

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS IN THE
CURRICULUM OF YOUNG ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS IN
A TAIWANESE URBAN CONTEXT

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This qualitative study explores the perceived influence of literacy skills on speaking skills for young (aged 6-7) English learners in Taiwan. Reading and writing skills are often neglected for the sake of improving learners' oral production. Previous research has shown a significant connection between oral production and literacy skills. The written modality is an asset in the EFL environment where there is a lack of native oral input and integrating written language with oral for young ESL learners could lead to gains in oral proficiency. Interviews with teachers, school managers, parents and a curriculum writer indicate the inequality of time allocation towards literacy skills and it was confirmed by classroom observations. Findings revealed that teachers are not aware of the parents' needs towards their childrens' literacy skills. Teachers hope to spend more time on literacy in the classroom but are hindered by a full curriculum and perceived demands from management and parents. Directions for future research and pedagogical implications are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy skills are traditionally considered secondary to the development of oral language in many contexts (Harklau, 2002; Williams, 2008). It is a common fact that young learners of English acquire the spoken word first, then they learn to read and lastly they write. In this view, one might infer that child reading development could be influenced by a child's oral ability and how well a child writes may depend on both his speaking and reading abilities. This has resulted in a discussion among language acquisition researchers and among language teachers over whether written English (reading and writing) should be used to develop oral English skills for beginning ESL students. In other words, is an adequate level of oral language skills a necessity for literacy instruction in English? Researchers in child and adult language development (e.g. Kim, 2008; Olson, 2002; Williams, 2008; Wong, 2001) have indicated an interrelated and complex relationship between literacy and oral skills. Several researchers believe that there isn't a unidirectional influence of one modality over the other but rather a bidirectional relationship between the written and oral modalities.

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the perceived influence of reading and writing on the spoken skills for young English learners in Taiwan. In my experience as a language teacher in Taiwan, reading and writing skills are often neglected for the sake of improving young learners' oral production in Taiwanese private schools despite the fact that previous research has shown a significant connection between oral production and literacy skills. In fact, integrating written language with oral for young ESL learners might lead to greater gains in oral proficiency (Blake, 2009; El-Koumy, 1998; Kim, 2008; Weber & Longhi-Chirilín, 2001).

To understand what takes place I examined the perspectives of some stakeholders at a school in Taipei, namely teachers, school managers, parents of Taiwanese learners (of L2

English), and a curriculum writer. Topics to be addressed by this study include: the participants' views on teaching literacy skills; methods of teaching literacy; time allocation to reading and writing; time allocation to oral practice; and views on the links between literacy skills and oral production.

EFL students at the kindergarten and elementary levels are under-researched populations throughout the world, and research with regard to the development of second language literacy among children is scarce. Although this study does not focus on the development of speech and writing of learners within the EFL context, it does nevertheless investigate where the focus of instruction lies, whether on oral English or written English, the possible reasons for the preference of focusing on one modality rather than the other, and whether or not stakeholders are aware of the potential bidirectional relationships between the oral modality and written modality.

Literature Review

This section consists of three parts. In the first part, I will review some studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and a few in the field of education research with regard to the interconnectedness of reading, writing, and speaking skills in language development. In the second section, I discuss the Taiwanese context in which the current study took place. In the third section, I present the research questions investigated in the current study.

The Interconnectedness of Reading, Writing, and Speaking Skills

Second language teaching and learning has historically been about the acquisition of spoken language; in other words, the focus has been on teaching speaking since written production has seemed less likely than spoken language to be a reflection of English proficiency. Research, especially bilingual research, has concerned itself primarily with the study of spoken language (Leki, 2000; Valdés, 1992). There are only a small number of empirical studies that

have investigated the effects of modality (Weissberg, 2006; Wong, 2001) and only a little research on early L2 writing of young learners (Matsuda & De Pew, 2002).

Often written and oral skills are viewed as separate processes (Strube, 2011). The assumption of most researchers on child reading development seems to have been that the development of reading depends on prior phonological awareness, and as such, literacy acquisition depends on a child's speech processing skills (Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). However, other researchers in child language development lean toward the opposite position in that the development of literacy increases phonological awareness. Olson (2002) stated that writing is what introduces our speech to us; that is, writing shows our speech as having a particular structure. "To segment words, the child has first to learn that an utterance can be segmented into words, and that knowledge too may be acquired in the process of becoming literate" (Olson, 2002, p. 156).

Some research challenges the idea that ESL learners need to become proficient in spoken English to learn the basics of written English. Several studies take for granted that children have basic implicit knowledge of their first language and thus a foundation for acquiring the form and use of another language in print as well as in speech (Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). In Taiwan, the situation is different in that knowledge of the learners' first language (Mandarin Chinese) does not necessarily provide children with a foundation for L2 literacy because of the different writing systems used in Mandarin and English. The use of different orthography systems has also received little attention in L2 literacy research, particularly with children. Buckwalter and Lo (2002) studied a five-year-old Taiwanese learner of English, and their case study gave insights on the debate as to whether the introduction of literacy in languages with two different writing systems helps or hinders literacy development in both languages. They found

that their participant acknowledged Chinese and English as separate writing systems with different characteristics—and that he was aware of the differences. These researchers also concluded that literacy development in one language had a positive effect on literacy development in the other. Interacting with text and constructing meaning from it led to foundational concepts in literacy. Reading and writing both English and Chinese help to develop the basic concepts of literacy. As Buckwalter and Lo stated, “This knowledge serves as a support base for literacy in any language, regardless of the surface level differences that may occur due to the nature of the writing system” (p. 287).

Building literacy at the same time as learning a new language would seem to demand astonishing flexibility and dedication. The young Taiwanese students learning English at private language institutes in Taiwan learn to become literate in both English and Chinese while they are learning a second language.

The effect of home literacy practices on children’s language abilities and later academic success has been well documented (for understanding associations between early reading and later language skills, see Karass & Braungart-Riker, 2005). Other research provided evidence that joint writing activities (writing activities completed through parent/child cooperation) were more effective for literacy development than joint reading for children aged three to five (Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006). These joint writing activities improved children’s performance on phonological awareness and word writing. On the other hand, the usefulness of L2 reading for receptive skills was suggested by Elley and Mangubhai (1983). They found that reading skills transferred not only to productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing), but also to other areas of academics.

Kim (2008) argued that oral language and literacy skills can develop simultaneously. She provided two different types of instruction (i.e., integrated and oral language based instruction) to two young ESL learners. Results showed that the participant who was exposed to the integrated instruction made gains on most English oral and written assessment measures. The other participant who had an exclusively oral language-based intervention didn't make significant gains on oral language assessment. Not only do these findings suggest it is possible to develop literacy skills without a pre-determined level of oral skills, but also that literacy skills can be used to develop oral language skills for young ESL learners. The findings showed a positive role that reading and writing can play in the development of oral language and that students' reading and writing were important and might provide learners with chances to record their ideas, as well as to further their language development.

