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### 碩士論文

以活動理論探討兩位台灣大學英文寫作老師教學信念及實施

**A Case Study on Two Taiwanese EFL College Writing Teachers'**

**Beliefs and Teaching Practices: An Activity Theory Perspective**

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A Case Study on Two Taiwanese EFL College Writing Teachers'  
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## 以活動理論探討兩位台灣大學寫作老師的教學信念及實施

### 摘要

過去幾十年中，學者在語言教學老師教學信念領域已經在諸多方面皆有所研究探詢。由於許多研究建議將教師所處情境納入考量，影響教師信念的情境因素顯得日益重要。然而在過去的研究中，情境因素仍然是個較為邊緣性的主題。本研究利用 Engeström (1987) 活動理論試圖了解語言教學老師的信念、教學實施、信念與實施的關係以及情境對於此關係的影響。

本研究使用個案研究法檢視兩位台灣北部一所大學之寫作老師的教學信念與實施。資料經由訪談、課室觀察、以及文件蒐集彙整而成。所蒐集資料經由活動理論架構分析以便釐清教師教學信念與實施的關係，以及在活動系統中所存在的情境因素。在活動理論架構中，六個組成元素包含主體、客體、中介工具、規則、社群與分工。此六個組成元素於本研究中被用於詮釋寫作教師教學信念、教學實施以及其所在情境因素。在個案內分析中，本研究結果呈現兩位寫作老師教學信念與實施。此外，其教學信念與實施之關係以活動理論加以討論。在跨個案分析中，本研究分別回答兩個研究問題。研究問題一探討了四個主題，包含影響教師信念的原因、教學信念對教學實施的影響、教學信念與教學實施的不一致以及教學實施對教學信念的影響。在研究問題二中，本研究發現教師利用所使用中介工具來執行其信念於其教學實施中。此外，情境因素包含職員社群、社群所訂定規則、以及學生反應影響其教學信念與教學實施關係最為明顯。

本研究期望能找出教師信念、教學實施以及所存在環境因素中的互動關係。基於研究結果，本研究並提出研究結果在教學及研究上之意涵，包含寫作教師與單位主管清楚溝通、同社群中新手教師與有經驗教師雙向意見交流，以及更多教師發展活動提升寫作教師之教學。此外，本研究之限制包含較為有限的資料蒐集時間、沒有針對所有社群成員以及個案教授的所有課程做觀察與研究。因此，未來研究建議可針對這些問題加以改善，以便找出更多深入存在於教師信念及其教學實施之關係中的情境因素。

# **A Case Study on Two Taiwanese EFL College Writing Teachers' Beliefs and Teaching Practices through Activity Theory**

## **Abstract**

In the research on language teacher education, language teachers' beliefs have been considerably investigated in the past few decades. Although many studies have recommended that situated contexts should be taken into consideration and contextual factors affecting teachers' beliefs have become increasingly important, contextual factors still seem relatively peripheral. Therefore, by using Engeström's (1987) activity theory, this study aims to examine language teachers' beliefs, teaching practices, the relations between the two and the contextual influences on the relations.

This study adopted the case study approach to investigate the beliefs of two Taiwanese college EFL writing teachers at a public university in northern Taiwan. Various data collection techniques, including semi-structured interviews, class observations, and documents were adopted. The collected data were analyzed by activity theoretical framework in order to clearly identify the relations between teachers' beliefs and practices and the contextual factors existing in the activity systems. Within the activity theoretical framework, the six components, including subject, object, mediational means, rule, community, and division of labor, were applied as the interpretive elements of the writing teachers' beliefs, practices, and the situated contextual factors. In the within-case analysis, the results of the study showed the beliefs and the teaching practices of the two writing teachers. Moreover, the relations between the beliefs and practices were further discussed within the activity theoretical framework. In the cross-case analysis, the two research questions were respectively answered. In Research Question 1, four themes, the factors to affecting the writing teachers' beliefs, how their beliefs shaped their practices, the inconsistency between

beliefs and practices, and how their teaching practices influenced their beliefs, were examined. In Research Question 2, it was revealed that mediational means contributed greatly to the belief-practice realization. Also, the faculty community, the rules established by the community, and the students' responses were the most distinctive contextual factors influencing the relations between the writing teachers' beliefs and practices.

In conclusion, this study revealed the interactive relations among teachers' beliefs, teaching practices, and the embedded contextual factors. Based on the findings of the study, several pedagogical and research implications are proposed, including clear communication between writing teachers and program directors, opinion exchange between experienced teachers and novice teachers in the same communities, and more teacher development activities to upgrade writing teachers' teaching. Moreover, the limitations of the present study consist of limited data collection time, only investigation of a limited number of the community members, and inclusion of limited number of the teachers' courses. It is suggested that future research should improve the above limitations in order to elicit more in-depth information resulted from the contextual factors existing in the relations between the teachers' beliefs and teaching practices.

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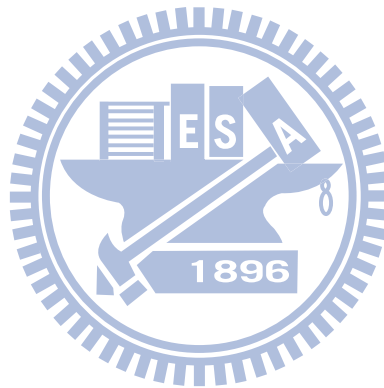
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Rationale

Being one of the foci in language teacher education, teachers' beliefs play a vital part in language teaching. It is believed that what language teachers believe about language learning might affect their actual teaching in language classrooms and originate from their own learning experiences, professional training, and on-duty experiences (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Therefore, with diverse teaching styles and philosophy, scholars in this field are interested in finding out what language teachers believe about language learning, how these beliefs form or change, and how they practice these beliefs in their classrooms (Burns, 1992).

Due to scholars' different research agendas and perceptions, beliefs are defined inconsistently in the literature (Barcelos, 2006). First, from the normative perspective, beliefs are viewed as the indicator of one's future behavior as good teachers or learners. In other words, beliefs are seen as "synonyms for preconceived notions, myths, or misconceptions" (Barcelos, 2006, p. 11). Second, from the metacognitive perspective, beliefs are regarded as "individual, subjective understandings, idiosyncratic truths, which are often value-related and characterized by a commitment not present in knowledge" (Wenden, 1998, p. 517). The distinctions between beliefs and knowledge are salient in this approach. Third, from the contextual perspective, beliefs are considered "contextual, dynamic, and social." In other words, as Barcelos (2006) indicates, beliefs are "part of one's experiences and interrelated with his environment" (p. 21). Hence, beliefs are influenced by one's experiences and one's situated environment from this viewpoint.

Emphasizing the importance of consideration for contextual factors, Barcelos (2006) argues that studies on beliefs should "move beyond a simple description of beliefs as predictors of future behavior to an investigation of beliefs in context" (p. 29). In addition,

Kalaja (1995) also proposes her assumption that scientific knowledge and conceptions are “seen as social constructions of the world” (p.196). Thus, taking the contextual factors into account, research on beliefs should focus on teachers’ experiences and actions, their interpretations of their experiences and actions, and the social context shaping their experiences and actions.

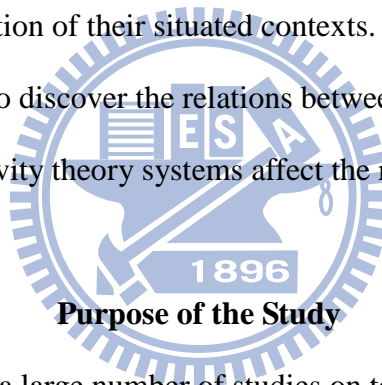
Previous studies on ESL/EFL teachers’ beliefs provide precious information in various aspects, including (a) what beliefs second language teachers hold (e.g. Peacock, 1999; Richards, 1996); (b) what changes of teachers’ beliefs may occur and the reasons for the changes (e.g. Mattheoudakis, 2007; Tercanlioglu, 2005); (c) how language teachers’ reflection can elicit and develop teachers’ beliefs (e.g. Farrell, 1999a; Tsui, 1996); (d) how ESL/EFL teachers’ pedagogical knowledge is influenced and reflects in their teaching (e.g. Gatbonton, 1999; Mullock, 2006); and (e) what the relationships between teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices are (e.g. Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001; Burns, 1996).

Several studies on teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices have been conducted in the context of teaching ESL/EFL writing (e.g. Cumming, 2001; Shi & Cumming, 1995; Tsui, 1996). It is revealed that teachers’ beliefs might be modified to accommodate the existing writing teaching context (Pennington et al., 1997; Tsui, 1996; You, 2004). However, in these studies, contextual factors seem to be only a peripheral topic without being fully explored, particularly how they can have an impact on teachers’ beliefs and practices in a systematic way. Therefore, teacher beliefs need to be further examined with a well-established theory focusing on contextual factors inside and outside language classrooms in the teachers’ belief studies.

From a perspective of activity theory, the minds and behavior of individual people are influenced by the situated contexts, including their personal history, community members, social/cultural conventions of the community, and available resources to utilize (Engeström, 1987). Hence, on the basis of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (SCT), activity theory seems

capable of interpreting language teachers' beliefs and their practices with more in-depth consideration of different kinds of contextual factors. As Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) suggest, the concept that one's actions are purposeful and closely related to one's thoughts corresponds to the construct of activity theory. In addition, Robertson (2008) also indicates that activity theory offered a way to make assumptions, values, and beliefs more explicit.

Applying SCT as the theoretical framework, several studies on language teachers' beliefs have been conducted (Antonek, McCormick & Donato, 1997; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Reeves, 2008; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005). However, most of the studies only adopt the concept of mediation to understand language teachers' beliefs without taking one step further to interpret how their teaching beliefs are formed or how these beliefs are applied and transformed with the consideration of their situated contexts. Therefore, through activity theory, the present study aims to discover the relations between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices to figure out how activity theory systems affect the relations.



### **Purpose of the Study**

Although there have been a large number of studies on teachers' beliefs, very few of them have considered contextual factors holistically. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate what Taiwanese EFL writing teachers' beliefs are and how they put their beliefs into practice from an activity theory perspective. More specifically, analyzing contextualized teaching practices, the study took both the internal factors, namely writing teachers' beliefs/intentions in their minds, and the external contextual factors in their classrooms into account. Moreover, this study also attempted to discover to what extent different contexts may influence the writing teachers to put their beliefs into their teaching practices. In other words, I tended to apply activity theory to understand how teachers' beliefs are transformed to real classroom practices from the multiple dimensions of the theory.

## **Research Questions**

Two research questions of the present study are proposed:

- (1) How do writing teachers' beliefs shape and are shaped by their teaching practices?
- (2) What factors influence English writing teachers' beliefs and practices?

## **Significance of the Study**

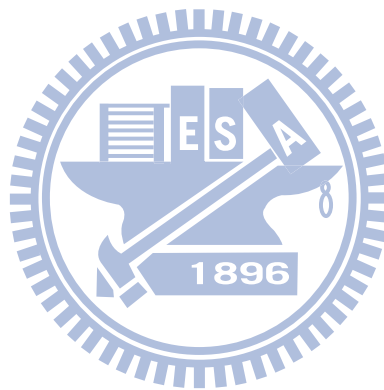
The significance of the study is presented in three aspects. First, the present study is expected to interpret language teachers' beliefs from an activity theory perspective to provide a new angle to understand the relationship between what the teachers have in mind and what they actually do. With the activity theory framework, the present study intends to elicit more contextual factors in EFL writing classrooms. Second, compared with previous research on this topic, the study expects to reveal more than collected statistics based on the normative approach by questionnaire or quantitative data, and to investigate from a holistic and contextualized angle. Third, this study can unveil precious information about what the possible contextual factors found in Taiwanese college educational contexts are. Hence, the elicited information could be a useful reference for other language practitioners to reflect on their own writing teaching.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

In addition to Chapter 1, the thesis includes four chapters. In Chapter 2, previous studies relevant to activity theory and language teachers' beliefs are reviewed. Based on the review, the research niche to investigate language teachers' beliefs and practices through activity theory is proposed. In Chapter 3, the research methodology is reported in detail, including the research setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter 4, I present two cases respectively by indicating their teaching beliefs, practices, and the interactional relations in their activity systems. In Chapter 5, based on a cross-case analysis, the discussion

of the findings in response to the research questions is presented. Subsequently, the conclusion, inclusive of the summary of the study, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research, is drawn at the end.

In the next chapter, I review the studies related to activity theory and language teachers' beliefs to understand what research topics have been studied and what kinds of areas need further exploration.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review of the present study consists of two main themes: activity theory and ESL/EFL teachers' beliefs. Several research issues of each theme will be discussed based on their relevance to the researched topics. At the end of the review, the discussion of the two main themes will be subsequently synthesized.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Activity Theory**

Sociocultural theory has been widely applied in the field of second language acquisition, and its importance has been gradually raised and acknowledged. According to Vygotsky (1978), human cognition does not function alone within an individual mind without the connection with the society, including one's history, culture, and social conventions. In other words, human behavior is deeply influenced by its existing social context and needs the assistance provided by the artifacts of the context to be carried out from a sociocultural perspective.

The so-called artifacts, namely the physical (e.g. books, computers) and symbolic tools (e.g. languages, rules), are mainly created by human culture and society. These artifacts provide assistance to facilitate an individual to perform tasks until he can internalize the needed skills and utilize them by the individual himself. Moreover, these artifacts can be modified to fulfill the needs of its existing community and individuals (Lantolf, 2000). Johnson (2006) indicates that from a SCT interpretation, human learning, as a type of human behavior, is “the progressive movement from external socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity” (p. 238).



Mediation, as the key concept of sociocultural theory, describes how human behavior is carried out through artifacts. Based on different types of mediational means, it was categorized into three types when being applied to second language acquisition; they are social mediation by experts and peers, self-mediation, and artifact mediation (Lantolf, 2002). In addition to mediation, there are important several themes under sociocultural theory, such as zone of proximal development, internalization, and activity theory.

As a theme of Vygotskian sociocultural theory, activity theory is basically “a philosophical and cross-disciplinary framework for analyzing different types of human behaviors from the perspective of development processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time” (Kuutti, 1996, cited in Lantolf & Throne, 2006, p. 209).

Activity theory is based on the concept that human actions are driven by “the needs for the conventional dichotomies of biological predispositions for certain kinds of cognitive functioning, and the effects on cognition of participation in culturally organized activity” (Lantolf & Throne, 2006, p. 209). The term “activity” can be defined as the biological and social/societal need or desire that creates motives of real actions to achieve particular goals. Lantolf (2002) indicates that activities have two components: observable (material conditions) and unobservable (motives and goals). Lund (2006) points out that the key concept of activity theory lies in “the transformation of existing environments and activity systems, through human interactions and use of cultural tools” (p. 186).

Activity theory originates from Vygotsky’s concepts of cultural mediation, as shown in Figure 2.1. In the model of human activity, there should be a subject and his or her object. However, the subject needs to utilize the mediational tools to carry out “cognitive and material functions” (Lantolf & Throne, 2006, p. 213) to act on the object.

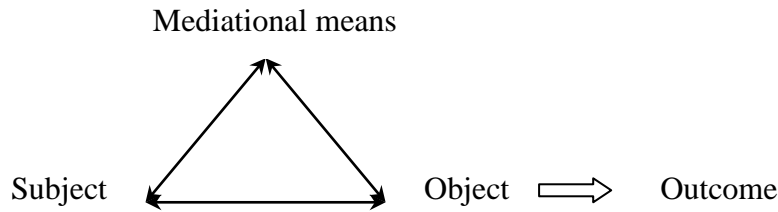


Figure 2.1 Vygotsky's Concept of Mediation

Based on Vygotsky's concept, Leontiev (1981) proposes a more complex model of activity theory. Unlike Vygotsky's emphasis on individual human consciousness and inter-individual interrelations realized by mutual communication, Leontiev takes the theory further to "underlying explanatory context and the practical application of activity in life" (Leontiev, 2003, p. 46). Three hierarchical levels of human behavior was proposed by Leontiev in this model: activity (biological and social need or desire), action (goal-oriented behavior driven by the motives made by the activity), operation (real actions responding to immediately situated social-material conditions) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In addition, Bødker (1997) clarifies that "We can analytically separate categories of activity, action, and operation by posing the questions: Why does something take place? What takes place? How is it carried out?" (pp. 150-151). On the basis of the hierarchy of human behavior, we can further explore what a person thinks about and what has happened in the processes of carrying out real actions.

Engeström (1987) expands the model of activity system, which was shown in Figure 2.2. According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), six components are shown as follows. A subject refers to "an individual or group whose agency is the focus of the analysis" (p. 222), while an object means "an orientation of an activity driven by one's motive for an outcome or result" (p.223). As for the mediational means, they are "the symbolic and material artifacts" (p. 223) utilized in the process of carrying out the actions. In addition, the community is "the participants who share the same object and lend to the individual shared activity at hand" (p. 223). Moreover, the division of labor refers to "the horizontal actions and interactions among

the members of the community and the vertical division of power and status” (p.223). As for the rules, they are “the regulational norms which afford and constrain the goings on within a functional activity system” (p. 223). Rules determine the division of labor within a specific community.

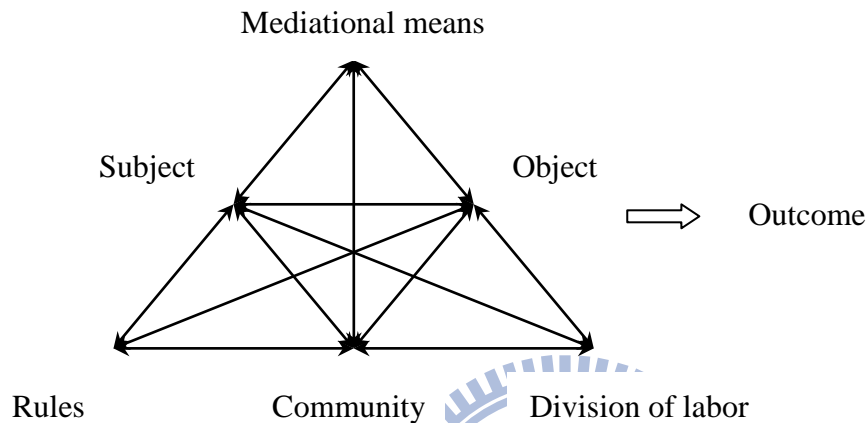


Figure 2.2 Engeström's (1987) Activity Theory System

Additionally, a single activity system may be affected by many life events and numerous communities. These events and communities can also become other components of other activity systems. Owing to this, there is no so-called student-centered, teacher-centered, or technology-centered pedagogy from an activity perspective (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), since the each component was greatly influenced by the other five.

In addition to the six components, Yamazumi (2007) proposes “three principle positions of activity theory in human developmental research” (p. 23), which include development, contradiction, and agency. First, the position of development in human activity regards subjects and activities as “part of a historical process” (p.23). In other words, such a perspective shows that subjects and activities exist in human developmental process and constantly change in the process. Second, the position of contradiction reveals that humans face contradictions in their activities due to multiple motives contradicting with one another.

According to Engeström (2006), human beings are not always rational and predictable. Therefore, with “multiple motives embedded in and engendered by their historically evolving community and objects” (p.3), human irrationality and unpredictability leads to the production of contradictions in the activity systems. Third, the position of agency indicates that in all kinds of intentional actions exists potential intentionality and free will. The potential intentionality and free will is viewed as the agency of the subjects or the activities that direct the intentional actions. The so-called agency, as Yamazumi (2007) states, is “subject potentialities and positions in human activities” (p.20). Therefore, the intentional actions are shaped by the subjects and the activities based on humans’ intentional free will as agency.

