

4.3 Development of Interview Questions

Having decided on the research methods and participant teachers for the present study, the next challenge for me was to develop a set of research questions that were not only able to help answer my research questions but also helped to encourage the research participants to elicit their beliefs and practices in the most appropriate manner.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, researchers are supposed to prepare a preliminary outline listing all the broad categories they feel may be relevant to their study (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1979). One essential component is to conduct the literature review and use it in an 'informed, skeptical, or comparative manner' (Morse, 2003, p. 891, cited in McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Based on the literature review on teachers' beliefs and theoretical framework stated in the previous chapter, and bearing in mind my major purposes of the interviewing were to try to elicit teachers' beliefs as true as possible, a general structure for the interview questions was formed, consisting of 3 major parts: teachers' learning experiences before being a teacher; teachers' beliefs and practices toward reading; origin and development of teachers' beliefs.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), the questions asked in the interview

were designed to be open-ended, which was aimed to provide room for interviewees to share their thoughts and ideas, while also allowing the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and address any confusion or misconceptions. The interview questions were designed to mirror the central themes of the research, ensuring that they align with the research questions. Below is the list of the specific interview questions:

Table 4.2 Interview questions of the semi-structured interview

Q1.	Why did you choose to become a teacher in a junior high school instead of other kinds of school?
Q2.	What got you started on this particular career path?
Q3.	What academic qualifications do you currently have?
Q4.	Did you undergo any formal training before becoming a teacher? What was that like? Do you feel it was helpful for your later career?
Q5.	What would you say are your main beliefs or values as an English teacher? Which things are especially important to you?
Q6.	Compared with the other 3 skills in English, how would you describe EFL reading?
Q7.	Do you think you yourself are good at teaching reading? How do your skills in this area compare with your teaching of the other skills?
Q8.	What do you think is important in teaching EFL reading in junior high school?
Q9.	Where you do think your stated beliefs come from?
Q10.	Have you always held these beliefs and values, or have they changed and developed over a period of time? If they have changed, what do you think has caused that?
Q11.	Could you describe for me the way that you would typically go about teaching reading? Are there any particular stages that you go through?
Q12.	Have you ever tried to do anything different or any new approaches when teaching reading?
Q13.	How would you normally use the reading text within the textbook in class?
Q14.	What are the factors that might have led to your current practice in teaching reading?
Q15	Is there anything else you want to add after today's interview?

By inquiring about teachers' motivations for choosing to teach in a junior high school (Q1 and Q2), their academic qualifications (Q3), and their experiences with formal training (Q4), I aim to understand the background and context that shape their beliefs and practices. My main reason for putting these questions at the beginning of the interview is that focusing on introduction and personal information can "*help interviewees to relax*" and "*encourage them to open up*" (Dörnyei, 2007, p.137).

Questions such as Q5, Q9, and Q10 delve into the values and beliefs held by teachers, their sources of belief formation, and whether these beliefs have evolved over time. Exploring teachers' approaches to teaching reading (Q6, Q7, Q11, Q12, Q13) and the factors influencing their current practices (Q14) provides insights into their reported practices. Lastly, the interview concludes with an opportunity for teachers to share any additional thoughts or perspectives (Q15). By developing these interview questions, I aim to gather rich and detailed data that will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of teachers' beliefs and reported practices in relation to reading instruction and their congruence with China's recent curriculum reforms.

Of course, follow-up questions were ready to be asked if the participants' responses were not explanatory or descriptive enough. In this sense, semi-structured interviews are a suitable option because they enable participants to share detailed narratives and respond in a way that suits them, thereby enabling more comprehensive exploration of the research subject.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis
4.4.1 Data Collection

Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002; Silverman, 2016). To maintain credibility and legitimacy, research data should be collected, organized, analyzed, and presented appropriately (Lichtman, 2012). One of the challenges of in-depth interviewing is that it requires "*intense listening*" (Rubin &

Rubin, 2005, p. 14), which is why pilot interviews are necessary for novice researchers like me to reflect on the ability to listen with due respect, intense curiosity, and appropriate reactions to my respondents' answers.

Therefore, before the first interview formally took place, a pilot interview with one of my colleagues was conducted to test the relevance and clarity of my questions. This piloting process was conducted in September, 2019, and it also served as a practice-run for me prior to commencing the real interviews. The piloting proved invaluable in highlighting a few areas where methodological tweaks were still needed and as a result, I ended up re-arranging the wording and order of some of my questions.

In terms of the actual logistics, the interviews were conducted over a period of 2 months' time and involved me systematically moving from one teacher to the next. Each interview was originally conducted in Chinese in order that both me and my participant teachers would be able to explain, exchange and express our ideas more effectively and unambiguously. The resulting interview transcripts were then later translated into English for coding and wider data analysis.

Regarding the actual interview methodology, although I had a series of interview questions prepared and had shared these in advance with the participants, when it actually came to me asking my questions, in many cases the original order of these had to be either expanded or contracted, as our discussion often developed into an exploration of broader issues. While I was careful to ensure a broad degree of uniformity in the questions I was asking each participant, I also wanted there to be sufficient flexibility for each interviewee to be able to interact with me as an individual. In this regard, as I have outlined above, the semi-structured nature of my interviews proved to be most ideal as it provided a general framework but also allowed for some personalization. My purpose in each interview was to elicit honest answers and detailed reflections from my interviewees regarding their

personal beliefs about EFL reading and their statement about how they teach reading, as well as to gain insights into the different factors which they considered to influence their pedagogic decisions.

Each of the participants received the interview questions at least one day before the actual interview took place. This avoided them being put on the spot and meant that they would have sufficient time to think carefully about their answers. At no time did I wish to ask the participating teachers anything that they had not had the chance to prepare for. I believe that following this principle has generally helped to strengthen the validity of my research. The interviews generally lasted for between 30 minutes and an hour and were digitally recorded. Two recording devices were used simultaneously for this, just in case one of the devices failed, so that I could use the other as a backup. The table below provides an overview of when each interview took place and how long it lasted.

Table 4.3 Interview schedule and time lengths

Order	Interviewee	Date	Duration
1	Tina	Oct.15, 2019	51 minutes
2	Hebe	Oct.16, 2019	42 minutes
3	Zola	Oct.17, 2019	50 minutes
4	Yolanda	Oct.22, 2019	41 minutes
5	Lucy	Oct.29, 2019	37 minutes
6	Carol	Nov.1, 2019	53 minutes
7	Wendy	Nov.7, 2019	45 minutes
8	Zoe	Nov.13, 2019	46 minutes
9	Helen	Nov.27, 2019	65 minutes

In order to create a pleasant, comfortable and productive climate, while confirming to the ethical guidelines for how to conduct interviews, each interview was held either in the participants' own offices or vacant classrooms in their schools. In other words, I was careful to

choose locations which matched their "territorial comfort zones" (Stewart & Cash, 2011, p. 45).

I was also always very mindful that in helping me with my research, the interview participants were giving up their precious time; I therefore thanked them sincerely for their participation. I felt very fortunate indeed to have these participants for my study, as they were all very friendly and cooperative. Even though they were busy with their schoolwork, particularly some teachers who were also involved in additional administrative duties in their schools, they were still able to make time for me in their schedules.

From my perspective, all of the interviews went smoothly, and I felt that the participants appeared relaxed and willing to share their views. When I expressed my gratitude, several interviewees mentioned that it was also good for them to reflect on what they had experienced, and many of them promised to offer me further help if I felt it was needed.

4.4.2 Data Analysis

When it came to data analysis, it was very important for me to interpret the data in a way that was "*as true to my participants' experiences and perspectives as much as possible*" (Patton, 2002, p. 404). To do this, I knew that I needed to immerse myself in the data and interpret the data in an in-depth way. One way of achieving this was for me to analyze all of the interview transcription by myself, rather than using a paid research assistant or relying on automated transcription software. Although this added significantly more work, I felt it was worth it, as it allowed me to get closer to my own data. As I transcribed, I felt like I began to get to know my participants more fully and understand their stories in a better way.

After all the interviews in this study were transcribed and translated, I started the initial stage of analysis. The analysis of the data was conducted at two different levels: within-case and cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998).

In terms of the within-case analysis, I firstly coded the data of each individual respondent as a whole, and extracted the recurring themes of each teacher's stated beliefs. In the process of doing this, I read the interview transcripts individually to distinguish the main themes. After familiarizing myself with the first batch of transcripts, I then read through the individual segments of each interview in more detail, looking for any similar pieces of the same code.

When it came to the cross-case analysis, the individual thematic analyses were grouped into larger categories to allow for cross-referencing based on my research questions. This allowed me to identify several recurrent patterns which began to emerge from the data. According to Punch (2009), constant comparison is the "*central intellectual activity in analysis*" (p. 182). As I sorted through my data, I continually compared the codes, and took note of any emerging trends and themes. At times, new codes and categories emerged, while weaker ones dissolved. After engaging in this process of focused coding and constant comparative analysis, I was finally left with a set of common themes which I then categorized under new sets of descriptors.

Since my main research objectives were to understand the participant teachers' beliefs toward EFL reading, and the development and origin of such formation of beliefs as well as their stated practice, I worked with the categories that showed the most promise for these lines of inquiry. When selecting those core themes during data analysis, I also took into account any possible linkages between the selected themes and the perceived significance to teacher training. Following the generation of the list and the grouping thematically, I began sorting them into hierarchical sub-themes based on the level of generality, which I tried to keep as close as possible to the language and terms used by the participants themselves.

The following themes emerged from my study, after this process of in-case and cross-case analysis: relevance of schooling, including why

and how they had entered their current job and their perceptions of their pre-service education and other factors that fluctuated their beliefs (see section 5.2), teachers' stated beliefs in teaching reading in terms of their general thoughts and values about EFL teaching and learning, specific beliefs toward reading and the teachers' stated practices in their classroom (see section 5.1). In addition to teachers' stated beliefs and practices, I revisited the overall data and presented the major themes to see the level of congruence of teacher beliefs with the current curriculum reform (see section 5.3).

My data analysis finally came to an end when I felt that I had reached a theoretical saturation, in other words, when "*additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a [theoretical] category*" (Mason, 2002, p. 121).

4.5 Ethical concerns

4.5.1 Ethical issues while conducting this research

With regard to ethical issues for this study, researchers in education should carefully consider ethical issues to avoid causing harm to participants and maximize the quality of their research (Buchanan & Warwick, 2021; Busher, 2005). Furthermore, for me as a researcher, maintaining a sense of fairness and respect with minimum subjectivity throughout the research was as important as considering the procedural items.

Erickson (1986) identifies two basic ethical principles which he feels should always be followed. In his view, it is important that participants are fully informed of the purposes and processes of the study and also any burdens (such as additional workload) or risks they may incur by participating. Additionally, he advises that research participants should be protected from *social and psychological risks* as much as possible (p. 141). Erickson (2012) also adds that establishing clear agreements with teachers and administrators regarding the conditions for sharing research findings at both local and national levels can help alleviate

their concerns.

I believe I was very cautious and highly ethical when aiming to achieve these principles. I firstly contacted all the possible participant teachers by telephone or through Wechat, and fully explained the nature and purpose of my study and what they are expected to do during the study. All of the 9 participant teachers were therefore fully aware of the application of ethical principles when they agreed to contribute to the study. Additionally, they received a detailed Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix) and were briefed on the research procedures, methods of data collection, confidentiality, as well as my assurance of having no risk in participating in the study. Also provided was a written Consent Form (also see Appendix) in which participants were informed that they were entitled to get access to the data and that pseudonyms would be used to protect their anonymity.

Interviews were audio taped using Recorder on my personal pad during the interviews, and my mobile phone served as a back-up in case the planned device failed to work. The recorded interviews were then deleted after all the transcriptions were done, to eliminate the risk of disclosure. To protect the recorded interviews, encrypted PINs were utilized to secure the gadgets used for recording. These measures were implemented to minimize the risk of unauthorized access to the recorded data. Additionally, it should be noted that after the data analysis and reporting were completed, all recorded interviews were permanently deleted to further safeguard the participants' anonymity. By adopting these measures, the study aimed to uphold the ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process." Apart from that, the participant teachers were also assured that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the research any time they want and their withdrawal would never be viewed negatively if this were to occur. Through provision of such details in the research, I was able to gain the participants' trust as well as build up mutual trust and rapport with them.

4.5.2 Validity and Reliability

In the field of educational research, it is generally agreed that validity refers to the "*soundness*", "*genuineness*", and "*truthfulness*" of the study (Zhao, 2006, p. 69), while reliability indicates the probability that a repeated test will yield similar results if other factors remain constant (Anderson, 1990; Brown & Dowling, 1998; Cohen, et al., 2017; Eichelberger, 1989; Verma & Mallick, 1999). Hereby I will separately explain what steps were taken in the study to improve the validity and reliability of the study.

4.5.2.1 Validity

Validity in qualitative research is defined as "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them (Schwandt, 1997, cited in Cresswell, 2000, p. 125) and also seen as "*the 'goodness' or 'soundness' of a study*" (Miller, 2008; p. 909; cited in Morse, 2015). As I am aware that the research itself has its limitations in adopting solely qualitative interview to explore teachers' beliefs, a number of measures have been specifically taken to enhance the validity of the study.

Firstly, at the research design stage, trialing and piloting of the interviews ensured that the questions would gather the data that this research purports to gather. After the interviews, transcriptions were conducted immediately, and the copies were sent back to the interviewees for checking. The simultaneous coding of raw data captured the themes and patterns that emerged and revealed relevant characteristics that added to the content validity of the findings (Merriam, 2009).

Secondly, Creswell and Miller (2000) as well as Lub (2015) mention that, prolonged engagement in the field, which means taking time to familiarize oneself with the context and the people around, can help increase the validity of the research. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland(2022) also note that researchers need to gain an intimate level of familiarity with their studied phenomenon and argue that an intimate familiarity with research participants and their world is imperative for

credible research. The very nature of my research setting is conducive to establishing this much-needed level of familiarity. As I have had 16 years of teaching experience at the JHS in Ningbo, I am familiar with the culture and system within the contexts, which also helps me to build trust with my participants.

Thirdly, Patton (2002) stated that "*thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting. Good description takes the reader into the setting being described*" (p. 437). Therefore, thoroughly detailing the research environment, participants, and methodology guarantees a comprehensive comprehension of the study's location, participants, and procedures, which, in turn, augments the research's validity (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). To achieve this aim, I tried to give thick and in-depth description of the people, phenomenon and the contexts researched. The valuable data I obtained allowed me to obtain a diverse range of viewpoints, compare and contrast the similarities and differences among various respondents, and corroborate the research findings. For me, this meant that my research was able to better "*portray the fullness of the studied experience*" and offer deep insights into the participants' "*lives and worlds*" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 528).

Another method that I used to mitigate the threats to the validity was internal validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Merrick, 1999). In the first stage, I did the initial coding myself and then invited my supervisor to check my results so that I would benefit from a second pair of eyes and not miss any important details. Then, after doing another 8 codings and printing out the coded data, I checked it again with the originals. In the final step, the coded data was reread for further refinement. Some categories were combined, some were created, and others were eliminated. In addition, I undertook analytic memo-writing throughout the data collection and analysis stages, for as Charmaz (2006) has pointed out, memos offer a space to write down important ideas and details, provide a record of analytic progress, and facilitate deep and consistent analysis. It thus enabled me to present a comprehensive

account of the studied phenomenon.

4.5.2.2 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the research methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data are consistent and dependable, leading to trustworthy and accurate research outcomes.

To enhance the reliability of the research, several measures were implemented to ensure consistent and dependable data collection. One key strategy was the utilization of a similar set of core interview questions for all participants. By employing a standardized interview protocol, the study aimed to minimize variations in data collection procedures and ensure a consistent approach across all participants. This helped establish a reliable framework for gathering information and allowed for meaningful comparisons and analysis of responses.

Moreover, the core interview questions were carefully designed to target specific aspects of the research topic, ensuring that relevant and comparable data were obtained from each participant. This methodological consistency and alignment contributed to the overall reliability of the research findings by minimizing potential sources of bias and enhancing the trustworthiness of the collected data.

As I have also mentioned briefly in the previous section, my supervisor spent a huge amount of time, going through each transcript with the researcher (me), page by page and line by line, spotting points and parts that needed checking. This effort along with the prior respondent validation of the transcription can also ensure a much greater degree of reliability.

Besides, to improve the reliability of the data, I carefully selected quotes from teachers that offered solid evidence to substantiate my interpretations. I aimed to provide the reader with the opportunity to form their own conclusions regarding the findings based on the selected quotes

4.5.3 Researcher Role

With my dual role of both being the researcher and a junior high school teacher myself, I have been very mindful of my relationship with the participants in this study. In my opinion as a researcher, human beings construct meaning based on their reflections on their experiences, so it is of great importance to identify the interpretations that they give to their actions. By engaging with my interviewees' world, I have attempted to understand their contexts in order to achieve this goal. For me to gain an understanding of why teachers would hold some certain beliefs and act in a particular way, I must first understand what their actions mean to them and the world through their own perspective.

Throughout the whole process, I have also paid particular attention to my own beliefs and opinions in order to minimize my own social and cultural biases and avoid becoming an instrument of the study (Preissle & de Marrais, 2016). I have constantly examined and re-examined my attitudes, intents, approaches, and interpretations, as both an outsider (a researcher of the current study) and an insider (a peer teacher also teaching English in a junior high school) to avoid crossing any boundaries. While gathering my data, I tried not to interfere with my participants' daily teaching routine, nor did I intend to add any further burdens to them. I was also very careful that the data I had collected was kept private and was only used for my research.

Nonetheless, I believe that it is impossible to be perfectly objective when dealing with human concerns. Sharing some commonalities with those participants and being able to empathize with their background as a fellow junior high school English teacher was in fact a privilege in terms of granting me access to potential research participants, but I must also acknowledge a possible risk that participants might tell me what they believed I wanted to hear. In me sharing my own views with the research participants, there was also a slight danger that I might unconsciously have an influence on their responses.

However, by the same token, I am also convinced my role as a junior high school teacher would make it easier for me to build up a close rapport with the participants than other university scholars or district supervisors who seem to be more "distant" to them. Besides, I believe I viewed them more than just *research* objects but also as fellow humans who have emotions, values and needs (Elbaz, 2018). In sum, I believe that playing both an insider and outsider role has contributed to me gathering more credible results.