Another relevant study was conducted by Weber and Longhi-Chirlin (2001). These researchers studied two Spanish first graders and suggested that children can readily apply themselves to reading and writing in English in spite of limited spoken ability. Both children achieved much toward acquiring early English literacy, such as reading words orally, without a strong oral foundation. These children however, found themselves in a setting that allowed them access to spoken English most of the day, which is much different in an EFL environment such as Taiwan as discussed later.

A number of other studies have also shown that writing can improve oral ability (Blake, 2009; El-Koumy, 1998; Kim, 2008). El-Koumy (1998) used dialogue journal writing as a tool in the EFL classroom in Egypt to help improve oral fluency. The posttest results indicated that the experimental group that used dialogue journals scored significantly higher than the control group in oral fluency tests.

Blake (2009) addressed the issue of improving oral fluency in a second language with the use of internet chats. Some recent studies have paid attention to the potential of computer environments for helping L2 learners develop their abilities in L2 writing but only a few studies have examined the potential impact on oral language proficiency. One of the reasons, according to Blake, is that there seems to be a disconnect between written and oral output. His study was conducted in an effort to contribute to research with regards to the oral-written connection. The significantly higher gain scores in oral assessment of the Internet chat group at a university level ESL class support the notion that oral fluency improvement is possible within a text-based environment. The author offers some explanation for the results. Participants in the Internet chat group were not speaking, but they were engaged in real-time communication that required effective access of the lexicon. In the face-to-face group participants had to wait for their speaking turn, but in the chat group, turn-taking protocol was not observed and participants contributed simultaneously. Learners in classrooms often have to wait for their speaking turn and this leads to fewer opportunities to practice oral skills or self-expression. Whereas in the written modality learners don't have to adhere to this protocol and it offers them a lot more opportunities to use the language they have learned. This is also relevant to the Taiwanese situation where classrooms often have a large number of students (at least 40 students at elementary school) and opportunities to speak are limited.

Blake (2009) also mentioned that the potential of the chat environment is that participants were able to see the sentences that were produced by the instructor and other participants, plus the participants were given extended opportunities to focus on their own language. In an exit survey, parents, teachers and learners indicated their skepticism about the use of writing and

reading to improve oral fluency and therefore more studies are needed to promote the idea of reading and writing as important factors in oral fluency.

Related to Blake's findings, Hardison (2011) found that the percentage of time L2 English (L1 Korean) graduate students spent using English (vs. their L1) for various types of electronic communication significantly predicted their fluency scores in an oral interaction task.

Several researchers have shown that the written modality could be helpful to draw learners' attention to form and that could have a facilitative effect on overall proficiency. Van Patten (1990) indicated that adult L2 learners of Spanish have difficulty simultaneously attending to meaning and form of aural input, especially when the grammatical form is not essential for understanding the content. Van Patten only addressed the aural mode in his Spanish L2 data, but Wong (2001) compared the written and aural modes and focused on French learners' acquisition of English. Wong (2001) found that learners can pay attention to form and meaning at the same time in writing, unlike speaking. Even though the participants in the Wong study vary greatly from the participants in my study (i.e., college level students vs. young learners) Wong's findings have relevance in that they clearly indicated that "attentional constraints do not affect the aural and written modes in the same way" Wong, 2001, p. 360). Processing written input may be less taxing on the language learner's attentional resources because written input is segmented and you can reread the written modality.

It is generally accepted that children perform better in the oral mode than the written mode and further research should address how proficiency levels and age might affect processing in one modality versus another.

The mutual interdependence of writing and oral skills is perhaps obvious, but in the past speaking was seen as the precursor and writing was viewed as the outcome of proficiency.

Rubin and Kang (2008) suggested several ways in which written language acts as a foundation for oral proficiency. Acquiring print code affects metalinguistic representation of speech; that is, when “children can visualize language because they have cracked the print code, they consequently become more aware of the stream of speech as composed of segmentable units” (p. 215). While speaking can often stimulate writing, the opposite is also true. Learners may talk about their writing processes, or they may talk about their texts as objects. Writing can also script oral performance or it can guide interaction. Writing requires a slower rate of production and therefore it allows the opportunity for more reflection and revision (Rubin & Kang, 2008).

The acquisition of the ability to decode an alphabetic script has been shown to change the way in which an individual processes oral language (Tarone & Bigelow, 2005). In a study with illiterate adults, results indicated that the acquisition of the grapheme-phoneme correspondence in learning to read an alphabetic script provided important cognitive tools, for instance the awareness of linguistic units encoded in written language, for the processing of oral language. Tarone and Bigelow (2005) are of the opinion that an adequate SLA model should also be able to account for the learning experiences of illiterate and low-literate multilinguals, and the directionality between phonological awareness and literacy development cannot be fully understood by just working with children. Thus incorporating research with an illiterate adult population has the potential to give a much broader picture of SLA.

Other research has indicated that language may emerge first in the written modality before speaking (Harklau, 2002; Weissberg, 2006). The written modality took preference over the spoken modality as the preferred mode for the development of L2 syntax for a group of ESL learners at an American university (Weisberg, 2006). Certain grammatical forms appeared in particular modalities for all five participants in a variety of oral and written language production

tasks, such as oral interviews and written essays. Irregular verb forms, personal pronouns, prepositions, and plurals most often appeared first in speech. Regular past morphemes, negatives, modal auxiliaries, passives and perfect verb tenses appeared in writing before they appeared in speech. These findings also have pedagogical implications for the EFL and ESL classroom and research with more participants could shed light on these findings. With these ESL learners, written English syntax appears not to have developed on the basis of an existing oral proficiency. These findings have several implications for L2 writing and speaking instruction in that they suggest a preference for writing over speech as the main modality for morphosyntactic development. Weisberg (2006) shows the importance of writing in the L2 acquisition process of adults, but some generalizations, to a limited extent, can be made with young learners in Taiwan because the situation is similar to what Weisberg described. Weisberg put it very aptly: “It seems clear that the L2 composition classroom is not just a place to learn about writing; for some students it may be the best place to learn the new language” (2006, p. 52).

The relationship between the development of written and oral proficiency is a dynamic and complex one. Williams (2008) discussed the influence of writing on the development of oral proficiency. Research showed that writers are more likely to develop their writing when they have a chance to talk about it. Learners can also use the written modality to test out new forms and also access acquired forms they do not yet totally control. The use of a new form in writing “increases the likelihood that it will be produced later in a more spontaneous setting, such as conversation” (Williams, 2008, p. 13). There is less pressure in writing than speaking so it allows learners a safe and more private place to try out new language about which they do not feel confident. The aforementioned discussion makes apparent the possible benefits from the written modality for learners of English.

The role of writing and reading in lower level curricula needs to be reconsidered. For example, Maxim (2002) concluded from his study of beginning L2 German learners at university that they benefitted from a curriculum where extensive reading was incorporated. He also proposed that beginning students could develop more than just reading skills, but also greater grammatical and communicative competence. Even though Maxim's study involved adult beginning learners, it might be applicable to young learners in Taiwan.