### **Second/Foreign Language Teachers’ Beliefs**

With the increase popularity of language learning, the way how language teachers teach the learners varies considerably. Language teachers administer their teaching in language classrooms based on their teaching beliefs. Therefore, in order to know what language teachers think about language learning and make sense of why they decide several specific language teaching approaches in class, scholars from the field of teacher education started to discover teachers’ beliefs.

The definition of the proposed teachers’ “beliefs” differs based on different scholars’ conceptualization of the term. Originated from educational psychology, teachers’ beliefs were defined as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Moreover, Kagan (1992) indicated that teachers’ beliefs were rather stable and barely change; they not only revealed the core concepts of the teachers’ instructions, but also formed the teachers’ own careers.

Borrowed from the same construct, the idea of teachers’ belief was applied to language teacher education research. Johnson (1994) proposed three basic assumptions about teachers’

beliefs: a) Teachers' beliefs could affect the teachers' perception and judgment; b) Teachers' beliefs could translate the information on teaching to the real classroom practices; and c) Teachers' beliefs could help us understand what were left to be improved in teaching practices and teacher education programs. On the other hand, according to Borg (2003), teachers' beliefs were embedded in the term, "teacher cognition"—"what teachers know, believe and think about language teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials and instructional activities" (Borg, 2003, p.81-82). Citing Kindsvatter, Willen, and Ishler's (1988) work, Richards and Lockhart (1994) indicated that language teachers' beliefs were derived from several different sources, including a) teachers' own language learning experiences, b) experiences of what is most effective, c) preferred teaching practices of the school or the community, d) teachers' personalities, e) education or research related teaching principles, and f) principles of a specific teaching approach or method.

Research investigating ESL teachers' beliefs has been done in the field of teacher education as a branch of applied linguistics in various different aspects (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Cheng & Wang, 2004; Cumming, 2001; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Farrell, 1999a; Farrell, 1999b; Gatbonton, 1999; Graden, 1996; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Mullock, 2006; Peacock, 1999; Peacock, 2001; Pennington et al., 1997; Reeves, 2008; Richards, 1996; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 1999; Sengupta & Xiao, 2002; Shi & Cumming, 1995; Tercanlioglu, 2005; Tsui, 1996; Valencia, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005; You, 2004). Since the research topics of the previous literature were quite diverse, the following categorize the studies into four categories: general language teachers' beliefs, reflective thinking, teachers' knowledge base, and teachers' beliefs and teaching practices.

## Studies of Language Teachers' Beliefs

Numerous studies have been conducted to realize what second language teachers believe about the nature of language learning and teaching at the mid-1990s (e.g. Cheng and Wang, 2004; Peacock, 1999; Richards, 1996; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 1999). Richards (1996) studied three ESL teachers at the British Council in Hong Kong to figure out their “maxims” in language teaching. The “maxims” refers to the pedagogical principles shaped by the teachers’ beliefs. From the descriptive results, several different maxims were found and he further implied that language teachers’ maxims could be one of the useful tools to examine student teachers’ professional preparation. In addition, Peacock (1999) utilized Horwitz’s (1985) instrument, beliefs about language learning inventory (BALLI), to discover the differences between learner and teachers’ beliefs. 202 EFL students and 45 EFL teachers in Hong Kong participated in the research. The findings showed that the gaps between learner and teachers’ beliefs might result in negative learning outcomes, lower learner confidence, and more reluctance to join take part in activities. Moreover, Richards, Gallo, and Renandya (1999) investigated the teachers’ beliefs about language teaching and learning of 112 ESL teachers in Southeast Asia and Australia by survey. The results revealed that the role of grammar and beliefs about learners were found to be the most important teachers’ beliefs. Also, teachers’ beliefs play a central role in the process of teacher development. As for changes in teachers’ beliefs, it was found that changes in teaching practices did not necessarily resulted from changes in teachers’ beliefs, and changes in teachers beliefs could be affected by multiple sources.

From the beginning of the millennium to date, it seemed that gradually more attention was shifted to the pre-service language teachers (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Peacock, 2001; Tercanlioglu, 2005; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005). Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) investigated 25 student teachers’ beliefs about language learning and teacher, and further tracked the changes in their beliefs in a one year program. Grounding from the

collected data, the researchers discovered several categories of the student teachers' changing their beliefs. In addition to the categories, the results also proved that student teacher's beliefs could be flexible, since their pre-existing beliefs were found to develop over time. Peacock (2001) researched on 146 ESL trainee teachers in Hong Kong by once again using BALLI. The focus of the study was to detect the changes in the beliefs about second language learning in the three-year longitudinal study. However, contrary to Cabaroglu and Roberts' (2000) findings, the results indicated that there were no significant changes in the trainee teachers' beliefs found after three years of TESL methodology training. Similarly, Mattheoudakis (2007) also conducted a BALLI study on 66 Greek ESL pre-service teachers' changes in beliefs about language learning and teaching. In the three-year program, the majority of the pre-service teachers were found to significantly change their teaching beliefs. However, it was also reported that student teachers' short teaching practice experiences did not apparently influence their teaching belief development. Interestingly, opposite to Kagan's (1992) theory, obvious changes in teachers' beliefs were found in the field of applied linguistics, especially in the cases of pre-service teachers.

Based on the findings of the studies of language teachers' beliefs in both in-service and pre-service settings, it was revealed that most of the studies majorly focused on two topics, what language teachers' beliefs were and if there were changes in language teachers' beliefs. Therefore, it seemed that the contextual factors were still needed to be further investigated in the field of language teachers' beliefs.

### **Studies of Language Teachers' Reflective Thinking**

In addition to general teachers' beliefs, reflective thinking is also another type of study frequently seen in the teachers' belief literature (Farrell, 1999a; Farrell, 1999b; Sengupta & Xiao, 2002; Tsui, 1996; Valencia, 2009). Farrell (1999b) examined how group discussion promoted language teachers' reflective thinking by studying on three experienced EFL

teachers in Korea. It turned out that in the group discussion, the teachers shared their personal theories of teaching and the challenges they faced from their experiences. Hence, it seemed that all the three teachers are quite reflective about their own teaching. Similar to Farrell (1999b), Sengupta and Xiao (2002) case studied on three ESL teachers at a piloted writing center in Hong Kong to figure out their beliefs in teaching ESL writing and how they theorized their beliefs through discussion and experiences. The results indicated that the development of ESL teachers' knowledge or personal theory was affected by various sources, including their own reflections. Since teachers' belief research was to figure out the unobservable mental behavior of teachers, this type of research seemed to heavily rely on the teachers' reflection.

The findings elicited from the studies of language teachers' reflective thinking revealed the effectiveness of using teachers' reflective thinking to examine language teachers' beliefs. These findings also echoed Bratels' (2005) review on the teachers' belief research methodologies of the previous studies: interviews, questionnaires, reflective journals, think aloud protocols, stimulated recalls were the frequently applied methods to understand what language teachers believe.

### **Studies of Language Teachers' Knowledge Base**

More recently, teacher knowledge base has become increasingly popular in this field (Gatbonton, 1999; Mullock, 2006; Reeves, 2008; Valencia, 2009). In order to realize if the teacher's pedagogical knowledge would be shown in their own teaching, Gatbonton (1999) studied on seven Canadian ESL teachers by analyzing their reflections while playing their videotaped lessons. The results showed that there were several patterns commonly seen among the teachers. Furthermore, it was found out that the teachers mainly focused on language management, which is the language their students receive and the language they use. Partially replicating Gatbonton's (1999) study, Mullock (2006) carried out her study on a



different context. She utilized the same stimulated recall methodology and coding features to investigate four EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge base in Australia. The findings supported Gatbonton's (1999) patterns, for two-thirds of the pedagogical thoughts reported located in the patterns. However, due to the different samples and research contexts, there were still some differences found in Mullock's (2006) study. Also, Valencia (2009) tended to discover five Colombian EFL teachers' knowledge base by using reflective journals and interview techniques. The results showed that the teacher's pedagogical knowledge was not only resulted from their professional training in language teaching, but also influenced by their own language learning and teaching experiences.

### **Studies of Language Teachers' Beliefs and Teaching Practices**

In order to understand how the teachers' beliefs were translated into real classroom practices, many scholars focused on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001; Burns, 1996; Cumming, 2001; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Graden, 1996; Pennington et al., 1997; Shi and Cumming, 1995; You, 2004). Burns (1996) investigated six experienced ESL teachers in Australia to figure out what their beliefs were and how their beliefs shaped their teaching in language classrooms. Although the teachers' beliefs were implicit and unconscious, from the observation and interview analysis, the study still proved that these beliefs were the fundamental motivation to the teachers' teaching. Moreover, Graden (1996) conducted a study on six FSL (French as a second language) or SSL (Spanish as a second language) teachers in America to examine their beliefs about reading instructions and their real classroom practices. In the findings, though the teachers had their own preferred practices based on their beliefs, they were found to compromise with their classroom practices, for the students' proficiency level were lower than they had expected. In addition, Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite (2001) investigated the relationships between teacher's thinking and actions by conducting an

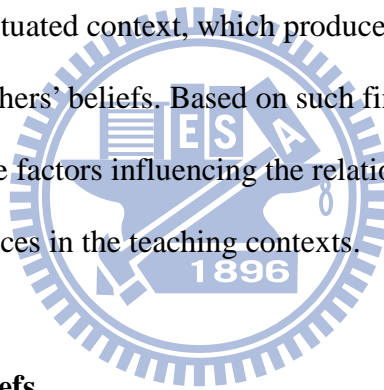
18-case study on Australian ESL teachers. The results showed that teachers of similar experiences and working in the similar context might have similar finite set of teaching principles despite the individual differences. Therefore, there seemed to be a pattern reflected “the habitus of a group of language teachers” (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001, p. 496). Hence, it seemed that the translation from teachers’ beliefs into teaching practices was greatly influenced by the contextual factors, such as students’ language proficiency and working environment.

### ***Studies of writing teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices***

Among the studies concerning teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices, there were several ones focusing on the context of ESL/EFL writing (Cumming, 2001; Pennington et al., 1997; Shi and Cumming, 1995; Sengupta and Xiao, 2002; Tsui, 1996; You, 2004). Shi and Cumming (1995) conducted a case study on five experienced ESL writing teachers in Canada to examine the qualities of the teacher’s thinking about their practices and how the three out of the five teachers’ thinking adapted to a specific instructional innovation. The findings of the study indicated that each teacher’s pedagogical practices and beliefs were highly consistent. Moreover, it was found that individual qualities of teachers’ teaching beliefs played an influential role while the teachers situated the new curricular changes in their own classrooms. Moreover, Tsui (1996) case studied on how an ESL teacher in Hong Kong adopted process writing approach in her classroom by close observations, interviews and analysis of the course materials and students’ writings. In the process of using the new approach, the teacher encountered anxiety in teaching practices and dilemma in her pedagogical concerns. However, it was found that the teacher successfully absorbed the process writing approach and generated a modified approach in her own teaching. Using a questionnaire and several follow-up interviews, Pennington et al. (1997) tended to find out the gap between 31 ESL/EFL teachers’ ideal and actual teaching practices in Australia, Hong

Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan. This cross-country study was also intended to figure out the differences between the gaps held by the native speaker groups and the non-native speaker groups. According to the results, it was found that the ideal teaching practices did not always correspond to the actual ones. Although the majority of the teachers thought that the process writing approach was the ideal practice, lots of teachers were found to blend process and product approaches in their writing classrooms. Such a compromised approach was apparently found in the Asian countries, which indicated that EFL writing teachers in the Asian countries also tried to incorporate other elements for other pedagogical concerns, such as problem-solving, communication, or examinations.

These studies revealed that in writing classrooms, there were several pedagogical considerations existing in the situated context, which produced deviant teaching practices not in accordance with writing teachers' beliefs. Based on such findings, the present study tended to further explore what were the factors influencing the relations between language teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices in the teaching contexts.



### **SCT Studies of Teachers' Beliefs**

SCT has been applied in different fields of educational research on teachers' beliefs (Antonek, McCormick & Donato, 1997; Ball, 2000; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Joyes, 2006; Joyes, 2008; Karaağaç and Threlfall, 2004; Lund, 2006; Reeves, 2008; Robertson, 2008; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005). Drawing the concept of internalization, Ball (2000) investigated the beliefs of fifty teachers from the U.S. and fifty from the South Africa about literacy. The participating teachers were given a three-year course focusing on the theory and practice in teaching literacy to students. From their reflective journal entries, classroom and small group discussions, the teachers were found to internalize the useful information provided in the course and to reshape their beliefs about teaching literacy. Moreover, instead of copying what they had learned, the development of personal voices on the issues of

teaching and learning literacy was also discovered. In addition, Karaağaç and Threlfall (2004) applied the concept of mediation to examine the beliefs of a Turkish math teacher's in a private institute. By interviewing the teacher, they found that the teacher was aware of the conflicts between his beliefs and practices. However, based on his attempt to “water down the tension between his beliefs and practices” (p. 142), the teacher did not have the motivation to change. This also reflected that the real teaching actions were influenced greatly by the teachers' goals, not by their beliefs. In this study, it was shown that the teachers' teaching goals were one of the factors directing the teachers' teaching practices and simultaneously resulting in the conflicts between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. From a sociocultural perspective, it was evident that there were other factors existing in the teachers' teaching contexts affecting their teaching. Hence, the present study tended to not only figure out what are the factors in the teaching contexts but also understand how these factors impact on the relations between beliefs and practices.

### ***Activity theory studies of teachers' beliefs***

Among these studies, several have adopted activity theory to analyze teachers' beliefs (Joyes, 2006; Joyes, 2008; Lund, 2006; Robertson, 2008). Joyes (2008) conducted a study on six Malaysian tutors' beliefs about effective online pedagogy by using the learning activity analysis tool (LAAT), which was a computer software created based on Engeström's (1987) activity theory. From the LAAT analyses and the text discussions of the tutors, the findings indicated that LAAT encouraged the tutors to “reconsider things that they were taking for granted” (Joyes, 2008, p. 177), allowed the tutors to think about their design of online learning activities before they taught, further predicted the tension, and came up with appropriate strategies to deal with the tension. Although this study applied activity theory to investigate teachers' beliefs, the primary concern of this study was to justify the effectiveness of the LAAT instead of exploring the possible factors influencing teachers' beliefs and

practices in the contexts. As a result, this study still did not specifically revealed what the six components (subject, object, mediational means, rules, community, and division of labor) in the contexts were and how these components interplayed within the tutors' activity systems.

Not mainly focusing on teachers' beliefs but on the professional development of e-learning teachers, Robertson (2008) adopted activity theory to theoretically examine the relationships between the embedded activity systems in the e-learning context. Three different activity systems were proposed: a) organizational (emphasizing "the physical, financial, and human resources of the organization" (p.3)), b) technological (focusing on "the health of the organizations information technology systems" (p.3)), and c) pedagogical (based on "teaching and learning" (p.3)). It was proposed that "between the organizational, technological, and pedagogical activity systems, activity theory provides a means to make explicit the assumptions underpinning and any contradictions between the three systems" (Robertson, 2008, p.7-8). Therefore, it was concluded that any management changes of e-learning must have their power relationships between the three activity systems and the beliefs about good teaching practices shaped by the teachers' professional development (Robertson, 2008). Although Robertson (2008) revealed several issues existing in teachers' activity systems, including beliefs, contradictions, and power relationships, the study, however, did not focus on teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices. Hence, the need for further investigation still existed.

### ***SCT studies of language teachers' beliefs***

However, there were relatively fewer SCT studies concerning language teachers' beliefs found in the literature, specifically in the field of applied linguistics (Antonek, McCormick & Donato, 1997; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Reeves, 2008; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2005). Inspired by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Villamil and de Guerrero (2005) inquired into ten MA-TESL students' beliefs about L2 writing by asking the participant to use metaphors to

conceptualize ESL writers and teachers in Puerto Rico. Presenting the student teachers' changes of metaphors to describe writers and teachers, they proposed that metaphorical conceptualization is beneficial, for it encouraged the student teachers to reflect and examine their own beliefs. Reeves (2008), on the other hand, focused on teacher's linguistic knowledge for teaching. Conducting a case study on two novice ESL teachers in America, Reeves (2008) found that the teachers' own language learning experiences could also provide the linguistic knowledge for teaching and their first language knowledge of English did not seem to equip them with enough linguistic knowledge to become ESL teachers. Therefore, the biographies of the pre-service teachers should be also taken into consideration while they were trained in teacher preparation programs.

However, these studies did not cover the relations between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices, mostly still stayed at what they know, think, and believe. Also, these SCT studies on language teachers' beliefs only focused on the tools as mediation to understand teachers' beliefs. Nevertheless, the more complex contextual factors of language classrooms seemed not yet fully examined. Therefore, activity theory could be another interpretive option to investigate teachers' beliefs and the relationship between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices with more consideration of the contexts.

In the next chapter, the research methodology is proposed to answer the aforementioned research questions and to establish the connection between writing teachers' beliefs/practices and the situated sociocultural contextual factors.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a case study approach to examine EFL writing teachers' beliefs, their practices, and the relations between the two. In this chapter, the methodology of the present study is presented, including setting of the study, participants, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

#### Setting

The study was conducted at the language center of a public university in Northern Taiwan. The university consists of mostly science and engineering departments. The language center is responsible for designing and implementing all non-English major students' foreign language programs.

The courses offered by the language center are categorized into three major branches—undergraduate courses, graduate courses, and continuing education courses. The undergraduate courses are further divided into three categories: Freshman English courses (listening, speaking, and reading), Advanced English courses (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and Remedial English courses (listening and reading). All the students at the undergraduate level need to take two Freshman English courses (four credits) in their freshman year and one to two elective courses from Advanced English courses (two to four credits) or other foreign language courses based on the requirement of their departments. Remedial English courses are offered to students who fail to pass the first stage of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) at the high-intermediate level.

As for graduate courses, academic writing and oral presentation are offered. The two types of courses are expected to improve both graduate students' language proficiency and their academic literacy. Finally, continuing education courses are mainly offered to graduate

students or people interested in improving their language skills. The continuing education offered both credited academic writing courses and non-credited courses, including English grammar, conversation, and pronunciation. Due to the complex course structure, teachers in the language center are required to teach a great variety of courses. In addition, the offered writing courses also vary based on different language proficiency levels and learning needs.

In the semester which data were collected, seven of the fifteen full-time teachers offered writing courses. They offered ten writing courses in total, including four for undergraduates (two *Practical English Writing*, one *Advanced English Writing*, and one *English Grammar and Writing*) and six for graduates (five *Academic Writing I* and one *Academic Writing II*).

## Participants

### Recruiting the Participants

Based on convenient sampling, the researcher first approached the writing teachers by sending a research invitation e-mail (Appendix A) at the beginning of the semester (spring, 2009). After ensuring the willingness of the participating teachers, the researcher met the teachers and talked about the details of the general focus of the study, data collection, and the expected involvement from the teachers. Those who were willing to join the study were given a consent form to formally recruit them as the study participants. Among the seven writing teachers in the language center, four teachers showed their interests in knowing more details about the study. In the end, two (Teacher A and Teacher B) agreed to participate and signed the consent form.

### Demographic Information of the Participants

Table 3.1 shows the demographic information of the two cases. The two participants are the full-time, contract-based lecturers at the university. Working in the language center, they are colleagues sharing the same office.



Table 3.1  
Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants	Teacher A	Teacher B
Gender	Female	Female
Age	28	25
Background	Growing up in Taiwan Taiwanese educational system	Growing up in different countries Multiple educational systems (Foreign and Taiwanese)
Professional Training	M. A. TESOL (Gain from Taiwan)	M. A. TESOL (Gain from the USA)
Native Language	Chinese	English and Chinese
2 <sup>nd</sup> Language	English	Spanish
Teaching Experiences	EFL Children* EFL Adults EFL College students*	EFL Secondary students ESL Adults EFL College students*

Note: \* Teaching English writing

### **Teacher A**

Teacher A received her education and professional training in Taiwan. She received her bachelor degree from the Department of English at a public university in Northern Taiwan. She further gained her master degree at the university where this study was conducted. The graduate institute she graduated from was closely attached to the language center.