Research is a highly dynamic process, during which the researcher and those researched might experience some changes in their beliefs and behaviors. Researchers' sharing accounts of their own lives can sometimes serve as a useful catalyst in helping their research participants open up. During the interviews, I therefore freely exchanged ideas with the participants about my own beliefs and practices, in the hope that this would then help to spark more of their own ideas and beliefs. When doing this though, I must add the caveat that I was always careful to maintain a level of objectivity and not to impose my own way of thinking. When encountering beliefs and practices which were very different to my own, for example, I was wary of not trying to convert others, nor to become converted myself. In other words, I tried to keep my stance relatively neutral.

However, as I have already acknowledged, given my shared background with the participants, my complete neutrality as a researcher would probably be unfeasible. As part of my reflexivity, I should therefore acknowledge that in researching this topic, there will always be some potential for bias in my interpretations. However, I have tried to remain critically aware of this danger and to be as sensitive in my interpretations as possible. Questions such as "what are my aims for this study?", "who am I?" and "what is my relationship with them" were therefore always kept at the forefront of my mind.

4.6 Limitations

Drawing on the interpretivist paradigm, this study aimed to uncover the

detailed and complex nature of participants' beliefs about teaching EFL reading, as well as the origin and development of these beliefs. While the limitations of solely relying on qualitative interviewing were addressed earlier, it is important to note two additional limitations and the mitigations implemented to address them.

The first limitation pertains to the limited sample size. With only nine participants from a specific geographical context, the generalizability of the findings beyond the scope of this study may be limited. To mitigate this, rigorous data analysis techniques were employed, including repeated data checking and cross-checking, to enhance the validity of the findings within the specific context. The use of multiple perspectives and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences helped provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

The second limitation lies in the study's snapshot approach, as teachers' beliefs and practices are known to be dynamic and subject to change over time. To address this limitation, a conscious effort was made to dig deep and ask in-depth questions about participants' past experiences during the interviews. By tracking the origin and development of their beliefs, the study sought to capture a nuanced understanding of their current beliefs and the relevant changes and developments.

By implementing these mitigations, the study sought to enhance the quality and validity of the findings, despite the limitations associated with sample size and the temporal nature of beliefs. These mitigations aimed to provide rich insights into the research phenomenon while acknowledging the inherent limitations of the chosen research approach.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I first restated my research questions and the overall aims for the study. I also clarified my rationale for taking an interpretivist

stance in aiming to gain a deeper perspective on teachers' beliefs and reported practices during a time of reform.

Case study and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the research methods for this qualitative study as they can help provide a contextualised and detailed account of where one teacher's beliefs originate, how their beliefs develop and how they are related to individual's practices.

I then explained why and how the particular respondent teachers were chosen to meet my research objectives as well as the development of my interview questions based on the theoretical framework elicited in the Literature Review chapter.

The pros and cons of those approaches were then considered, along with a discussion of my efforts to ensure the validity and reliability throughout the data collection and analysis process.

I concluded the chapter by acknowledging the limitations of my study. In the following chapter, my specific findings will be presented.

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Chapter Summary

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to report on the data emerging from the interviews, including the teachers' beliefs toward ELT and EFL reading, the origins and development of such beliefs as well as their congruence with the curriculum guidelines.

My presentation of the data in this chapter will be horizontal in nature, representing a contrastive examination of the 9 participants as a whole. The reason for presenting the data in this way is that my objective in the current research is to explore JHS teachers' beliefs in order that this can offer wider implications for reading pedagogy and curriculum implementation. I believe that presenting the findings horizontally can thus help to showcase a more holistic and inclusive picture of teachers' beliefs than presenting individual teacher's beliefs one by one.

My findings will be presented following the order of the research questions, each of which links back to the specific interview questions originally posed. The findings of the study are thus presented in three main sections, each of which addresses one of my three main research questions.

The table below provides a brief biographical overview of each interview participant. To protect their identities, in each case I have assigned anonymized English pseudonyms.

Table 5.1   Detailed description of participants for the study

'Helen'	Helen is 50 years old and has worked as an English teacher now for 28 years. She works in a school which is famous for English language teaching in the district.
'Lucy'	Lucy is 47 years old with 23 years of teaching experience and now works in a suburban school. Due to some changes in local educational policy, Lucy worked in a vocational school and primary school before.
'Zoe'	Zoe is 40 years old with 16 years of teaching experience. She has transferred jobs twice, moving from a rural school to a school in the city center.
'Zola'	Zola is 40 years old with 13 years of teaching experience. She has a Master's degree and currently works in a rural school.
'Hilary'	Hilary is 37 years old with 13 years of teaching experience. She has been honoured with the title of 'Elite Teacher' in Ningbo and also currently works in an elite school.
'Yolanda'	Yolanda is 31 years old with 7 years of teaching experience. She was transferred to her current school due to the district policy.
'Tina'	Tina is 30 years old with 4 years of teaching experience. She has a a Masters degree from a very prominent normal university in China.
'Carol'	Carol is 28 years old with 2 years of teaching experience. She studied for her BA in China and her MA in the UK.
'Wendy'	Wendy is 25 years old with 2 years of teaching experience. Her current workplace is a rural school, which is also her first workplace.

To anchor my presentation of the findings, it is worth me now reiterating the specific research questions that my study seeks to answer:

1. What are teachers' beliefs and reported practices about teaching reading?

2. Where did these beliefs originate from and how have they developed?

3. Are the teachers' beliefs and reported practices congruent with China's recent curriculum reforms?

5.1   Teachers' Beliefs and Stated Practices toward Reading

To answer Research Question 1, seven main questions with related follow-up questions were asked during each semi-structured interview.

5.1.1 Teachers' Beliefs toward Reading

5.1.1.1 General Beliefs about English Teaching and Learning (corresponding to interview question 5)

When asked about their beliefs toward EFL, the respondent teachers'

answers displayed a diversity of priorities with regard to language learning. A common point emphasized by several of the respondents was that learning English should not only be about language, but should also encompass other dimensions such as culture and critical thinking. There was also the sense that learning English should serve as preparation for future communication:

'I want students to be comprehensive in English learning, like when they go out to a foreign country, they can communicate with foreigners in English freely and confidently.' (Zoe)

'Learning language is not just about the language itself, but rather, to infer meanings from context. This is highly important in language communication... and build students' confidence in English learning.' (Zola)

'English learning should be for students' comprehensive development, and language isn't the only thing. Culture and thinking are important.' (Wendy)

Other respondents not only stated that English learning should be lifelong, but also stressed that English learning itself needs a lot of practice and drilling in order for learners to become proficient These respondents felt that it is important that teachers carry out some practices like dictation and reciting of passages for students:

'We should aim higher...because we do not just learn for 3 years. And practice and drilling are always important.' (Hilary)

'English learning and teaching need a lot of practice and drilling, and only through that can students cultivate their sense in this language. And there should be a 3-year plan for students' learning.' (Helen)

'Accumulation is important in English language learning, where students need to accumulate ... to pave way for English learning.' (Lucy)

These particular respondents had more than 10 years of experience and were very confident in stating their beliefs. Each of the three respondents above have teaching experience of over ten years. Especially for Helen and Lucy, who were learning English in the 1980s, it is worth noting that the specific way in which they themselves learned the language (lots of drilling and mechanical practice) has clearly left a deep impression and now shapes what they believe ELT should be all about.

In contrast to the older respondents who focused particularly on language drilling, two younger respondents who started learning English in the early 2000s highlighted the need to create a good atmosphere for English learning and to raise their students' interest and to make their lessons fun. This is perhaps because the time when they themselves were learning English was a period when CLT and TBLT were being strongly advocated:

> 'Interest in English learning is of great importance and thus students can learn in a positive and relaxing atmosphere.' (Yolanda)

> 'English learning should be open and tolerate, in which students can have the chance to learn and share their ideas freely, thus they are motivated to learn English actively.' (Carol)

Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively, given China's traditional focus on learning English for examinations, only one of the teachers made specific mention of tests when talking about the aims for EFL teaching:

> 'EFL teaching has a lot to do with tests and classroom performance and participation. So I believe that English tests are important in the journey of students' English learning.' (Tina)

5.1.1.2 Conceptualizations of Reading (corresponding to interview question 5 and 6)

When respondents were asked to share their conceptualizations of reading, several themes began to emerge from their responses. With regard to EFL reading itself, the first point which was mentioned by almost every respondent was that they regarded reading to be the most important skill, not only in daily learning and testing, but also in life:

> 'Reading is the most important among all the other language skills and we have the most reading lessons comparing with other skills in English.' (Hilary)

> 'Reading is the most important as when students enter the society, they will see different texts like signs or ads in English.' (Zoe)

> 'Reading is important for students because in most of the tests, reading takes up more and more of the scores.' (Wendy)

> 'Reading is highly important. I always tell my students that the one with high reading

scores can always get a high score in exams.' (Tina)

'Reading can help improve students' writing. To become a good writer, the more important thing is for a student to become a good reader.' (Helen)

It was also clear that these respondents held different ideas on the relationship between reading and the other three skills. Some respondents shared their belief that developing listening and speaking skills basically requires students to pay attention to sentence patterns and comprehension. In order for proficiency in these areas to be achieved, the teacher would need to provide students with lots of drilling and practice. By contrast, it was suggested that when reading, students would gain more comprehensive skills such as critical thinking and cultural awareness:

'In listening and speaking, teachers mainly cultivate students' basic language ability like comprehension and vocabulary or grammar. But in reading, it is quite comprehensive.' (Lucy)

'Listening and speaking classes are usually aimed for drilling and practicing the sentence patterns while reading should be more in-depth and thought provoking.' (Tina)

'A lot of speaking practice will take place in the listening and speaking class, while in the reading classes, there will be thought-provoking questions.' (Helen)

'In listening and speaking classes, students can practice the pattern and communicate more, and there are fewer activities for thinking, but there is more thinking in reading classes.' (Carol)

'Listening classes should focus more on the listening skills and key words while reading classes should emphasize on the content of the reading passage.' (Wendy)

Interestingly, some respondents noted that they preferred listening and speaking classes to reading classes because the former was perceived to be more fun and the students would be more active and interested in their classes. As an extension of this, some respondents admitted that they were actually not so confident about their abilities in teaching reading:

'I prefer listening and speaking class, because the topics are close to students' daily life and they are more interested in talking about these things.' (Zoe)

'I am not so good at teaching reading myself. I think I myself should improve my

reading.' (Yolanda)

'I am not so good at teaching reading... my students are super silent in my reading class.' (Wendy)

'I am not so good at teaching reading and I think sometimes my structure and system in the class design is really a mess.' (Tina)

From all of my interviewees, only one respondent, Carol, indicated a clear preference for teaching reading:

'I personally like reading classes a lot, because I think every teacher will have different interpretations toward a reading text, which is very fun. 1000 people have 1000 Hamlets in their eyes.' (Carol)

However, the same respondent readily acknowledged her own shortcomings as a reading teacher and indicated that she was aware of the need to improve herself:

'I have to improve English reading myself. I need to enhance my own cultural awareness. I am reading English literature works myself, because I believe the teacher him or herself needs to stand higher.' (Carol)

5.1.1.3 Key Elements in Teaching Reading (corresponding to interview question 7)

When it came to discussing their beliefs about the key elements in teaching reading, my respondents shared several different perspectives from the previously stated beliefs in EFL teaching and learning. Some drew specific attention to the importance of cultivating critical thinking skills:

'Besides the basic skills in reading, it is important to cultivate students' ability to have the critical thinking.' (Zoe)

'Teachers should focus more on the questions on critical thinking instead of basic facts in a reading text.' (Helen)

'It is important for students to...extract information from a reading text... develop the logical and critical thinking ability.' (Yolanda)

'Reading class isn't about the language itself, but the content, the thinking behind the text.' (Hilary)

'To improve students' language ability is the most important, while critical thinking and cultural awareness should be second. Deep thinking is also important.' (Wendy)

Others felt that the emphasis should be on fostering comprehension and deeper thinking:

> 'Through the teaching of reading, some in-depth thoughts can be brought out from the students.' (Carol)

> 'Reading is not for vocabulary and grammar, but to make students understand... the reading passage and think deeply about it.' (Zola)

> 'English reading class is like our Chinese class, where students appreciate the language, understand the writer and the writing purpose, and gradually cultivate the overall reading ability.' (Lucy)

Most of the respondents agreed that compared with listening and speaking classes, reading classes should be more comprehensive in nature and aim to cover a wider scope. It was also felt that reading texts can help students to develop their personal opinions and deeper understanding:

> 'Students can express their opinions based on the reading article.' (Yolanda)

> 'Students can air their opinions based on the reading text and understand the underlying cultural meaning.' (Carol)

> 'Students can have their deep understandings toward the text and empathize the writer's feeling.' (Hilary)

The teachers' role in assisting students when interpreting texts was also frequently mentioned, with most respondents indicating that teachers should aim to provide in-depth insights when delivering reading lessons:

> 'It is important for teachers to interpret reading texts ...The reading text itself, its content,... is the most important element...exploit the cultural and thinking elements.' (Lucy)

> 'How a teacher interprets a text is highly important, because it will affect how students read the text and how the class is going.' (Hilary)

> 'Reading texts should be treated as a whole passage instead of segments of words and phrases...teachers should read between and beyond the lines themselves.' (Helen)

> 'It is important to exploit deeply in the reading text, and understand what the writer wants to convey.' (Yolanda)

> '...teachers get to interpret the text closely and know what the text is about, how the text

is organized and why it is written. The text itself is the most important.' (Carol)

The positioning and role of student learning was another important dimension, with several respondents stressing that the students should be given centre-stage and carefully scaffolded. They indicated that students are the center of the class, and that teachers should design the lessons on the basis of students' needs and characteristics so that they can be confident in reading and motivated to read as well:

'It is important for teachers to pay attention to students' development zone, so that students will accept and understand the reading texts better.' (Hilary)

'Students should be the center instead of teachers talking most of the time.' (Lucy)

'It is important for students to gain confidence through reading...to get ready for reading tests. I try to ease their anxiety when reading long passages.' (Zola)

'It is important to nurture students' ability to learn better and enhance their attitude toward learning.' (Helen)

'It is important for teachers to focus on the balance of input and output of the students in a lesson, ... students should gain something after this reading class.' (Yolanda)

It was also stressed that in a reading lesson, teachers are supposed to motivate the students by capturing their interest and awakening their thinking:

'It is important for students to be motivated to learn and think about the reading text, and even pose questions.Reading classes don't have to be active. The most important... students are thinking deep into the text.' (Carol)

'... help improve students' language and reading strategy, but also to meet students' interest and provoke students' interest.' (Tina)

In terms of how teachers believe reading should be taught, the respondent teachers also displayed shared beliefs about contexualized teaching:

'I believe that no matter what reading material it is, we need to create a context for the reading material and guide students to read under this context.' (Carol)

'I think we can't isolate reading from contexts. We need to provide students with different activities under the same context.' (Tina)

'Teaching reading is like a contextualized activity, where the textbook is merely the

carrier between teachers and students.' (Hilary)

Some respondents also mentioned that teaching students reading should be seen as a long-term process whereby teachers should help students to accumulate the language gradually. As an extension of this, it was felt that reading should not only take part in English classes. Several respondents stressed that there should also be some time spent on reading beyond the classroom and that both teachers and students should be encouraged to develop longer-term reading plans:

> 'The more students read, the more they accumulate. The more they accumulate, the better their reading ability will be.' (Tina)

> 'Vocabulary and grammar are the foundation of good reading. So accumulation of the language for students is highly important.'(Hilary)

> 'Teaching reading should not only be about teaching students the current reading text, but teachers should always have three-year reading plans in mind, and get them ready for the future test.' (Zola)

5.1.1.4 Interim Summary

From the above findings, several themes emerged which illustrate teachers' overall beliefs toward teaching reading.

Firstly, in terms of goals of English learning, the respondent teachers' answers reflected the different Zeitgeist of their respective time periods. For older teachers like Lucy, Hilary and Helen, they evidently focused more on practice and drilling of the language, while younger respondents like Yolanda and Wendy paid more attention to making the learning of English fun and relaxing.

The second major theme emerging from the findings was the teachers' unanimous statements of beliefs toward reading. For example, they expressed their shared objectives when teaching reading, that is to facilitate students' comprehension as well as raise students' cultural awareness and critical thinking, with only one teacher (Tina) attaching importance to reading tests.

All of the respondent teachers focused on students' learning and students being in the center stage as well as the accumulated nature

of reading. For example, they believed that reading can only be improved with a significant investment of time and effort. In terms of how they believe reading should be taught, they all believed that students should learn reading texts through contextualized activities instead of merely via bottom-up reading approaches. The teachers all agreed on the importance of EFL reading in students' future development and overall ability and they were all aware of their own importance in interpreting texts and carrying out reading lessons.

One surprising finding from the research though is that although all the teachers perceived reading as a very important language skill in English reading, out of the nine teachers surveyed, only Carol stated her preference for reading and giving reading classes. The other teachers admitted either not reading in English often or not considering themselves to be very good at teaching reading. Nathanson et al. (2008) has discussed the issue of struggling teacher-readers in which teachers of reading who have pessimistic perceptions of themselves as readers might adversely affect their teaching practices. With those respondent teachers' lack of confidence and generally negative self-perceptions about their abilities in teaching English reading, it raises some doubts about the efficacy of their reading classrooms and whether their students are perceiving English reading in a positive light.