The education system in Singapore shares similarities with Taiwan in the sense that children are attending English schools, but they don't come from English speaking homes. In addition, teachers in Singapore also face many external constraints such as rigid syllabi and limited curriculum time (Ng & Sullivan, 2001). Moving away from a curriculum that relied heavily on writing, the Singaporean government implemented a Reading Skills Project (REAP) that focused on reading acquisition. Several years later, tests revealed that REAP schools outperformed non-REAP schools with regards to speaking skills, amongst others. Ng and Sullivan (2001) found that the students who read more also spoke English more confidently and responded more in classroom discussions.

English within the Taiwanese Context

It is relevant to consider how the Taiwanese perceive the English language. English has been considered a prestigious language for study in Taiwan since the end of the Ching dynasty (1644-1911) when the Chinese society started to be more welcoming of western civilization. The prestige position of English was continued after World War II as a result of the ties between the United States and Taiwan (Wang, 2000). English, especially American English, has remained popular in Taiwan and the Taiwanese government has promoted English education to a great extent in recent years. Wang (2000) indicated that English serves an instrumental function in

Taiwanese society, in that Taiwanese people depend on English for knowledge from professional publications and English language media. But despite the popularity of English, Chinese remains the medium of instruction in both elementary and high schools and both students and teachers indicated “that the language most often used in English class in high school is Chinese” (Wang, 2000, p. 129). Lai (2009) also confirmed that English, although a major foreign language taught in school, is not used much by people in society. In Taipei city, the only suburb where learners of English might be exposed to English in everyday life is *Tienmu*, a popular area for expatriates and their families. But in most other areas of Taiwan only Taiwanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Hakka are spoken and learners of English will not have many opportunities to hear English outside of the classroom.

Children from families who can afford it, start learning English very young, as early as kindergarten (age 3, or at some select schools as early as age 2). Children from less affluent families, who don't attend private kindergarten, usually start state-run schools at the age of 7. There is also a long existing trend for parents to send their children to private language schools or *bushibans* in order to better compete with peers and do well on entrance tests to be admitted to good elementary and high schools in Taiwan. Previously, English language education began at the secondary level but since 2001 English instruction has been introduced at the elementary level. This trend occurs not only in Taiwan, but in other East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea. In the past, critics noted that language instruction focused too much on grammar and translation with the result that students often acquired insufficient communication skills (Butler, 2004, 2007). To rectify this, the Taiwanese government began introducing English language education at the elementary level with a particular emphasis on developing oral skills. The government provided several general guidelines for teaching English. In order to develop

students' communicative abilities in English, the government suggested to teachers a number of activities such as games, songs, chants, and role plays (Butler, 2005). English is taught as an academic subject for around 72 lessons per year (40 minutes per lesson). The objectives articulated by the central government state "a) To develop students' basic English communicative abilities; b) To develop students' interests in and ways of learning English; c) To increase students' awareness of native and foreign cultures and customs" (Butler, 2004, p. 248).

The Taiwanese government also suggested that all English classes be conducted in English with a relaxed and interactive instructional method. Speaking and listening are the primary focus, and according to the government policy, "reading and writing should not be neglected" (Butler, 2004, p. 249). At elementary school level there are not many native speaking teachers (NSTs) who teach English and English language instruction is usually done by individuals who have obtained English-related degrees or individuals who possess sufficient English proficiency based on the computer-based TOEFL test. These teachers, however, often have insufficient proficiency to teach English effectively (Butler, 2004). To increase the number of proficient speakers, the Taiwanese government plans to hire more native English speakers, but the number of teachers working in public elementary schools remains limited. There is, however, a flood of NST's that work at various private language institutes throughout Taiwan where many students take English private lessons after school (Butler, 2007).

The Chinese culture of learning in Taiwan warrants some discussion. Taiwan is a highly exam-oriented society and success on writing tests is usually a precondition for academic study (Chien, 2011). According to Yu (2008), emphasis is placed on memorization and analytical ability, rather than functional use of language for communication (also Lai, 2009). The role of teacher is the "source of knowledge" and Yu (2008) reported that Chinese teachers of English

often have concerns about adopting Western approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT). These sentiments were also supposed by Butler (2005) and Wang (2000). Wang found that grammar-based practices still reign in English classes in Taiwanese high schools. One of the reasons could be because of the way Taiwanese students learn Chinese. Chinese language learning is seen as the memorizing of words and grammar. In Chinese, children learn to write first before reading and it is presumed that Chinese learners should learn written words by writing them so that they can read them later (Hsu, 2004).

The same procedure is not applicable when Taiwanese students learn English because they learn to read first and “most Taiwanese students will have only two years English composition writing experience at their 11th and 12th grades” (Hsu, 2004, p. 2). Longhi-Chrillin and Weber (2001) also noted that writing is not a regular practice in the ESL classroom.

According to Yang (1999), students in Taiwan have strong beliefs about becoming skilled in listening and speaking skills. Students believe that the purpose of studying English is to have native-like speaking proficiency. Wang (2000) noted that pronunciation (specifically American English pronunciation) is an important factor in the Taiwanese context. Wang also reported that most English learners in Taiwan considered excellence in pronunciation to be the most important factor in improving English communication. Because the Taiwanese government emphasizes oral communication in their elementary school English curricula, Butler (2004) discovered that Taiwanese teachers felt that they needed a more balanced proficiency level across all skill domains, not only speaking. Butler (2005) also found that many Korean and Taiwanese teachers questioned the government’s current policy and commented that students “need to have instruction in written English to facilitate their learning” (p. 437).

When EFL kindergarten students make the transition from private language schools to elementary school in Taiwan, they are faced with a variety of difficulties. The two education systems of kindergarten and elementary schools are quite different. In kindergarten the students are used to an environment with small English classes, native-speaking English teachers who employ different teaching methodologies, and curricula that focus on spoken skills. When they go to elementary school, they become part of classes with more than 40 students in each class. They also have Taiwanese teachers who don't follow the same teaching methodologies as the native-speaking teachers. At the elementary school level there is also a focus on written English, rather than spoken English. Both learners and parents often complained to me that kindergarten did not prepare them sufficiently for the writing activities done at elementary school. Similar frustrations of children entering first grade without much experience in literacy were found by Weber and Longhi-Chirilín (2001) and Harklau (2000). Students considered as "good students" or "model students" often experience difficulties in elementary school and they often rebel against the system and long for their kindergarten days.