Teacher A's experiences of teaching English started from her college years. At that time, she taught only kindergarten or elementary students at an English cram school. Later, in her second year at graduate school, she started to teach adult learners from the Science Park near her school. After she obtained her master degree in TESOL, she worked as a part-time lecturer at two public universities in northern Taiwan, including the university that she received her master degree from. Not until then did she actually teach students at college levels. Then, she became a full-time lecturer at the university which she graduated from. Due to her past learning and teaching experiences, Teacher A was relatively familiar with the

contexts of the language center of the university in concern.

Teacher A had her first experience of teaching English writing when she taught the elementary students basic paragraph writing in her college years. Subsequently, while she worked as a part-time lecturer, she offered remedial courses of *Reading and Writing* in the language center. She started to teach academic English writing after she worked full-time at the university.

### ***Teacher B***

Teacher B used to move around the world with her family every three years because her father was a diplomatic official. Due to this factor, Teacher B regarded herself as a native speaker of English. Meanwhile, she also spoke Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. She received her primary and secondary education mostly in American schools in the countries she stayed. As a result, English became the main language for communication. When her family moved back to Taiwan, she chose to major in International Trading at a private university in Northern Taiwan. After finishing her college degree, she pursued her master degree in TESOL in the United States.

Because of her familiarity with English, she began to teach English while she was in college. At that time, she taught both kindergarten and elementary students and junior high students at private cram schools. While she was pursuing her master degree, she taught Mexican ESL adult immigrants English because she could also communicate well in Spanish. Receiving her master degree, she returned to Taiwan and started to teach English to MBA graduate students at a private university of technology in Northern Taiwan. Subsequently, she became a full-time lecturer at the public university where the present study was conducted. During the data collection semester, she also worked as a part-time lecturer at another public university.

According to Teacher B, in her English teaching career, she first taught “formal” and “academic” English writing while she taught the MBA graduate students at the private university of technology in Northern Taiwan.

***Courses taught by participants during data collection semester***

Table 3.2 shows the working information of the two participants during the data collection semester. Teacher A offered two non-writing courses, including two *Listening Comprehension* for freshman, and three writing courses, including two *Academic Writing I* and one *Academic Writing* for continuing education. Teacher B offered three non-writing courses, inclusive of one *Listening Comprehension* for freshman and two *Remedial Reading*, and two writing courses, including one *Practical English Writing* for advanced undergraduates and one *Academic Writing I* for graduates. Due to the regulation of enrollment limits set by the language center, in each writing course, the maximum class size was 30 students.

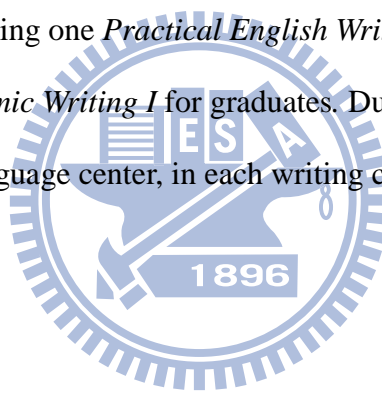


Table 3.2  
Courses Taught During the Data Collection Semester

Participants	Teacher A	Teacher B
Non-Writing Courses	2 <i>Listening Comprehension</i> (Undergraduate / Freshmen)	1 <i>Listening Comprehension</i> (Undergraduate / Freshmen)
		2 <i>Remedial Reading</i> (Undergraduate / Remedial)
Writing Courses	2 <i>Academic Writing I</i> * (Graduate)	1 <i>Practical English Writing</i> * (Undergraduate / Advanced)
	1 <i>Academic Writing</i> (Continuing Education)	1 <i>Academic Writing I</i> * (Graduate)

Note: \*Courses observed in the present study

Since the study focused on the writing courses taught by the two teachers, I observed Teacher A’s two *Academic Writing I* classes (Class A1 and Class A2) and Teacher B’s

*Practical English Writing* class (Class B1) and *Academic Writing I* class (Class B2). Teacher A's academic writing class offered in continuing education was considered inappropriate because I tended to focus on regular daytime courses with less complex student compositions, which were mainly full-time graduate students. Students in continuing education classes were usually off the campus and the contextual factors brought by the students might be so complicated as to interfere with data interpretation.

The targeted writing courses are of two course types, *Practical English Writing* and *Academic Writing I*. These two types of courses differed greatly in teaching objectives. According to Teacher A and Teacher B, *Academic Writing I* was designed specifically for non-English majoring graduate students to develop good abilities to read and write general academic texts. The main teaching objective of *Academic Writing I* was to help students become capable of writing academic texts similar to standardized language proficiency tests, such as TOEFL or IELTS. In addition, it was believed that *Academic Writing I* could equip the graduate students taking the course with basic academic writing literacy, and further establish successful links to writing research articles, which would be taught in *Academic Writing II*.

On the other hand, unlike *Academic Writing I*, *Practical English Writing* was offered for students at the undergraduate levels. According to Teacher B, knowing that undergraduate students might need to use English writing in their future working environment or daily communication, writing teachers provided the courses to strengthen the students' writing abilities in various types of practical genres, such as resumes, autobiography, or cover letters.

### **Data Collection**

Bratels (2005) suggests that questionnaires, class observations, reflections on teaching (reflective journals, stimulated recalls, or think aloud protocols) and interviews were the most commonly used techniques in researching teacher beliefs. Creswell (2007) also indicates that

the data collection of case studies extensively relied on multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Therefore, the present study adopted interviews, observations, and documents as data collection methods to address the two research questions to understand the teachers' beliefs and practices. In this study, the functions of questionnaires and reflective techniques were combined with the interviews. Hence, although these techniques were not explicitly utilized, the functions were implicitly embedded in other data collection techniques used in the study.

### **Interviews**

Three interviews were conducted with each participant in the semester. Appendix B presents the time frame of the interviews with actual dates recorded. The interviews elicited the teachers' demographic information, beliefs and thoughts. I also collected the teachers' reflection on their own teaching by collecting their answers to the questions based on previous class observations in the interview process. The interviews were semi-structured, aiming to elicit answers to the questions on the question lists. All of the interview question lists were shown in Appendix C. Moreover, the interview conversations were all audio-taped and subsequently transcribed. With reference to the sample of the interview transcripts, please refer to Appendix C as a sample.

### **Class Observations**

Class observations were conducted to record what actually happened in writing classrooms, what the actual teaching practices were, and how the teachers' teaching beliefs were practiced in their classrooms. There were six class observations in each observed course and 24 class observations in total. The frequency of the class observations were in average every two weeks with a one-week interval. Appendix B also shows the specific dates of class observations on each course.

In each class observation, a field note was produced to record the teaching procedures, activities, and special conversations or interactions between the teacher and the students. Moreover, in the class observation field notes, I also recorded my reflections on the observed phenomena. The sample of the field notes is presented in Appendix D.

## **Documents**

In addition to interviews and class observations, available class materials, such as class syllabi, handouts, or worksheets, were also collected as the documents, for the documents might provide more in-depth information about the teaching practices. From the interpretation of the documents, I could also gather relevant information concerning their beliefs in teaching writing. Moreover, the documents also offered references to triangulate and verify the teaching beliefs discovered from the interviews and the class observations.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

As shown in Table 3.3, the data collection procedures of the present study are reported as follows. In Weeks 1-2, before the actual data collection, the researcher talked to the two teachers to reach agreement about the optimal times of class observations and the distribution of the class observations in the whole semester, in order to minimize the disturbance.

In Week 3, I first made preliminary class observations of the four writing courses to basically understand how the teachers planned their lessons, what the teaching objectives of the writing classes were and if there was a need to observe the two writing classes taught by the same writing teacher.

After the preliminary observation, the first individual interview with the two teachers was conducted to collect their demographic information, their teaching beliefs about teaching English writing, and how they arranged their syllabi in Week 5.

Table 3.3  
Data Collection Procedures

Time	Data Collection	Collected Data
Week 3	Preliminary Class Observation	Field Notes Syllabi
Week 5	First Interview	Interview
Week 6-11	Class Observations <i>Three observations for each course With a one-week interval</i>	Field Notes Worksheets
Week 12	Second Interview	Interview
Week 13-17	Class Observations <i>Three observations for each course With a one-week interval</i>	Field Notes Worksheets
After the Course Ended	Third Interview	Interview

After the first interviews, class observations on the writing classes were conducted before the midterm exam in Weeks 6-11. The actual dates of class observations were confirmed with the teachers in advance by emailing them to ask for permission when the date was coming. Because of the emphasis on teaching situation as a whole from a more natural condition in the writing courses, the class observations were not conducted based on the same teaching topics presented by the two teachers in their writing classrooms. Instead, I tended to distribute the class observations in the 18 weeks of the semester with a one-week interval.

The second interview with the teachers was conducted in Week 12 around the midterm examination. The purpose of the second interviews was to know the rationale behind the teaching practices based on the previous observations, and if there were any changes in their teaching beliefs after interacting with their students for a period of time. Following the second interviews, subsequent class observations of the writing classes were conducted in

Weeks 13-17.

After the courses ended, the third interviews were conducted. In the third interview, the teachers were required to reflect on their teaching practices, if they changed some of their beliefs, and if they would change any teaching practices after finishing a whole run of teaching the courses. Also, I attempted to understand the thoughts behind several teaching practices administered during the period of time from the midterm to the final.

## Data Analysis

### Analytical Framework: Activity Theory

The data collected were analyzed based on Engeström's (1987) activity theory as the analytical framework. The present study analyzed each case by identifying the six components (subject, object, mediational means, community, rules, and division of labor) and further examining the interactive roles which the six components interplayed in the two writing teachers' teaching.

Based on the given definition of Engeström's (1987) activity theory, the six components are listed as follows to fit into the research context of the present study (Figure 3.1). *Subjects* were the teachers participating in the research. The beliefs the teachers held were categorized as the *agency* underlying the subjects in the activity systems. *Objects* were the intended teaching goals of the teachers. Moreover, the *Mediational means* were materials or tools utilized in the process of teaching, such as language, teaching aids, and teaching instructions.

In addition, contextual factors were taken into consideration in activity theory. Three components were labeled as contextual factors, including rules, community, and division of labor. People involved in the teachers' teaching were regarded as part of the *Community*, such as students, colleagues, and the program director. *Division of labor* represented not only the teachers' interactions with the community members but the power relationships among them. In addition, *Rules* were the course syllabus design, ways to implement the teaching practices,



and the institutional requirements.

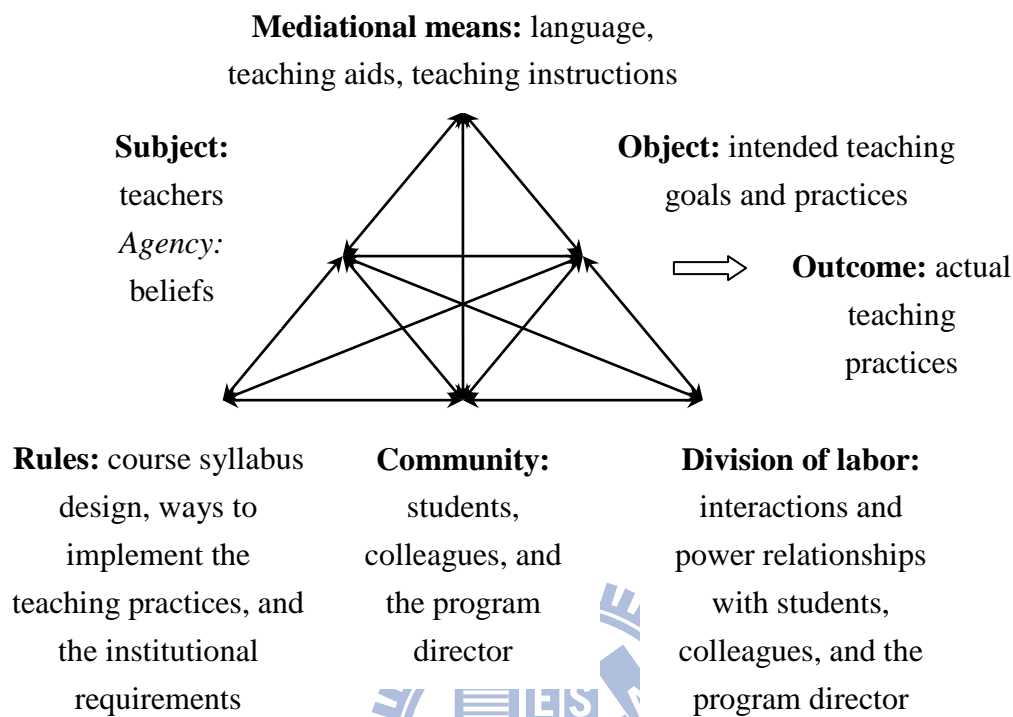


Figure 3.1 Six Components of Activity Theory in the Research Context

### Data Analysis Procedures

In case studies, data are analyzed by first providing a detailed description of the case and subsequently finding out common issues or themes to present more complex and in-depth information (Stake, 1995). Moreover, according to Creswell (2007), “one analytic strategy (of case study) would be to identify issues within each case and then look for common themes that transcend the case” (p. 75). Therefore, in the process of data analysis, I first examined all of the data sources within one case to figure out its own themes related to the teachers’ beliefs about teaching English writing and her teaching practices in the classrooms by using the activity theoretical framework. Furthermore, I tended to clarify the relations between the beliefs and the practices and to further discover what the factors influencing the relations were. The six components of the activity theory systems were used to code the phenomena

recorded in the observation field notes, the interview transcripts, and the documents. The description of the phenomena and the specific excerpts with interpretation were reported after the coding was finished. After I finished analyzing one case, the same approach was applied to the other case. With the two with-in case analyses completed, a cross-case analysis was conducted by examining and identifying the common themes responding to the two research questions.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness was ensured in the following three ways. First, multiple data sources, interviews, class observations, and documents, were used to triangulate the findings in order to ensure the validity of the study. Second, I also conducted six class observations in each course during the data collection semester and three interviews with each teacher to gain consistency of the data. Since the observations in each course were periodically distributed at the average of a one-week interval in the 18-week semester, the collected data, therefore, were capable of representing the case as a whole. Third, a member checking technique by the participants was used to examine the transcribed data and field notes to make sure that the data accurately corresponded to their original thoughts.

In the next chapter, the results of the study is presented to report the two writing teachers' beliefs, teaching practices, and the contextual factors in relation to their beliefs and practices existing in their activity systems.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

In this chapter, the two cases are reported in sequence. In each case, I emphasize three elements—teaching beliefs, teaching practices, and the interactive relations among the components in their activity systems.

#### Case I: Teacher A

In the data collection semester, Teacher A taught two listening courses and three writing courses. The three writing courses were *Academic Writing I*, including two offered in the daytime for graduate students and one in the continuing education. This study targeted on the two graduate *Academic Writing I* classes, because the study only focused on regular daytime courses mainly for full-time students. The two observed classes were labeled as Class A1 and Class A2. In addition to the five courses she taught, she, at the same time, served three writing consultation sessions and two English table discussion sessions for the language center every week in the data collection semester.

#### Teacher A's Teaching Beliefs in English Writing

##### *Belief 1: Organization as the top priority in English writing*

Believing that writing was not just putting several sentences together, Teacher A indicated, “If a student never learns English writing, I think the most important concept to learn should be the structures.” (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). According to Teacher A, the structure referred to information structure in writing, namely paragraph and essay organization in English writing. Part of the reason why she emphasized the organization of a composition was from her previous learning experiences. She learned that English writing was not about writing “correct” sentences without grammatical mistakes, which was the

belief she used to hold in her high school years. While she prepared for the college entrance exam, she thought that she would get very high scores if she did not make any grammatical mistakes. However, it turned out that the scores of her writing were not very satisfying to her. Learning from this lesson, when she taught English writing, she would like to emphasize the importance of the organization of English writing and helped her students pay attention to it and subsequently produce better products.

Because of her emphasis on the organization of a composition, she comparatively did not put much emphasis on grammar. As she explained, “Because this was not a grammar course, I would tell [my students] that I did not teach grammar. ... If they are not clear about the grammar, they should refer to grammar books.” (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Although she thought that grammar was also very important, grammar teaching should not overtly appear in her courses since they were writing courses. Therefore, it seemed that from Teacher A’s perspectives, her writing courses focused on writing paragraphs or compositions only. Language skills less relevant to English writing should not frequently appear in the writing courses.

To sum up, her belief about the importance of organization in English writing was formed based on her previous learning experiences. Furthermore, based on such belief, she tended to focus on concepts and skills relevant to English writing in her writing courses.

### ***Belief 2: Creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere***

Teacher A believed that a humorous and interactive class atmosphere was the key to keep students motivated to learn English. To Teacher A, language learning motivation was very vital for students. Without enough motivation, students were not able to learn English writing from the teacher. She also indicated that if students were bored in her writing course, this might further decrease students’ willingness to learn all kinds of English skills. Hence, Teacher A seemed to be concerned about making students bored in her writing classrooms. As

Teacher A said,

It [a humorous atmosphere] corresponds to my whole teaching philosophy. As what I have mentioned before, this [English writing] is already very boring. If I want to make students interested, I can't teach them in a boring way. Therefore, I would try to add some interesting elements in my teaching. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

According to Teacher A, the concern about making students bored was originated from Teacher A's own learning experiences of English writing back in her college days. As she was a sophomore student at the department of English, she encountered a devoted but boring writing teacher. As she recalled,

He knew a lot. He is an expert in linguistics. However, I did not know why his class was so boring. It made me fall asleep right after sitting in the classroom. Though the teacher tried his best to teach us, I did not remember what he had taught. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

From her own learning experiences, she believed that the ways of presenting the concepts to the students were quite important, for they determined if students had the interests and motivation to receive the provided information from the teacher and to subsequently absorb it. Therefore, in order to avoid boring her students, Teacher A would like to try to keep them motivated by maintaining a relaxing and humorous learning atmosphere for her students. Furthermore, according to her, "Based on my own perception, this [humorous and interactive atmosphere] can produce better learning effects and make the writing class more successful, though I do not know if it actually [enhances] better [learning effects]." (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Moreover, her personality also played a significant role in this belief. As she mentioned, "In short, I feel that I am kind of variety-show type [in my teaching]." (Interview III, July

20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Instead of being calm and serious, Teacher A would like to teach like a variety show host, having many interactions with her students. She thought that in this way not only her students but also she could enjoy her teaching more in class. According to her, she regarded such a teaching style was formed by her own personality. As she mentioned,

When I talk with people, I do not like an awkward lack of response. If two people [including me] talk to each other, I will try to say something when I find out the conversation is not able to carry on. (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Hence, because of her preference to maintain harmonious and interactive relationships with people, her personality was also found to shape her belief about creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere. In conclusion, based on her past learning experiences and her own personality, this belief was formed as a principle in her English writing teaching.

***Belief 3: Seeking for a balance between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness***

Teacher A believed being somewhat teacher-centered to offer a clear direction for her students to follow was also very important, though she tried to make her classrooms humorous and interesting. As a consequence, it was found that she would like to seek for a balance between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness.