5.1.2   Stated Practices in Teaching Reading

5.1.2.1 Teaching Procedures in Reading Classes (corresponding to interview question 12)

General procedures in teaching reading

When asked to state their steps in teaching reading, most respondents felt that they teach in a very traditional and patterned way, dividing their lessons into three common stages such as the Pre-, While- and Post- (PWP) model of reading:

> 'Since I got to learn English teaching, I was taught to teach reading in three steps: pre-while and post. It is like a pattern in reading classes.' (Wendy)

'Reading lessons are going like PWP reading model.' (Hilary)

'My way of teaching reading is somehow patternized, just like PWP reading.' (Zoe)

'I would normally go like PWP reading in my reading class. Everyone does that.'(Yolanda)

'When I first taught reading, I just imitated how my colleagues teach: PWP.' (Lucy)

'There is no other way than PWP model that I can think of.' (Zola)

Possibly due to the influence of the new curriculum, one respondent categorized these three stages slightly differently, although she was essentially describing the same thing:

'In every one of my lesson, there are three parts: activities for learning about the text before reading, activities for understanding and comprehending the reading text, and finally activities for applying and transferring the context after reading.' (Tina)

Only one respondent stated that she didn't always follow a set pattern in her reading class:

'I wouldn't only teach reading in reading classes, I will utilize the text according to different needs and then decide if I want a reading class or a writing class based on the characteristics of the text.' (Helen)

Pre-reading Stage

For those teachers who subscribe to the PWP model, there was widespread agreement that the main objective of the pre-reading stage is to warm up the students, activate their prior knowledge and get them ready for the tasks to follow:

'I will introduce the topic to the students at the beginning of lessons.' (Yolanda)

'I will activate students' prior knowledge by using pictures, titles or background knowledge toward the subject.' (Lucy)

'I will lead in the topic by showing some pictures or the title to activate students' prior knowledge and help them to be more familiar with the topic.' (Zola)

'For the lead in, I would usually have some free talk on the topic. If there are some videos or pictures, I would prefer use them.' (Wendy)

'The pre-reading activity should be eye-catching and to students' interest, it can also be real-life based. So I will lead in by having free talk or showing videos.' (Hilary)

While-reading Stage

When it came to text comprehension, some respondents indicated that they typically guide their students to answer a string of questions:

> 'Students in my reading classes are like taking reading tests. I will ask different questions to check their understanding. The questions are similar to the ones in the test.' (Zola)

> 'I will ask them some questions about the text and explain some difficult words or phrases. The questions are designed according to the level of difficulty, from factual questions to referential ones.' (Yolanda)

> 'Basically, I would go through the reading text and ask some WH questions about the text.' (Wendy)

Others used different techniques, such as mind-mapping and creative use of the board, to check and enhance their students' understanding:

> 'I would prefer to use mind mapping to ask students to conclude and summarize the ideas of articles through reading.' (Zoe)

> 'A teacher's blackboard design should present all the essence in one lesson... I try my best to make my blackboard design clear and logic so as to help students understand the text.' (Tina)

Further respondents felt that the students should be encouraged to understand more than just a basic comprehension of the text. For these respondents, there was evidently a desire to have their students engaging with the texts on a deeper level and thinking more about the writer's purpose. It was felt that this would allow them to evaluate the text more objectively:

> 'Besides the main idea and structure of the text, learning about the writer's writing purpose is also important.' (Carol)

> 'I think it is highly important for my students to be able to think deep about the text, like 'Is the writer writing well? Do you agree with him/her? Is he/she stating his/her opinions clearly to provoke students' thinking... Thinking is not only needed in science subjects but also art subjects.' (Hilary)

> 'I would always ask some thought-provoking questions based on the understanding of reading texts so that students can think in the perspective of the writer.' (Zoe)

> 'I will specifically lead my students to read and infer the deep meanings in the text. Students will put themselves into the shoes of the writer,... Students are also asked to do a lot of comparing within texts to infer meanings and analyze structures.' (Helen)

However, when asked how they specifically designed critical thinking related activities, most of them simply referred to 'exploiting deep in the text' and 'leading students to think beyond the text', instead of giving further explanation of the what critical thinking and core essence of critical thinking.

In order to improve their students' efficiency in reading, all the respondents agreed that reading strategies should be taught as an explicit part of the reading process. Under this heading, not so surprisingly perhaps, skimming and scanning were the skills they made mention of most:

> 'I pay much attention to reading strategies because they are important in reading tests. I teach my students almost all the reading strategies. If some students don't understand the reading text, I will even teach them how to guess the answer. I will carry out top-down reading model, because I think the overall layout is the most important.'(Zola)

> 'Teachers should specifically aim to enhance their ability not only in language but also some reading strategies. I ask students to skim and scan while reading.' (Zoe)

> 'I will teach reading strategies like skimming or scanning in the reading process.'(Carol)

> '...I will explain in Chinese how to grasp the strategies in reading like skimming. Students are asked to find out main ideas of each paragraph within limited time.' (Helen)

Two participant teachers especially mentioned such reading strategies, indicating it important for the improvement of students' reading capacity:

> 'I pay much attention to reading strategies because they are important in reading tests.' (Zola)

> 'Teachers should specifically aim to enhance their ability not only in language but also some reading strategies.' (Zoe)

However, when it came to how those teachers actually nurtured students' ability of applying those reading strategies, these same teachers failed to elaborate further on how exactly they taught those reading strategies. Only Helen and Zola provided specific explanation

on this micro-level dimensions:

> '...I will explain in Chinese how to grasp the strategies in reading like skimming. Students are asked to find out main ideas of each paragraph within limited time.' (Helen)

> 'I teach my students almost all the reading strategies. If some students don't understand the reading text, I will even teach them how to guess the answer. I will carry out top-down reading strategies, because I think the overall layout is the most important.' (Zola)

Post-reading Stage

When respondents talked about how they typically handled the post-reading stage, there was some variance in their answers. Some indicated that they would ask their students to do more talking and thinking on the reading topic based on a certain context created by the teachers:

> 'For the post reading activities, I would design a context, like an interview or talk show in a TV station. I think it important to create a real context for students in an activity.' (Wendy)

> '...I like to relate the reading text to students' real life and ask them to talk about their experiences.' (Zoe)

> 'I will carry out some discussion...because it is the most direct and efficient way to make students' voices heard.' (Yolanda)

> 'Students are invited to share their personal experience related to the topic, in groups of 4. I personally favor this kind of activity very much.' (Helen)

Others preferred to focus on improving their students' writing:

> 'Writing can be improved a lot after proper reading instructions. So, I prefer to have some writing practice after reading.' (Helen)

> 'Writing activities are better because the outcome can be based on input from reading.' (Lucy)

It is also interesting to note that some participants, especially those who are head teachers in their schools, also mentioned the aim of moral education. This is possibly because more senior teachers are also expected to take responsibility for the moral education in their respective schools:

'...If there is some moral education after reading, it will be better.' (Hilary)

'Some moral education will be carried out when referring to students' life experience after reading.' (Helen)

'I would put students into certain context where they get some tips or advice in their real-life situation like moral education.' (Lucy)

Some respondents noted that despite the prevalence of teachers following a typical "pre-while-post" structural model for teaching reading, there is often not really enough time made available for the post-reading stage:

'There is not enough time for students to write after reading within the class, but I will sometimes carry out some speaking activities instead.' (Wendy)

'It is hard to apply writing after reading because it is very hard for my students to finish all this within one lesson.' (Zola)

'Sometimes there isn't enough time for the post-reading activities so I would just skip this part.' (Zoe)

'There is not enough time for post-reading activities because of the limitation of time.' (Yolanda)

Despite these evident time limitations, however, the same respondents explained that they would be happy to devote time to the explanation of the meaning of words and phrases immediately after the while-reading stage. As an aid for student comprehension, it was admitted that the Chinese language would often be used here:

'I will particularly underline some key points in the reading text for students who are low-achieved. I will use English to give the lesson first, and then Chinese to explain it, so that all the students can understand this reading text.' (Lucy)

'After reading, I will still go back to grammar and vocabulary explanation, or I would feel quite unsafe because the low-achieved students might not understand what I talk about in English.' (Zola)

'I will ask my students to underline the key words and phrases in reading texts and explain them in Chinese so that they can review them after class.' (Wendy)

Interestingly, two of the younger and less-experienced respondents stated that they would behave differently in demo classes and daily

teaching when carrying out the post-reading part. They explained that this was largely because they believed that what they did in their classes was not supported by the current curriculum:

> 'In demo classes, I will give complete lessons while in my daily teaching, I focus on the grammar and vocabulary.' (Yolanda)

> 'In demo classes, I will give a complete lesson, but in my daily teaching, I will spend some time after class explaining to students the key words or phrases and ask students to read and memorize them after reading. Some Chinese will be in the English lesson.' (Wendy)

5.1.2.2 Application of Innovative Approaches to Teaching Reading

(corresponding to interview question 13)

Beyond the approaches already discussed, my respondents made little mention of more innovative approaches to teaching reading. Many even indicated their reluctance to do this:

> 'I don't like to try some new approaches to teaching reading. I tried literature circle, but I think deep in it, it is just the same as any other teaching approach, just in a different way.' (Helen)

> 'I think I am past the age to try new things. The traditional approach is rather fine to me.' (Lucy)

> 'As I aim to improve students' score when teaching reading, other novice approaches are not attractive to me.' (Zola)

> 'I hardly apply any new approaches as I think they are only applied in demo classes.' (Hilary)

> 'I tried using jigsaw puzzle in reading classes in my intern time but it wasn't successful, so I stopped trying new things and just follow the usual pattern.' (Wendy)

> 'I can not fully understand those novice approaches and I don't have time to fully absorb the ideas.' (Yolanda)

> 'I've tried different approaches like grouping students and asking them to give presentations or comments on certain text or analyzing the text ... but none of these is effective.' (Tina)

> 'I've heard of different approaches like jigsaw reading. I don't approve of this way of teaching because I don't think the students can learn a lot from these. These ways only apply to demo classes but not our everyday teaching.' (Zoe)

Indeed, only one respondent mentioned her experiences of trying a

new approach and stated that this had worked well:

> 'I've tried literature circle and so far I think I've been doing well and students also welcome the change according to my interviews with them.' (Carol)

Other respondents expressed their preference for more "traditional" methods such as drills on sentence patterns and reading aloud, possibly because these activities better reflected their own experiences as learners:

> 'Practice and reciting is helpful in enhancing students' reading ability.' (Hilary)

> 'Reading the text aloud and a lot is highly important because it can help students understand the text better. Students will gradually know where to pause and how to read better, which will help with their comprehension.' (Helen)

5.1.2.3 Use of Textbooks and Additional Reading Materials (corresponding to interview question 12)

Use of Textbooks

Textbooks are important sources for students to get access to reading texts and act as a tool for teachers to develop reading skills with their students. How teachers utilize textbooks and their relative beliefs toward textbook use also reflect how they actually approach teaching practice. For all the participant teachers, the current textbook *Go for it!* is the only official and compulsory textbook in the area, and the reading texts within this book are the carrier or the media to enhance students' abilities at all levels.

For some teachers, textbooks provide them with some useful activities to carry out in their own teaching. For example, Yolanda, Wendy and Lucy stated that they strictly followed the patterns and orders of the textbook and made full use of it because the textbook is the only official and authoritative source of teaching for them:

> 'I will make full use of the textbooks, including the exercises, because these designed tasks and activities are quite good and suitable for the students.' (Lucy)

> 'There are no extra reading materials because the reading text itself is hard enough for the students. So I make full use of the textbook.' (Wendy)

> 'I will follow the questions or tasks in the textbooks and make full use of them.' (Yolanda)

These three teachers, as I mentioned earlier, have only been in their current workplace for a relatively short period and their main role in the school has been to fit in and adapt to their new environment. Therefore, following the teaching instructions from the textbook was noticeably less burdensome for them when planning their lessons. This has helped those teachers to meet the requirements of the entrance examinations for SHS by using the guided classroom activities in the textbooks. Teachers' positive attitudes towards textbooks could, at least partially, be attributed to these points.

The interview data has also suggested that experienced teachers, especially those who were quite confident in their own teaching, were especially good at adapting the textbooks to meet their own teaching needs and purposes:

> 'I am quite bold in using textbooks. I will choose what I believe is good for the students, and reorganize the unit according to my own need.' (Helen)

> 'I myself will reorganize the order of the tasks in textbooks and design them according to the different needs: either for the students or the lesson plans.' (Zola)

By comparison, the other teachers tended to be more in the middle. They focused on the texts in the textbooks and followed the tasks assigned by the textbooks. However, they also expressed the belief that any task or activity should be based on students' needs and interests and their beliefs were reflected in their stated practice that they did't always blindly follow the steps suggested by the textbooks:

> 'I will sometimes choose some good points in a textbook and apply that in my teaching.' (Zoe)

> 'I don't like to follow the textbook all the time. Instead, I will make some changes according to my own needs.' (Tina)

Only one respondent was openly critical of the current textbook, claiming that the material was too dated. For her, it was clear that how teachers teach is much more important than the actual material they use:

'..textbooks are quite old-fashioned, so I will usually ask my students to question the textbook and even criticize some contents in it. Textbooks are not that important in students' learning. Any textbook can do if teachers teach in the right way.' (Hilary)

These statements suggest that variances in the teachers' use of the textbooks were mainly due to differences in the teachers' experience, sense of boldness and levels of confidence in their own teaching.

Use of Additional Reading Materials

However, it must be stressed that there may still be limits on how well one textbook can best meet the needs of all teachers, given the ambivalence and differentiation regarding textbooks. When asked to comment on the role of supplementary materials, most of the respondents agreed that they tried to provide these for their students. Authentic materials such as newspapers in English were seen as being particularly useful:

'I will ask my students to read some authentic reading materials from Britain to broaden their vocabulary and horizon in reading.' (Zoe)

'Students should read more than just textbooks. So I will input some authentic reading materials for them every morning class.' (Tina)

'Our students will read English newspapers to enlarge students' vocabulary.' (Hilary)

'Our students have extra lessons for extra reading materials like authentic children's literature work.' (Helen)

'We have some extra reading materials like the English newspapers and New Concept English, but I mainly ask students to recite the articles or do exercise.' (Yolanda)

By contrast, in Zola, Lucy, and Wendy's workplace, which were quite rural in Ningbo, their schools didn't apply any extensive or extra reading materials. Thus, students' only access to English reading was through textbooks and tests. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a correlation between the school type and the teachers' application of supplementary reading materials.

'My students can not even understand simple words in the textbook How can I have time and energy to teach them additional materials?' (Zola)

'We are in a rural area, and students' ability of English is below the required standard.

It is impossible to input additional reading.' (Lucy)

> 'Teaching students on the basis of textbook is a lot of work for a novice teacher like me. I don't have time and energy to do other things.' (Wendy)

Despite that those three teachers were aware that extra reading input can help enhance their students' reading capacity, they still felt it impossible to employ some additional reading materials in their classrooms. This may be because in schools with poor foreign language foundation, especially in those rural schools, students find learning English rather difficult. So using supplementary materials seems to add a heavy load for teachers who are already busily occupied by their daily routine.

Some teachers also mentioned other important factors which stopped them from introducing additional reading materials:

> 'It is time-consuming and energy-consuming to look for proper materials for their students.' (Zola)

> 'It is difficult to find reading texts for the students, as their level of English is a bit higher than little kids but much lower than high-achieved English learners. Authentic material is difficult to get.' (Lucy)

> 'Sometimes I do see some good materials that I want to share with the students, but they are too difficult. I have to modify those materials myself. I just give up.' (Wendy)

It can be seen from the above data that authentic reading materials themselves are not that difficult to gain access to, but they have to be selected, justified and modified elaborately so as to fit students' level of language proficiency. However, in real life, work pressure, heavy workload and other challenges may conspire to stop teachers from promoting extensive reading in their classrooms.

5.1.2.4 Interim Summary

The previous section listed the findings of teachers' stated practices in teaching reading. Teachers' statements regarding the PWP mode in teaching reading confirms much of the earlier research (e.g., Yu, Bian & Huang; 2022; He, 2017; Ge, 2012) that PWP is the most popular approach when teaching reading.

Most respondent teachers' acknowledgement of using GTM by

explaining grammar and vocabulary in reading class also resonates with He's (2017) statement that a number of teachers still focus on grammar and vocabulary in reading classes. Those teachers' later statement of preference for practice and drilling in teaching reading rather than employing some innovative approaches to reading also implies teachers' implicit belief that GTM is a 'safer' way of teaching reading. As these teachers later recalled, GTM was also how they had learned reading when they themselves were students.

When it came to the use of textbooks in nurturing students' reading ability, teachers' stated practices showed a little divergence, with older and more experienced teachers like Helen and Zola who are bold in reorganizing the contents to meet their own teaching objectives and younger or less confident teachers like Yolanda and Wendy who strictly follow the contents of the textbooks to help meet the requirements of the SHS entrance examinations by using the guided classroom activities in the textbooks. This is partly in agreement with Liu, Wang and Zhao's (2020) findings that English teachers in China usually lack the personal initiative to innovate in textbook use.

It can also been summarized from the above findings that teachers' use of supplementary reading materials largely depends on the school type and students' proficiency in English, with elite schools assuming supplementary reading a compulsory task and rural schools lacking source and support from both schools and parents. However, it is found that even though some teachers utilize supplementary reading in their classes, they attach little importance to the actual guidance on students' reading in this respect.

In summary, those respondent teachers' stated mode of teaching shows great similarity, but comparing with teachers' unanimous shared beliefs of teaching reading, their self-reported statements on the use of reading strategies and reading materials displayed diversity depending on their school type, students' proficiency in English, and their own confidence and experience in teaching reading.

5.2 Origin and Development of Teachers' Beliefs

To answer Research Question 2, seven main questions with relative follow-up questions were asked. In the following section, I will list the interview data by categories. These categories mainly follow the key dimension of Borg (2015)'s framework, namely, schooling, professional coursework and contextual factors. It should be further clarified that due to China's policy for teacher recruitment, some teachers (in fact quite a large proportion of teachers including myself) didn't intend to be teachers until they graduated from university, and a number of them merely focused on English learning during the uniersity period. Taking this into consideration, the relevance of schooling here includes not only the respondent teachers' English learning experience before university, but also their academic trajectory during their university time, including some teachers' pre-service education and MA education. At the same time, the category of professional coursework directly points to their formal in-service training.

5.2.1 Relevance of Schooling
5.2.1.1 Reasons for Becoming an English Teacher (corresponding to interview questions 1 and 2)

Surprisingly, when asked what made them want to become English teachers in the first place, only one respondent stated that this had been a deliberate vocational choice:

> 'I like English, and I have been interested in English since I was a student myself. So it has always been a dream for me.'(Yolanda)

By contrast, the other respondents were quite clear that becoming an English teacher had not in fact been a deliberate part of their original career planning. They indicated that they had ultimately chosen this path either because their parents perceived teaching to be a stable profession, or because this was merely the best they could do based on their college entrance exam scores:

> 'I became an English teacher because at that time old family members would think

being a teacher is quite stable.' (Lucy)

'I wanted to be a doctor first but my score wasn't high enough. And my parents thought that being a teacher was stable for a girl.' (Wendy)

'As a girl, it is stable for me to be a teacher. So I have become one even though I don't want to.' (Helen)

'In fact I don't like English that much, but because of the score in the college entrance exam, English just fits in the choice of major.'(Carol)

'I never wanted to be an English teacher. I dreamed of becoming a doctor. But my test score determined where I could go.' (Hilary)

One respondent even indicated that she had at first felt some reluctance about becoming a teacher in junior high school, thinking that her non-Ningbo local identity would serve to limit her career choices:

'I could only choose to be a teacher in junior high school instead of senior high school because my university is not that well-known. Besides, I am not a Ningbo local, so it is more difficult to find a job as a teacher.' (Zoe)

5.2.1.2 Relevance of Pre-service Training (corresponding to interview questions 3 and 4)

Chances and Challenges in English Learning

Although being an English teacher was not the first choice for most teachers in this research, neither were they keen on learning English, as soon as they formally got into their ELT majors in university, most of them were quite quick in transferring their role and status, and almost all of the respondent teachers began to take their English learning seriously:

'In fact, I was not so good at English, but as I had to study it as a major, I began to study hard at it.' (Helen)

'I wanted to be a doctor first, but as I became an English major, I found English learning quite interesting.' (Hilary)

'The moment I began to be a student in English major, I began to take my English learning seriously.' (Zoe)

Many participant teachers stated that their English competence has been improved because they spent most of their time studying English:

'As I was studying in a time of dumb English, my university life was a time when I improved my English a lot during different courses and my own hard work.' (Helen)

'I remember my years in the university very busy and hectic as we had to finish a lot of reading, listening and speaking tasks. We were making full use of every minute to enhance our skills of the language.' (Carol)

'In my university learning, I spent a lot of time improving my English ability.' (Zoe)

'While studying in university, I made great efforts improving my language ability.' (Tina)

'A lot of effort was made in my university time to learn English.' (Zola)

It can be seen from those participant teachers' statements that as soon as they entered English major in their school, both their university and their own aim for the learning was to improve English ability at all levels so that they could be qualified for their future jobs. In this sense, the courses on English language helped to equip the participant teachers with basic skills in English and qualifications for their future job, though they identified little change of beliefs took place when taking such language courses.