I had lived and worked as an English teacher in Taiwan for nine years prior to beginning this research. During this time I noticed that the learners went to elementary school with inadequate literacy skills which had a detrimental effect on their experiences in elementary school. Parents often complained to me that their children didn't want to study English any more once they entered elementary school. I became interested in the topic because I wanted to make sure that these young learners were prepared for elementary school. In my experience, the written modality was neglected in the kindergarten classrooms at private language schools and when these children went on to elementary school they couldn't cope with the writing that was expected of them at that level. As a teacher, I was explicitly told by school managers that parents

just expected their children to be able to speak English. In several conversations with parents I received contradictory requests. Parents were very worried about their children going to elementary school without sufficient writing and reading abilities. To prepare these learners for elementary school, teachers might have to focus more on the written modality. Insufficient preparation for elementary school could have detrimental effects on their motivation to study English in elementary school and beyond. I went into this study thinking about the positive effect that writing can have on oral skills, as well as possible reasons that teachers and managers might neglect reading and writing at a young age; therefore, I interviewed teachers, parents, and managers. To triangulate the data, I also observed several classes.

Research Questions

I hope to provide a picture that includes both the broader socio-cultural context in Taiwan, as well as interactions within the classroom. Issues to be addressed by this study include: the participants' views on teaching literacy skills; their opinions regarding suitable materials; methods of teaching literacy; time allocation to reading and writing; time allocation to oral practice; and views on the links between literacy skills and oral production. This led to the following research questions:

1. What are the participants' views on teaching literacy skills?
2. What are the teachers' methods of teaching literacy?
3. What percentage of time is allocated to reading, writing, and oral practice in class?
4. What are the participants' views on the links between literacy skills and oral production?

CHAPTER 2: Method

In this section I discuss the data collection procedure and the materials used. I will then conclude chapter two with a discussion of the way in which the data were analyzed.

The Site

The research site is a well-known private school in Taipei, Taiwan. The school is very prestigious and known to attract top students from all over the island. This language institute is the largest in Taiwan with several branches in Taiwan as well as internationally in other countries such as Korea, Canada, and Singapore. The company employs English native-speakers to teach English to Taiwanese learners aged three to sixteen. Classes are often co-taught by a NST and a Chinese teacher (CT). The main office supplies all branches with curricula (including books, audio CDs, props, and artwork) written and published by company employees.

These young learners at private kindergartens have long school days that vary from eight to ten hours. They attend kindergarten five days a week and they have English classes for two and a half hours every day. They are smart and highly motivated learners. By the age of six, they have studied Mandarin, English, Japanese and French. The teaching philosophy of the company focuses on whole-child development and what the company calls *educare*¹. Whole-child development implies that children will achieve the best results cognitively, emotionally, physically, and socially when they develop a balance of these intelligences. The curriculum, has therefore, been written with the methodology of integrating several ways of learning simultaneously. *Educare* is an approach to schooling, which recognizes the indivisible

¹ Information about the teaching methodology was taken from the company's website.

relationship between educating and caring for a child, that is, if a child feels safe and cared-for then learning will come effortlessly.

These schools had three levels of classes: little class (children aged 3-4); middle class (children aged 5); and big class (children aged 6-7). The classes that were observed were all big classes and all teachers interviewed were big class teachers.

Participants

The participants for the study were ten native English-speaking teachers, five school managers, three parents of Taiwanese learners, and one curriculum writer. The employees at the time of data collection were either working at one of the schools in Taiwan or at the language institute's headquarters in Taipei city, Taiwan. The parents at the time of data collection had one or two children enrolled at the language institute.

To qualify for participation, teachers had to have worked in one of the language schools for more than six months; school managers had to have worked as a manager for at least one year; parents had to speak some English and be willing to be interviewed; and the curriculum writer had to have at least two years of curriculum writing experience. To recruit participants, I went to three schools in the Taipei city area to introduce myself to the NSTs. I also contacted some school managers and parents via email. Several school managers allowed me to talk to parents in the school's reception area while they were waiting for their children. I gave these parents my contact information and asked them to contact me if they were willing to be interviewed. The study was presented as an opportunity to talk about their views on the literacy of young children in an EFL context and methods of achieving it. Participants were identified on the basis of availability and willingness to participate in the interviews. Teachers and school

managers wishing to participate gave me their contact information or emailed me at a later time. I subsequently arranged times to meet with them at their convenience.

TABLE 1

Participants' Backgrounds

	Nationality	Years of teaching/ management experience
Teachers ²		
A	Australian	3
B	Australian	9
C	Canadian	8
D	American	2
E	British	2
F	American	8
G	South African	6
H	Canadian	6
I	South African	10
J	American	4
School Manager		
K	Taiwanese	20
L	Taiwanese	18
M	Taiwanese	8
N	Canadian	4
O	Taiwanese	7
Curriculum writer		
P	American	15

Managers are very involved in the day-to-day teaching at school because they have regular meetings with teachers and observe classes on a monthly basis. Two of the managers were known to me due to previous contact and collaboration in 2005 – 2006. One manager was

² All teachers were L1 English speakers

my previous employer. Three teachers were previous colleagues of mine. I wasn't familiar with the other teachers who were interviewed. One of the parents being interviewed was well-known to me because her children were students at the branch where I had been employed. I wasn't familiar with the other parents who were interviewed. The mothers interviewed were married to a doctor, a lawyer, and factory owner. These parents had high socioeconomic standing and lived in an affluent area of Taipei.

Details about the participants' nationalities and work experience can be found in Table 1. All teachers are native speakers of English from America, Canada, England, South Africa and Australia. The teachers had an average of 5.8 years of experience teaching English in Taiwan. The managers were Taiwanese and one manager was Canadian. They had an average of 11.4 years of experience managing Taiwanese private schools. The curriculum writer was American and had 15 years of curriculum writing experience.

Overview of the Data

Some classes were observed and field notes were made with the use of an observation template (Appendix A). Four sets of interview questions were designed to elicit responses from the four groups of participants (Appendices B, C, D, and E). These are mostly open-ended questions combined with some specific questions relating to the participants' views on literacy and teaching literacy skills (i.e., reading and writing). The interviews provided me with valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the participants in their context.

Two different sets of curriculum materials were reviewed. The first set of materials consisted of reading books, writing books, and teacher manuals that were used to prepare learners for elementary school. Additional curriculum materials that were considered were the books used in the first semester of elementary school. These materials were not associated with

the Taiwanese elementary school system, but part of the *bushiban* system, that is, they were English class materials not issued by elementary schools but by the educational institute. These materials consisted of a textbook, a workbook, and two homework books. Due to copyright restrictions, examples of curriculum activities cannot be shared in this thesis. An outline of the types of data collected can be found in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Summary of the Data Collection

Methods of Data Collection	Data Collection Period	Data Collected
Interviews with teachers	Between July 21, 2011 and August 30, 2011	Recorded and transcribed interviews 10 interviews total Average 45 min each
Interview with curriculum writer	July 21, 2011	Recorded and transcribed interview 50 min in duration
Interview with school Managers	Between July 21, 2011 and August 30, 2011	Recorded and transcribed interviews 5 interviews in total Average 30 min each
Interviews with parents	Between August 1, 2011 and August 16, 2011	Recorded and transcribed interviews 3 interviews in total Average 30 min each
Classroom observations	Between July 21, 2011 and August 30, 2011	Field notes on 5 lessons in 5 different classes (total 12.5 hours of observation)
Curriculum materials	Between January 12, 2012 and February 26, 2012	4 story books 2 work books

TABLE 2 (cont'd)

2 student books
1 writing book
1 teacher's guide

Procedure

The schools in this study were chosen to reflect the circumstances of young EFL learners in an affluent Taiwanese urban context. The schools are located in a high-income neighborhood in Taipei city. These districts are considered prestigious especially due to their location close to a big park and the seat of the Taipei mayor's office and the Taipei City Government. Key buildings in the area include Taipei 101, the International Convention Center, the Taipei World Trade Center, and various shopping malls.