Based on the students' responses in her past teaching experiences, she believed that being somewhat teacher-centered was beneficial to her students. As she asserted,

In the writing courses that I offered, most of the students came to my writing courses with a hope to find a savior to help them on their theses or dissertations. Because they had urgent needs, they took the courses. (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

From the students' responses, Teacher A found that the students taking her courses tended to greatly rely on her to improve their writing. Thus, she thought that she had to hold a clear

direction for her students as her responsibility of being an English writing teacher. In order to point out a clear direction, being teacher-centered to guide her students to accomplish the goals she set for them seemed necessary. She thought that maintaining a certain degree of teacher-centeredness could give students a sense of security. As she mentioned,

Most of the students are eager to be saved. Under such circumstances, if a teacher tries to be nice by not holding much authority, sometimes he/she can not meet students' goals and expectations. Therefore, I think that holding a proper degree of teacher-centeredness is necessary. Telling them what to do can save their time in exploring by themselves. Moreover, it turned out that students liked that. (Interview II, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Due to her learning and teaching experiences, she perceived that Taiwanese students were culturally more reliant on the teachers, because they wanted to be helped by receiving the teachers' instructions to improve their English writing. The perception of Taiwanese students' cultural background also shaped Teacher A's belief that she had to possess the power to clearly show where she would guide them. Once the students' confidence in teachers lowered, it might be relatively hard to take them anywhere.

Moreover, the results from the course evaluation survey done by her students in the past four semesters also showed that clearly indicating a way for her students to follow was correct. According to her,

From the student survey at the end of semester, the scores of my *Academic Writing I* in the past four semesters were quite high. ... I do not know if the courses were organized enough to meet their needs. One thing is certain, that is, some students wrote email to me or told me in writing consultation sessions that what was taught in my writing courses helped them clarify some confusing concepts they had before. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

Due to students' positive responses, she thought that her arrangement in her writing courses was right and suitable for her students. Therefore, this also shaped her beliefs about holding some teacher-centeredness to guide her students towards the right track.

Additionally, her personality was also found to be a factor in this belief. As Teacher A said,

I kind of inherit my mom's personality, wanting to control everything. Since I am the teacher of the courses, I think I have great responsibility. If I ask them to do the activity, I am obliged to know what they are doing and if they do well. If they do not do well, I should tell them so. (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

Owing to her own personality, she would like to take care of many details in her writing classrooms. Therefore, it was found that Teacher A was the type of teacher who wanted to control the tempo of her classroom to purposefully guide her students to the right directions. However, since most of her students were adult learners, in order to keep harmonious relationships with them, she could not become overtly teacher-centered. As a result, she believed that she needed to maintain balance between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness. In summary, based on the students' responses from past teaching experiences and her own personality, Teacher A held such belief to teach her English writing courses.

## **Teacher A's Teaching Practices in the English Writing Courses**

### ***Teaching goals in her writing courses***

In the writing courses that Teacher A taught, she set the teaching goals in three aspects as shown in her course syllabi and the interviews: 1) to help the students master the basic concepts of academic writing, 2) to help the students be capable of dealing with writings like standardized writing tests, and 3) to help the students prepare for their thesis writing and

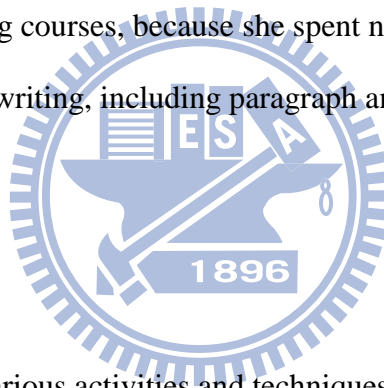


## *Academic Writing II.*

### ***Course structure***

Based on her syllabus design and class observations, the *Academic Writing I* course was divided into two stages. Before midterm, the course focused on paragraph organization and three types of subordinate clauses (noun clauses, adjective clauses, and adverb clauses). After midterm, the class focus shifted to essay organization. By introducing various text types (argumentative, chronological, cause/effect, and comparison/contrast) of academic writing, Teacher A taught the essential structural concepts to the students.

Teacher A's teaching practice reflected her beliefs that organization was the most important element in her writing courses, because she spent nearly two-thirds of the courses on the organization of English writing, including paragraph and various types of essay organization.



### ***Activities and techniques***

Teacher A implemented various activities and techniques in her writing classroom. First, while introducing basic concepts of academic writing, she used numerous input sources, including textbook, PowerPoint slides, or activities related to the topics, such as article jigsaw tasks and writing error identification tasks. In terms of the textbook, she selected the important concepts from the book chapter and put them in her PowerPoint slides. She thought that it was easier for students to understand the content by using PowerPoint slides. Moreover, the example sentences listed in the slides have their functions in her teaching. The functions included providing interesting jokes and showing tips for students to clearly understand the concepts taught. In addition to her PowerPoint slides, the activities related to the topics helped raise students' awareness of the introduced concepts. With more input sources, Teacher A believed that they reduced the possibilities of making her students bored.

Second, in the process of presenting the concepts, Teacher A preferred interacting with her student by raising questions. By doing so, not only did she hope to increase chances to interact with students but she also wanted to raise the students' awareness of specific concepts by making them think about the questions. However, while waiting for the students to answer, Teacher A seemed to have relatively short waiting time. Based on class observation, if the students could not answer the questions within her waiting time, she would answer them by herself. According to her, she did not like silent periods in her classrooms. Instead, she preferred administering her teaching procedures in a faster pace with frequent teacher-student interactions, not having too much blanks in her class time. Although reducing silent periods created more sounds in her writing classrooms and seemingly made the class atmosphere more bustling, such short waiting time sometimes decreased real interactions between Teacher A and her students.

Third, Teacher A preferred using interesting metaphors or strategies to help students understand the concepts she taught. The class observations (Class A1 Observation, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009, & Class A2 Observation, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009) showed she utilized the relationships among a boss, a group leader and an engineer to illustrate the concepts of an adverbial clause, including a main clause, a subordinate clause, and a subordinate conjunction. According to her, the main clause was the most important part in the whole sentence, and it was similar to the importance of the boss in a company. Also, she indicated that a subordinate clause (the engineer) had to follow a subordinate conjunction (the group leader) and could not exist alone. Since most of her students were in science or engineering-related fields, they were quite familiar with such relations. Also, in this interesting way, students were able to understand such relations without memorizing awkward grammatical rules.

Fourth, during group discussions, Teacher A liked to go down the stage and to listen to what the students discussed about. Sometimes, she also participated in students' discussions to see if their discussions were exactly on the topics. She tended to monitor what they

discussed about to avoid letting them go on the wrong track. Moreover, it was found that while having the students to discuss about the given tasks, Teacher A often provided extra explanation of the tasks or what the students should do to speed up the process.

Fifth, Teacher A was found to frequently interrupt her students' show and tell presentations on stage. In show and tell presentations, students were asked to find examples from the academic articles in their field based on the specific topic she had taught the week before. They had to apply what they had learned in the course to identify the characteristics of the clauses or essays and to report to the classmates. According to Teacher A, this activity tended to raise students' consciousness of the taught concepts as a form of after-class review. Moreover, she could diagnose which part students did not understand well from this activity.

In the process of students' show and tell, Teacher A might intervene and offer comments, explanations, or supplementary information about the shown examples. Moreover, being afraid that the students might learn the wrong concepts presented by their classmates, she provided immediate error corrections for the wrongly presented information.

According to these activities and techniques, her beliefs were found to be reflected in the writing courses. First, the use of multiple input, questions, metaphors, group discussion, and show and tell presentations provided more interesting elements and increased teacher-student interactions. Consequently, it reflected her belief about creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere. Nonetheless, sometimes it was observed that she answered the questions she asked for the students because the students did not respond to her after a longer period had passed. As a result, although the silent periods in classrooms were reduced, the chances for students to interact with her were also decreased; this might lead to her original belief about creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere.

Second, the monitoring and intervention of group discussions and show and tell presentations also indicated that she believed she had to maintain certain teacher-centeredness in her student-centered writing classrooms because she wanted her students to follow her

direction to improve their English academic writing abilities. By such monitoring and intervention, in Teacher A's perceptions, the students could benefit more and avoid learning English writing in a wrong way in her writing classrooms.

### ***Assessments***

In addition to activities, techniques, and assignments, Teacher A's assessments were related to her beliefs about the importance of organization. For example, the midterm exam showed the contradiction to her emphasis on organization. The midterm exam was a combination of grammatical tests on the three types of subordinate clauses and tests on concepts of paragraph organization. It was closely related to what she had taught to the students in the first half of the semester. However, it was found that the midterm emphasized much on grammar. Of thirty test questions, only ten questions were related to writing organization while twenty were related to grammar.

On the other hand, at the end of the semester, all the students were asked to write an argumentative essay based on several topics given by the teacher. The final essay was to examine "not only their knowledge of paragraph organization and clauses but also their understanding and application of the essay organizations taught during the second half of the semester." (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). The arrangement of the final essay corresponded to her belief that organization was the most important element to learn, since the paper mainly focused on organization of paragraphs and essays.

### **Components Interplaying within Teacher A's Activity System**

Teacher A's teaching practices were carried out essentially based on her teaching beliefs to achieve her intended goals. It was found that the six components interplayed within Teacher A's activity system when her beliefs were applied to achieve her intended goals in the form of her teaching practices.

### *Agency, mediational means, and objects*

Teacher A utilized various materials in her English writing teaching, inclusive of textbooks, PowerPoint slides, worksheets to facilitate her teaching. Moreover, there were also many different tasks such as show and tell presentation, teaching of three subordinate clauses (grammar), in-class group writing, and group discussions. Additionally, she implemented questions or metaphors/strategies to help students understand the taught concepts in her writing classrooms.

Based on these mediational means, two interactive relations respectively with agency and with objects were found. First, as for the agency, Teacher A's beliefs were found to influence the mediational means she used in her writing classrooms. One of the evidence was that Teacher A claimed that she would like to offer different types of input to present the same concept so that her students could become familiar with the concept due to her "reinforcement." (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Based on class observation, she typically introduced a writing concept to the students first by using PowerPoint slides or activities, and then guided them read the textbooks. Afterwards, she arranged show and tell presentations based on the given topic. As she indicated,

Actually, most of the content of my PowerPoint slides are relevant to the textbook. The first reason is that it is written in English. If you only guide students to read through it, they might feel kind of bored. The second reason is that some students' English proficiency is not high enough to deal with English textbooks. .... They will not know what you are doing. ... Therefore, I want to use activities or PowerPoint slides to present [the concepts]. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

Hence, based on the interview and class observations, it was found that she tended to bring fun elements, such as metaphors and jokes, into her PowerPoint slides to maintain an interesting class atmosphere. The activities and teaching materials utilized were to ensure that her students were not bored with English writing. This closely corresponded to her belief

about creating an interactive and humorous class atmosphere.

Moreover, there was a contradiction between the agency and the mediational means discovered in this study. One special mediational means in her teaching was the introduction of the three subordinate clauses. As she mentioned,

When I taught the three subordinate clauses, many students' memories of grammar were reactivated. Then, they would come to me to ask me about grammar. Because this was not a grammar course, I would tell them that I did not teach grammar. In reality, I think grammar is also very important. Therefore, when I taught them the clauses, I would remind them of what kind of grammar it is. If they are not clear about the grammar, they should refer to grammar books. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

One interesting phenomenon was that instead of saying that she taught grammar in her writing courses, she used the term, "the ability to write clauses/sentences." (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Using such a term seemed to imply her teaching the three subordinate clauses was different from teaching grammar to students. Instead, she regarded clause teaching as one of the basic elements to help her students to build up a paragraph.

Interestingly, as she mentioned in the interview, she also admitted that she "reminded" her students of the relevant grammatical rules. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). However, there was no denying that teaching the three subordinate clauses was teaching English grammar, even though she tried to differentiate the two.

Based on her beliefs about organization, grammar in Teacher A's writing classroom seemed to have a relatively peripheral status. However, according to her syllabus and class observation, it was still found that she spent nearly one-third of the semester introducing the clauses.

Consequently, a contradiction was revealed while she utilized this mediational means. On one hand, she held the principle that she did not teach grammar in her writing courses to make sure her belief could be realized. On the other hand, she knew that teaching grammar

(the three subordinate clauses and other) to her students was beneficial to them, so she taught them some grammatical rules to help them understand, which made the writing classes look like grammar classes. Hence, such implementation of the mediational means seemed to demonstrate a certain degree of inconsistency between her beliefs and real practices in her writing classrooms.

In addition to the relations between the agency and the mediational means, the interactive relations between mediational means and objects were also found. Teacher A's intended teaching goals were also found to be related to her utilized mediational means in her writing courses. One of the evidence was that her intention to help her students prepare for thesis writing in *Academic Writing II* was shown in her show and tell presentations and her grammar lessons.

First, Teacher A took the students' professional backgrounds into account while executing her activities. In show and tell presentations, she required students of relevant professions to get into groups to find a research article in their fields to report in the show and tell presentations. Such requirement revealed that one of the purposes of this activity was to assist the students to become familiar with the academic texts they encountered. Therefore, with more familiarity with the academic texts of their professions, the students were expected to be more prepared to take the challenge of *Academic Writing II* (object).

Second, she was also found to supplement certain concepts in thesis writing in her teaching. In the preliminary class observation (Class A1 Observation, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009, & Class A2 Observation, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009), she introduced the different tenses used in the literature review part of research papers to the students, making them aware that the tenses reflected the authors' attitudes in their academic writings. The introduction was originally one of the main foci in *Academic Writing II*, for it was specifically designed for thesis writing. However, Teacher A tended to help the students form better foundation for their thesis writing by indicating such a concept. Thus, it was found that her goal to prepare her students for

*Academic Writing II* (object) was revealed in her grammar teaching.

Because of the interactive relations between the mediational means (show and tell presentation and grammar teaching), and the object (preparing students for *Academic Writing II*), the ways of utilizing the mediational means (teaching practices) were influenced and shaped to fulfill the teaching goal (object).

### ***Contextual components in Teacher A's activity system***

The interactive relations among the contextual components in Teacher A's activity system, were found to exist certain impacts. The community where she taught, the rules set for the writing courses, and the division of labor seemed to interplay in her teaching practices.

#### ***Community***

The community involved in Teacher A's activity system included the program director, her students, and her colleagues. Basically, the program director did not interfere with Teacher A's teaching contents, providing absolute freedom for her to administer her teaching. According to Teacher A, she could put "almost one hundred percent of her beliefs" into real practice in her writing classrooms. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Among the community members, Teacher A's colleagues were found to influence her teaching most. Teacher A frequently exchanged information or ideas about teaching English writing with other teachers. Mostly, Teacher A and her colleagues were in quite harmonious and cooperative relationships. Among all writing teachers at the language center, she cooperated with another teacher, Teacher C (pseudonym), to develop their course activities.

Two interactive relations between Teacher A's colleague community and the mediational means and the rules respectively were discovered. First, the collaboration with Teacher C was found to have impacts on the mediational means Teacher A used in her writing courses. As



she indicated,

Among the writing teachers, I have the closest collaborative relationships with Teacher C (pseudonym), because we chose our textbooks together in the beginning. After that, we came up with our syllabi together. And then, we use the same PowerPoint slides in class. In the first semester, Teacher C made some slides and I used them. In the second semester, I thought that I could add something. I would tell her after adding it, and we reach agreement after discussion. (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

For Teacher A, the collaboration with Teacher C was a good way to share the heavy workload of preparing materials for the courses. As she mentioned, “I think that sharing handouts and PowerPoint slides can save our energy [in preparing the teaching materials].” (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Moreover, it also led Teacher A to exchange ideas and teaching resources with another teacher, which was regarded as an advantage by her.

Teacher A and Teacher C established an intimate collaborative relationship in teaching material development. Not only did they share the same teaching materials but also they discussed about the alteration of the original version of the teaching materials. Moreover, they exchanged the ways of presenting the concepts, the jokes they told, and the responses of the students. Such a connection built upon them seemed to contain certain power relationship between them. Based on the freedom given by the program director, Teacher A had the power to change teaching materials she though not suitable. Therefore, it was not necessary for Teacher A to tell Teacher C about her modifications on the teaching materials and to make the decision about her alteration after discussing with Teacher C. However, it seemed that Teacher A and Teacher C shared the power of the teaching materials they made together. As a consequence, it turned out that due to respect to the other author of their products, Teacher A had certain duty to inform the modifications.

Before presenting the second interactive relations, I first report the rules in Teacher A's activity system for better understanding.

## *Rules*

The rules existing in Teacher A's activity system could be categorized into two: the rules in the classrooms and the rules in the faculty community. Inside the classroom, the rules were mostly constituted by Teacher A and her colleague, Teacher C, together. Most of the requirements, evaluation, regulations, ways of conducting the classes, and the arrangement of the writing topics were presented on her course syllabus. Based on class observations, she consistently followed the established rules on the syllabus.

As to the rules in the faculty community, there seemed to be a standard for Teacher A to follow while teaching the *Academic Writing I* courses. First, the textbook used in *Academic Writing I* was determined under the agreement of the writing teachers offering the courses. Second, the content of *Academic Writing I* should focus on writings similar to TOEFL essays or technical reports. Also, the course prepared students for *Academic Writing II*, which emphasized on writings like master thesis or doctoral dissertation.

Second, the faculty community also affected the rules in Teacher A's activity system in two aspects. In one aspect, the collaboration with Teacher C affected the rules in the classrooms, which were the course regulations and requirements. In order to reach agreement with Teacher C, Teacher A tended to set up similar rules in the classrooms as Teacher C's. As she addressed, "Our collaboration is only limited to syllabus design and sharing teaching materials. As for teaching approaches, I think we have many differences." (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). However, she admitted that she had to maintain consistency with Teacher C's rules in fear of students' comparison between these two teachers using the same teaching materials and teaching in the same order. Therefore, her rules established in her course syllabus were influenced by Teacher C because she had to make them identical with Teacher C's.

According to Teacher A, the reason why she cooperated with Teacher C was because their styles of thinking about how to teach English writing were very similar. The match of their thinking styles made it possible to share the same teaching materials without any obvious problems. However, after four semesters of collaboration, it was not certain whether the results of their collaboration were the products reflecting Teacher A's original teaching beliefs or just the accommodation that Teacher A had already got used to.

One thing for sure was that while Teacher A put her teaching beliefs into real practices to achieve her teaching objectives, her teaching seemed to be more or less affected by Teacher C, since they used the same materials and the same rules to teach the writing courses. Although the collaboration did not show any contradictions between Teacher A's beliefs and her practices, it still revealed a factor to direct Teacher A's teaching practices while she tended to realize her beliefs. In other words, in the process while Teacher A put her beliefs into practice, such collaboration served as a type of mechanism to direct her beliefs to certain specific teaching practices.

In another aspect, besides rules in the classrooms, the rules in the faculty community were also influenced by Teacher A's colleagues. In order to be consistent with other *Academic Writing I* teachers, Teacher A needed to follow the rules to reach the standard for *Academic Writing I*. Hence, it was apparent that due to the effect of *Academic Writing I* teacher community, the rules in the faculty community (the standard for *Academic Writing I*) were determined in Teacher A's activity system.

Furthermore, the rules in the faculty community also possessed two other interactive relations. First, the rules in the faculty community were found to have an effect on the mediational means that Teacher A utilized. The standard for *Academic Writing I* directly determined one of Teacher A's mediational means, her textbook. According to Teacher A, the textbook decision was made under the agreement of the teachers teaching *Academic Writing I*.

Hence, Teacher A had to choose the same textbook as other teachers. In other words, Teacher A's teaching practices (textbook selection) was impacted by such standard.