Four respondents also recalled that their initial failures and challenges in learning English had an impact on their belief formation:

'I was terrible at spoken English and even got a 'fail'. This somehow intrigued my motivation to improve spoken English...I would insist that my students read aloud texts so as to improve their pronunciation.' (Helen)

'I wasn't so good at English back in the university, but I practiced hard and I did make progress, so I think success of English learning can be achieved through practice.' (Hilary)

'I believe English language proficiency for teachers are highly important because I was turned down in some job interviews several times because the interviewers believed my English was not proficient enough.' (Zoe).

'I didn't do well in my college entrance exam and it limited many of my chances for future jobs. So I think tests are highly important.' (Tina)

For some respondents, it also became clear that the prevailing Zeitgeist had a role to play at the time of their English learning. For example, in the 20th century, with little audio and authentic resources in English, both English teachers and learners at the time could get little access to

authentic English listening or reading materials. These issues are reflected in the comments from Helen, the oldest teacher's learning experiences, when she related to her English learning experience:

> 'My first English teacher in my junior high school didn't even know how to read English aloud. She only made us recite some rules to read English words, like b-e-e bee, t-e-a tea. We recited them over and over again in English classes and it wasn't until many years later that I realized that her pronunciation of some words was wrong.' (Helen)

This experience, as Helen recalled, in fact had a huge impact on her learning and teaching of English in the later years. Despite the great efforts that Helen had made when she was a schoolchild to improve her speaking skills in English, she often failed and became frustrated. Therefore, when talking about EFL reading, she chose to place a strong emphasis on having students read from their texts aloud:

> 'I think it highly important for students to read texts out aloud, which will help them understand the text better. I will require my students to do this almost every day.' (Helen)

Similar stories also emerged from Lucy, who had started learning English in between the 1980s and the 1990s. Her description of her experience of English learning was "dumb English":

> 'I didn't learn English much back in middle school, but I did learn a lot through university time.' (Lucy)

The "Usefulness" of Courses on Teaching Theories

For teachers who received pre-service courses on teacher education, there was general agreement that the specific instruction they had received on reading had probably played a key role in establishing their beliefs and future approaches. It should also be noted that Tina's and Zola's statements are absent here as they hadn't received any formal training in university time to be a teacher:

> 'In my university, I was taught to read by using English texts and skimming and scanning are the 'must-master' approaches in English reading.' (Zoe)

> 'My university courses especially taught us to teach reading as they want us in a patternized way: the PWP model. It is the widely acknowledged way by our university teachers.' (Carol)

> 'In my university, our teachers would ask pre-service teachers to teach according to the set pattern so the safest way is to teach reading like this: PWP, which means pre-reading activities, while-reaidng activities and post-reading activities.' (Wendy)

However, when asked about the usefulness of their pre-service training, most of the respondents were generally in agreement that what they had been taught at university was not particularly beneficial in preparing them for teaching English:

> 'There was only one teacher teaching us about teaching methodology. Other teachers just talked about grammar and vocabulary.' (Zoe)

> 'The first several years in university were very theoretical...without any real practice in teaching.' (Wendy)

> 'No teacher would tell us how to really teach. None of my teachers knew how to teach middle school students. Even though there was sometimes some guidance about teaching, it was aimed for senior high schools.' (Yolanda)

> 'Teachers in my university didn't know much about teaching English in middle schools themselves. So most of the time we just tried to learn the language more than learning about teaching.' (Hilary)

Taking the teaching of EFL reading for example, Carol and Wendy mentioned that her teachers in university just told them they should have PWP reading process in each class, and there was even a required time limit for each part without explaining to them any explicit reason; Zoe and Yolanda also mentioned the teaching of reading strategies, but what they learned was only the name and process of those strategies instead of the underlying reasons behind why and how students might learn to read more effectively with the help of those strategies.

It can be seen that the main reason for those teachers' denial toward the teaching theory courses was that, they were taught by university teachers who neither had taught in a middle school, nor understood how middle school students studied English. It therefore follows that when those teaching theories were taught and transmitted, students

were in fact just listening to some big names and ideas without really knowing what it was about and how it could really work.

Positive Attitude towards Internship

Compared with their variant evaluation of learning at university, most respondents were much more positive about their experience of internships:

> 'The 2-month internship was quite different. I think I at least learned how to teach in real-life situation.'(Zoe)

> 'Our school has provided us with many chances to listen to demo classes and internship, ...these experiences taught me to be quick-minded when dealing with different situations.' (Carol)

> 'I think the internship is the most helpful because it teaches me about real-life teaching.' (Wendy)

During the internship, the participant teachers were assigned a mentor to guide and help them to know about real classroom teaching. Acting as a platform for student teachers to practice, internship is vital for developing those teachers' teaching skills. Therefore, during their internships, as those participant teachers recalled, they finally gained a chance to combine what they had learned in university to the real-life classroom, and they finally felt that they got close to their future teaching jobs.

For some teachers, internship was also an opportunity for them to be faced with the teaching "reality". For example, Wendy stated that when she was studying in university, she was interested in a new approach to reading called jigsaw reading and wanted to apply it to her class teaching during internship. However, she recalled it as being "a great failure" and realized the gap between what she thought she could do and what she actually did. She came to realize that what she had learned in university was somehow in conflict with the teaching reality. After some consulting and self-reflection, she learned that the teaching techniques and classroom activities she had learned as a student teacher require full cooperation of students, high proficiency of students' language ability and their interest, confidence and

motivation in learning. This was when she renewed her understanding about EFL teaching being not only about knowing about teaching techniques and theories, but also being about knowing students' current language proficiency and developing teachers' pedagogical skills. In this way, teachers' pedagogical beliefs were formed under the influence of their real-life practices and mentors.

From the findings above, courses on teaching theories and techniques actually appear to have had very little influence on those teachers' beliefs about ELT or teaching EFL reading. The reason behind this is that it is difficult for pre-service teachers to be capable of applying some teaching theories or strategies before they actually put them into practice. Without real practice, these beliefs can be quite vague, weak, and easily affected. Although a 2-month internship can offer most teachers with chances of innovating their beliefs and relating these to their future teaching practice, some of them indicated that they were more observers than real practitioners during the process, as they could only give limited lessons due to the school schedule and policy.

<u>Eye-opening MA Experiences</u>

Surprisingly, compared with the pre-service education at the BA level, of the three teachers who had achieved a Masters degree, their comments on the role of their MA training were more diversified and seemed to be more positive. They emphasized that their experiences in MA studies had influenced their ways of conceptualizing language.

For example, Carol, who had studied for her MA in the UK stated that her experience there "opened up her eyes about teaching English and that there should never be a set-pattern", which she later recalled had a huge impact on the shaping of her beliefs:

> 'I studied Education in UK, and it totally opened up my eyes toward English learning: it is never patterned like what I always thought. It can be anything with many possibilities!'(Carol)

Zola, on the other hand, had studied applied linguistics in a Chinese university, and the learning of pragmatics led her to look at reading

texts in a different perspective. She highlighted that she would also guide her students to pay attention to pragmatic function of the language:

> 'I learned pragmatics in my MA, and it influenced me in how I looked at the language. It's more than language itself... the deep meaning behind the language. I will read for the pragmatic meaning of the English text ...and I will lead my students to pay attention to these aspects.' (Zola)

As for Tina, who had studied for her MA at a prominent university in Shanghai, she was in constant touch with elite faculty groups and seminars in Shanghai, and adored the academic atmosphere in the big pioneering city:

> 'My MA experience in Shanghai opened up my eyes and I have seen many elite teachers and experts giving cutting-edge comments and theories of teaching. I think that teachers should have a big picture of planning lessons in unit levels instead of individual lessons.' (Tina)

In fact, what Tina stated about the unit-level teaching plan is what is strongly advocated in the current 2022 NECS guidelines (the interview took place in 2019, before the official issuing of the curriculum).

In this sense, it can be seen that an MA education can provide teachers with some different perceptions of ELT. This can serve to strengthen existing beliefs or open the possibilities for new perspectives.

5.2.1.3 Interim Summary

From the above findings, with regard to where the beliefs of reading came from, the respondents offered a range of possibilities. For most of them though, it seemed that the main catalyst for belief formation was the time when they themselves were still students. For example, Helen recalled her failure when learning English, which made her focus more on reading aloud in English. Wendy and Yolanda also stated that their first perceptions of reading came from the time when they were middle school students, because their teachers had only taught reading by following the PWP model.

These findings resonate with various studies (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Bailey, 1996; Gürsoy, 2013) that teachers' prior experiences as students significantly impact their beliefs and later their language teaching instructions. This also agrees with the much earlier and seminal work by Lortie (1975) who stated that when students observe their teachers' teaching practices, it is an active observation as the practices are then imprinted or embedded in their memory subconsciously.

In terms of those teachers' recalling of their pre-service learning, despite those kinds of training courses are perceived to prepare teachers' for their future teaching, little recognition can be sought from the teachers' responses especially with regard to courses on teaching pedagogical theory. The respondent teachers attributed the reasons like the courses either being too theoretical or the teachers knowing little about teaching in middle schools. These findings confirm the previous studies (e.g. Cheng & Sun, 2010; Yang, 2016; Zou, 2009; Zou, 2019) that many university teachers tend to fail to help their students understand some teaching theories as those teachers lack the self-consiousness of their students' learning and some of them even don't know how English is actually taught in middle schools.

One interesting finding is that three teachers with MA degrees gave positive comments on their postgraduate study. Their beliefs of reading were impacted either by some specific course they received at that stage (Zola focused on pragmatics), or their school's open academic atmosphere (Carol believed that reading shouldn't be patternized; Tina began to focus on the unit-theme for a reading text). In this sense, it can be seen that an MA education may provide teachers with some different perceptions of teaching reading. This can either serve to strengthen existing beliefs, or open up the possibilities for new perspectives. It was also later discovered that those teachers were more articulate about their own beliefs and it became apparent that these teachers' MA experiences had made them comparatively more receptive to new ideas about teaching.

5.2.2 Professional Coursework (corresponding to interview question 10 and 11)

In terms of the professional training that the respondent teachers received after they formally became teachers, it can be seen that their beliefs can somehow be influenced through different means of teacher training. In the course of my interviews with the 9 participant teachers, most of them admitted that certain professional coursework had made a difference to their beliefs and practices of teaching EFL reading. In the following sections, I will therefore categorize the different forms of training the participant teachers mentioned and list the impact they perceived those forms of training had had on them.

5.2.2.1 Appointment of Mentors for Novice Teachers

As novice teachers begin their training or learning on the periphery of the bodies of knowledge within their teaching practice, the most common way for them to develop the skills in teaching in China's context of education is usually through appointing a mentor for the new teachers:

> 'My reading class was rather messy when I first taught, but thanks to the mentor the school appointed for me (a retired expert in ELT in our district), my classes soon became much more well-organized.With her help, I realized that my previous perceived way of teaching reading was wrong and that I should explore deeper into the reading texts as well as knowing enough of students' learning ability.' (Wendy)

> 'I followed a mentor who was an expert in ELT. I observed her lessons and learned a lot, like reading classes can be not so patternized and can be so in-depth and wonderfully taught.' (Carol)

> 'My working place is the most prominent foreign language school and I have a mentor who is now an ELT expert in China. I have been following his footsteps and somehow evolved my beliefs in teaching.' (Helen)

Through imitation and observation as well as discussion with their appointed mentors, the above teachers obviously updated their perceptions and beliefs toward ELT and gained some new insights in their beliefs.

However, some teachers were keen to stress that their appointed

mentors had helped little in both their formation of beliefs and practices:

> 'I was appointed a mentor soon after I became a teacher, but she was too busy to help me. I explored how to teach myself.' (Tina)

> 'It is our school tradition to appoint a mentor for every new teacher. But I think it merely a formality as I can get little help from my mentor. And after one year, as new teachers are no longer that new, the mentor-apprentice relationship just ends.' (Zoe)

As these statements suggest, newcomers fit into their respective workplaces by observing, adapting and adjusting their behaviour to fit the accepted requirements within the bigger community. However, teachers display diversified comments on the usefulness of this form of help. For some teachers like Helen, Carol and Wendy who got expert teachers to guide them, their beliefs were transformed in a positive way, while for Tina and Wendy whose schools merely carried out the formality of such professional assistance found little even no help in their professional growth.

5.2.2.2 Lectures

Lectures given by experts from university or district supervisors in ELT are another frequently mentioned form of professional coursework. It is compulsory for every teacher to listen to lectures to be awarded credits, as was stated earlier in Chapter 2. The aim of such lectures are usually to convey the ideas from the curriculum or the Ministry of Education. However, negative comments can be found from those respondent teachers:

> 'I don't find those lectures helpful. Most experts just talk about the big theories. They are too abstract for me.' (Wendy)

> 'Of all those years of listening to lectures, I think these experts are just talking about the same thing. I am just doing these things.' (Helen)

> 'I sometimes can't understand what the experts really want us to do in their lectures. What they say is not practical for my own teaching.' (Zoe)

> 'For a common teacher like me, those theories are just theories, they don't help in my daily teaching.' (Lucy)

> 'I am deeply disappointed in the lectures and seminars held in Ningbo because they are

shallow and can teach me nothing. ' (Tina)

'We do have some supervisors in the district who would guide us through lectures, but I don't think they are helpful, as these new ideas can't apply to my students.' (Zola)

The reason why some teacher training can't be recognized by some teachers is that similar to pre-service training, some teacher trainers don't actually know what teachers really think and what they actually do in their teaching practice. In some training programs, lecturers or teacher educators merely talked about some teaching concepts or pedagogical approaches without much interaction between teachers and teacher educators.

Also, among the comments on such lectures, it appears that teachers with more knowledge of the curriculum and training opportunities are more flexible and acceptable of the ideas and concepts they learned about in the training programs. Those teachers clearly articulated that their abundant knowledge of the curriculum is actually accumulated from some teacher training programs they took part in:

'When concepts in curriculum seemed quite abstract for me, lectures by experts helped to make things easier and more explicit.' (Hilary)

'My inspiration of literature circle approach was just from a lecture and this ignited my impulse to try this in my daily teaching.' (Carol)

5.2.2.3 Demo Classes

Compared with lectures given by teacher educators, observation of demo classes, as another form of in-service continuing professional development, was frequently mentioned by the participant teachers as a form of learning and self-development:

'I prefer to imitate some practice in some demo classes and apply them in my own reading class. If they are successful, I will keep using them.' (Zola).

'I will listen to some demo classes and imitate some of the activities in my own teaching.' (Wendy)

'Our school has provided us with many chances to listen to demo classes...these experiences taught me to be quick-minded when dealing with different situations.' (Carol)

'Teaching theories are rather too big and abstract for me, so I would prefer to listen to

demo classes and I can apply to what I learn from those lessons immediately.' (Zoe)

From those teachers' statements, although they show evident preference for demo classes, it also suggests that they seem quite passive in that they just wait for occasions or chances to be educated or trained rather than actively engage in learning themselves. They would rather be told what to do in a direct way, and demo classes are often perceived to be their easiest access to effective teacher education as teachers can easily copy and imitate directly from what is done within the demo classrooms.

5.2.2.4 Teaching Competitions

Teaching competitions play a critical role in the shaping of beliefs and can also be recognized as critical incidents in teachers' development, and almost every participant teacher mentioned their experiences of taking part in teaching competitions.

Zoe, Hilary, Tina and Wendy all took part in competitions and won some satisfying results, which in turn gave them some confidence to carry on with what they were doing and believing in or helping them reflect on their own teaching:

> 'I once got a quite satisfying result in a competition. I think I won mainly because I integrated moral education in my classroom teaching. I believe I will carry out these activities in my future teaching.' (Tina)

> 'My achievements in teaching competition made me feel more confident of myself and my beliefs of teaching are relatively stronger than before.' (Hilary)

> 'I could apply for my current job because of my award in teaching competition. That is truly critical for me.' (Zoe)

> 'As a novice teacher, I treasure opportunities to take part in competitions, and I get a feeling of satisfaction when getting some award, this in turn drives me to work harder in my job.' (Wendy)

> 'I didn't get very good results in teaching competitions, but they helped me reflect on my problems in my teaching and made me change some of my teaching practices, which somehow became a part of my belief, like critical thinking.' (Yolanda)

Experiences such as these can strengthen teachers' beliefs, as the recognition from experts then helps to endorse their practices. However,

for Zola, who didn't win any awards in teaching competitions, she didn't seem to be optimistic about her own development of career, and her main focus now in teaching was to raise students' score in tests as she believed "it was the only thing she thinks she can be capable of":

> 'I didn't get any award in teaching competition. I think my career is just like this, plain and common. I will just do my own job of teaching my current students.' (Zola)

5.2.2.5 Inspirational Role Models

Inspirational role models are also critical in teachers' development of belief formation. For example, a frequently mentioned issue was the role played by experts:

> 'An expert in Ningbo stated that it is important to plan students' learning in 3 years' term... I believe it crucial to plan for my students, which is also why I start to carry on my teaching based on tests.' (Zola)

> 'An expert English teacher's fluent spoken English somehow provoked me to practice English speaking hard. It also led me to believe that fluent English can be achieved through hard practice.' (Zoe)

> 'When I was an intern, I listened to a lot of lessons by an expert in ELT, and her lessons showed me that English shouldn't be only about language itself, but also a lot of in-depth critical thinking.' (Wendy)

> 'An expert in our school influenced me a lot because she taught me to open up my eyes and see more than ELT but other subjects…She also taught me by example that students should be encouraged instead of being criticized.' (Carol)

> 'I've always believed that through my constant practice and drilling for the students, they will be better in English. But these years I have changed my belief, because a close friend of mine, also an expert herself, told me by example that it is through students' own motivation that they will strive to learn English.' (Helen)

Interestingly, the expert that these respondents had referred to turned out to be the same person. Evidently this individual was, for a long time, an inspirational model for many teachers in Ningbo. Those above examples showed that mentors or inspirational models who offer individual guidance to teachers' needs are also more efficient and critical in influencing teachers' beliefs. It must also be acknowledged that teacher belief transformation is a process which is not only about

learning to do, but is also a part of learning to be. Those inspirational models also led those teachers to have the impulse to reflect and change based on their prior experiences. Through the guidance and advocates of the inspirational models, those teachers gradually learn to adapt their relative beliefs and practices.