Interviews took place in a variety of locations, such as the school itself, the head office, coffee shops, and the homes of the Taiwanese parents. All of these locations are in Taipei city in the *Da-An*, *Sinyi*, and *Songshan* districts. The exact choice of location for the interviews was left to the participant and the interviewer/researcher accommodated those requests.

The classroom observations were done at two different schools. No recording of classes were allowed. In all five observations, I observed the class through the visitor's window. These classrooms typically have three walls and then one wall that included a huge window directed to the inside of the school. This is often referred to as the parent window or visitor's window. Through the visitor's window, all classroom activities can be seen and heard. Each of the five classrooms contained four children's tables, an average of 18 children's chairs, two to three bookcases, a whiteboard, and a CD player. Walls were all lined with colorful posters and decorated with artwork made by the students themselves. All five classrooms at the research site had a small reading corner equipped with a library that held both English and Chinese books. The Chinese books are used later in the day when the CT teaches Chinese. These classrooms

were all different in the way these elements were positioned, but the basic equipment was similar in all classrooms observed.

Data Collection

Interviews

Teachers, managers, parents, and the curriculum writer were interviewed individually. These participants worked at different branches of the same educational organization or had children in different branches. The participants could choose when and where the interview took place. Most of the interviews were done at their place of employment after class time. Two teachers preferred to be interviewed at a local coffee shop, and two parents requested that I meet them at home. I did not reveal any information from any of the participants to any of the other participants.

The interviews were semi-structured. I used the questions as a guide, while I still had the freedom to digress and probe for more information. I started most interviews with an open-ended question and discussion and I put the key questions in the middle of the interview so that the interviewee could overcome any anxiety if needed. Teacher interviews lasted on average 45 – 50 minutes, and the rest of the interviews were shorter, about 30 – 40 minutes each.

Two possible risks were considered. First, language difficulties could have been a problem when interviewing the Chinese school managers and parents. I allowed participants to answer in Chinese if they were not sure about the English vocabulary. I have limited Chinese skills and was willing to employ the services of an interpreter. I also attempted to interview parents with a high intermediate English ability to lessen ambiguity during the interviews. No participants chose to answer in Chinese. Two Taiwanese mothers requested to be interviewed

together and the one parent often asked for translation of words from the other parent. No other translations were requested by any of the participants.

Second, the teachers could have experienced discomfort in criticizing the curriculum or in being observed. Because I am a former teacher and fully aware of possible conflicts, I assured the teachers that their views would be kept confidential.

Although teachers' busy schedules permitted only one formal interview, they sometimes talked with me informally during the day and shared their thoughts about their classes, their struggles about living in a foreign country, or their general ideas about teaching English. These conversations were often noted by me via field notes³.

Classroom Observations

Five of the ten teachers interviewed consented to a classroom observation. Two of these observations took place after the teachers were interviewed, and the other three took place before the teachers were interviewed. Each classroom observation lasted two and a half hours.

I stayed behind the visitor's window and tried my best to be unobtrusive. This was not a one-way window, but a window through which the learners could still see me. Young learners can easily become distracted and they might pay more attention to a new person in the environment; therefore, I spent a lot of time with all of the children two weeks before the observations started so the young learners were used to seeing me around the school. I also tried to be careful not to disrupt learning and be sensitive to the perspectives of both teachers and learners in the classroom.

³ Not all conversations were noted by the researcher. Only topics relevant to the research questions were noted.

One of the caveats of this kind of research is that the presence of the observer might cause the participants to act differently. To prevent my observation from influencing the linguistic behavior of those being observed I attempted to enhance credibility by collecting data over a period of eight weeks to ensure that the participants had become used to me and were behaving naturally.

The focus of the classroom observations was threefold. I took note of the modality (i.e., written or oral) that the young learners practiced, the time spent on that modality, and the types of activities.

Analysis

As is typical in qualitative research the data were analyzed through an inductive approach in which themes and patterns emerged from the data. After all interviews were transcribed these transcriptions were entered into NVivo 8.

I read the data and compiled a list of general themes, which are presented in their final form in Table 3. Examples of how coding was done for the different themes can be found in Appendix F.

The list of general themes was refined throughout the initial coding process by grouping related themes together and renaming combined categories. In order to triangulate data the curriculum materials were scrutinized. I separated all the activities in the classroom textbooks into three categories, namely predominantly speaking, listening, and writing. As in any classroom these four skills are integrated in most activities and therefore I let the instructions of these activities guide me in their classification. The classroom activities were divided by headings in the textbooks. Phonics, conversation, songs, and vocabulary were classified as speaking activities because they had to be repeated orally. Listening activities happened once in

every theme and were counted as listening activities, even though there was some reading involved in these activities.

TABLE 3

Coding Categories and Themes that Emerged From the Data

Major category	Subtheme
1. Affective issues	a. Positive b. Negative
2. Enjoyment	a. Drama/ Role-plays / Skits b. Fun and games
3. The Status of English	
4. The Taiwanese context	a. The role of Taiwanese parents b. The environment in Taiwan c. Taiwanese elementary schools
5. Time issues	a. Time constraints b. Reactions to the time constraints
6. Views of learning and teaching	a. Creativity b. Independence c. Rote learning/ repetition/ substitution d. Self-expression
7. Links between literacy and oracy	
8. The role of technology in the classroom	

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

The purpose of chapter three is to present the results of the data analysis as they relate to the research questions. First, I will discuss the themes as they emerged from the data in more detail in order to describe the Taiwanese private school context. Next, I will link some of these themes to each research question.

Emerging Themes in the Data

As mentioned in chapter 2 and shown in Table 3, several major categories and subthemes emerged from the interviews. The number of references for each theme can be found in Table 4. The most robust themes, with regards to number of references, are the role of Taiwanese parents (49 references); fun and games (42 references); links between literacy and oracy (35 references); negative affective issues (34 references); and the Taiwanese environment (33 references).

The themes mentioned by a majority of participants, were the role of Taiwanese parents (17 participants); links between literacy and oracy (16 participants); negative affective issues (15 participants); positive affective issues (14 participants); the role of technology (14 participants); fun and games (13 participants); and rote learning, repetition, and substitution (13 participants). I will discuss the most robust themes in more detail and give examples of responses from participants. I noted the number of references as well as the number of participants who made the comments in order to clarify possible differences between the three groups of participants. The number of participants from each group was not equal. The curriculum writer and managers were put in the same group because they fulfill management duties and neither of these participants teaches any classes but they do often observe classes. The other two groups were parents and teachers.