Second, the rules in the faculty community also influenced the objects in Teacher A's activity system. The standard for *Academic Writing I* determined not only the mediational means Teacher A used but also the teaching goals (objects). The two teaching goals—to help students cope with academic writing like essays in standardized language proficiency tests and to help students prepare for thesis writing in *Academic Writing II*—were essentially based on the agreed standard for *Academic Writing I*. According to Teacher A, she did not teach the students how to write the sections of their theses or dissertation. Instead, she tended to focus on how to write academically in writings like TOEFL essays. As she indicated, “Teaching actual thesis writing is in [*Academic Writing*] *II*.” (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Based on such a standard, Teacher A was influenced by other *Academic Writing I* teachers to follow the agreed teaching goals of her writing courses. Based on such predetermined goals set by the faculty community, Teacher A's teaching practices were regulated, not covering actual thesis writing in *Academic Writing I*.

### *Division of labor*

The division of labor in Teacher A's activity system consisted of the roles of her students and herself, the interactions with her students, and the power relationships with her students. First, as a teacher, Teacher A acted like a director in her writing courses to guide her students to follow her directions. On the other hand, her students acted as knowledge receivers and respondents to Teacher A's teaching. Second, the interactions were defined as the things Teacher A and her students did in the writing courses to carry out the activity of teaching and learning in the writing courses. The observed interactions between Teacher A and her students included her students' in-class interactions with her and her students' academic performances based on her given tasks or assignments. Third, the relative power relationships existing

between Teacher A and her students were formed based on their roles in the writing classrooms.

Based on the division of labor, a bidirectional interactive relation with agency embedded in the subject was found. Teacher A's beliefs (agency) were found to be reflected in the division of labor in her writing courses. Based on her belief about seeking for a balance between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness, she played a role as a kind director, leading her students to the directions she wanted with a gentle attitude. According to class observations, she tended to closely monitor the students' group discussions and immediately provide error corrections to the wrongly presented information by her students. Moreover, as she mentioned, "Some students who had learned writing before might carry certain ideas or ideology into my writing classrooms. Therefore, I needed to make more effort to let them trust me and follow my instructions." (Interview I, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Such attitude indicated that it was quite important for Teacher A to have enough authority to direct the whole class in her writing teaching. Hence, it was discovered that her beliefs influenced her role in writing classrooms as division of labor.

Reversely, it was also found that the division of labor in Teacher A's activity system also had an impact on her beliefs. The students' academic performances seemed to lead her to rethink about her beliefs. In the process of grading the students' final essays, Teacher A found that some students had all learned the basic concepts that she wanted to teach them and put them into their final essays. However, she realized that only knowing those basic concepts might not help them to perform best. As she indicated,

I used to think that if I could point out students' errors and explain to them in a systematic way, telling them not to write like this or that, they should get it. However, after teaching these classes, I came to realize that doing this was indeed what a responsible writing teacher should do. It turned out the effectiveness was not that obvious as I had expected. (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

She believed that since students need to rely on her, she had to point out a way for students to follow. However, she figured that even though she tried her best to take care as many details as possible, students' performances were not able to reach her original relatively high expectation. As a result, she started to wonder if teaching writing should be in a "scientific" way to teach them step one, step two, and so on. According to her, in the end, she found that even though she taught the basic principles to the students, their products still looked very different.

Consequently, as she said, "I start to wonder whether or not we should have many standardized steps when we teach writing, telling them what they must do in the process." (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Such academic performances also seemed to challenge her beliefs about holding teacher-centeredness to arrange students to follow her steps, since it was found that those who followed her steps did not necessarily perform well to meet her expectations.

From the students' academic performances, Teacher A started to be aware of another aspect of teaching writing. "Writing sometimes is not like math classes, but kind of similar to art classes. It is like the Chinese saying, "The master teaches the trade, but the apprentice's skill is self-made." (Interview III, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Because of this, Teacher A pointed out that she would try to integrate the "arts" of writing in her writing courses if she offered next time. In consequence, in Teacher A's activity system, the division of labor was found to be both an element to affect her beliefs to be put into practices and an indicator to help Teacher A reflect on her beliefs.

## **Summary**

In Case I, I present Teacher A's teacher beliefs, teaching practices along with teaching goals, and contextual factors, including rules, community, and division of labor, existing in

her activity system in relation to her beliefs and practices. Figure 4.1 shows all the components in Teacher A's activity system.

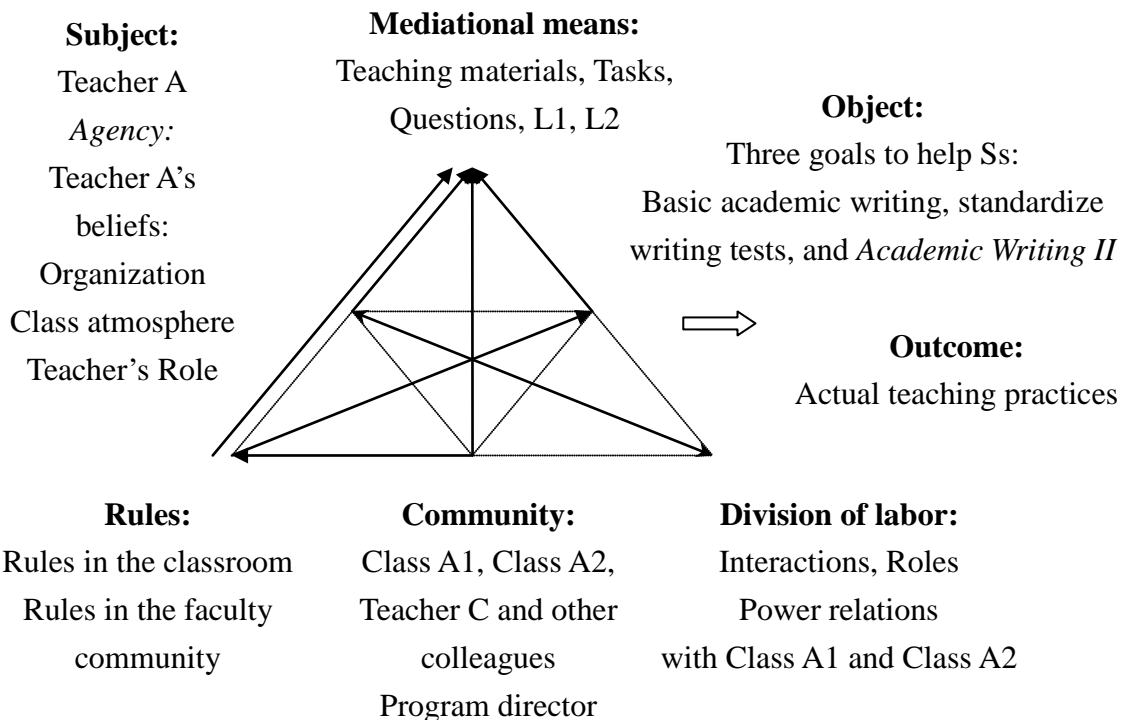


Figure 4.1 Teacher A's Activity System

In Teacher A's case, three beliefs were found in this study. First, organization was the most important concept to learn in her writing courses. Such belief was reflected in her course structure and her final assignments of her teaching practices. Second, she believed that creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere was very important. Hence, she realized such belief by using numerous input sources to present concepts, interesting metaphors or strategies to help her students understand the taught concepts, group discussions, show and tell presentations, and questions to increase both teacher-student and student-student interactions. Third, it was her belief that in a student-centered teaching environment, seeking for a balance by holding certain degree of teacher-centeredness was considered necessary. As a consequence, teaching practices, including monitoring and

interfering with students' presentations and group discussions, reflected this belief.

As for the impact of the mediational means in Teacher A's activity system, several interactive relations were discovered. First, the mediational means was found to be tools for realizing Teacher A's beliefs (agency) in real teaching practices (outcomes) to achieve the teaching goals (objects). Second, a contradiction between agency and the mediational means was revealed in this case. Such a contradiction showed the inconsistency between her belief about the importance of organization in English writing and her teaching practices of great amount of grammar teaching in her writing courses.

As for the contextual factors influencing the relations between beliefs and practices, there were also several interactive relations existing in Teacher A's activity theory. First, the community was quite influential to Teacher A's mediational means and rules. For one thing, the cooperating writing teacher, Teacher C, developed not only teaching materials but also rules in the classroom together. For another, the faculty community was also found to establish a standard for *Academic Writing I* (rules) that Teacher A needed to follow.

Second, the rules in the faculty community, namely the standard for *Academic Writing I*, further influenced the choice of the textbook (mediational means) and the teaching goals (objects). Based on these two interactive relations, Teacher A's teaching practices were consequently shaped.

Last, the division of labor in Teacher A's activity system has a bidirectional interactive relation with the agency. In one direction, Teacher A's role in her writing classrooms (division of labor) reflected her beliefs (agency) about having teaching authority in a student-centered teaching environment. In another direction, her students' responses to her teaching (division of labor) were found to cause her to reflect her belief (agency) about possessing teacher-centeredness because her expectations of the effects of closely monitoring the students' learning did not seem to be reached.



## Case II: Teacher B

Teacher B offered one listening, two reading, and two writing courses in the data collection semester. The two writing courses included one *Academic Writing I* for graduate students and one *Practical English Writing* for undergraduate students. The study focused on both writing courses and the two observed classes were labeled as Class B1 and Class B2. Meanwhile, she also served three writing consultation sessions and two English table discussion sessions for the language center every week.

### Teacher B's Teaching Beliefs in English Writing

#### *Belief 1: Grammar as top priority in English writing*

Teacher B believed that mastering grammar was the first priority in learning English writing. In the three interviews, she repeatedly mentioned that if one did not write grammatical sentences in his/her writing, the problem might be very severe. In addition, she asserted, "Writing is grammar, and grammar is writing. [As writers], we just try to use the language structure to present in the form of writing." (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009). Such statements showed that Teacher B regarded grammar as the fundamental element to teach students in her writing courses. She further indicated,

If they [the students] are native speakers, then I will not focus on grammar at all. ... However, you might think college students' grammar is already great, but actually they are not that great. If I do not teach them grammar, they will not learn by themselves. As a result, they may keep making the same [grammatical] mistakes. ... Because of the student population [the students who are ESL learners], I think they need grammar. (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009).

This belief resulted from two aspects. First, she thought that since the students were non-native speakers, they needed grammar to help them improve their English proficiency more effectively. Second, from her past teaching experiences, Teacher B found that her

students needed to improve their writing by strengthening their grammatical knowledge.

### ***Belief 2: Teaching English as a whole***

Teacher B believed that English should be taught as a whole without deliberately separating the four skills and emphasizing only one skill. Hence, from Teacher B's perspective of teaching writing, she did not solely focus on the "writing" itself. Instead, she tended to teach English as a whole language. As she mentioned, the students' eventual goal of learning English writing was to "communicate with others." (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009). Therefore, she was inclined to provide as much input as possible. The input was not limited to enhancing the students' writing abilities. As a result, listening, speaking, reading, and critical thinking input should be also included in her writing courses. As shown in her syllabus in both writing courses, "The course is designed to improve student's English writing ability to an academic level. This means improving your writing skills, reading skills, grammatical skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and overall English skills."

### ***Belief 3: Creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere***

Teacher B believed that an interesting and interactive class atmosphere was important to her writing classrooms. One of the reasons behind such belief was that she thought learning itself could be boring and stressful. Therefore, as a teacher, if she tried to be nice to the students, it could relatively reduce the boredom and the stress brought to the students. She indicated, "If the teacher is able to make people happy, then they will not be that painful. ... People like to be happy, so if you can, you know, try to do some funny things, they will laugh and think that it is kind of fun." (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009). Therefore, she thought that she had to be very nice to students, so that they were willing to learn things from her and interact with her in class.

Another reason was that she believed that silence in her classrooms was awkward. She mentioned, “There should be noises [in class]. Either the teacher or the students should talk.” (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009). According to her, she preferred more interactions with students, since she was “more like American styles of teaching.” (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009). Recalling her learning situations in American schools, she mentioned while she was in American schools, students were quite straight-forward to express what they thought. The teachers were very open-minded to accept all kinds of questions from the students; even those might not be relevant to the topics of the classes. Immersed in such culture of classroom interaction, Teacher B stated,

Although students may be too shy to talk, I will try to make them feel comfortable to ask questions in class. If they do not ask questions, I will feel the class is very weird and creepy. It is not OK to be very silent [in class]. (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009).

Moreover, Teacher B’s unpleasant past learning experiences in the seventh grade in Taiwan also affected her beliefs about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere. As she recalled,

When I was in Taiwan, before going abroad, I had studied at a junior high school for several months. I found that those junior high school teachers were very cruel. I do not think students can learn anything from them. When I asked questions, they directly retorted the questions. And then, I still got very confused because they did not answer my questions, and they just condemned me. (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009).

The unpleasant learning experience in a Taiwanese junior high school made Teacher B more willing to embrace the American style of education. This was one of the keys shaping her beliefs about being nice and open-minded to the students and having more interactions with the students. Thus, based on her own attitude and learning experiences, she tended to

create an interesting and interactive class atmosphere for her students.

***Belief 4: Broadening the students' horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities***

Teacher B would like to broaden the students' horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities in her writing classes. She mentioned, "Language is more than just structure. It is a lot about culture." (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009). Due to her familiarity with the culture of the target language, Teacher B regarded herself as an information source of the values and activities in an English language culture. For example, she thought plagiarism was a very important issue that Taiwanese education did not emphasize very much. She indicated,

I think that students in Taiwan tend to plagiarize easily. They think it is OK; it is fine, but it is not. Therefore, I think they must know that if they do this when they study abroad, they will get fired. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

By emphasizing the importance of not plagiarizing, Teacher B tended to deliver her cultural value, which was also the target language cultural value, to the students.

Also, she understood that there were cultural differences existing between native speakers and non-native speakers. However, her attitude towards her past teaching experiences showed her persistence in maintaining such belief. In the first semester she taught writing courses at the language center, she conducted peer review in class. The reason she asked students to do peer review could be traced back to her learning experiences. She recalled, "We used to frequently do peer review [in writing classes in foreign countries], and we knew what to expect. We all knew what peer review was for." (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009). Based on her learning experiences, she also wanted her students to do peer review.

However, it turned out the students did not know what to do. She found out a cultural problem that the students were too modest to provide their opinions. “That was unlike the situations when we were in America. Because all the students were native speakers, we are quite straight-forward to each other.” (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009). Facing such a situation, instead of giving up the activity, she tried to provide more specific instructions to help the peer review process carry on. According to Teacher B, she thought that at least her students were able to communicate with one another about their ideas in the peer review activities, regardless of how much they commented on their peers’ writing. Therefore, knowing and experiencing the benefits of peer review brought by her past learning experiences in foreign countries, she still wanted to let her students experience such culture in her writing classrooms.

In addition, because Teacher B did not have much contact with the Taiwanese educational system and culture, she had her own interpretations towards Taiwanese students. First, she thought the reason why students in public universities averagely had higher English proficiency was that “they receive a longer period of English training.” (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009).

Second, she perceived, “Taiwanese students think grammar is very difficult because they do not know what those grammar rules are for.” (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009). This interpretation seemed to motivate her to put more emphasis on her grammar teaching. Teacher B wanted to guide her students to learn grammar in a “systematic” way and to let them not fear about grammar.

These interpretations resulted from unfamiliarity with Taiwanese educational system and culture showed the cultural differences between her and her students. Such cultural differences allowed her to deliver the target language culture to the students since they did not know the culture. Also, it affected her perceptions of students’ learning, such as what they had learned before and how to establish a link from what they had learned to what they were

supposed to learn in the writing courses.

## **Teacher B's Teaching Practices in the English Writing Courses**

### ***Teaching goals in her writing courses***

As shown in her course syllabi, the teaching goals she set for the writing courses were: 1) to help students improve their writing abilities in academic or practical genres, 2) to help students improve their grammatical knowledge, and 3) to increase students' other language skills and motivation to learn English.

### ***Course structure***

Because of the focus on both grammar and writing, these two elements were quite obvious in Teacher B's writing courses. The two-hour lessons each week were divided into two parts. The students were required to have two textbooks: one was for their writing techniques, and the other was the grammar book written by Teacher B. Throughout the semester, the first hours focused on the knowledge and techniques of English writing, while the second hours were mainly grammar lessons. This arrangement echoed her beliefs about the students' inadequate grammatical knowledge and their needs to learn English writing to achieve the teaching goals.

Interestingly, it was found that Teacher B's two writing courses were very similar both in the syllabus structure and in learning contents. In *Practical English Writing*, she used a textbook named *An Introduction to Academic Writing*, which was a simpler version of the same series as the textbook used in *Academic Writing I*. Based on her own perception, the so-called "practical writing" consisted of all kinds of different practical genres and academic writing. Consequently, the students in the two writing courses both had one hour academic-like writing class, and one hour grammar class. The two classes were found to be nearly identical. In *Practical English Writing*, she then added some practical genres, such as

cover letter, resume, and autobiography. According to Teacher B, she mentioned that the most distinctive differences between the two were the assignments that she gave to the students. (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009).

However, the two writing courses were offered to different groups of students. Her *Practical English Writing* was offered for undergraduates, while *Academic Writing I* was for graduate students. In addition, based on the original rationale of the writing courses, the goals of the two courses were supposed to be different. *Practical English Writing* should focus on practical writing genres which might be encountered in daily life, such as emails or resumes. On the other hand, *Academic Writing I* should focus on academic writing such as research papers or technical reports. Therefore, it was quite interesting to know why Teacher B's two writing courses were quite similar. As Teacher B claimed,

After the first time I taught the two courses, I found that students' language proficiency in the two courses was at the similar level. Students in *Academic Writing I* were not found to perform significantly better than those in *Practical English Writing*. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Since she did not sense many differences between the two, she thought that the learning needs of the two groups of students should be the same. Furthermore, as she mentioned, "Because their proficiency level are very similar, you may find that the ways I teach the students are almost the same." (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Additionally, she provided another reason why the two courses were similar. She mentioned that they used the same grammar textbook, and the writing textbooks were in the same series. Therefore, it seemed unavoidably these two courses looked similar.

Because the two [writing] textbooks are from the same publisher, they resemble each other very much. So, you may find the content of the two overlapping. Maybe it is also OK for the [graduate] students, for they still do not learn those [grammar rules very well]. Therefore, I do not think students in Academic Writing I should be taught differently. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Based on the above reasons, the two courses had the same course structure, which reflected her belief about the importance of grammar in English writing courses.

### *Activities and techniques*

In addition to the course structure, there were various activities and techniques exploited in both of her writing courses. First, she adopted peer review activity to let students exchange ideas about their writings. In the peer review activity, students were asked to comment on their peers' writings based on the guidelines or instructions given by Teacher B. She claimed that this activity could not only encourage students to discuss writing problems but also reduce the laboring jobs of correcting students' grammatical mistakes. As a consequence, students had more chances to interact with others by implementing such activity.

Second, while having the students do the exercises on the textbooks, she usually required them to do group work. Moreover, she announced that members of the fastest group finishing doing the exercise, sharing their answers with the whole class, and getting all the correct answers could get "a happy face" marked on Teacher B's evaluation sheets. A happy face meant an extra credit given to the students. In this way, she tended to arouse students to actively participate in the activities by offering extra credits as rewards.

Third, during the group discussion time, she played music to create some sounds in the classroom to encourage the students to say something. The music she played in the discussion time was jazz or lounge music. As she stated,



When I play music [during group discussion], they may think that they can not be heard. And then, they will speak louder. They have to be louder than the music, so they can hear one another. That is the real conversation, not just some whispering. ... Another advantage is that each song has its own length. I can choose which song to play based on how long I let the students discuss. Therefore, my time control can be more precise. (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009).

According to her, in this way, not only could she activate the interactive class atmosphere but also she could use music to manage her time in her writing classrooms.