5.2.2.6 Academic Associations/ Learning Groups

Learning groups or academic associations for teachers to exchange ideas and engage in professional development are also mentioned by most teachers.

Wendy, for example, made explicit mention of participating in research projects for novice teachers like herself. When taking part in seminars especially designed for novice teachers like her, she felt she had assimilated some key concepts like cultural awareness and began to input these concepts into her teaching of reading:

> 'My working place strongly encourages the growth of young teachers, I am part of a project on raising students' cultural awareness. Participating in this project helps me become more aware of the element of culture in reading articles.' (Wendy)

There are also academic associations set up for elite teachers who have already received some recognition in their field. This kind of community is aimed to nurture better and more notable teachers for the district. Zoe is a member of one such elite teacher group in her district. When she got recognition from teachers and supervisors in her district, she felt more confident of her own belief and teaching:

> 'As a member of that group, I have had many chances to meet someone who is excellent in teaching in the district. We go out for lectures and seminars and discuss our ideas of teaching. I observed many lessons and some of them challenged my original scope of what a reading class should be like.' (Zoe)

Hilary also mentioned her participation in similar elite teacher organizations:

> 'As I am considered as an elite teacher in our district, I am part of the elite teacher association. I think I can meet more educators who have powerful voices. And when my lessons were observed, they would also give me useful suggestions.' (Hilary)

Through mutual collaboration and collective interactions with other members of the group, such associations provoke teachers to reflect on

their own practices. As a result, it can be seen that some aspects of their beliefs about teaching reading have been strengthened, and more knowledge was acquired than would be acquired independently.

5.2.2.7 Self-learning

For some respondents, self-learning of curriculum guidelines can also help to shape and develop their pedagogical beliefs:

> 'Without any mentors to instruct me in teaching English, I spent a lot of time exploring and learning about the NECS, and they have become the guiding stars for the shaping of my belief, like critical thinking...' (Zola)

> 'Actually I think I am a kind of person who is really willing to learn and improve. But my environment around me doesn't help me in any way. So I will try to learn by myself, through reading curriculum and other teaching-related books, different sources on the internet' (Tina)

Though much of the exploration in curriculum is not voluntary, for respondents who are unable to get access to experts' lectures or inspiring demo classes, the NECS guidelines for English teaching can be another authoritative source of learning, and some respondents were aware of their beliefs being influenced by this. They would even explore further to reach out for other sources through self-learning.

5.2.2.8 Interim Summary

In the previous section, different forms of professional coursework and their relative impact have been exhibited in the findings, namely, mentors' guidance, lectures, demo classes, teaching competitions, inspirational role models, learning groups/academic associations and self-learning. These findings are in partly agreement that professional coursework training teacher education programmes can influence some participant teachers' relative beliefs to some degree (Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000; Richards, et al, 1996; Richards, et al, 2001). The current findings also reveal some other forms of professional coursework with China's contextualized features like teaching competitions and inspirational role models.

In the interviews, the respondent teachers also expressed divided ideas

towards the same form of professional coursework and the impact on their development of beliefs. For example, most teachers believe that lectures can help them little because experts only talk about the big theories and don't guide them exactly what to do, while Hilary (an elite teacher in the district) and Carol (MA graduate with an interest in exploring teaching reading) are fond of such form of professional training. Carol, Helen and Wendy were grateful for the help they could get from their mentors when first entering the workplace, while Zoe and Tina recalled very little influence that the mentorship had had on them.

In terms of participation in academic association and learning groups, most teachers are involved in different kinds of groups and find them helpful. Interestingly, it also emerged that teachers engaged in different kinds of groups comparatively feel more confident and "secure" about their own teaching. This is especially reflected in Hilary and Wendy's statements. Comparatively, however, teachers who are not made to feel part of a group may sometimes feel lost. For example, later evidence about self-learning from Tina and Zola show that they are forced to be highly self-reliant in their professional development. This lack of support from their wider groups or associations has evidently led to some disappointment.

Therefore, it can be summarized that the influence of a given group or association may have both positive or negative effects. Positive reinforcement from peers or the community leaders can help to build up teachers' self-confidence, strengthen their beliefs and these teachers will keep on doing what they have been doing. But if teachers feel that they are doing something different from their colleagues and may then be negatively judged for this, then their confidence may be negatively impacted and their practices may become restricted.

Overall, the results of this study identify the impact of professional coursework on the beliefs of teachers, and it can be seen that teachers with a more open attitude toward learning and involved with more groups of learning expressed more positive attitudes and their beliefs

have been strengthened accordingly.

5.2.3 Contextual Factors (corresponding to interview question 14)

5.2.3.1 Students

When asked about the factors which might have an impact on teachers' current approaches to reading pedagogy, students in the classrooms were the most frequently cited factor. Several respondents mentioned that it was the performance of their students that provided them with the momentum to carry on, either doing the same things as always, or making changes in their relative practices:

> 'In order not to let students feel bored or scared when reading, I will try to design my lessons more to their interest.' (Lucy)

> 'Students will get bored with the current textbook, so I will add some extra reading materials to add color to their daily learning.' (Tina)

> 'The students in my school are almost top students in the city and they have high requirement for teaching. So I have to keep up with the latest trend and follow their interest.' (Helen)

> 'My students find English easier after they enter Junior Three because I have helped them build get better grades. So I will keep teaching how I teach.' (Zola)

> 'When trying literature circle, my students found it fun to analyze the characters themselves, even relating to some characters in other literature works, which gives me motivation and confidence to go on.' (Carol)

Despite this, it transpired that on occasion, students' performance may hinder what teachers ideally want to do in their reading classes. This could sometimes result in a tension between their beliefs and their practice:

> 'As the students' ability of English is limited, even though sometimes I want to carry out what the curriculum advocates, still it is a bit difficult because the students can't reach the goal...' (Lucy)

> 'As there are low-achieved students in my class, there are many times I have to slow down my pace and help them understand my teaching instructions...' (Tina)

> 'Some students might not even understand what the reading passage is about. The only thing I can do is to make my teaching easier and put more drilling in it.' (Wendy)

'Students' poor performance will sometimes make me doubt myself and my belief: am I

going a bit too far? Am I doing the right thing? So I will go back to do something I really dislike:dictation and exercise and drilling.' (Carol)

'... I have to force myself to focus mainly on the vocabulary and grammar because I dare not go too far. From time to time I have to struggle between my belief and reality.' (Zoe)

5.2.3.2 Test Scores

For some respondents, test scores have become the biggest stumbling block in them remaining true to their beliefs, which means that some teachers may feel compelled to change some of their practices, even though they don't really want to:

'Test is an integral part and people must not step over it. There are also times when I am constrained by tests to do things I am not willing to.' (Zoe)

'As a novice teacher, I need to improve my students' grades, so I will focus on grammar and vocabulary after class.' (Wendy)

It was clear that for several respondents, tests do continue to play an important role. Some also drew attention to what they see as trends in the design of reading tests and believe that these trends will have a backwash on their daily practice:

'Now the reading tests focus on critical thinking... so I will ask more critical questions in my class ...' (Lucy)

'The current trend of senior high school entrance exam is the guideline for my teaching ...and the patterns in the test are deeply implanted in my mind and I will keep training my students for the test.' (Zola)

'Tests, especially the reading tests have an impact on my daily teaching, because these questions in the reading tests show what aspects are important in a reading passage.' (Wendy)

Beyond this, students' test scores can also strengthen teachers' beliefs if it turns out that the final test results are satisfactory:

'After I tried using test patterns in my reading classes, I found that my students have quite good results in tests, so I believe it is the right way.' (Zola)

'Through all the years, almost all my classes can achieve much better score than other classes, which makes me quite confident in my teaching because I am not only approved

by the school but also my students and their parents.' (Helen)

5.2.3.3 School Environment

Beyond students and tests, the third most frequently factor was fitting in with the school environment. Respondents talked about the need to meet the expectations of parents and school leaders. Sometimes a change of workplace had also forced teachers to change their practices:

> 'When I taught in primary school, my teaching aim was to make my lesson fun. While teaching in a vocational high school my main focus was for students to use the language. But junior high school is somehow different. So, I have to change my way of teaching to suit the different need.' (Lucy)

> 'As I have transferred to a new school where the students are better at English than before, I find my former way of teaching not satisfying enough and I need to make some changes.' (Yolanda)

> 'I am a young teacher and I need recognition from my school, my students and the students' parents. Sometimes I wanted to try something new, like new reading approaches, but no one around me is doing this and I think as a new teacher I should first do my own job.' (Wendy)

It was further mentioned that some schools strongly advocated the growth of teachers, providing many opportunities for them to gain extra experience. Some respondents claimed to have been very positively influenced by this environment. They indicated that the academic atmosphere at school can have a positive impact on the development of beliefs:

> 'There is a project in our school where every teacher should take part in, in which students should be the center of the learning. This also somehow changed my beliefs in reading, that students should be the center instead of teachers talking most of the time.' (Lucy)

> 'I didn't know much about teaching in my first working place. In my current school, I got help from colleagues and changed some of my beliefs in English teaching by learning from excellent teachers around.' (Yolanda)

> 'The headmaster of our school is an expert in ELT, so we would often listen to his lectures and advocates of the curriculum and somehow influenced by their talks. Also,

our supervisors in the district would often listen to our lessons and give us guidance and even encourage us to take part in different activities and competitions.' (Hilary)

'My workplace strongly encourages the growth of young teachers, so I have many chances to go out to lectures,...and even edit books like raising students' cultural awareness. Editing the book in turn raises my awareness in culture in ELT.' (Wendy)

'In my school every novice teacher needs to initiate a research project, so I began trying literature circle with my peers.' (Carol)

By contrast, for teachers whose schools don't offer much support in their training or development, some disappointment and disagreement became apparent:

'I am the only young teacher in our English faculty and I truly like to learn something new and grow faster, but I have no mentor nor positive school surrounding. The only way for me to learn is through self-exploration. It is slow but at least I am improving.' (Tina)

'To be honest, I am not so valued by the school and I am quite disappointed in it as I am always by myself, doing my own jobs, working my own things out.' (Zola)

In most cases, schools can also be seen as a formal and large community of practice where teachers are officially enrolled as staff in the organization, participate in the daily teaching and become a member within the school setting, sharing the same culture with their peers. The underlying values which prevail in the school are likely to have an influence on the teachers' own values and work priorities. As I have already argued in the previous section, tests play a key role in affecting teachers' practices; it follows that if a school places a strong value on testing, for example, then teachers working at that school are also likely to value testing:

'Our school places great importance to tests. Every semester I will receive a report, showing the scores of the students I teach and the rank in the whole grade.' (Zoe)

'If I my students get low mark in tests, I will be called in to the headmaster's office. I need to... I must strive hard to improve their score. As a novice teacher, I need to get recognition.' (Wendy)

As the above quotations suggest, the underlying values which prevail in the school are likely to have an influence on the teachers' own values

and work priorities. The influence of the working environment thus can be seen as a key factor which shapes teachers' beliefs.

5.2.3.4 Peers at Work

Beyond tests and schools, it must also be said that the influence of peers can have both positive and negative effects. As evidenced by the three quotations below, positive reinforcement from peers can help to build up teachers' self-confidence and these respondent teachers will keep on doing what they have been doing.

> '...These years I have changed my practice because our headmaster of the school would listen to my lessons and encourage me to learn something new and give reading classes in a more in-depth way.' (Hilary)

> 'Despite that I am not that young in my faculty, I still have to learn a lot because almost everyone in our school is learning the new things and making changes, even our headmaster. So I must keep up with them and change things in my teaching.' (Lucy)

> 'In our school it is compulsory for young teachers to engage in some projects and my peer colleagues are involved with the literature circle with me. I feel rest assured with others' company and support.' (Carol)

However, if teachers feel that they are doing something different from their colleagues, as shown by the responses from Wendy and Zoe, then their confidence may be negatively impacted and their practices may become restricted:

> 'I am a young teacher and I need recognition from my school, my students and the students' parents. Sometimes I wanted to try something new, like new reading approaches, but no one around me is doing this and I have to compromise to the surroundings. I think as a new teacher I should first do my own job.' (Wendy)

> 'A lot of teachers who only focus on grammar and vocabulary can help students achieve super high scores, which makes me doubt about my teaching style and I have to do that in my own teaching, too.' (Zoe)

> 'Despite that I am not that young in my faculty, I would choose to imitate what my colleagues do in their workplace so that I will not be 'wrong'.When I taught in primary school, my teaching aim was to make my lesson fun, while teaching in a vocational high school my main focus was for students to use the language. But junior high school is somehow different. So I would adjust my teaching style to suit different needs.' (Lucy)

> 'After entering into my current workplace, I think I am more of an obedient role, looking at what my colleagues do and follow suit.' (Yolanda)

Despite some differences in their age and years of experience, each of the four teachers above have one thing in common — they are all relative newcomers to their current workplaces, and they all feel a certain pressure to try and fit in the new environment and achieve a certain sense of belonging. For example, Lucy, Zoe and Yolanda transferred from other schools to their current workplace. Wendy was only in her second year of teaching, and it was also an important period for her to seek recognition within the school.

5.2.3.5 Chances of Promotion

Chances of promotion are another aspect that influences teachers' beliefs, for this helps teachers to begin to look at English learning in a different perspective. For example, Hilary is currently in charge of moral education department in her current school. As a result, in her teaching, she would not surprisingly focus more on moral education. For Lucy, who is now the leader of the English faculty group in her school, she would focus more on the school projects she participates in and somehow input the ideas from these projects to her students:

> 'As I am in charge of the moral education in my school, I would more or less integrate some of my ideas to my own students.' (Hilary)

> 'As I am the leader of my school English faculty, I should set my own examples to show how to teach according to what the national curriculum advocates and what our school project focuses on.' (Lucy)

5.2.3.6 Interim Summary

The previous section provided evidence to show the influences and various other contextual factors the participant teachers had mentioned, namely, students' academic performance, test scores, school environment, peers at work and chances of promotion.

These findings suggest that teacher beliefs and practices are mutually informed by contextual factors which then play an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement classroom instruction congruent with their beliefs. But comparing with teachers' beliefs, participant teachers' classroom practices are more

likely to be influenced by various contextual factors. These results generally align with the earlier findings of Putnam and Borko (2000), Tsui (2003), and Suwannasom (2010) who stress the influence of contextual factors in teaching. My results are also similar to other studies that have reported that the contextual factors could affect '*teachers' classroom decisions in teaching reading*' (Duffy & Anderson, 1982; Herrmann, Conley, & Johnson, 1988; Roehler et al, 1988, cited in Borg, 2006, p.138)

The current findings also partly resonate with Borg's (2015) statement that '*contextual factors may interact with teachers' cognitions in two ways; they may lead to changes in these cognitions or else they may alter practices directly without changing the cognitions underlying them*' (p.399) . A relevant example here is Zola's stated belief that she used to teach according to the requirement of the reading test design, and as her students' grades improved, she became inspired and continued doing so. The same case also applied to Helen who was confident of her own teaching and encouraged by her students' scores.

However, these above findings differ a little from Borg (2003, 2006, 2015)'s statement that teachers' beliefs are changed due to contextual factors. Based on my own research, I would argue that contextual factors can serve to strengthen teachers' beliefs if the teachers themselves are convinced that their beliefs will lead to positive effects.

In summary, the co-existence of the pressure from tests, the school environment, the students' performance and workplace peers indicated that the teachers had to consider multiple contextual factors when making certain decisions related to teaching reading. Most of the times, it can be seen from the findings that the presence of various contextual factors resulted in conflicting demands on teachers' work, leading to conflicts between their beliefs. Despite being aware of these conflicts, the participants opted to respond cautiously and maintain a delicate equilibrium. In other words, most of them, especially those who were novices or less experienced teachers (like Wendy and Yolanda)

would prioritize those contextual factors over their own beliefs, which might then lead to a lack of congruence between their stated beliefs and their actual practices.

5.3 Congruence of Teachers' Beliefs and Curriculum Guidelines

In the following section, I will be focusing on my third research question: whether the teachers' stated beliefs are in congruence with the curriculum guidelines. Several main themes emerged from my data and I will list these below.

5.3.1 Objectives in EFL Reading and Perceptions of Teachers' Roles in Teaching Reading

According to the curriculum guidelines, as I also mentioned in Chapter 2, students are expected to cultivate their core competences through EFL reading, namely, linguistic ability, learning ability, cultural awareness and critical thinking (MoE, 2022).

When asked about the teachers' objectives in teaching reading and their own perceptions, some key emergent themes are captured in the table below:

Table 5.2 Teachers' objectives and perceptions of their own roles in teaching reading

	Key elements in teaching reading	Perceptions about their own roles
Helen	*focus on **critical thinking**... *nurture **students' ability to learn better**. *treat **reading passage as a whole** instead of segments of words and phrases...	Teachers should **read between and beyond** the lines themselves. ...teach reading to **help students write better**..
Lucy	*appreciate** the language, **understand** the writer and the **writing purpose**, and **cultivate the overall reading ability** *put **students in the center**...	It is **important for teachers** to **interpret** reading texts ...**exploit** the **cultural and thinking** elements.
Zola	*understand** and **think deeply** *get confidence** through reading *have **three-year reading plans** ... **for tests**	**Teachers' reading ability determines** how they can best teach reading to their students.