TABLE 4*Themes and Number of References*

Theme	Number of participants	Number of references
Links between literacy and oracy	16	35
Taiwanese context:		
Taiwanese schools	7	8
Taiwanese environment	13	33
Role of Taiwanese parents	17	49
Time Issues		
Time constraints	9	23
Reactions to time constraints	8	12
Enjoyment		
Drama/role-plays/skits	8	11
Fun and games	13	42
Views on learning and teaching		
Creativity	9	16
Self-expression	9	22
Rote learning/repetition/substitution	13	24
Independence	11	24
Affective issues		
Positive	14	28
Negative	15	34
The status of English	11	11
The role of technology in the classroom	14	31

Bolded themes signify the more robust themes

Links between Literacy and Oracy

Sixteen of the participants mentioned a possible link, or sometimes suggested no knowledge about, a link between literacy and oracy. Some examples of comments follow.

“I think reading and writing can use more words than speaking. They can learn new words through reading and writing. We hope they can use more words or expressions and reading can give them more words.” (Parent 1)

“With the reading we’re trying to provide them with lots of English input that is good quality and certainly correct good English. And after they have all this input they will eventually be able to start producing.” (Curriculum writer)

“Reading can help to write. When we are a little child we need to memorize poems. We need to memorize almost 300 poems. We didn’t understand. But when you write something you can use it. You can use the phrases. So it is a great help. Reading is the key.” (Manager K)

“Maybe normally I would think reading would influence the speaking. I didn’t really think that writing will influence speaking.” (Manager L)

“They will learn how to speak much faster when they learn how to read and write.” (Manager E)

“I think the goal is to give them basic language so that they can express themselves. Reading and writing help them with this goal.” (Teacher B)

“I think reading opens up a different way of expressing themselves. It opens up different ideas, different concepts, and sometimes concepts that they already have in their native tongue but not in the second language and reading is a key point there for showing them something.” (Teacher G)

“I think that it will build on their actual vocabulary base. If they are able to read more, their vocabulary will expand and then they will be able to say more things and certainly writing does the same thing.” (Teacher J)

The Taiwanese Environment

The lack of English in the Taiwanese social environment, Taiwanese culture of learning, and the importance of creating an English environment for students at school were mentioned by thirteen participants.

“English is not a second language. This is Taiwan. You need to spend more time to practice at home.” (Manager K)

“But for reading comprehension, sometimes maybe, in Taiwan it is not an English environment. They can just recognize. They can read but not really understand.” (Manager L)

“In Taiwan now is different when I am young I think the reading and writing is very important because we had a lot of tests. Then reading and writing is good but they cannot speak naturally. Now we just change and encourage the students to speak more.”

“I think there was this push from the educational environment of Taiwan to get kids doing a lot early. And because there has been this push I think somewhere along the way there wasn’t enough time spent on the fundamental reading goals.” (Teacher F)

“That’s difficult because we only have a Chinese environment. So when they grow up they just pick up the most convenient language, Chinese.” (Parent 3)

The Role of Taiwanese Parents

Seventeen out of a total of 19 participants made 49 references about the role of the parents. Most references were made by the teachers and school managers, but comments from parents were about what they expected from their child’s English teacher, such as:

“So I have to, for me personally, I will talk to the teacher every week if I can to make sure what my child have learned, or what is her weak point⁴.” (Parent 3)

Comments from the curriculum writer were mostly concerned with the role of parents with regard to the curriculum material and homework.

“In our curriculum we don’t make an effort to get the parents involved because it is hard to do that and I guess it is my feeling that a lot of parents are too busy and they don’t want to be involved. If we’re trying to get them involved it is just a lot of extra work for the teacher so we cut all of that and just focused on what is going on in the classroom but ideally if the parent is helping their kids, sure it is uncountable amount of help.” (Curriculum writer)

Managers and teachers often referred to pressure of demonstrating students’ improvement or learning to the parents.

“It is a big change for kids because they stay in kindergarten and just focus on speaking and listening. There is not a lot of time and the focus is not writing and spelling. So I think it is difficult to show English achievement ability for parents.” (Manager K)

“I think pronunciation is really important and again the parents want their pronunciation to be perfect. So I will focus on pronunciation first.” (Teacher H)

“The success is measured by how much they speak because the parents like to show them off to other parents.” (Teacher A)

“In Taiwan so much [sic] parents want child to show they can speak.” (Manager M)

⁴ No grammar mistakes from participants were corrected. Quotes are shown as transcribed.

Managers and teachers also commented on the lack of support from parents in learning English.

“Do many parents help? No, because parents are busy because of job pressure.”

(Manager K)

“Right now some parents care about their students. They will spend the time with their kids. But we notice that many parents are very busy so if we don’t have any special events they will just don’t do anything at home. If we start doing something different like events, some parents will participate.” (Manager L)

“In Taiwan everyone is so busy. It is very different if there is a housewife, then they will have time to read with their child. But now in Taiwan almost always both parents work and when they come home they just feel tired and play a CD or DVD so they can sit there and watch their children sing and listen.” (Manager M)

“Parent involvement is really important but I don’t think it happens.” (Teacher A)

“Parents should be involved but parents are not really involved at all. I find that a lot of parents, especially here, see it as the teacher’s problem. It’s your job so do your job correctly, but language is not just learning at school.” (Teacher G)

Parents in Taiwan seem to have high expectations with regards to their children’s English ability. Both managers and teachers commented on it.

“The parents’ expectations are that they want the kids to be completely bilingual.”

(Manager N) “They want their kids to be a genius so of course they want to achieve the highest possible level.” (Manager O)

“But the sort of Asian mentality is that they want their child to be the prodigy child. They truly want their kids to be phenomenal or at genius level.” (Teacher F)

“In all honesty, I do believe that their personal goals for literacy are a little unrealistic. I think that there is this constant feeling that somehow a seven year old that has been studying English, even in the most extreme case, for five years, there is this belief that somehow they can master English. And I just think that is a little unrealistic. So I would say that most parents’ goals for their kids are a little too high.” (Teacher F)

“The parents want them to be perfect. They want them to speak English pretty well and understand everything but they are still in big class. Oh my God. Sometimes it forces you to give the kids tough times because most parents give you pressure.” (Teacher H)

Fun and Games

A lot of teachers and managers (13 in total) made comments about the importance of fun in learning English.