Fourth, especially in the first hours of teaching writing techniques, Teacher B lectured in English in her writing courses most of the time. She thought that since the students were learning a language, they should use it as much as possible. Therefore, she chose to speak English to provide more listening input. Also, she encouraged her students to speak English in their group discussion. She would rather explain in English first and translate in Mandarin Chinese than directly use Chinese to speed up the teaching process. In this manner, her students' other language skills could be simultaneously trained in her writing courses.

Fifth, she also introduced the things she encountered in her past learning experiences in foreign countries for her students. She played the spelling bee contest videos to the students and taught them the American Psychological Association (APA) style. According to Teacher B, playing the spelling bee contest videos to the students was to make them laugh and let them know that there were still some native speakers struggling for learning English, since many students did not know this contest. Hence, although the spelling bee contest videos were somewhat related to the grammar topic, nouns, it was more likely to serve as a tool to motivate her students to learn English. As for teaching the APA style, it was due to her emphasis on not plagiarizing. Therefore, she taught that it was necessary to teach them how to quote others' words and list the references.

Sixth, Teacher B frequently required the students to make sentences based on the taught grammatical topics as exercises. When the students share their sentences with the whole class,

Teacher B typed the sentences in a blank Word file. She checked if the sentences were grammatical and even modified the sentences for the students. From this activity, she might know whether the students had learned to apply the grammar rules, and she would provide explanations for her modifications if students had any problems with them. Additionally, there were more teacher-student interactions produced in this activity.

The activities and techniques utilized by Teacher B were found to reflect her teaching beliefs. First, the peer review, group work in exercises, sentences making based on grammatical topics, spelling bee contest videos, and music played in group discussion showed her intentions to create more chances for students to interact with her and their peers. Also, these practices offered more relaxing and interesting elements in her writing, which closely corresponded to her belief about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere.

Second, activities and techniques that Teacher B experienced in her past learning in foreign countries, including doing peer review, playing spelling bee contest videos, and teaching the APA style, were found to be related to the beliefs about broadening students' horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities. Because the students had relatively few experiences with these activities and techniques, Teacher B took advantage of the writing courses to introduce these to them. Moreover, echoing with her course structure design, she tended to provide as much as English input for the students to improve their all kinds of English abilities. This also reflected her belief about teaching English as a whole.

### ***Assessments***

One of the special assessments found in Teacher B's writing classrooms was the midterm exam. The midterm exam of Teacher B's two writing courses was a grammar test on the grammatical topics she had taught to the students. According to Teacher B, "Regarding the assessment of students' writing, I think there is no need to give them tests to evaluate a

technical skill [like writing]. I can examine that by giving them [writing] assignments. ... Therefore, in the midterm, I do not test them on writing styles or techniques.” (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Teacher B mentioned that writing could not be tested by asking students to accomplish a writing task within a short period of time. Since she thought that writing could not be tested in a short period of time, she could have cancelled the midterm exam. However, she still tended to stress the importance of English grammar. As a result, she decided to give her students a grammar-only midterm exam. Hence, the grammar-only midterm exam was also found to reflect her belief about the importance of grammar in English writing.

### **Components Interplaying within Teacher B’s Activity System**

In this section, I point out the other components in Teacher B’s activity system in addition to her beliefs, teaching practices, and teaching goals. Focusing on her teaching beliefs and teaching practices, I subsequently discuss several interactive relations among the six components in the activity system. Specifically, the influences of the mediational means and contextual components (rules, community, and division of labor) are to be discussed.

#### ***Agency, mediational means, and objects***

The mediational means that Teacher B utilized in the writing courses consisted of different teaching materials, tasks, and target language culture related values and activities. As for teaching materials, she used textbooks (both writing and grammar), worksheets, PowerPoint slides, grammar video clips on the grammar website she constructed to conduct her writing courses. Moreover, she applied various tasks, including peer review activity, in-class group writing, group discussion, and sentence making. In addition to materials and tasks, she exploited extra cultural input, such as the spelling bee contest videos and the APA style, music, and language (L1 and L2).

As for the relations among the agency, the mediational means and the objects, Teacher

B's mediational means mainly served as tools for putting her beliefs (agency) into practices to achieve the goals (objects) she set. By using various activities and teaching materials, Teacher B's beliefs were able to be transformed into real practices. Two of the most special mediational means used in her classroom was the APA style and the spelling bee videos. Teacher B introduced the APA style due to her concern about plagiarism, since plagiarism was totally unacceptable in the target language cultural value. While inquired about the reasons for teaching the APA style, she indicated,

I think there seems to be a tendency that Taiwanese students easily plagiarize [others' writings]. They think it is OK, it is fine. But it is not. Therefore, I think I have the responsibility to let them know they will be fired if they do this in foreign countries. ... Because they have to write TOEFL essays, I required them to at least use quotations and paraphrase as a small practice [based on the APA style]. ... You know, I might as well take advantage of this opportunity to let them know this idea. However, whether they are capable of using it is not the primary concern." (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Hence, Teacher B tended to teach the APA style to the students in order to raise the students' awareness of plagiarism. According to her, she thought she might not be able to fully introduce the APA style in limited period of class time. Therefore, the APA style introduction seemed more about delivering a cultural value to the students.

Moreover, from the class observations, it was found that Teacher B played the spelling bee contest videos to the students. When Teacher B's grammar lessons moved to the topic of nouns, she played the video clips to the students. She explained,

As for [playing] spelling bee [videos], in such way, students may know actually American students sometimes they might find plural forms are difficult. ... American students might think the plural form of moose is mooses, and the [Taiwanese] students might think it is very funny. Therefore, they do not think American students are all good. The only advantage American students have is they speak the language. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Based on the grammar topics she taught, Teacher B tended to introduce more interesting elements to her students to keep them motivated. The funny videos made the students relax and these videos also deliver a message that the students were not inferior to American students. She also claimed, “I think it is quite hard for them to experience this, unless they go there. Because I am a half American, you know, I know their culture quite well. Therefore, I will try to bring it into my courses if I can.” (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Based on the above evidence observed in the study, it was clear that Teacher B used such mediational means to realize her beliefs about broadening students’ horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities and creating an interesting class atmosphere.

Additionally, it was found that the selection of the mediational means contradicted with Teacher B’s goals (objects) for her students in *Practical English Writing*. The textbook she chose for the students in *Practical English Writing* was an academic-oriented writing textbook. Such a textbook did not closely match the teaching objectives of Practical English Writing, since students were supposed to learn practical genres, such as emails or resumes. However, the content of the textbook did not cover these genres. Although Teacher B indicated that she supplemented extra materials to introduce genres, including cover letters, resumes, and autobiography, she spent most of the time teaching the textbook in the first hours. Therefore, based on class observations, the students were found to have more academic writing training than practical training.

Since the textbook was based on academic writing, there might be a doubt for why she chose it as the textbook to teach practical writing techniques. She explained,

Actually, I once thought to replace the blue book (the writing textbook used in *Practical English Writing*). One of the advantages of using it is that it teaches the students different kinds of writing. However, sometimes they are not very practical, so that I have to add practical materials like autobiography, resume, and cover letter. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

In fact, she also felt somewhat strange by using the textbook in this course. However, Teacher B indicated that the curriculum set for undergraduate students did not contain academic writing courses. Therefore, she was found to utilize such gap existing in the curriculum structure and combined academic and practical elements in her courses. Further, as she mentioned, “[I was] also thinking that academic writing is also a type of practical writing used in the real world. ... If we see TOEFL writing from a practical point of view, the textbook is just more detailed in academic writing.” (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Such a viewpoint seemed to make sense of her teaching practices. However, it still revealed certain concern about whether or not she directed *Practical English Writing* to a very different direction. Thus, such selection of the textbook (teaching practice) showed the contradiction between the mediational means and the objects.

### ***Contextual Components in Teacher B’s Activity System***

#### ***Rules***

The rules in Teacher B’s activity system were categorized into two aspects: the rules in the classrooms and the rules in the faculty community. As the teacher of the writing courses, Teacher B established most of the rules in her classrooms to regulate the way to conduct her writing courses.

About the rules in the faculty community, they were almost identical with Teacher A’s, since they shared the same standard for *Academic Writing I*. First, the decision of textbooks used in *Academic Writing I* was made on the basis of the agreement among the writing teachers offering such courses. Second, the focus of *Academic Writing I* was on writings similar to TOEFL essays or technical reports.

Based on the rules in Teacher B’s activity system, the study discovered two interactive relations. First, the agency was found to affect Teacher B’s rules in the classrooms. One rule was found to be closely related to her belief about creating an interesting and interactive class

atmosphere. The rule was that while the students shared their answers of the textbook exercises in groups, they needed to raise their hands as fast as possible to gain the chance to answer the questions. The groups obtained the chances and reported all the correct answers were offered “a happy face” for an extra credit. Due to this rule, students were motivated to gain more points by actively participate in sharing the answers of the textbook exercises, and it consequently produced more teacher-student interactions. Therefore, it was apparent that such rule was affected by Teacher B’s beliefs about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere.

Second, as for the rules in the faculty community, they were found to impact on the mediational means. The standard for *Academic Writing I* required all the teachers offering the courses to use the same writing textbook. Based on such rule, the selection of the textbook (teaching practice) was limited and constrained due to the fixed decision of the writing textbook in *Academic Writing I*.

Third, the rules in the faculty community also influenced the objects as well as the mediational means. The rule determining what the writing teachers should teach in *Academic Writing I* confused Teacher B with the teaching goals and consequently influenced Teacher B’s teaching practices. The rule that *Academic Writing I* should focus on writings like TOEFL essays provided a basic concept of what Teacher B was supposed to teach in *Academic Writing I*. Using the same textbooks as other *Academic Writing I* teachers, she was able to understand more detailed foci of *Academic Writing I*. However, in another interview, she still asserted, “It is not easy for me to differentiate between *Academic Writing I* and *Academic Writing II*. In reality, in the beginning, I tended to use the APA manual as the textbook, the black one.” (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009). However, except for the information gathered from the textbook, she did not clearly understand what to teach in *Academic Writing I*. One reason behind such phenomenon might be the definition and goals of *Academic Writing I* themselves were not clear enough to let Teacher B follow on the basis of her perceptions.

Consequently, such uncertainty resulted in her teaching practices in *Academic Writing I*, which were relatively similar to and overlapping with the teaching contents regardless of the teaching objective regulated by the standard. She did not seem to fully understand why such rule was set in the curriculum. Thus, she relatively neglected the students' professional backgrounds while teaching *Academic Writing I*, not sensing that this course was also a preparation for *Academic Writing II*.

### *Community*

The community existing in Teacher B's activity system contained students, colleagues, and the program director. First, the students in *Practical English Writing* (Class B1) and the students in *Academic Writing I* (Class B2) were the main student population. Second, Teacher B's colleagues included Teacher A, Teacher C, and other writing teachers at the language center. However, Teacher B did not cooperate with other writing teachers. Although sometimes she exchanged ideas about teaching with Teacher A and other colleagues, she still had her own ways of organizing teaching materials and activities. Third, the program director provided sufficient freedom for writing teachers to decide what they tended to teach in their courses.

As for the interactive relations with other components, the community was found to influence two other components, including rules and mediational means. First, the rules in Teacher B's activity system were affected by the community members. With regard to the rules in the classroom, she made alterations in order to be consistent with other teachers offering *Academic Writing I*. As she mentioned,

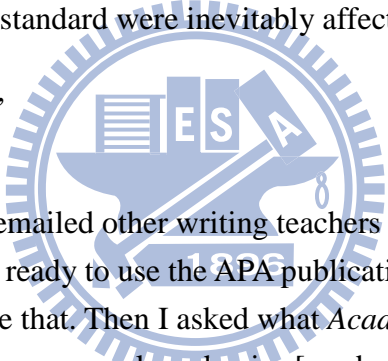
I once discussed with other teachers and found that they did not have finals [final exams]. The final exams made others think this course was very demanding because the requirements were more [than other courses of the same name]. Therefore, I do not give them finals in this semester. ... The reason I stop giving them finals is mainly because



other teachers teaching this course [*Academic Writing I*] do not give finals.” (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009).

Although she could preserve the finals in *Academic Writing I*, she chose to delete them from her assessments to reduce the differences between her course requirements of *Academic Writing I* and those of her colleagues. Therefore, it could also be found that the deletion of final exams (teaching practice) was based on the influence of the *Academic Writing I* teachers on the rules in the classroom, for she decided to follow other *Academic Writing I* teachers’ in-class regulations.

Moreover, the rules in the faculty community were also found to be influenced, since the standard for *Academic Writing I* was established by the teachers teaching the courses. Therefore, the rules under such standard were inevitably affected by the *Academic Writing I* teacher community. As she said,



When I first came here, I emailed other writing teachers about my chosen textbook for *Academic Writing I*. I was ready to use the APA publication manual. However, they told me this course was not like that. Then I asked what *Academic Writing I* was for. They answered that it was like very normal academics [academic literacy]. Then I asked when the students would learn thesis writing. They replied that it would be in *Academic Writing II*. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Because of the community, Teacher B chose to follow the rule about what should be taught in *Academic Writing I* to reach the standard by taking the advice of the older/more experienced teachers.

Second, it was also found that the community also directly influenced the mediational means Teacher B used. According to Teacher B, when she searched for an appropriate textbook for *Practical English Writing*, other writing teachers recommended her to use the blue book, *An Introduction to Academic Writing*.

When I just entered the language center, they said that there was a simpler version of the textbook they use in *Academic Writing I*. The two books were in the same series. They did not teach *Practical English Writing*, but they thought that seemed not bad. Because I just came here and several books I had found was way too easy, I thought that book was quite OK. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Other writing teachers provided such suggestion based on their good intentions to help Teacher B. Nevertheless, their recommendations were taken by Teacher B because she “just came here” and was not familiar with the courses at the language center. Hence, it was found that her colleagues also impacted on her selection of the textbook in *Practical English Writing*.

Furthermore, there might be another meaning existing in such phenomenon that the older/more experienced writing teachers suggested an academic-based writing textbook to a novice teacher to teach in her *Practical English Writing*. Such a suggestion might entail that there were not many differences between *Practical English Writing* and *Academic Writing I* in terms of the teaching contents in the perceptions of the community members of the writing teachers. Therefore, such blurred perceptions consequently caused Teacher B to integrate academic writing with practical writing and to claim that academic writing was actually practical in a way.

### *Division of Labor*

The division of labor in Teacher B’s system was mainly about the interactions, roles, and respective power relations with her colleagues and her students, since they were the two groups of community members who frequently interact with Teacher B. First, the interactions referred to, in the process of teaching and learning, the things that Teacher B and her students respectively did to conduct the writing courses. Most of the observed interactions were between Teacher B and Class B1 or Class B2, including in-class interactions and students’ academic performances of the given assignments. Second, in the writing classrooms, Teacher

B's role was a facilitator providing different kinds of teaching activities and tasks for the students to learn without much intervention when students did the tasks. On the other hand, the students' roles were knowledge receivers, reflective thinkers, and respondents to Teacher B's teaching. As for her roles in the writing teacher community, she was relatively a newcomer/a novice teacher at the language center, while her colleagues were the information and suggestion providers helping her accommodate to the educational systems at the language center. Third, the power relations between Teacher B and her students and those between her and her colleagues were formed based on the roles of Teacher B's students, colleagues, and herself.

According to the aforementioned three types of division of labor, there were three interactive relations relevant to division of labor found in Teacher B's activity system. First, the agency was observed to affect the division of labor. Her role as a facilitator in the writing classrooms reflected her belief about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere. She mentioned that she did not prefer possessing high teacher authority in her courses but welcome all kinds of challenges to her, because that was how teachers and students interacted in America based on her own learning experiences. She also indicated that she did not consider an English teacher to be a know-all and she could also learn from her students. As a consequence, it was found that her roles closely corresponded to her beliefs about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere under such less stressful situation.

Second, the division of labor was also a factor influencing the mediational means Teacher B utilized. From her students' responses, she was able to make sure her teaching was acceptable or in the right direction. In her *Practical English Writing*, she taught students to write autobiography, resumes, and cover letters. She stated,

As for *Practical English Writing*, resumes, cover letters, and autobiography are the most basic documents to find a job. When I designed the course, I would think about what I would need in the future if I were a student. ... In the end, it proved that students took this course because they wanted to learn resume, autobiography, and TOEFL writing. (Interview I, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009).

Moreover, as for grammar teaching in her writing courses, she also received the students' responses to confirm the acceptability of her teaching practices. As she claimed, "... but overall, I think they were not unhappy about that [grammar teaching], and they just wanted to learn grammar well." (Interview III, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009). Since there were no students complaining to her about her grammar teaching, she confidently thought that was acceptable.

In the interview, she indicated that this was the third semester she conducted the two writing courses. The experiences of teaching in the previous two courses provided many thoughts for her to modify her writing courses. In this semester, it was "the smoothest" on the basis of her students' responses. Hence, she would keep this course design without many changes in the following semester.

Hence, due to her students' responses, she confirmed that she was in the correct direction, which meant the teaching materials and tasks (mediational means) satisfied the students' learning needs. Based on such confirmation, she tended to keep using the mediational means in her subsequent teaching practices while she offered the same writing course in the next semester.

In addition, students' responses could also contribute to her teaching. Based on class observations, a student in Class B2 told Teacher B that another grammar book had another explanation of participles after class. He claimed that participles were the results of reducing adjective clauses. Teacher B never knew that kind of explanation. As she mentioned,

Sometimes students may indeed do some thing out of my expectation. For example, the relations between participles and adjective clauses were not in the design of my grammar lessons. Then, the students told me that. I was like, “Oh! Really? It is very cool.” After that, I integrated this into my grammar lessons. I think, you know, I still learn these things. Through some students, I can learn more. (Interview II, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

She accepted the student’s contribution with a quite open mind and tried to put it into her design to make her grammar lessons more complete. Therefore, it was observed that in the next lesson in the other class (Class B1), while Teacher B taught the same chapter, she revised her teaching instructions by indicating such relations. Accordingly, it was found that the students’ responses also affected the teaching materials/instructions (mediational means), which changed the teaching practices of presenting the concepts of participles as well.

Third, the division of labor in Teacher B’s activity system was also affected by the community. The power relations between Teacher B and other writing teachers were formed based on their different roles in the faculty community. Being a newcomer of the writing teacher community, Teacher B needed to follow the standard set by the *Academic Writing I* teacher community to fit in the teaching context. In order to maintain the harmonious relationships with other writing teachers, Teacher B chose to follow what she was told to teach *Academic Writing I*. To a certain extent, following what she was told entailed that she acknowledged their power, since Teacher B was new to the language center and she had less power to challenge the “tradition” of the curriculum structure.

### **Summary**

In Case II, I present Teacher B’s teaching beliefs, teaching practices, and the effects of mediation and other contextual factors influencing her writing teaching within her activity system. Figure 4.2 shows the interactive relations among the six components in Teacher B’s activity system.