Zoe	*cultivate students' **critical thinking**... *prepare students for the **future**...	Teachers play **a key role**...**not good at teaching reading**...
Hilary	*__think__ behind the text. *focus on **students' development zone** *accumulate **vocabulary and grammar**	How a teacher **interprets a text** is highly important, because it will **affect how students read the text**
Yolanda	*__extract__ information from a reading text... *__develop__ the logical and critical thinking *focus on the **input and output** of the students...	Teachers should **exploit deeply** in the reading text, and **understand** what **the writer** wants to convey...need to **improve** reading...
Wendy	*improve students' **language ability** *cultivate **critical thinking** and **cultural awareness**	...**not good at** teaching reading... **students are silent** in class... ...puzzled about teaching reading
Tina	*improve students' **language ability** *provoke students' **interest**. *__accumulate__ more and improve more	...**not so good at** teaching reading.. structure and system in the **class design is really a mess**...
Carol	*bring out students' **in-depth thoughts** *__motivate__ students to **think deep** into the texts *to **encourage** students to **exploit** the texts	Teachers get to **interpret the text closely and know what the text is about**....like reading classes a lot...

It can be seen from the first column in the above table that, when stating EFL reading objectives, the participant teachers exhibited signs of adopting the key concepts within the national curriculum into their beliefs. However, the respondent teachers' answers showed their different focuses. For example, Lucy, Hilary, Yolanda, and Carol mentioned "*the linguistic ability of comprehending reading texts*" and the importance of "*culture and thinking elements in reading*"; Zoe and Helen, on the other hand, focused on "*linguistic accumulation*" and made special mention of "*critical thinking*", believing critical thinking being the core element of students' overall development in English reading.

Besides talking about the newly posed core competence in the curriculum, most of the respondents expressed willingness to address students' needs first before carrying out any reading class. For example, Hilary mentioned "*the development zone*", believing that the reading lessons should be based on the students' level, otherwise any perfect design would be futile. Wendy, a novice teacher in her second year of teaching, also mentioned that she designed the lessons according to

students' need, and in her reading class. She hoped that her students can "*gain something more*" based on their prior learning and she stated it important "*to give students enough reading time so that they can feel more confident in reading*". Zola, on the other hand, focused a lot on motivating students' learning. For example, she emphasized that it is "*of great importance for students to gain confidence through reading*", so she tried to ease their anxiety when reading long passages. Tina also looked at improving students learning strategies, believing that "*meeting students' needs and interest*" was another important issue, while Carol and Helen also emphasized the importance of students' motivation to learn.

From the above statement, it can be seen that despite the strong advocacy for enhancing students' core competences in cultural awareness and critical thinking, the respondent teachers still placed a lot of importance on developing their students' linguistic abilities and learning strategies when it comes to real classroom teaching. Without a basic level of linguistic competence, it can be challenging for teachers to meet the higher-order requirements of the concepts now raised in the curriculum reforms.

To achieve the objectives in core competences, in terms of teachers' roles in teaching reading, teachers are expected to analyze the reading texts based on the topic in the unit, and exploit and teach the reading texts to enhance students' general understanding of the unit theme (MoE, 2022). It can also be seen from the second column of the table that most teachers also emphasized the importance of teachers themselves in teaching reading. For instance, Lucy and Yolanda indicated the importance of "*exploiting deeply*" in the reading material before the actual class takes place; Carol, Helen and Hilary emphasized the importance of teachers' abilities to read "*between and beyond the lines*" within a certain text.

As evidenced by my interview data, the participant teachers' professed beliefs toward the objectives of teaching EFL reading are

generally congruent with the objectives and core competences in the curriculum, due to the overwhelming popularization of the new curriculum at all levels. However, those teachers' professed beliefs diverged a little from the curriculum when referring to real-life teaching practice because of their different interpretations of the curriculum and the variance of the linguistic abilities in their students. If teachers believed that their students' language proficiency was too weak to take on higher-form of competence such as cultural awareness and critical thinking, they would usually choose to prioritize linguistic competence to ensure that language learning is really taking place. This suggests that while lip service is being paid to the curriculum reforms on a surface level, in reality, individual teachers may still be interpreting things quite differently and assigning their own emphasis.

5.3.2 Reading Pedagogy

It has long been acknowledged that developing cognitive and metacognitive skills is an important step in becoming a fluent reader (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Hall, 1994). How teachers teach reading in their classrooms will therefore have a direct impact on students' overall reading abilities. The table below exhibits teachers' general beliefs about how reading should be taught and what reading approaches they believe to be appropriate when carrying out a reading class:

Table 5.3 Teachers' general beliefs on how reading should be taught and conceptions toward reading approaches

	General teaching procedures	Preferred approaches to teaching reading	Perceptions of innovative approaches
Helen	**No set pattern**, utilize the text according to **students' different needs** and the **characteristics** of the text	*exploit the **writing purpose and structure** ***compare texts** of similar types *encourage students to **think like the writer** ***share personal experience** in groups * have some **writing practice** after reading * **moral education** * **read** the text **aloud**	new approaches are **not applicable**...deep inside...these approaches are **just like the old ones**, just in different forms...

Lucy	**PWP model:** <u>*Pre-reading:</u> activating students' prior knowledge <u>*While-reading:</u> text comprehension and utilizing reading strategies like skimming and scanning <u>*Post-reading:</u> assigning a task in the form of writing or speaking activities	*picture and title **prediction** *ask **WH questions** about the text ***moral education** ***practice and drilling** *explain **grammar and vocabulary**	**past the age to try new things...** the traditional approach is rather fine
Zola		***free talk** to introduce the topic *ask question similar to **reading tests** *have some **writing practice** after reading *explain **grammar and vocabulary**	only aim to **improve students' score** ...other novice approaches not attractive...
Zoe		***free talk** to introduce the topic *use **mind mapping** to ask students to conclude and summarize the ideas *exploit the **writing purpose** *relate to students' **real life** ***practice and drilling**	..**don't approve of** new approaches...**students can't learn** a lot from these..**not apply to daily teaching**..
Hilary		***videos** to arouse students' interest ***free talk** to introduce the topic ***exploit** the writing purpose ***moral education**	**hardly apply any new approaches** as they are **only applied in demo classes**
Yolanda		*ask questions from **factual to referential ones** *carry out some **discussion** *explain **grammar and vocabulary**	**can not fully understand** those approaches and **no time**...
Wendy		***free talk** to introduce the topic ***videos or pictures** to arouse students' interest *ask **WH questions** about the text ***design a context**, like talk shows or interviews *explain **grammar and vocabulary**	**tried** using jigsaw puzzle but it **wasn't successful**, so... **stopped trying new things** and just follow the usual pattern
Tina		*ask questions from factual to referential ones *use clear and logic blackboard design to help students understand the text ***design a context**, like talk shows or interviews	**tried** different innovative approaches ... **but none of these is effective**
Carol		***visualize the big task** before reading * exploit the writing purpose and structure *discuss the relative topic in groups ***design a context**, like talk shows or interviews	**tried literature circle** and so far I think I**'ve been doing well** and will **continue** doing so

From the pedagogic approaches presented above, it seems that in the majority of cases, teachers' stated objectives in reading do correspond with the aims of the curriculum, i.e., to nurture students' competence through contextualized teaching, proper guidance of reading strategies and approaches to reading, as well as to enhance students'

critical thinking and cultural awareness (MoE, 2022).

The teachers' stated beliefs of approaches to teaching reading also showed quite a lot of similarity: patterns of their teaching reading generally followed the PWP model. Those teachers also attached great importance to cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, which is generally congruent with what was advocated in the curriculum i.e., teachers should guide students to take proper steps and strategies to accomplish tasks in English learning, by employing metacognitive skills such as planning, monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on the process of learning (MoE, 2018).

A further point is that most teachers attach great importance to contextualized teaching when stating their beliefs, especially in the warming up and post-reading stages. However, the same teachers also admitted constantly switching from contextualized teaching to de-contextualized teaching for the sake of raising test scores. For example, Wendy, Yolanda and Zoe all stated that the function of contextualized teaching was to arouse students' interest toward the reading texts at an early stage of the whole reading class and ended the lesson by presenting a "*holistic*" picture, but they also believed that repetition of grammar and vocabulary practice played an important role in assisting learners to memorize the key points in tests. As a result, they would choose to omit the post-reading contextualized teaching in their daily teaching to reconcile to test-driven grammar and vocabulary exercises. As was mentioned previously, Wendy and Yolanda even admitted to acting differently in demo classes and their day-to-day teaching because they "*wanted to show the ideas of curriculum in demo classes to other viewers*". It can thus be concluded that despite the teachers' emphasis on contextualized teaching, they still prioritized decontextualized teaching over contextualized teaching.

While the new curriculum guidelines from the Ministry of Education encourage teachers to embrace more innovative practices in the teaching of EFL reading, it seems that most teachers prefer to 'play it

safe' by sticking with what they already know and what they are familiar with. Only Carol made a direct attempt to apply literature circles in her own teaching.

5.3.3 Use of Textbooks and Supplementary Reading Materials

According to both the 2001 and 2022 National Curriculum guidelines, teachers should not only be the followers of textbooks but are also required to be active facilitators. Teachers are expected to fully understand the layout of the textbook, and the relations between each unit (MoE, 2001; MoE, 2022). In other words, teachers should utilize textbooks as a tool for their own educational purposes rather than blindly following what they say regardless of their own contextual factors. The findings summarized in the table below show that most teachers are in fact able to select and reorganize textbooks according to their teaching objectives:

Table 5.4 Teachers' beliefs toward the use of textbooks and supplementary reading materials

	Use of textbooks	Use of supplementary reading materials
Helen	**bold** in using textbooks ... **choose** what is good for the students, and **reorganize** the unit accordingly...	students have **extra lessons** for **extra reading materials** like authentic **children's literature work**
Lucy	**make full use** of the textbooks, including the exercises in the book	students' English proficiency is **below the required standard**... **impossible** to add additional reading.
Zola	**reorganize the order** of the tasks in textbooks and **design** them according to the **different needs**	students **can not even understand** simple words in the textbook...**no time or energy** ...
Zoe	**select** some good points in a textbook and **apply** that in my teaching	students read some **authentic reading materials** from Britain to **broaden vocabulary and horizon** in reading
Hilary	textbooks are **old-fashioned**,...ask students to **question the textbook** and even **criticize** some contents in it	Students read **English newspapers** published by Chinese agencies to enlarge students' vocabulary
Yolanda	**follow** the questions or tasks in the textbooks and **make full use** of them	extra reading materials like the **English newspapers and New Concept English**, students mainly **recite the articles** or **do exercise**.'
Wendy	**make full use** of the textbook..**strictly**	textbook is a lot of work..**no time or energy** for

	follow the pattern and order...	other reading
Tina	**make changes** accordingly	input some **authentic reading materials** for students **every morning class**
Carol	**use** the textbook according to the **objectives** I set for my reading class	students have **extra lessons** to read **authentic children's literature work**

Among those teachers, Helen and Zola showed the strongest confidence in dealing with textbooks, which might be attributable to the encouragement they gained from getting good test results. Though from different school settings, Helen and Zola both excelled at raising their students' scores in English, thus they were more confident of their teaching practice compared with the other teachers and their beliefs toward textbook use were more in congruence with what the curriculum required.

In addition to the required reading from textbooks, students should have the reading capacity of at least another 150, 000 English words, indicating the benefits which supplementary reading materials can bring to the development of students' reading skills. The curriculum guidelines also specifically point out that teachers should guide their students to carry out supplementary reading by providing them with the proper reading environment, resources and methods (MoE, 2022).

From the data presented above, it can be seen that teachers' use of additional reading is heavily dependent on their students' overall English proficiency and their school types. For Helen, Carol and Hilary who come from elite schools, additional material is common and even compulsory for each student, as those students are usually high in terms of their language proficiency. Tina, Yolanda and Zoe's schools also strive to meet the requirements posed by the curriculum. However, for rural schools like Lucy, Wendy and Zola's, as they are still striving to help students understand the basic texts in textbooks and those schools are relatively poor in resources and equipment, supplementary reading can only rarely be added.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have sought to report 'horizontally' on the main themes

which emerged from my interviews by comparing the responses from my 9 participants as a whole. Overall, I believe that some interesting and valid results have been obtained. Based on a cross-case qualitative data analysis, I provided a holistic overview of teachers' beliefs and their stated practices. I also further explored the factors which could be deemed to have had an impact on teachers' beliefs and have discussed these findings with reference to the relevant literature.

It is evident that the teachers' articulation of their beliefs and practices displays some degree of similarity, but some differences can also be seen depending on the teachers' years of teaching experience, their personal confidence, their prior learning experiences and other contextual factors. My findings also shed some light on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and the new curriculum. The 'negative comments' shared by most participants about of the value of their pre-service and in-service training, for example, suggests that more work needs to be carried out in this area.

In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss what I believe to be the wider significance of my research, consider its strengths and limitations and make recommendations for some possible directions in future research on this topic.

CHAPTER 6: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

6.1 A Critical Discussion of the Answers to My Research Questions

Introduction

The findings of this study bring to light the complex nature of Chinese JHS teachers' beliefs in a time of reform. In this chapter, I conclude my study with discussions based on the following six sections. Firstly, I summarize what I believe to be the major findings of this research and consider the extent to which this can provide answers to my stated research questions. Secondly, I discuss the contributions I believe my study makes to the existing literature. I next consider the wider implications of my research in relation to enhancing teachers' overall performance when teaching EFL reading as well as their professional learning and development in the context of the curriculum reforms. At the end of the chapter, I consider what I believe to be the strengths and weaknesses of my research and make some recommendations for the direction of future studies.

6.1 Answers to my research questions

The main focus of this study was an exploration of teachers' beliefs toward the teaching of EFL reading. Three specific research questions were formulated around this topic and my intention was that the findings of the study should provide answers to these. In the following sections, I will provide some critical discussion of this.

6.1.1 What are teachers' beliefs and reported practices about teaching reading?

Though classroom observation is absent in the present study, respondent teachers' self-reported practices did, to some extent, reveal the conflicts and tensions within their beliefs and self-reported practices. Following the interim summaries in Section 5.1.1d and Section 5.1.2d, I will now combine these two sections and discuss the main features of teachers' beliefs and reported practices about teaching reading.

Firstly, despite the respondents' unanimously stated beliefs about the need for contextualized activities when teaching reading, findings on teachers' reported practices indicated that most teachers in fact applied eclectic approaches, which are a combination of new approaches and traditional ways. In fact, such eclectic approaches to teaching are a result of the teachers' dual objectives: developing students' overall competence and improving their test scores.

The reason to account for this phenomenon is that tests are highly crucial in assessing students' achievement and performance in English learning due to China's test-oriented culture. When encountering time constraints or pressure from tests, teachers would choose to omit activities like contexualized activities. Implicitly, it can be found that those teachers regarded contextualized activities in reading classes as a way of promoting learning atmosphere and arousing students' interest in English learning, but when faced with the conflict between tests and such activities, most teachers still prioritized mechanical drills or repetition. Therefore, it can be seen that despite the reforms and

pleas for more communicative styles of teaching, the importance of test scores remains as an artefact of the 'old' China.

Secondly, all the teachers believe that cognitive and meta-cognitive reading strategies are essential components of helping students to read more efficiently and effectively in reading classes. They can be seen as the most commonly used strategies in activating learners' background knowledge and teaching to improve text comprehension, which is in agreement with the reading strategies recommended by Anderson (1999). While specifying particular strategies or reading skills, skimming and scanning were the mostly mentioned terms, but most teachers simply mentioned the terms of such strategies without being able to explicitly explain *why* and *how* to carry out those specific reading strategies, the main exceptions to this being Helen and Zola, whose students were able to achieve good results in tests. These two teachers appeared to be stronger in their beliefs in nurturing students' abilities of utilizing reading strategies.

Thus, a lack of the practical application of theory was a weakness evident in the responses from most teachers. These results were congruent with Chou (2008)'s findings. As was mentioned earlier, Chou's (2008) study found that although most EFL teachers agreed that teaching reading strategies were highly important, the same teachers couldn't offer much detailed support for what they were doing. The findings also reinforce the claims of Andrews (2008) who found that when it comes to their engagement with the language content of their lessons, less experienced teachers tend to exhibit a shallower level of involvement than more experienced teachers. This suggests that novice teachers may not fully immerse themselves in the language content to the same extent as experienced teachers.

The third feature of the teachers' stated beliefs in reading is their conservative attitude towards the application of new reading approaches such as "jigsaw reading", "picture walking", or "literature circle" which have frequently appeared in recent years in Chinese ELT

journals and seminars. The teachers I interviewed did not seem to value these new techniques or find them particularly practical for their own contexts. To be fair, some of the respondent teachers *had* tried the new approaches, but then later claimed that these approaches did not work well. Some just clearly stated their disapproval toward the new approaches to teaching reading. The teachers' "refusal" to try new approaches can be traced back to their own ingrained beliefs about reading when they were students, and it seems difficult for them to change, especially for those experienced teachers, who were more confident and proficient in their older ways of teaching.

Additionally, as textbooks are important resources in L2 or EFL reading in order to motivate the students to read as well as to develop their reading skills and abilities (Anderson, 1999), how teachers utilize textbooks is also highly important (Jiang & Li, 2023). The findings suggest that all of the teachers attach great importance to the use of textbooks in their teaching practices, but their dependence on textbooks varies according to teachers' teaching experience and personal degrees of confidence. The use of supplementary reading materials also appears to be insufficient. For some rural school teachers, it turns out that the school type and students' overall proficiency play a leading role in whether extra reading resources will be used. Moreover, even though some teachers believe supplementary materials can help broaden students' reading scope, when faced with work pressure, heavy workload and little support from the school leadership, it is difficult for teachers to break out of this cycle. And a lack of technological rapport and financial support can also become one of the main reasons according to their statements.

It can be seen from the above that the teachers' belief system and their reported practices contain apparently conflicting components, but they are able to coexist without significant conflict because they pertain to different teaching contexts and have distinct purposes. In this sense, Green's (1971) perspective on the contextualized nature of teachers' beliefs is highly applicable in this context(cited in Bueh & Beck,

2015). The above findings indicate that teachers may have beliefs and reported practices that appear to contradict each other, but they can peacefully coexist, which can then develop and emerge independently in various contexts.

6.1.2 Where did these beliefs originate from and how have they developed?

Being an English teacher is a process which involves developing knowledge, beliefs, teaching skills, and awareness of oneself as being a teacher able to engage in teaching English. The current study also traced teachers' origin of beliefs, and found that the teachers' beliefs are originally formed from previous learning experience and the different zeitgeists of their times.