“The storybooks are meant to be enjoyed. We try to make it close to their level but there are about 30% of words that they haven’t learned before.” (Curriculum writer)

“I think they [the teachers] should make the students enjoy the story.” (Manager M)

“There are activities and games that I would expect them to incorporate to make it fun.” (Manager O)

“Students’ goals are to have fun. Naturally kids want to learn and they look for ways figuring things out in a fun way.” (Teacher A)

“And the first thing I have to set up in the classroom for them is a way to relate to English and enjoy it. And those are usually starting with games and myself enjoying it.” (Teacher F)

“We try to make it fun and at the same time emphasize learning and trying to keep it all in English.” (Teacher J)

Rote Learning, Repetition, and Substitutions

Thirteen participants made comments about rote learning, repetition, and substitution in learning English in the Taiwanese private school context.

“But it [learning English] is just rote. What is this? This is a” (Manager N)

“I expect them to read and repeat, read and repeat. Repetition is key.” (Manager O)

“I use a lot of chanting and drilling.” (Teacher A)

“I really drill the phonics hard.” (Teacher F)

“I create a skeletal structure on the board and we go over some of the words they already know and we will write it on the board and they can pick words and substitute it into the story frame we have created in class.” (Teacher G)

“My school focuses too much on the idea of drilling and doesn’t understand that often learning does not just require somebody to repeat something a number of times.” (Teacher I)

Negative Affective Issues

Fifteen participants mentioned negative affective issues with regards to students, such as fear, anxiety and pressure to perform.

“You always need to push kids—every lesson.” (Manager K)

“Students experience the most anxiety in speaking because when they read they can follow but if they want to speak because it is from the brain.” (Manager L)

“Reading and writing for the kids who are a little slower might have anxiety because they are not getting it as quickly. I think it could also be alleviated by allowing kids a little bit more time to read or write but the curriculum is too jam packed and often the culture in Taiwan is don’t try to do something well, just do a lot.” (Teacher A)

“They find it stressful because they don’t want to do it and I have to find a way to motivate them to do it. That makes it stressful because it is required of me and it is required of them and they are six years old and sometimes they just want to play with their friends.” (Teacher F)

“I understand how hard it is so sometimes I just want to make it easier for them when they have too much pressure.” (Teacher H)

“But if they cannot read they don’t understand what it says in the book, then they can’t express themselves or what they have read. That is what they will be afraid of because they don’t understand.” (Parent 3)

Positive Affective Issues

On the other hand, several participants made comments about positive affective issues such as confidence, lack of fear, and enthusiasm for learning.

“Students are not afraid to read or write.” (Parent 2)

“I don’t think they are scared and writing is not difficult for the kids.” (Parent 3)

“They love writing.” (Manager N)

“In kindergarten speaking English is second nature. It is awesome. I don’t see them stressing out.” (Teacher A)

“Nobody is scared to read in front of the class. Everything is done in a supportive way.” (Teacher I)

The Role of Technology in Teaching English

Fourteen participants made comments about the role of technology in learning and teaching English. Most comments included the use of DVDs at home to review the English taught at school. Most participants acknowledge the positive influence technology can have in learning and teaching, but some participants were conflicted about the importance of technology in learning and teaching.

“It’s hard for me to see a positive role for technology in the classroom.

Technology is just distracting from the teacher and student interaction.”

(Curriculum writer)

“I think it is a trend for the future. Of course we should use technological tools to inspire our students.” (Manager L)

“I am conflicted about new technology, like smart phones. I’m losing pace with that language. They [the students] will need to communicate that way but I am worried about the influence of that on the proper use of English.” (Manager N)

“I suppose on that matter I am old-school. I honestly don’t know if technology matters or not for learning because I believe kids can learn just as well with pieces of paper and writing grids as they could with an iPad.” (Teacher F)

“I think technology is great for supplementing their learning.” (Teacher G)

Other Themes

Several other themes, in addition to the most robust themes mentioned above, emerged from the data. It is relevant to mention a few of these.

The status of English was mentioned by several participants. These comments usually referred to the importance of learning English and the position of English as a global language.

“There is a greater need now for people to write well in English. It is a global language.” (Teacher A)

“In Taiwan I think the need for English ability is getting more important.”
(Manager L)

“Chinese is becoming the biggest language and the most common spoken language but I still think English is the predominant language and gets taught all over the world.” (Teacher E)

The Taiwanese elementary school system was mentioned by participants. The huge amount of Chinese homework was mentioned as well as the fact that learning English at elementary school is very different from learning English at private schools.

“And that is the difficult thing. Everything they start in Taiwanese elementary school is beginner’s level because not all kids went to kindergarten. They insist to go to *bushiban* to make sure they don’t fall behind.” (Teacher I)

“Now there is English in every school and any kid who goes to *bushiban* will ace every test. The parents aren’t as bothered as they use to be. They are getting double education.” (Teacher C)

“They learn a lot of Chinese homework and they have to learn English so I think it is too much for them.” (Manager K)

Time constraints and reactions to these time constraints in the classroom were mentioned by both managers and teachers. In most cases time constraints, or lack of sufficient time in the classroom is given as a reason as to why teachers don’t spend too much time on teaching reading and writing.

“It is difficult to include writing and finish all goals in two hours. Sometimes you need to spend a lot of time on writing.” (Manager K)

“Sometimes you can have ten or fifteen minutes for writing but I don’t think so because you don’t have a lot of time in class.” (Manager K)

“We just don’t have enough time to develop their writing skills.” (Manager N)

“The tricky part with the curriculum is that you don’t have a spare minute to devote to things like reading activities.” (Teacher A)

“I would certainly like them to have the time to do a journal. I don’t have time to do that.” (Teacher C)

“You have to go over all the words first, read as a group, and then if you have time, but actually we don’t have time, but I hope we can read individually.”
(Teacher H)

In response to these time constraints, teachers often neglected certain aspects of the curriculum, such as writing or reading (as seen in the above examples). Another response to these time constraints was putting more pressure on the students.

“If you give the kids two hours to do their work book writing, they will take two hours. So the teacher has to find a way to hurry them along or call out the slower kids and have them do it at a different time.” (Curriculum writer)

“Basically what ends up happening is that kids are fast at different activities and when that happens they have free reading time and they can go grab a book in the library and read silently. But other kids don’t get that opportunity if they are slower.” (Manager M)

“That is really frightening. After a month they [some students] still can’t read the book. Students should actually master concepts and key things before we move on.” (Teacher G)

Several other themes with regard to views on teaching and learning emerged. I have already mentioned rote learning, repetition, and substitution. In the data creativity, self-expression and independence were mentioned by several participants as goals to strive towards in the classroom.

“I want teachers to focus on more creative writing.” (Parent 3)

“Give them the chance to be creative because here in Taiwan there is no creativity.” (Manager N)

“I would do more activities that stimulate thinking in different ways.” (Teacher I)

“I want writing to be about expressing themselves.” (Teacher A)

“I really think the most important thing to write are these sort of basic interpersonal expressions, how do you feel? What do you like? I hope my students can express things they do in daily life.” (Teacher F)

“But later I expect the kids to be involved in reading on their own. The reason why it is set up like that is because we want them to get familiar with the phonic sounds and then apply it to the reading.” (Curriculum writer)

“Inspire them to read on their own.” (Manager N)

“I try to encourage them to look at it themselves--the basic transition of learning to do things on their own.” (Teacher F)

“I put a lot of emphasis on teacher will not help, you need to do it by yourself.”
(Teacher I)

Overview of Curriculum

There were four writing activities in each unit in the curriculum materials. Each unit is taught for four weeks. These writing activities were a) Fill in the blank (26 activities), b) Write the answer to the question (20 activities), and c) Crossword puzzles (6 activities). This analysis revealed that the majority of activities are predominantly oral in their nature. Writing activities were in a close second position. More details can be found in Table 5.