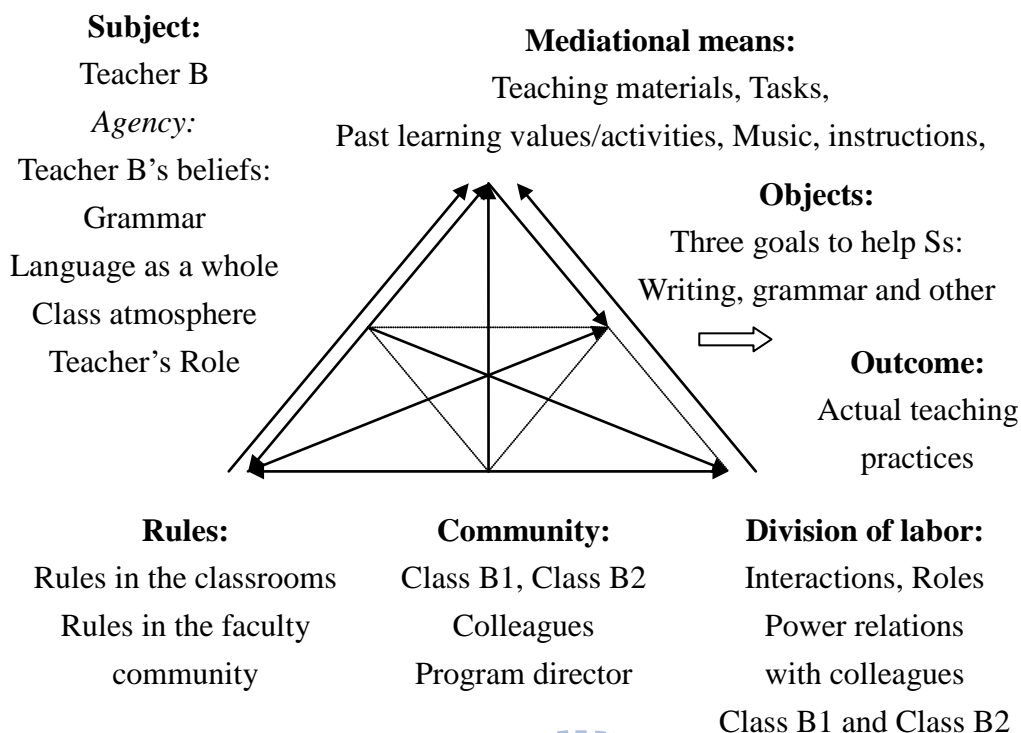


Figure 4.2 Teacher B's Activity System

This study discovered four teaching beliefs discovered in this study. First, Teacher B believed that grammar should be the first priority to learn in English writing. Such belief was revealed in teaching practices, including the course structure and the midterm exams. Second, she believed that language should be taught as a whole without separating the skills. Therefore, her conducting the writing courses in English (teaching practice) reflected such belief because she also tended to train students' listening and speaking in the writing courses. Third, it was her belief that creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere was quite crucial in her writing classrooms. As a result, it was found that teaching practices, inclusive of peer review activity, group discussion, music played in group discussions, and sentence-making activities, revealed such belief. Last, she believed that she could be the information provider to broaden her students' horizon of knowing foreign cultural values and activities. In consequence, teaching practices like playing the spelling bee contest videos and teaching the APA style were provided for the students.

As for the effects of mediational means in Teacher B's activity system, several interactive relations were discovered. First, the mediational means served as tools for realizing Teacher B's teaching beliefs in her teaching practices. Second, a contradiction between the mediational means and objects was found. Such contradiction influenced the teaching practices in *Practical English Writing* and subsequently resulted in its similar course contents to her *Academic Writing I*.

With regard to the influences made by the contextual components, there were also several interactive relations found in Teacher B activity system. First, as for the rules, they were influenced by not only Teacher B's beliefs but also the faculty community. In addition, the established rules were found to affect the mediational means and objects, and subsequently impacted on her teaching practices, such as textbook selection and grammar teaching in *Academic Writing I*.

Second, concerning the community, it was found that Teacher B's colleagues provided suggestions for textbook (mediational means) used in *Practical English Writing* and established the power relations (division of labor) to regulate Teacher B's teaching by requiring her to satisfy the *Academic Writing I* norm. The above two impacts also affected Teacher B's real classroom practices, including textbook selection for *Practical English Writing* and teaching foci of *Academic Writing I*.

Last, with reference to the division of labor, it not only reflected Teacher B's beliefs about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere but also influenced the teaching materials, tasks, and contents (mediational means). The influences of the mediational means made by the division of labor determined Teacher B's preservation and alteration of her previous teaching practices.

In the next chapter, a cross-analysis of the two cases to answer the research questions and the conclusion of the present study are presented.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the cross-case analysis of the two cases is first reported to respond to the research questions. Secondly, the conclusion of the present study is presented, including summary of the study, pedagogical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

#### **Cross-case Analysis responding to the Research Questions**

In order to answer the research questions, I report the related common themes in the cross-case analysis. Two research questions are responded based on the findings of the study.

**RQ1: How do writing teachers' beliefs shape and are shaped by their teaching practices?**

#### ***Factors for affecting teachers' beliefs***

The teachers' individual differences were found to be one of the important reasons for affecting their beliefs and subsequently influencing their real classroom practices. Shi and Cummings (1995) claims that individual qualities of teachers' beliefs play a significant role while language teachers administered their teaching practices in the situated contexts. Hence, the teachers' individual differences seemed relatively influential to their beliefs and practices. According to the findings, there were two themes discovered to be relatively apparent, inclusive of the personal perceptions of the situated contexts and the images of writing teachers.

First, the personal perceptions seem to help a writing teacher shape their own beliefs about teaching English writing. In this study, because Teacher A received her education in the



Taiwanese educational system, she was relatively familiar with the past learning experiences of Taiwanese students based on her own learning and teaching experiences. However, on the other hand, Teacher B was educated in various educational systems. As a consequence, her unfamiliarity resulted in different perceptions of Taiwanese students from Teacher A's. The different perceptions were found to influence their beliefs and practices. For example, the two teachers' attitudes toward grammar teaching were completely different. Knowing what the students had learned in high school and college, Teacher A did not intend to repeat all the grammatical rules they had learned. Instead, she required the students to consult grammar books if they did not understand. On the contrary, due to her comparative unfamiliarity with Taiwanese students' previous English training in high school and college, Teacher B might need to rely on her perceptions generated from her understanding to the students. As a result, gaining the information that the students' grammatical knowledge was inadequate, she tended to teach grammar systematically based on different parts of speech in her writing classrooms.

As Tsui (2003) discovers in her study, the differences between novice language teachers and experienced ones may be due to their different ways to relate and interpret their working contexts. Consequently, they produced different "conceptions and understanding of teaching" (p.245). In this study, because Teacher A contacted with the working context at the language center longer than Teacher B, she was considered more experienced than Teacher B.

Therefore, echoing with Tsui (2003), with different degrees of familiarity with the context, it was found that the writing teacher's beliefs and teaching practices were influenced by the teachers' personal perceptions. Also, Borg (2003) points out that "the interaction between teachers' pedagogical choices and their perceptions of the instructional context" (p. 94) may lead to teachers' departures from the originally planned teaching practices. In line with Borg's statement, the impact brought by the familiarity with the working context to the two writing teachers also reflected in their teaching beliefs and teaching practices.

Second, the teachers' beliefs might be influenced by the images they desire to create in their writing classrooms. As Wenger (1998) indicates, while subjects tend to achieve the objects, they both produce outcomes and their identities. Moreover, it was pointed out, "Whichever identities are salient for an individual during a particular context exist in a complex dance with one's sense of agency and position within the social world." (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 215). Hence, in the process of realizing teachers' beliefs in writing teachers' teaching practices, it seems inevitable that the images or identities they try to create may be apparently influential.

In Case I, it seemed that Teacher A tried to project an image as a competent and caring writing teacher in her writing courses by creating an humorous and interactive class atmosphere and preserving her teacher-centeredness simultaneously. On the other hand, in Case II, Teacher B tended to broaden the students' horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities because she regarded herself as a native speaker of English, taking her advantages of receiving education in foreign countries. It was found that the image they tended to create not only explained why they hold their beliefs but was also reflected by their teaching practices. Therefore, there seems to be two interactional relations. First, through different kinds of images the teachers tried to create, their beliefs can be shaped and consequently reflect in their teaching practices. Second, through realizing writing teachers' beliefs in teaching practices, the images of writing teachers can be recreated in the social interactions between teachers and students.

### ***How the two teachers' beliefs shape their teaching practices***

In this study, the two writing teachers were found to realize various teaching beliefs in their teaching practices in writing classrooms. As Johnson (1994) claimed, teachers' beliefs could translate the information on teaching in their teaching practices. Similar to such claim, the findings of the present study also revealed how teachers' beliefs shape their teaching

practices. In Case I, Teacher A held three teaching beliefs, including the belief about the importance of organization in English writing, the belief about seeking for a balance between student-centeredness and teacher-centeredness, and the belief about creating a humorous and interactive class atmosphere. Based on the beliefs she held, her teaching practices were shaped, including the organization-prominent course structure, close monitoring and interfering the students' learning, and various humorous and interactive activities and techniques.

On the other hand, in Case II, Teacher B possessed four teaching beliefs, which were the belief about the importance of grammar, the belief about teaching a language as a whole, the belief about broadening students' horizons of knowing foreign cultural values and activities, and the belief about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere. These beliefs were found to shape her teaching practices, including the course structure focusing on both writing techniques and grammar, English instructions to conduct the lessons, the introduction of peer review, the APA style and the spelling bee contest, and also various techniques and activities increasing classroom interactions.

### ***Inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices***

In both cases, there were contradictions among the writing teachers' beliefs, teaching goals, and teaching practices. Previous studies indicate that language teachers may modify their teaching practices due to other pedagogical concerns (Pennington et al., 1997; Tsui, 1996). Moreover, sometimes the compromises that language teachers made in their modified teaching practices to match the situated contexts may contradict with their own teaching beliefs (Graden, 1996). These findings are also in accordance with the results of the present study.

In Teacher A's case, the contradiction is revealed when she tried not to overtly emphasize on grammar teaching but actually spent relatively much time in teaching the

clauses to her students. On the other hand, in Teacher B's case, the contradiction was found in her textbook selection for *Practical English Writing*. Although she mentioned that she used to consider finding another book to replace the academic-oriented writing textbook, she still preserved the textbook. Knowing that the teaching contents were not closely relevant to the objectives of *Practical English Writing*, she supplemented other practical genres to match the course objectives, instead of changing the textbook. These contradictions might suggest that the writing teachers also produced teaching practices which failed to establish connections between their beliefs and practices due to the influences of the situated contexts.

Although Teacher A conceptually wanted to decrease the proportion of grammar teaching in her writing classrooms, she still provided grammar lessons to the students, for she also acknowledged the importance of grammar. Owing to this, her belief about the importance of organization was challenged by her perceived the students' learning needs in her writing classrooms. As a result, such inconsistency in mind seemed to direct her teaching practices to a direction opposite to her teaching beliefs that she should focus more on the writing organization rather than grammar. Moreover, in Teacher B's case, since the academic-oriented writing textbook was recommended by her colleague, regardless of her supplementation of other practical genres, her textbook selection (teaching practice) was influenced by her colleges and resulted in deviation from her teaching goals that she originally set to teach the students.

### ***How the two teachers' teaching practices shape their beliefs***

As for the reserve influence that the teaching practices shape the teachers' beliefs, there was no significant evidence found in this study. The lack of significant evidence may be due to the limited time spans of data collection. Since this study was a semester-long study, it might be relatively difficult to observe the changes of the writing teachers' beliefs caused by their teaching practices. Based on the collected data, it was shown that both Teacher A and

Teacher B still hold the same beliefs throughout the data collection semester. As Barcelos (2006) claims, in order to understand how beliefs develop and evolve, more longitudinal studies are required.

**RQ2: From an activity theory perspective, what factors influence English writing teachers' beliefs and practices?**

From an activity theory perspective, in this study, the mediational means and the contextual factors, namely the rules, the community, and the division of labor, were found to be influential to the relations between writing teachers' beliefs and teaching practices.

***Mediational means***

The results of this study showed that both Teacher A and Teacher B used various mediational means to realize their teaching beliefs and to achieve their teaching goals. For example, both Teacher A and Teacher B held the belief about creating an interesting and interactive class atmosphere in their classrooms. In Teacher A's case, she utilized numerous input sources (PowerPoint slides, the textbook, and in-class activities related to the taught concepts), interesting elements (metaphors and strategies for understanding the presented concepts and jokes), techniques to increase interactions (show and tell presentation, group discussion, in-class group writing, and questions). Similarly, Teacher B also implemented various interesting elements (spelling bee videos and jokes) and techniques to enhance interactions in class (peer review, sentence making, group discussion, in-class group writing, and providing extra credits to the fastest groups finishing the tasks). By using these materials, techniques, and tasks in their writing courses, they were found to successfully put their beliefs into practice, creating interesting and interactive class atmospheres.

As Lantolf and Throne (2006) pointed out, in the process of a subject tries to achieve or to act on an object, the mediational means were utilized to facilitate the process by producing

“cognitive and material functions.” (p.213). In other words, the functions of mediational means can assist a subject to achieve an object and subsequently produced outcomes. In this study, it was found that the relations among the writing teachers’ beliefs, the implemented mediational means, and their teaching objectives corresponded to such mediational process.

### ***Community***

According to the findings, the impacts of the other writing teachers in the community seemed to considerably affect the two teachers’ teaching practices. Being in the same community, Teacher A and Teacher B were both required to follow the rules established by the *Academic Writing I* teacher community. Due to such impact of the writing teacher community, despite the individual differences of the writing teachers’ beliefs, their teaching practices were found to follow the same set of principles. This may echo Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, and Thwaite’s (2001) study in which teachers working in similar working environment produce similar finite set of principles of teaching practices despite individual differences. Such phenomenon may also indicate that the underlying power existing in the faculty community could impact on the process of realizing writing teachers teaching beliefs in their teaching practices.

In addition to the writing teacher community, close collaboration with other writing teachers also revealed certain impacts on writing teachers’ teaching practices. In this study, Teacher A closely collaborated with Teacher C in material development and course rule establishment. In such collaboration, it seemed inevitable that Teacher A might not always preserve her beliefs and put them into practice without any compromise to reach agreement with Teacher C. Since the two individual teachers might have their own past learning and teaching experiences which shape their own beliefs about teaching English writing, it was quite possible that their beliefs were identical. Nevertheless, the same teaching materials and course rules seemed to be the factors directing their teaching practices to similar directions.

Hence, close collaboration with other teachers might also constrain the realization of their teaching beliefs in classroom practices. However, based on the interview, such collaboration could effectively decrease the laboring workload of preparing the writing courses, because they also offered many other language courses and services, such as table discussions and writing consultations, at the language center in the data collection semester.

### **Rules**

Moreover, in addition to the community, the rules were also found to obviously affect the writing teachers' teaching. In this study, because the community established the rules to standardize the *Academic Writing I* courses, the established rules were found to influence the writing teachers' teaching materials (mediational means) and teaching objectives (objects). Both Teacher A and Teacher B were required to select the same textbook for their *Academic Writing I* courses and they also had to follow the predetermined teaching objectives that they could only cover the basic academic writing skills rather than actual thesis writing. Although these rules were originally developed based on the writing teacher community, it seemed to gradually evolve to become a part of institutional requirements through time for teachers who offered such courses. Based on these institutional requirements, the writing teachers' teaching practices were guided to a specific direction, which might not correspond to their beliefs. Based on the interviews and class observations, Teacher A seemed relatively accustomed to these requirements. However, Teacher B, as a junior writing teacher in the community, revealed her doubts and difficulties of following the requirements. She mentioned that she did not know why the curriculum design was constructed as it was in the data collection semester. Due to these requirements, not only her belief about teaching the students grammar first before they take any language skill courses did match them, but also her original intention to teach thesis writing was impeded. As a result, because of the impacts of the rules, in Teacher B's teaching practices, it could be discovered that her beliefs about the importance of

grammar constantly conflicted or compromised.

### ***Division of labor***

Additionally, with reference to the division of labor, the students' responses were also found to be an important contextual factor in both Teacher A's and Teacher B's activity systems. In this study, students' responses were discovered to possess two different functions. First, the students' responses could be a reference for the acceptability of the writing teachers' courses. Since the program director did not explicitly regulate the teaching contents of the writing courses, the students' responses in the writing courses might become relatively important for the writing teachers to directly evaluate their own course design. Both Teacher A and Teacher B indicated that originally they were not certain about if their teaching contents really satisfied the students' learning needs. However, after receiving their positive responses to the writing courses, they felt more confident in their own course design.

Second, the students' responses could also be an indicator for writing teachers to reflect their teaching beliefs or to revise teaching practices. In Case I, Teacher A's students' responses in their academic performances stimulated her reflection about the effectiveness of the teacher-centeredness she tended to possess to closely monitor students' learning, since she realized that their performances still greatly varied. Because such reflection was made at the end of the data collection semester, it was not traced if she tried to change her beliefs or teaching practices in the next semester. Nevertheless, it was evident that students' responses to her teaching practices triggered her reflection on her beliefs and practices. In addition, in Case II, Teacher B adopted her students' contribution of how to explain participles and reform her teaching practices. Although such contribution did not influence her teaching beliefs, it drove Teacher B to revise her teaching techniques (mediational means) in her writing classrooms and she presented the revised teaching techniques in the other writing course while she taught the same grammar topic.



Although previous studies concerning language teacher beliefs and practices propose that students' characteristics, such as learning goals, interests, and personalities, can be one of the influential contextual factors to language teachers' teaching practices (Richards, 1996; Smith, 1996). Interestingly, there are no findings of relevant studies indicate the impacts of students' responses on beliefs and practices. The reason behind this may be that previous studies mainly focus on teachers themselves. However, from an activity theory perspective, the students' responses are also taken into account. Hence, this study seems to reveal that in college language education, students' responses may be relatively influential to language teachers' beliefs and teaching practices.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, the summary of the study is first presented and followed by several pedagogical implications on the basis of the findings. Subsequently, the limitations of the present study and the recommendations for future research are shown.

#### **Summary of the Study**

From the activity theoretical perspective, this study examined two Taiwanese EFL college writing teachers' teaching beliefs, practices, and their embedded contextual factors influencing the relations between the beliefs and practices. By various data collection techniques, including semi-structured interviews, class observations, and course materials as documents, this study tended to carefully elicit the two writing teachers' beliefs, practices, and the existing contextual factors. Furthermore, it also examined several relations, including how the writing teachers' beliefs were formed, how the writing teachers' teaching practices reflected their beliefs, and how the contextual factors influencing the process of realizing the writing teachers' beliefs in real teaching practices.

Moreover, based on the cross-case analysis, the two research questions were answered.

In Research Question 1, four issues were respectively discussed. First, writing teachers' individual differences seemed to be relatively influential to their teaching beliefs and subsequently affected their teaching practices. Second, the two writing teachers showed how their teaching beliefs were reflected in their teaching practices. Third, the inconsistency between the writing teachers' beliefs and teaching practices were reported. Last, due to limited time spans of data collection, this study did not find out any changes in the two writing teachers' original beliefs brought by the teaching practices they administered in their writing classrooms.

In Research Question 2, factors influencing the relations between beliefs and practices were discussed, including the mediational means and the contextual factors (rules, community, and division of labor). First, the mediational means played an important role in facilitating the process of the transformation from teaching beliefs into teaching practices. Second, the two writing teachers were greatly influenced by their faculty community. Third, by the rules established by the community, the community seemed to produce chain relations to impact on the choice of mediational means and the establishment of teaching objectives. Last, the students' responses not only served as a reference for the acceptability of the writing teachers' teaching but also provided materials for them to reflect on their beliefs or to revise their teaching practices.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

In light of the findings of the study, several pedagogical implications can be drawn from the study. First, due to the diversity of writing teachers' individual differences, it is quite necessary for program directors of language centers to clearly communicate with the writing teachers to prevent deviations from the original course objectives in the curriculum design. In this way, students are able to benefit more from the offered writing courses and achieve the goals set by the curriculum. Moreover, with such communication, writing teachers are more

likely to understand what the students' learning needs and what they are expected to teach in their writing courses.

Second, in writing teacher communities, the power relationships between experienced teachers and novice teachers may inevitably exist. As newcomers, novice teachers of writing teacher communities follow the conventional regulations set by the experienced teachers in the communities due to such power relationships. Although such power relationships can effectively stabilize the qualities of the writing teaching of the language center, they may also impede the creative thinking of novice teachers in writing teaching. Therefore, it is suggested that the voices of novice teachers in writing teacher communities should also be heard, because they may discover problems in the existing conventions that the experienced teachers have already become accustomed to. In this way, the novice teachers are able to point out their difficulties in accommodating the conventions and subsequently seek appropriate assistance from the experienced teachers. In addition, the community conventions are able to be enriched and improved by integrating the novice teachers' viewpoints.