An important piece of evidence from the findings discussed in Section 5.1.2 is that when compared with the newly-advocated approaches, "traditional" approaches to reading were supported by some teachers and several participant teachers especially stated the that it was quite essential to conduct mechanical drilling activities to consolidate students' foundation in English vocabulary, grammar and sentence construction. These beliefs, as those respondent teachers recalled, came from the time when they were still students. And how their language teachers taught them reading made a great difference to how they actually approached the teaching of reading. Despite the teachers' earlier claim about student-centered idea, most of them still chose the teacher-centred approach like GTM to maintain the "*flow of instruction and to retain authority*" *although they wanted to conduct a student-centred classroom and this decision was based on their* "*traditional images of teachers as sources of knowledge and as figures of authority*" (Johnson, 1994, p. 449). These findings also echo with the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 (e.g., Ashton, 1990; Bailey, 1996; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Lortie, 1975) that the beliefs individual teachers hold about teaching are shaped, in part, by the images they retain from prior learning experiences.

As I have related above, another important factor that contributes to the origin of teachers' beliefs is the teachers' different Zeitgeist of their time. It might be argued that any country or society goes through periods of social change, but in the case of China in particular, these changes have been extensive in recent decades. Depending on when and where a given teacher was born, we can therefore expect to see the influences of this Zeitgeist represented in their ways of thinking and behaving. As my findings detailed in Section 5.2.1b show, the differences in beliefs and values between the older and younger interviewees evidently owe much to their respective ages and different experiences. For example, for older teachers like Lucy and Helen, the mode of language teaching in the 1990s was evidently still relatively traditional in outlook, and "deaf and dumb English" was the oft-used term to depict the situation of Chinese students who cannot communicate effectively in the English language, so the specific feature of their timeframes had remained deeply ingrained in their ways of thinking and are therefore reflected in their beliefs and values. For most of the other respondent teachers though, their time of English learning and teaching took place after the new millennium, at a time when China "*was endeavoring to modernize and integrate into globalization*" (Pan, 2015, p. 53). This is reflected in the findings I shared in Section 5.1.1a, when Zoe, Zola and Wendy stated what they believed to be the current goals of English learning and teaching.

In terms of courses on teaching theories in respondent teachers' pre-service learning period, Johnson (1996) once expressed a criticism that teacher preparation programs which only focus on theoretical aspects of teaching, without acknowledging the practical aspects, are essentially sending inexperienced teachers into practical teaching situations without proper preparation. Sadly, this is what is reflected in those findings in Section 5.2.1b. Johnson (1996) also noted that the lack of alternative images of teachers and teaching to act as a model of action for the teachers to follow was also a reason for the pre-service

teachers' dependence on past learning experiences, instead of transformation and update of their prior beliefs. This best explains the reason why such teaching courses can hardly have any effect on teachers' development or change of beliefs.

As Borg (2011) has stated, judgments about the impact of teacher education depend on how impact is operationalized. The findings on development of teachers' beliefs have revealed that it is possible to exert gradual influence on some teachers' beliefs toward reading through professional coursework (e.g., lectures, demo classes, teaching competitions, inspirational role models, self-learning). But comparing with the impact of prior learning experiences, the effect of professional coursework on teachers is dependent on various factors such as the mentors they were appointed, the communities or groups of learning they were engaged in and their personal characters. There were also some teachers (for example, Tina and Zola) who stated that professional coursework had little change on their beliefs. Thus the findings also echo with the literature that teachers' beliefs are less likely to undergo dramatic changes over time (Green, 1971; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Richardson, 2003; Tondeur et al., 2012), but rather, their prior learning experiences play a major role in the shaping of their beliefs.

In terms of the effect of contextual factors (e.g., students, test scores, school environment, peers at work, chances of promotion), in many cases, findings from my current research suggest that those teachers' beliefs were strengthened or restricted, instead of being transformed or changed. These findings differ from previous studies in that contextual factors have a significant impact on stimulating change in teachers' beliefs and practices (e.g. Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Flores & Day, 2006). When encountering contextual factors which went against their prior beliefs, the participant teachers' mostly used phrases were '*forced to*', '*have to*', and they indicated that these factors would hinder their practice. For example, Wendy wanted to try some new approaches to teaching, but had to give up on these ideas because she felt the test

score was the most important and that her main priority was to survive and be accepted in the school as a new teacher. Zoe also stated that when her peers were doing better than she was in raising their students' scores, she would tend to follow suit. Thus it can be seen that the participant teachers tended to interpret such practices as a hindrance to the enactment of their theoretical beliefs while their prior beliefs actually remain unchanged.

However, despite the limited impact contextual factors and professional coursework has on teachers' beliefs, teachers' stated change of practice can be easily identified. In certain instances, the cultures of learning acted as an implicit motivation behind the teachers' habitual practices. For example, some teachers stated that when they were doing something different from their colleagues and negatively judged for this, their confidence may be negatively impacted and their practices may then become restricted.

It can be seen that the Chinese respect for seniority and greater experience operates strongly within the teacher group. Therefore, when contextual factors have a strong impact on teaching, teachers may develop habitual teaching practices that can prevent them from recognizing the unique characteristics of each teaching situation. In other words, the influence of contextual factors can lead teachers to rely on familiar teaching methods without fully considering the specific needs and circumstances of their students. This can potentially limit the effectiveness of teaching and prevent teachers from adapting their approach to better meet the needs of their students. Similar contextual factors, such as time constraints, school policies, and exams, were also discovered to have a significant impact on changing teachers' practices, echoing several studies which account for the incongruence between beliefs and practices(Ashton et al., 1982; Larenas et al., 2015). These contextual factors once again have emphasized their significance in comprehending and studying the beliefs and teaching practices of the teachers. This also indicates that teachers adjusted their teaching approaches to these contextual factors based on their

teaching experiences.

6.1.3 Are the teachers' beliefs congruent with the curriculum guidelines?

To nurture students' overall ability to adapt to the future society, core competence has been one of the major themes for curriculum reforms in many countries around the world (Yang, 2017) and also in the current 2022 National Curriculum for 9-year compulsory education (MoE, 2022). In terms of English language education, the key competences in ELT in China have been outlined as linguistic ability, cultural awareness, critical thinking and learning ability (MoE, 2018; MoE, 2022).

Findings from my research (see Section 5.3) suggest that almost all of the teachers in this study can generally relate the key ideas of the New Curriculum to their objectives of teaching reading and that these ideas have become embedded in their concept of ELT and have even become part of their own beliefs, which are generally compatible and congruent with the philosophy of the reformed curriculum.

The main reason for those teachers' familiarity and consensus on such beliefs is that in China, the National Curriculum is pushed forward like a compulsory policy. Under the guidance of such policy, teachers at all levels would have to learn what is said in the curriculum and memorize the content throughout their career. In tests or evaluations to recruit teachers or select elite teachers, the content of the curriculum are always tested either in forms of blank filling, multiple choices or questions answering. In other words, the curriculum is always with the teachers throughout their entire career and some of the concepts advocated in the curriculum have been deeply rooted in their minds.

The responses to the reform of all nine teachers in this study contradict the findings of Johnson (1992) that more experienced teachers tend to hold on to their own beliefs and resist changes while younger teachers are more open and flexible to changes. The findings in this research also contradict the findings of Lasky and Sutherland's (2000) and Liu et al's (2020) who concluded that teachers with less than ten years of teaching experience held fewer negative beliefs about the recent

reforms compared to those with more than ten years of experience.

However, further evidence also shows that many teachers still fail to carry out these ideas advocated in the curriculum into their teaching due to the factors identified in the previous section and confirms the studies mentioned in the literature review section about teachers' traditional teaching instructions in the context of curriculum innovation (e.g. Canh & Barnard, 2009; Prapaisit & Hardison, 2009; Tong, 2010; Waters & Vilches, 2008).

An evident example is that for most of the respondent teachers, despite them realizing the importance of critical thinking in their reading classroom, their understanding of what critical thinking really represents remains quite partial and incomplete. For them, simply asking questions about the reading passage represents critical thinking, when in reality, fostering critical thinking skills clearly needs to go much deeper than this and even the concept of what critical thinking is and how many layers there are in critical thinking remains a neglected area. The findings of this study confirm the statements made by Wang and Cheng (2009), who highlighted that the majority of teachers in China face challenges in developing a comprehensive understanding of curriculum innovations, leading to ineffective implementation of reforms.

Another key evidence here is teachers' unanimous approval toward the use of supplementary reading materials to help broaden students' horizons, but for teachers such as Wendy, Lucy and Zola, whose schools did not offer much support, they would give in to such challenges instead of searching and modifying authentic English reading materials by themselves. For those schools which were able to provide sources, most teachers just regarded the supplementary materials as additional work, and their teaching practices with those supplementary materials was to ask students to finish exercises or merely read and recite the content in the texts. As a consequence, teachers had insufficient time to engage in extracurricular reading, leading to conflicts and disagreements between the requirements from the curriculum and

teachers' own beliefs and practices.

The reason to account for the divergence between teachers' stated beliefs, their reported practices and curriculum guidelines, according to the statement of teachers', is again, the examination-oriented culture in China, where teachers are required to focus on teaching the content that will be tested and ensure that students are well-prepared to obtain a favorable outcome in the final evaluation. Another reason is the top-down implementation of the curriculum, from which teachers do not recognize the advantages that come from their own teaching methods and their professional development. The centralized education system could force teachers to conform, leading to a shift in their attention and energy away from building local capacity to make progress in their own teaching practice (Fullan, 1991). The consequence of this could be a reduction in the possibility of creating a consistent and collective pedagogic theory, which is considered as a fundamental requirement for achieving effective school reform (Fullan, 2015).

Above all, although the teachers' stated beliefs were generally congruent with the curriculum, the top-down implementation and the test oriented culture in China revealed the problems in teachers' real acceptance and absorption of the ideas posed in the curriculum, which resulted in the gap between the reform and teachers' real practices.

6.2 Contributions

The results of this study add to the already existing body of JHS teachers' beliefs regarding the teaching of EFL reading, especially at a time when China is striving to make massive efforts to advocate the themes and concepts in the new curriculum. It revealed that despite different ages, workplaces and academic background, most of the participating teachers favoured to teach reading by focusing on the vocabulary and grammar explanation or repetitive drilling rather than employing the advocated approaches in the curriculum, although on a surface

level, their stated beliefs seemed to be highly congruent with the advocate of the new curriculum. The main reason for this, as most teachers admitted, was due to the system of high-stakes testing, which has a significant influence on how ELT is perceived and practiced by teachers in China.

Another important finding was that insufficient knowledge of teaching reading was identified among most teachers, which can also explain those teachers' divergence between the their stated beliefs and practices. Thus this finding can also inform policy makers and teacher educators on how to effectively impart the ideas in the curriculum to the JHS teachers.

This research also investigated the role played by teacher training but the study did not reveal great changes in teachers' beliefs during the teachers' pre-service and in-service periods, except for Hilary and Zoe who benefited from the high-quality education programs for elite teachers and Carol who clearly had benefited from the various forms of training and conducted some ideas she learned in her own teaching.

In the realm of education, there is a substantial body of literature that highlights the importance of teachers' beliefs in guiding their instructional practices (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnson, 1994; Fang, 1996; Woods, 1996; Tsui, 2003). These studies suggest that teachers' beliefs play a critical role in shaping their teaching strategies, classroom interactions, and student outcomes. While past research has highlighted the substantial influence of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practices, it is essential to acknowledge the complex interplay of various factors that shape teachers' actions in the classroom. The findings of the study suggest that teachers' actions are influenced by a combination of factors, which may include but are not limited to their beliefs. These factors encompass contextual factors, professional development experiences, school policies, student needs, and other external influences. By considering the dynamic interaction between teachers' beliefs and these multifarious factors, this study offers

a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities underlying teachers' instructional practices.

Above all, the study adds to the existing research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in the field of education, and makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of this relationship in the specific context of China, particularly in regards to teaching reading. By building on previous work on teachers' beliefs and practices, this study provides new insights into the complex ways in which teachers' beliefs can impact their instructional practices, and highlights the importance of understanding the specific cultural and contextual factors that influence this relationship in different settings, especially at the time of curriculum reform. In the following section, I will specify the implications that I believe my research findings have for reading pedagogy, teacher education and the successful implementation of the curriculum reform.

6.3 Implications

While my research has admittedly been small-scale in nature and has focused on a limited number of respondents from a specific demographic pool, I believe nonetheless that it does have several important implications. The following are implications based on the problems I have identified from the previous research findings.

6.3.1 Implications for Teacher Educators and Teaching Institutions

Apart from focusing on teachers' beliefs about teaching reading, how we can best facilitate the effectiveness of teaching EFL reading is in fact the objective that both teachers and teacher educators want to achieve. One problem identified in the previous findings is the teachers' insufficient knowledge about reading pedagogy. The current study revealed instances where teachers expressed intentions to teach reading strategies aimed at fostering students' reading skills. However, the findings suggest that these attempts were reported to be relatively weak and ineffective, as indicated by teachers' reflections and self-assessments. While it is also important to note that the study did not

directly observe classroom instruction, the data strongly suggests that the interviewed teachers did not show any real understanding of the supporting theory. This further suggests that many teachers may lack sufficient knowledge of relevant theories and principles to underpin their pedagogical practice.

To resolve this conflict and to help teachers deepen their understanding of knowledge of reading pedagogy, it is important for teacher educators to know more about the theoretical knowledge that teachers already have, so that they can carry out their training programs more effectively. For example, an inventory for further exploring the content knowledge of the curriculum can be used for both pre-service and in-service teachers so that teaching institutions or teacher educators are able provide teachers with a more realistic understanding of the curriculum. Also, measurements of testing teachers' knowledge should become more diversified. Instead of multiple choice and blank-filling questions, there needs to be more open-ended questions and in-person interviews to gather more in-depth information from the teachers.

My findings reveal that all the teachers I surveyed have experienced different forms of training programs, which are reported as mainly organized in the form of theory-oriented sessions or merely demo class presentations. Teachers are divided in their evaluation of such training programs they have experienced. Comparatively, the findings in the current study show the positive effects of teachers' community of practice on teachers' beliefs comparing with the training forms that were mentioned earlier. Some theorists have indicated that teachers learn best by participating in collaborative inquiry, allowing them to reflect publicly on their practice, and positioning themselves as public and transformative intellectuals (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Thus teachers are more likely to develop long-term relationships that help them to feel part of a joint enterprise, and develop a sense of shared identity. These findings have significant implications for teacher education, as it has proved that learning in a community and

collaborating professionally with other teachers or colleagues help strengthen their beliefs, which further facilitates teachers' learning and professional development. Therefore, various forms of professional learning communities should be organized for teachers of different backgrounds, so as to promote teacher learning as well as their development in attitudes, beliefs, and practices about language teaching.

The findings of this research suggest that it is important to combine theory with practice in teacher training programs. This resonates with previous studies such as Yang (2019), where teachers expressed a desire for practical guidance in teacher training, emphasizing the need for instruction on 'HOW to do WHAT' rather than solely focusing on 'WHAT' to do. It seems evident from these findings that there is currently a perceived lack of practical instruction in Chinese teacher training programs. However, I must also acknowledge that this study did not specifically investigate the effectiveness of different orientations to teacher training. Further research examining the impact of various training approaches on teacher development would provide valuable insights into the optimal design of teacher training programs.

To be more specific, teacher education programs should be structured to incorporate specific tasks and activities that aim to elicit teachers' beliefs at the outset of the program, and encourage them to reflect on and rationalize these beliefs in relation to their instructional practices. This reflection process should involve exploring these beliefs in light of relevant literature and the specific language teaching context of the teachers. One possible strategy for facilitating this reflection is to have teachers keep reflective journals, which can then serve as a basis for collaborative discussions with peers and teacher educators. Based on these discussions and reflections, teachers can develop new teaching plans that respond to the identified issues.

To further support this process, teacher educators can conduct classroom observations to examine how teachers' beliefs manifest in

their actual instructional practices, and link these observations to the teachers' reflections. Finally, teacher educators can provide feedback to teachers based on classroom observations and reflections, with the aim of promoting further improvement. By incorporating these strategies into teacher education programs, educators can help teachers to become more aware of their beliefs and how they shape their instructional practices, and ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Above all, the ultimate purpose of teacher training is to help teachers become better teachers. To achieve this, teacher educators should not be simply knowledge transmitters who seem to be "superior" to the trainee teachers, but rather, they should be in the same community of practice with those trained teachers. Through observation and participation in classrooms, joint study and discussion of the teachers' teaching practices, teachers can then be expected to become better practitioners by participating in the joint efforts made by both sides.

6.3.2 Implications for Schools

Schools are the basis of teachers' practice and development and have a direct impact on the development and change of teachers' beliefs. The findings in this research have suggested that teachers' beliefs become more open and adaptive if the school or the school leaders can provide more possibilities and chances for their development. According to Walker and Dimmock (2000), the collectivistic culture within Chinese schools often leads to teachers conforming to the expectations of their superiors without much resistance, particularly on a superficial level. As a result of this cultural norm, teachers may prioritize the goals and values of their school community over their own individual beliefs and preferences, which can have implications for their instructional practices and decision-making processes. Findings from this current research suggest that some teachers wanted to try something new, but their practices were constrained by their school atmosphere. While many contextual factors are unavoidable, different

strategies applied by schools can play a key role. Therefore, the following implications can be identified based at the school level.

Firstly, it is important for schools to provide richer teaching resources and learning opportunities, as well as more incentives for teachers to learn and improve themselves. As the teachers in the current research present a certain tendency of clinging to their routine practices and former beliefs due to the heavy pressure from tests. It is also of great importance for schools not to judge a teachers' success or failure by his or her students' test scores, but to design more scientific evaluation and assessment mechanisms for teachers. This would help to encourage the teachers themselves to shift more attention on their own professional development and attain a better alignment between beliefs and practices.

Accordingly, findings of the research suggest teachers involved in more communities of practice are more open and confident of their own teaching, while teachers with little support from groups show disappointment and lack of confidence toward their own teaching. In this sense, school leaders are supposed to pay attention to the positive effects of teacher community of practice, and create different chances for teachers with different backgrounds and situations to become involved in different groups or associations. Moreover, the current findings show that while most teachers' comments on professional learning at the BA level are rather negative, teachers with MA degrees showed their positive comments toward their postgraduate experience. Thus it can be seen that further studies on ELT are also necessary and helpful, and schools should encourage their teachers to pursue higher degrees, thus they will have a better chance to bridge the gap between teaching theory and real-life teaching practices.

The last implication for the school is about the apprentice-mentorship within each faculty group. Findings from the study indicate that despite the traditional formality in Chinese schools whereby every novice

teacher is appointed a mentor to offer guidance on their teaching, teachers' answers vary depending on their mentors' expertise and engagement in the teachers' professional growth. For example, Carol, Helen and Wendy's mentors were ELT experts in the region, and those respondent teachers' beliefs toward reading were somehow transformed by imitating and observing their mentors, while other teachers got little help from their mentors. Therefore, it is important for schools to set strict regulations for both the mentors and novice teachers' mutual engagement. For example, apart from the traditional classroom observation between the novice teachers and their mentors, more focus can be placed on the professional growth of the novice teachers as well as their reflections on teaching and their own beliefs, and the personal track of the novice teachers' growth can all be documented for further evaluation and reflection. This is also an effective way for those novice teachers to feel a sense of belonging to their school: the biggest and the most influential community of practice that teachers are situated in.