Third, according to the findings, the evaluation of the writing teachers' teaching seemed heavily relied on the students' responses. This finding implies that the sources for Taiwanese college writing teachers to reflect their own teaching may be comparatively limited. Hence, the language center should provide more activities increasing writing teacher development, such as workshops and speeches made by professional scholars or creative teachers. Also, the language center can provide institutional feedback on writing teachers' teaching. With frequent reflection, information exchange, and institutional feedback, writing teachers can receive more input to improve writing teachers' teaching and avoid staying in the old habits. In this way, college writing teachers are more capable of doing more self-evaluation of their own writing courses.

## **Limitations of the Present Study**

Although the present study examined the relations between teachers' beliefs and practices, the research design is not without flaws. First, the data collection time spans of the two cases were limited in only a semester-long period. Based on the findings of the study, there were no apparent changes in teachers' beliefs resulted from the teaching practices in the whole data collection semester. Therefore, it is assumed that prolonging the observational time spans might provide richer data to reveal the changes in teachers' beliefs and the reverse effects from teaching practices to teacher beliefs.

Second, the study did not include investigation of other community members in the activity systems of the two teachers. The study only focused on the two writing teachers, and consequently all the data collected were only related to the teachers themselves. As a result, this study lacked the perspectives from the other community members to examine the teachers' beliefs and practices and discover relatively limited impacts from the community-related contextual factors.

Third, this study did not target all of the courses that the two writing teachers taught. In this study, I only focused on two writing courses of the writing teachers without conducting class observations of their other courses. However, there was no denying that from an activity theory perspective, the untargeted courses might also influence the writing teachers' activity systems. Due to this limitation, this study could not reveal any influences from other courses.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The study investigated EFL writing teachers' beliefs, teaching practices, and the relations between the two. Applying activity theory to understand the relations, this study revealed the complex mediational and contextual factors influencing the relations. For future research on related topics, several recommendations are made.

First, future research is suggested to be conducted in a longer time span than a semester

long period to examine the possibilities of changes in teachers' beliefs and to elicit more probable factors to the changes. Due to the research limitation of the present study, it was not yet verified if writing teachers' teaching practices could influence their teaching beliefs. However, from the activity theoretical perspective, the mutually influential effects between the beliefs and practices were likely to exist. Therefore, further investigation should be pursued.

Second, since this study did not contain the investigation to other community members in the writing teachers' communities, future research is suggested to further inquire language teachers' beliefs from the perspectives of other community members to illustrate the subtler interactive relations and their embedded influences on the relations between teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. In this way, the contextual influences brought by the community members in writing teachers' activity systems can be more profoundly presented and further provide a more complete picture of writing teachers' belief-practice relations from an activity theory perspective.

Third, because this study only focused on EFL writing courses, future research may expand the research context to investigate different types of language skill courses of the same teacher. Based on the findings of the study, it seemed that several beliefs were found to be quite general and could be realized in other language skill courses. Hence, the expansion of the research context may further reveal if the relations between teaching beliefs and practices and the influences brought by the contextual factors in writing courses were similar to those in other language skill courses. Moreover, it can further reveal what contextual differences are resulted from different language skill courses in the relations between beliefs and practices.

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## Appendix A: Research Invitation Email

Dear Mr. /Miss \_\_\_\_\_,

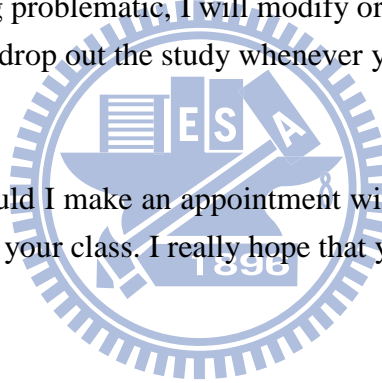
This is Ben from the Institute of TESOL in NCTU. I'm a graduate student and the advisee of Professor Ching-Fen Chang. I'm doing a research concerning EFL writing teachers' teaching beliefs and teaching practices in their writing classroom as my master thesis. I am wondering if I can have the honor to invite you to participate in my study. I might need to do some class observations and also hope that I am able to interview you in the data collection process (not in class).

Your personal information and the collected data are confidential. Except for the researcher, nobody can have the access to them. The data will be immediately destroyed right after the study is completed. In my thesis, I will use pseudonyms to protect your information. Moreover, the final transcript will be sent to you to make sure its appropriateness in the transcripts. If you find anything problematic, I will modify or delete the problematic part right away. Also, you may drop out the study whenever you feel uncomfortable participating in this study.

If you have the willingness, could I make an appointment with you to talk about more details? I will try my best not to disturb your class. I really hope that you can give me this precious chance to observe your class.

Thank you

Ben



## Appendix B: Actual Dates of Data Collection

Time	Data Collection	Collected Data
Week 3	Preliminary Class Observation Class A1: March 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Class A2: March 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Class B1: March 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Class B2: March 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Field Notes Documents
Week 5	First Interview Teacher A: March 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Teacher B: March 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2009	Interview Transcripts
Week 6-11	Class Observations <i>Class A1</i> : March 31 <sup>st</sup> , April 14 <sup>th</sup> , April 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2009 <i>Class A2</i> : April 1 <sup>st</sup> , April 15 <sup>th</sup> , April 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009 <i>Class B1</i> : April 13 <sup>th</sup> , April 20 <sup>th</sup> , May 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 <i>Class B2</i> : April 1 <sup>st</sup> , April 15 <sup>th</sup> , April 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009	Field Notes Documents
Week 12	Second Interview Teacher A: May 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Teacher B: May 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Interview Transcripts
Week 13-17	Class Observations <i>Class A1</i> : May 19 <sup>th</sup> , May 26 <sup>th</sup> , June 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 <i>Class A2</i> : May 20 <sup>th</sup> , May 27 <sup>th</sup> , June 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 <i>Class B1</i> : May 18 <sup>th</sup> , June 1 <sup>st</sup> , June 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 <i>Class B2</i> : May 20 <sup>th</sup> , June 3 <sup>rd</sup> , June 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2009	Field Notes Documents
After the Course Ended	Third Interview Teacher A: July 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2009 Teacher B: July 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2009	Interview Transcripts

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### Interview Questions I (Teacher A)

#### General Questions

##### *Experiences*

1. Would you please provide me with some information about your educational and professional background? When did you first begin teaching EFL writing?
2. What are your past experiences of teaching EFL writing graduate/undergraduate students in this college? What are the special qualities this population has revealed?

##### *Teaching Beliefs*

1. As a writing teacher, what are the most important things to EFL writing?
2. What do you want your students to learn from this course? Any goals?
3. What are the things do you think student writers need or expect most?
4. How do you apply what you think are important to EFL writing in your classroom?

##### *Teaching Materials*

1. How do you develop or select your teaching materials (PPT, worksheets, textbook, or website)?

##### *Teaching Context*

1. How would you describe your working environment? Your relationship with other writing teachers? With your administrator?
2. How do you see the match between available resources and your teaching syllabus? How do you see the match between what you want to teach and what is required by the college/language center or expected by the students?

#### Based on Previous Observation

1. What are your general impressions on your students in your two writing classes? Are there any differences between the two groups of students?
2. Why did you want to use Chinese to lecture most of the time?
3. Why did you want to play music while the activity was on?
4. Do you think a humorous class atmosphere is important in your writing classrooms? Why?

## Interview Questions I (Teacher B)

### General Questions

#### *Experiences*

1. Would you please provide me with some information about your educational and professional background? When did you first begin teaching EFL writing?
2. What are your past experiences of teaching EFL writing graduate/undergraduate students in this college? What are the special qualities this population has revealed?

#### *Teaching Beliefs*

1. As a writing teacher, what are the most important things to EFL writing?
2. In your opinion, what are the differences between academic writing and practical writing?
3. What do you want your students to learn from the courses? Any goals?
4. What are the things do you think student writers need or expect most?
5. How do you apply what you think are important to EFL writing in your classroom?

#### *Teaching Materials*

1. How do you develop or select your teaching materials (PPT, worksheets, textbook, or website)?

#### *Teaching Context*

1. How would you describe your working environment? Your relationship with other writing teachers? With your administrator?
2. How do you see the match between available resources and your teaching syllabus? How do you see the match between what you want to teach and what is required by the college/language center or expected by the students?

### Based on Previous Observation

1. What are your general impressions on your students in your two writing classes? Are there any differences between the two groups of students?
2. Why did you want to use English to lecture most of the time and also encourage students to discuss in English?
3. Why did you want to play music in class?

## Interview Questions II (Teacher A)

### General Questions

1. How do you think about your teaching the two writing classes so far? Are the classes going smoothly as you expected at the beginning of this semester?
2. What kinds of things that are out of your expectations happened in the process of teaching the two classes? Why?
3. Do you ever feel that the students in the two classes have different qualities so far? What are the differences? Do you have any preferences to one of the classes?
4. How do you think about the students' learning outcomes so far? Will that influence your teaching practices?
5. What are your past experiences of learning English writing or learning English grammar (the four types of clauses)?
6. How do you think the teacher's authority in a writing classroom? How do you feel when students challenge you?

### Based on previous observation

1. From an informal conversation, you said that the activities used in the two writing classes might be slightly different because of the order of teaching the classes. Is this situation still happening? Or how will you do to make this situation become less and less?
2. Show and Tell: How do you think the show and tell presentation of your classes? What is your role of commenting on students' reports?
3. Unity and Coherence: What do you want students to put the sentences in the right order?
4. Clauses: Why do you want to write an essay in Class A2 based on the sentences collected from the students? Do you ever consider having students watch you edit the text?
5. Assignment: Since you told the students to write an autobiography, have you taught them how to write an autobiography as a genre? Or do you think there is no need to do that?
6. Material: I found you used Clarence's PowerPoint to teach in class, what is the purpose of using it?
7. Quiz: Why did you let the students to open book while they were having the quiz (N. Cl. or Adj. Cl.)
8. Term: How did you come up with the term “雲霧”?

## Interview Questions II (Teacher B)

### General Questions

1. How do you think about teaching the two writing classes so far? Are the classes going smoothly as you expected at the beginning of this semester?
2. What kinds of things that are out of your expectations happened in the process of teaching the two classes? Why?
3. How do you think about the students' learning outcomes so far? Will that influence your teaching practices?
4. What are your own learning English writing experiences?
5. How do you think the teacher's authority in a writing classroom? How do you feel when students challenge you?

### Based on previous observation

1. Why did you want to teach the student the APA style in the practical writing class? In your own learning experiences, when did you learn the APA style? Do you think that is a bit academic?
2. I found that you tend to guide students to go through the whole book chapter. How do you think about finishing the content of a book chapter?
3. Did you teach students how to write autobiography, resume, and cover letter as genres?
4. How did you relate the textbook content to the practical writing, since the content of the book is mostly academic?
5. How do you grade the students' writings? What are the criteria of grading them? Why did you want to spend some time having the students read your graded feedback in class?
6. The idea of reducing Adj. Cl. in your present participle teaching...
7. What are the purposes of asking the students to make sentences in class in grammar teaching?
8. Why did your midterm only test on the student's grammatical knowledge?
9. How do you feel about having the students do the peer review?
10. Song (If I were a boy), drawing (descriptive paragraphs), Spelling Bee videos (grammar): What do you want the students to learn? Why do you choose these materials?
11. The content of the two classes seems to be somewhat overlapped. Why do you want to arrange that way? What differentiates the two classes?

## Interview Questions III (Teacher A)

### General Questions

1. After finishing teaching the two courses in this semester, how do you evaluate your own teaching? What kinds of teaching activities are successful and what are not?
2. How do you see the match between your teaching EFL writing beliefs and your teaching practices in your classes?
3. After finishing teaching the two classes, were there any changes in your teaching EFL writing beliefs?
4. If you are going to offer another similar class again, will you make any modifications? What are the modifications you might want to make?
5. Did my class observations make any influence to your teaching practices? In what aspects?

### Based on previous observations

1. How did you grade your students' writings?
2. How did the students' performances on midterms and finals? Are the performances satisfying?
3. *In-class writing*: Why do you want to spend time letting students write paragraphs (argumentative, process, cause and effect) in class?
4. *Students' writing errors*: Why do you want to give students a piece of paper listing students' common writing errors after giving back their autobiography? What kinds of errors do you tend to remind the students of?
5. *Argumentative essay*: Since the argumentative essay assignment required students to do multiple drafts, what are the foci of each draft?
6. *Tolerance of silence*: I found that your tolerance of silence was relatively low. What made you not to wait the students' answers? (kind of subjective)
7. *Emission of reading the sample text*: In the process essay class, you introduced the structure by having the students read the sample text, but I found that you omitted body paragraph 1. Why did you want to omit it?
8. *Writing consultation*: Why did you want to offer writing consultation on the last days of the classes?
9. *Teaching practices*: Why did you have students read the text and find out the signal words while you taught them the structures of the texts (argumentative, process, cause and effect)?
10. Did you feel that your teaching practices were somewhat limited because of your collaboration with another writing teacher? If yes, in what ways?



## Interview Questions III (Teacher B)

### General Questions

1. After finishing teaching the two courses in this semester, how do you evaluate your own teaching? What kinds of teaching activities are successful and what are not?
2. How do you see the match between your teaching EFL writing beliefs and your teaching practices in your classes?
3. After finishing teaching the two classes, were there any changes in your teaching EFL writing beliefs?
4. If you are going to offer similar classes again, will you make any modifications? What are the modifications you might want to make?
5. Did my observations make any influence to your teaching practices? In what aspects?

### Based on previous observations

1. How did you evaluate students' portfolio?
2. How did the students' performances on midterms and finals? Are performances satisfying?
3. *In-class writing*: Why do you want to spend time letting students write paragraphs in class?
4. *Multiple drafts*: I found that several writing assignments required students to write multiple drafts, why did you want to use this approach?
5. *Writing consultation*: How did the students do in the writing consultation?
6. *Reading*: Why did you have students read the text and find out the signal words while you taught them the structures of the texts (argumentative, process, paraphrase)?
7. *Strategies*: How did you come up with Op Sh A C O M and F A N B O Y S?
8. *Visual presentation*: I found that while you were playing the video clips, you also used half of the screen to display the text of the grammar textbook, why did you want to show these to students?
9. *Special students*: Did you ever feel that there are several special students always giving you strange sentences? (my own interpretation) How do you see these students?
10. *Grammar/Writing proportion*: Do you ever feel that the grammar lessons are more than actual "writing classes"? Are you worried about students might not have enough knowledge of English writing?

## Appendix D: Interview Transcript Sample

39. R: 所以你常反問學生要讓他們想？

40. A: 對，原因就是因為用字這個東西很難像句子，你告訴他們這個結構、這個方法就是這樣，所以就照著改。你必須去培養對英文這個語文的感覺。所以我就會常常用問他們的方式去讓他們思考。然後效果怎麼樣可能就是要去問學生跟看他們的作品。我覺得有差的是他們至少開始有 awareness，不會很不負責任的就是查了一個字就丟進來用。我覺得這個 awareness 是至少有給他們建立的。

41. R: 所以在 priority 上面，用字是在比較後面的，但其實過程裏面會一直安插？

42. A: 但是我選擇要點出來是在學期比較後面，他們其實有了一個學期的經驗了，他們才能夠 realize。不然你可能在第一堂課跟他們說用字很重要喔，他們沒有去體會，他們會覺得是空的話。

43. R: 那我中間突然有 flash 一個問題，就是你教的兩門課都是 academic writing，那麼你對於 academic writing 的定義是什麼？怎麼樣的 writing 叫做 academic writing？

44. A: OK，其實我們這個課本來就有定義了。所以如果以課的定義來說，說明白具體一點，就是現在這個課上的有點像是托福的 writing。它是基礎的，所以它沒有限制是論文，是 paper，還是其他的 technical report，沒有限定，它就是廣的，general 的。各個領域的文章可能課本裡都會有，就是有關學科知識方面的文章，但是不是專業的，因為他要給各個不同領域的人上。所以這是我的課的 academic writing。可是以 academic writing 來看，更細的去查，例如說科技英文，理工科的人的 paper，有的時候雖然上的是 Academic Writing I，可是像今天的寫作諮詢就有一個他拿他的 paper，學姐帶學弟，學姐因為她看了很多 paper，所以在改的時候，她就會告訴他這個要這樣寫。然後他來問我的時候，我就發現，比如說他們很喜歡用 such that，她就會想要問我 such that 怎麼用。可是即使我告訴他 such that 怎麼用，我再問他那你們領域怎麼用。有的時候就是他們領域已經很固定了，所以你就算知道 such that 原來怎麼用，他也沒差，他還是得要像他們領域那樣用。他們有的時候會很簡略用一個 for 就帶過了，它沒有動詞，可是他們的領域可以。我覺得這些也都可以算在 academic writing 裡面，但不是我這一門課的重點。我可能上課的時候，課本提到相關我就反問，科技類的文章或 academic 都是常用 passive，可是我去調查要他們去想他們領域的 paper 是主動多還是被動多。其實我已經知道答案了，交大很多電方面的，電資方面的學生，他們都會說他們都用 we。所以他們就會很 confused 說課本叫他們用被動，可是他們的 paper 都是用 we。然後我就會去反問他們為什麼？還真的有人可以跟我講為什麼。他們會說在我們領域如果你做的東西都跟人家一樣就沒有什麼貢獻，所以他們就會強調這篇 paper 我做了什麼。因為不能用 I，所以他們都用 we。所以從這樣的討論過程中，因為沒有辦法科系又不一樣。今天如果我教的都是電子領域的，我可能真的就要去讀很多電子領域的 paper，我對他們領域有一定的認識之後，我就會告訴他們：你們領域就是這樣。所以我就是覺得比較不同的。

### Appendix E: Field Note Sample

<b>Date</b>	3/9	
<b>Teacher</b>	Teacher B	
<b>No. of the Students</b>	30	
<b>Teaching Aids</b>	computer, projector, textbook, PowerPoint slides, website, videos, worksheet, Word file	
<b>Course Type</b>	Practical English Writing	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
15:40	<p>Greet to the students</p> <p>Introduce the syllabus (also remind the assignment)</p> <p>Make sure if students have questions about the assignment</p> <p>Check if students have the grammar book</p> <p>Arranging the class environment (close the door, open the window)</p>	
15:44	<p><b>Topic: Introduction to Academic Writing (PPT)</b></p> <p>1. <i>Basic structure: Introduction/Body/Conclusion</i></p> <p>Explain the slides with the textbook</p> <p>2. <i>Paragraphs: A paragraph only has one main idea.</i></p> <p>Ask students to read the slides (Please? Someone? Volunteer?)</p> <p>Have students give the students finishing reading the slides applause.</p> <p>3. <i>Introduction/Introductory paragraphs: (1) Introduction looks like a funnel. (2) A thesis statement is usually the last sentence of the paragraph containing the ideas of Body paragraph 1, 2, and 3.</i></p> <p>Read the slide by the teacher herself.</p> <p>Task 1:</p> <p>(1) Have students get in pairs</p> <p>(2) Explain the task in English:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Explain the exercise of the textbook: Students have to find out the sequence of the paragraphs based on the funnel shape idea of Introduction.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. The pair gets the answer first can get extra points.</p>	<p>How the PPT was made?</p> <p>What kind of textbook is used?</p> <p>Why did the T want the Ss to read the slides out loud?</p> <p>Why did the T read slide on her own in this part?</p> <p>The intentions of having Ss raise their hands to answer?</p>