In sum, one key implication from my research is that it is important for Chinese schools to focus more on their teachers' professional development and better utilize school resources to promote teachers' overall professional growth.

6.3.3 Implications for Pre-service Education

The findings from this current research indicate that most teachers did not want to be English teachers in the first place, neither did they like the learning of English themselves when they were students. Most teachers even admitted that they were either not very good at teaching reading or not fond of reading English themselves.

One suggestion to remedy this situation is that when recruiting would-be teachers in interviews, universities should focus more on whether the applicants like teaching or are willing to take teaching jobs, and also consider whether they have the potential to be teachers instead of merely focusing on the scores in college entrance exams. To do this, the

teacher selection process could be refined to include more in-depth communication during interviews and also the requirement of a demo teaching class, so that there can be a fuller evaluation of prospective teachers' abilities and aptitudes. Universities can also combine students' test scores with interview performances, and choose students who are more suitable for a teaching career, so that those students can more easily adapt to teaching jobs after graduation.

Findings from the research also indicated respondent teachers' negative comment on the usefulness of courses especially those related with teaching theories. Most of them stated that four-year university learning merely helped to improve their language proficiency, but they were still far away from the real teaching practices that they would face in future career. In other words, most of the respondent teachers believed they were not even ready to become qualified language teachers themselves through university learning. Wu and Zhou (2008) once pointed out that one major problem for teacher education in China is that it overstresses the importance of teaching theories but ignores the practicality of teaching approaches and real-life classroom practice. Based on the results of the current study, it seems that the situation has hardly changed over the past decade. Programs in which theory is discussed without explicitly explaining relative practices that correspond with those theories may result in puzzles and frustrations of those would-be teachers when they face the real-life teaching themselves.

To address these concerns, it is crucial for university teachers themselves to shift their attention to students' learning, instead of merely talking about the famous names from ELT and their theories. Some effective teaching approaches should be illustrated along with the teaching theories to facilitate pre-service teachers' understanding. This also indicates that the most efficient pre-service as well as in-service teacher educators should be those who are not only knowledgeable in teaching theories but also good at knowing how teachers work in different contexts in real classroom setting. Universities can also carry

out more programs and platforms for student teachers to know more about how English is really taught in JHS. Longer internship or even a 'gap year' before teachers formally take on the teaching job can help teachers adapt to the teaching reality more easily. Aside from internships, there can also be some other platforms where pre-service teachers may practice their teaching in real classroom contexts or virtual micro teaching classrooms supported by technology. This would be hugely beneficial for would-be teachers and would also grant them with rich opportunities for their professional development.

All in all, a well-designed and well-rounded pre-service teacher education training program should not only be limited to introducing specific pedagogical approaches and theories, rather, such programs should give teachers exposure to a variety of contexts to initiate real learning in those teachers. It is of great importance for teachers themselves to experiment with associated strategies in classrooms so they will get a better understanding of how to apply these strategies to different contexts. Just as Allwright (2003) has proposed, teachers can be encouraged to bridge the gap between theory and practice through an Exploratory Practice Framework. Doing so will help to foster more autonomous and independently thinking teachers who will be able to develop a closer relationship between their beliefs and their practices.

6.3.4 Implications for Curriculum Implementation

As I stated in Chapter 3, since the past decades, due to the highly centralized political and educational system in China, the implementation of educational reforms tends to occur in a top-down manner, with the government playing a significant role in shaping the direction and focus of these reforms. This approach can have both advantages and disadvantages, and has been a subject of debate among educators and policymakers. However, these reforms haven't necessarily achieved their desired effects (e.g., Yu & Wang, 2009; Zhang & Liu, 2013). As Fullan (2001, p. 90) once pointed out, in

successfully launching a new reform, "*having the right ideas*" takes up merely 25 percent of the whole success. Due to the uniqueness of every teaching situation, these right ideas alone cannot guarantee the success of curriculum implementation, so another 75 percent relies on establishing effective management mechanisms and other supportive organizations. Situated within the setting of curriculum reform, this study also bears significance for future instances of curriculum implementation.

As the findings exhibit, the teachers involved in my research have demonstrated different degrees of congruence in response to the curriculum guidelines. With China's complex geographical features and differentiated levels of EFL education, it is hard to implement the curriculum effectively if every region and every school is going through the same condensed form of top-down management. If reforms are to have the maximum desired impact, this situation needs to be changed.

First and foremost, there is a need to move away from a top-down approach to implementing educational reforms in order to foster innovation and capacity-building at the school and classroom levels. Instead, it is suggested that a bottom-up approach should be adopted, which focuses on building the capacity of teachers and school leaders to innovate and improve their instructional practices. This approach empowers individuals within the system to take ownership of the reform process, rather than simply following directives from higher authorities. By creating a culture of innovation and collaboration, this approach can lead to more effective and sustainable educational reforms in the long run.

For example, the process of curriculum reform can have much more teacher involvement from the ground up. This would then create more of a shared vision and strengthen a sense of mutual ownership. Initiating change from the perspectives of within and below is much more effective than attempting reform from the perspective of outside and above. As well, school-level participation and attention should also be

incorporated into concrete steps and activities, so that innovation can be stimulated and forced into school-level and classroom systems.

For effective implementation of educational reforms, it is equally important that teachers share a common set of pedagogical beliefs that align with the underlying principles and objectives of the reform. This means that teachers should have a clear understanding and agreement on the theoretical framework that informs the reform, and how this translates into practical teaching strategies and approaches. Having a shared set of beliefs and practices can facilitate collaboration and coherence among teachers, and ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is also crucial to focus on the prior beliefs and habitual teaching practices of the teachers when implementing the curriculum.

As I mentioned earlier in my discussion chapter, with regard to how my participating teachers' beliefs about reading had been formed, they recalled that their beliefs had actually originated back to the time when they themselves were students learning English, and some teachers' beliefs slowly transformed when they were undergoing pre-service and in-service training while other respodents' beliefs remained unchanged. This suggests that the transformation of beliefs is a slow-changing process and quite lengthy journey. If the reform of the new curriculum is markedly different from what teachers are already used to, such new ideas will challenge the core values of teachers' original pedagogical habitus.

To effectively implement educational reforms, it is crucial that teachers are provided with explicit information about the reasons behind the changes of NECS, as well as the expectations and challenges that may arise as a result of the reform. Teachers need to understand how the reform aligns with broader educational goals and objectives, and what specific changes are required in their teaching practices. Furthermore, they need to be equipped with strategies and solutions to address any challenges they may encounter during the implementation process. By

providing clear and comprehensive information to teachers, they can feel more empowered and confident in their ability to implement the reform effectively. Thus, teachers should not only know '*what*', but also be aware of '*why*' and '*how*'.

A further point here is that pedagogic recommendations need to match logistical realities. Both the 2001 and 2022 National Curriculum, for example, stipulate that students should complete at least 15,000 words of reading, but some schools especially rural schools lack sufficient sources to make such a target achievable. In order to overcome such constraints, teachers should first develop a conviction about the importance of extensive reading, and school authorities should also provide relative support and assistance. At the same time, the Ministry of Education is also advised to provide a wide range of extensive reading resources for teachers and students to choose from. Such overall consideration can thus help with the construction of a coherent educational system, which will not set obstacles for teachers when they implement new concepts later due to conflicting demands from different parties.

All in all, it is crucial for policymakers to recognize that teachers' personal beliefs can significantly influence the implementation of curriculum changes. In some cases, teachers' beliefs may not align with the underlying principles and goals of the curriculum innovation, and it is important to identify and address the reasons for this discrepancy. To ensure successful implementation of educational innovation, policymakers should consider various factors such as the compatibility of the curriculum ideas with the teaching context, the relationship between continuity and innovation, and the interaction of different shaping forces. It is essential to carefully analyze and address these issues to achieve the intended outcomes of the curriculum reform.

6.3.5 Implications for Teachers Themselves

Guskey (2002) believes that is difficult to change teachers' beliefs, unless they themselves can see or experience the improvement in their

students' learning. As for teachers themselves, it is important for them to be aware of their own beliefs, as well as their practices. As Farrell (2013) has already pointed out, systematic reflections on relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices can enable teachers to come to understand not only what they want to do in their teaching but also how they want to change their teaching situations.

However, when the interviews were conducted, all the teachers stated that it was the first time they had heard of the concept of beliefs and they told me that eliciting of such beliefs helped them to reflect on their own teaching and they found it a helpful way to do so. It can be seen that throughout those teachers' learning and working trajectories, the exploration and awareness of self-belief and values in the Chinese educational context anyway appears to be lacking.

Previous findings in the research also indicated that teachers' beliefs are more likely to be strengthened when they have received positive feedback on their own teaching practice. If teachers become more conscious of their own beliefs, it is easier for researchers or teacher educators to address their concerns and be able to help them improve their teaching more effectively and efficiently. For example, Zola and Helen, who could clearly articulate their beliefs and their strategies in teaching reading appeared to be more aware of what they were doing and why they were doing it. Making teachers more aware of both their beliefs and practices may deepen their understanding of the complexity of the process of teaching and learning and reduce their sense of frustration when they feel that they have been forced to compromise on their beliefs. This can also be a consciousness-raising process beneficial for teachers' professional development, as some implicit teacher' beliefs are then made to be explicit (Stern, 1983) and an exploration of teachers' own beliefs can also help teachers to adopt or adjust some new strategies to minimize possible conflicts that might occur and also to maximize their own favorable teaching practices.

Equally important, teachers can also pay attention to their students'

beliefs in the same matter and equip themselves with strategies to address students' responses in their teaching. Once teachers become more reflective practitioners (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Schön, 1987), and are more conscious of the nature of the correlation between beliefs and practices, they can thus adopt and adapt to new teaching strategies to better align their existing conceptions and utilize various reading resources to improve their students' reading skills and overall comprehensive abilities.

6.4 Limitations of the Present Study

Although I believe my study to have been well-planned and carefully carried out, I must acknowledge that several limitations still need to be taken into account when interpreting and generalizing from my conclusions.

One immediate limitation of this study is its small scale, with only nine case studies having been conducted. As teachers' beliefs are contextually bound, generalizations and wider inferences cannot really be drawn from these small case studies. Also, given the geographical and cultural diversity of China, although it is not feasible to provide a comprehensive account of all teachers' involvement in curriculum reform nationwide, this study offers insights that can be applicable to comparable cultural and contextual settings.

Also, I must acknowledge that the teachers' self-reported practice is from some perspectives a methodological weakness in my study. Sometimes people tend to represent themselves in a positive light, and in this sense, teachers may not want to disclose facts that are potentially face-threatening. Moreover, my data was collected about beliefs and practice from only the teachers' perspectives. Gathering data from their students' perspectives, such as their learning outcomes and their classroom learning in reading may have resulted in a wider-ranging and more holistic study.

6.5 Insights for Future Studies

While conducting the analysis and writing up the research, various ideas were generated that may be valuable and worthwhile for further investigation. In accordance with the limitations noted above, before closing I would like to make some suggestions and recommendations for future research into teacher beliefs about EFL reading.

Firstly, it would be interesting to carry out a follow-up study with the same teachers who took part in this research. This second study could observe a series of the teachers'classroom teaching situations and conduct a stimulated recall interview afterwards to help them reflect on their stated beliefs and real practice. Such studies might serve to further our understanding of the complex relationship between those teachers' beliefs and practices. There could also be an argument for JHS teachers to keep self narratives of their beliefs and practices in a longitudinal study, as a means of critical self-reflection. An activity like this would arguably shed further light on the intricacies of teacher learning.

Future studies can also include more male participants to either compare the differences between the beliefs and practices of teachers of different genders or to include a more holistic sample for the research context. In addition, as insufficient knowledge is identified in most respondent teachers, more work can be done to assess teachers' knowledge related to reading instruction in the other Chinese EFL contexts through inventories or observation of teacher practices.

Finally, as the process of curriculum reform is carried out nationwide, both in primary schools and JHS in China, research of a similar nature can also be conducted in both JHS and primary schools across different regions and provinces in China to gain a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum reform implementation. A larger-scale survey might allow for more generalisable results. Such studies could provide valuable information for policymakers and educators seeking to improve education systems and practices in China.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

In summing up, I would like to say that this research as a whole has been very rewarding and enriching on both the academic and personal levels.

Professionally speaking, my research has investigated different teachers' beliefs and practices toward teaching reading and the findings from my research suggest that teachers may simultaneously subscribe to beliefs which sometimes appear to be incompatible. Some of the factors which cause these apparent contradictions have been identified and I believe that these provide practical implications for both teacher educators and policy makers for the effective implementation of the curriculum reform.

On a personal level, my discussions with the participating teachers has helped me to reflect on my own teaching beliefs and practices. This experience has enriched my scope of cognition as well as the participant teachers'. For example, one respondent teacher Carol who participated in my study back in 2019 has become more reflective on her own teaching of reading since our interview. Her exploration and application of Literature Circle in her own reading class proved to be successful and she has published 3 papers on this topic and her exploration on literature circle in reading class still continues. She has even begun to take up important roles in research projects on teaching reading. In the future, I will focus more on helping the teachers around me to be aware of their beliefs and the effects that these beliefs are likely to have on their practice. I will also continue to promote the teaching of reading to better align with the curriculum guidelines and ultimately, support our students in becoming better readers of English.

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<u>APPENDICES</u>

A. Research Ethics Proformas

A. Research Ethics Proformas

a.1 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title ……Investigating Chinese Junior High School Teachers' Beliefs about the Teaching of Reading in a Time of Reform…………………

Researcher's name …Yibo Xiong……………………………………………

Supervisor's name …Professor Douglas Bell, Professor Anwei Feng……………………

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that the interview/data collection will be recorded/filmed .

- I understand that data will be stored in accordance with data protection laws.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require more information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of Nottingham, Ningbo if I wish to make a complaint related to my involvement in the research.

Signed …………………………………………………………………… (participant)

Print name ………………………………………………… **Date** ………………………………

参与者同意书

项目标题　………课程改革背景下的英语教师阅读教学信念与实践………...………

研究者姓名　………熊亦波……………………………………………………………

导师姓名　…Professor Douglas Bell; Professor Anwei Feng…………………………………….

- 本人已阅读声明,项目组织者已经我解释了研究项目的性质和宗旨。本人理解并同意参与。

- 本人理解项目的目的和在项目中的参与作用。

- 本人明白可以在研究项目的任何阶段退出,不会因此影响现在以及将来的状况

- 本人明白研究过程中信息可能会被公开,但本人身份不会被确认,个人的调查结果始终是被保密。

- 本人知道面谈/数据采集将会被录音/拍摄

- 本人了解数据会根据数据保护相关法律进行存储

- 本人知道,如果需要进一步有关研究的信息可以联系研究者或者导师,如果需要对参与研究提出投诉则可以联系宁波诺丁汉大学科研伦理小组委员会。

参与者签名…………………………………………………………………………….

日期…………………………………………………………………………….

a.2 *Participant Information Sheet*

Participant Information Sheet

Investigating Chinese Junior High School Teachers' Beliefs about the Teaching of Reading in a Time of Reform

Dear Participant,

Thanks for taking the time to participate in my interview　about my EdD thesis at the University of Nottingham Ningbo. The purpose of the project is to analyze the beliefs and practices of EFL teachers when teaching EFL reading.

It is voluntary for you to participate in the interview. Your participation in the research can be withdrawn at any time, and the information you have provided can be requested not to be used. Any information provided will be confidential. It is important for you to know that no information you provide in the interview will be used to reveal your identity without your consent.

As part of Nottingham Ningbo's ethical review process, this research project has been reviewed. Research Ethics and Conduct Policies govern these processes at the University. If you have any questions now or in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me. Should you have concerns related to my conduct of the research or research ethics, please contact my supervisor or the University's Ethics Committee.

Yours truly,

Yibo Xiong

Contact details:

Student Researcher: <yibo.xiong@nottingham.edu.cn)
Supervisor: <Douglas.Bell@nottingham.edu.cn>
　　　　　　　　　.<Anwei.Feng@nottingham.edu.cn>

University Research Ethics Committee Coordinator, Ms Joanna Huang

(Joanna.Huang@nottingham.edu.cn)

参与者说明书

论文题目: 课改背景下的英语教师阅读教学信念与实践

尊敬的参与者:

谢谢您参与这次访谈。这次研究调查是我在宁波英国诺丁汉大学博士论文主题。题目是课改背景下的英语教师阅读教学信念与实践。

您可以自愿参与此次研究，并可以在任何时候选择放弃参与，并要求您提供的信息不被使用在此次研究中。您提供的所有信息都是保密的。您的身份以及个人信息在研究结果呈现时不会涉及。

宁波诺丁汉大学已根据研究道德检查程序对这项研究项目进行检查。这一程序在学校关于研究行为和研究道德的行为标准的指导下进行。如果您有任何疑问，请联系本人。如果您对我在访谈过程中的研究行为或道德有任何质疑,请联系我的导师或者英国诺丁汉大学道德委员会。

熊亦波

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诺丁汉大学研究道德委员会秘书:Ms Joanna Huang
(Joanna.Huang@nottingham.edu.cn)

B. List of Interview Questions

Q1.   Why did you choose to become a teacher in a junior high school instead of other kinds of school?

Q2.   What got you started on this particular career path?

Q3.   What academic qualification do you currently have?

Q4.   Did you undergo any formal training before becoming a teacher? What was that like? Do you feel it was helpful for your later career?

Q5.   What would you say are your main beliefs or values as an English teacher? Which things are especially important to you?

Q6.   Compared with the other 3 skills in English, how would you describe EFL reading?

Q7.   Do you think you yourself are good at teaching reading? How do your skills in this area compare with your teaching of the other skills?

Q8.   What do you think is important in teaching EFL reading in junior high school?

Q9.   Where you do think your stated beliefs come from?

Q10.   Have you always held these beliefs and values, or have they changed and developed over a period of time? If they have changed, what do you think has caused that?

Q11.   Could you describe for me the way that you would typically go about teaching reading? Are there any particular stages that you go through?

Q12.   Have you ever tried to do anything different or any new approaches when teaching reading?

Q13.   How would you normally use the reading text within the textbook in class?

Q14.   What are the factors that might have led to your current practice in teaching reading?

Q15   Is there anything else you want to add after today's interview?