TABLE 5*Breakdown of Activities in Classroom Materials*

Type of activity	Number of activities	Percentage
Predominantly oral	65	46%
Predominantly listening	26	18%
Predominantly writing	52	36%
Total	143	100%

Most school managers want teachers to follow the curriculum to ensure quality education in all company branches. The managers place a lot of trust in the curriculum. One of the reasons is that the company often employs inexperienced NSTs and they feel that the curriculum is there to make sure that even inexperienced teachers can do a good job. Several school managers and the curriculum writer also mentioned that experienced teachers are welcome to adapt the curriculum and supplement activities to the curriculum, as long as the students are familiar with the material covered by the curriculum.

Classroom Observations

The times recorded on the classroom observation sheet were calculated for each modality: speaking practice, reading practice, and writing practice. A total of five classes were observed. Each class lasted 150 minutes. Out of a total of 750 minutes, each class spent an average of 15 minutes on eating a snack. So the five observed classes had a total of 675 minutes of learning time. Out of a total of 675 minutes, only 74 minutes were spent on teaching reading. The teachers spent a total of 151 minutes on writing practice (mostly writing books prescribed by the curriculum). A breakdown of the times can be seen in Table 6.

TABLE 6*Breakdown of Teaching Time during Classroom Observations*

Modality	Time in minutes	Percentage of time allocation
Reading	74	10.9%
Writing	151	22.4%
Oral practice	450	66.7%
Total time: 675 minutes		100%

Classroom observations indicated the following. Out of a possible 675 minutes of class time of the five observed classes, 450 minutes were spent on oral practice, that is, vocabulary repetition, sentence pattern repetitions, playing games with the vocabulary and sentence patterns. Spelling of the vocabulary was also practiced orally in some classes. The oral spelling practice times were equally divided into reading practice and oral practice time because the learners read the spelling word on the whiteboard, while they orally repeated the spelling. In cases where learners read sentence patterns from the white board, the time was also divided equally into reading time and oral practice. Looking at the data it is clear that teachers are aware of the unequal time distribution and most teachers would like to spend a more equal amount of time on these skills.

Observation findings suggest the most used methods of teaching reading are: phonics and sight word practice; group reading from big books or from sentences on the whiteboard; silent reading; and reading for the big picture or main ideas. Most reading was done during transition time, for example, where students finished one activity and then waited for other students to finish so that they could continue to the next activity. During these transition activities students could take a book from the library and read it silently. Silent reading, however, at this age is controversial. During the classroom observations it was noted that what was called silent reading

was actually just looking at pictures in the storybooks. Other reading activities were orchestrated by the teacher such as the teacher sitting in front of the whiteboard and reading to the students with students orally repeating the story after the teacher.

Observation findings suggest the most used methods of teaching writing are: focusing on correct word order and punctuation; writing book (curriculum prescribed); and question-answer format rote practice. Only one teacher employed a measure of creative writing in the classroom. This particular teacher allowed the learners to draw a picture and in their own words describe what they have drawn. Several teachers also used transition time to allow students to finish their class writing book. Not all students partook in the activities because they had already finished their books. The other students could draw pictures or play with toys. These times were not coded for writing practice because not all students participated.

The most general method of teaching reading and writing, as mentioned by the participants, should be fun and with a lot of repetition.

“The way to make good readers is to read more. Just keep trying. It doesn’t matter if it is super simple, but they enjoy the stories.” (Teacher J)

“With reading they have to say it again and again, but I don’t push them too much. It has to be fun.” (Teacher B)

Several participants mentioned that teaching correct pronunciation should be emphasized when teaching reading.

“Read every day and fix their pronunciation.” (Teacher B)

“I would tell my teacher to focus on proper pronunciation as they are reading aloud.” (Manager O)

“In reading instruction I think the pronunciation is really important.” (Teacher H)

“The primary focus of reading is pronunciation.” (Teacher E)

Most participants had the same idea in teaching reading in that you start with phonics and sight words.

“We start very slowly with fingers on the words, identifying words, vowel blends, and phonics.” (Teacher G)

“The primary focus of reading instruction is the concept of phonics blending so that they can become independent readers and start figuring it out themselves.”
(Teacher A)

“I expect them to read and repeat, read and repeat. Word for word, sound them out slowly.” (Manager O)

Comparisons between Participants

It is important to look at some stakeholder’s opinions, and make comparisons among the three groups of participants. Parents made the most comments about positive affective issues. Most remarks made by parents commented on the confidence of their children in learning English, as well as their lack of fear when it comes to reading and writing.

The second most robust theme parents commented on was the role of Taiwanese parents. These remarks focused on what parents expected from their child’s English teacher, but in contrast with the other two groups, did not include criticism about their own high expectations for their children. The third theme that received a lot of comments from parents was negative affective issues. Parents mentioned that their children are often afraid or unwilling to speak English at home or that they experience fear because they cannot express themselves in English.

The teacher group made the most comments about the fun and games theme. It was evident that the teachers who were interviewed wanted to make English fun for learners. Most

teachers considered enjoyment as the goal of learning English and games, skits, and other fun activities were mentioned as a means to reach this goal.

The second most robust theme the teachers commented on was links between literacy and oracy. Teachers mentioned possible links, or the lack of knowledge of possible links, between the written and the spoken modality. Most teachers could see the potential benefit of reading for improving speaking, but several teachers did not see the potential of writing for improving speaking.

The third theme that received a lot of comments from teachers was the role of Taiwanese parents. Teachers were very outspoken about the high expectations of Taiwanese parents toward the English proficiency of their children. Teachers also talked about the lack of support from parents in helping their children learn English.

Three other themes also received a lot of attention from the teachers, namely negative affective issues, the role of technology in teaching English, and rote learning, repetition and substitution. Given that teachers most commented on enjoyment and fun in learning English, it is no surprise that they also pointed out the enormous amount of pressure they have to put on their students to improve their speaking skills. Rote learning, repetition and substitution still seemed to be prevalent in the classroom and even though some teachers mentioned their distaste for these methods, they still served a purpose in the EFL classroom. As mentioned earlier in this thesis teachers were conflicted about the role of technology in teaching English.

The manager group made the most comments about the role of Taiwanese parents. I did not find this surprising because out of experience I have seen that managers often had to deal with the demands of the parents. Parents were also more willing to communicate with the managers about their expectations towards their children's English classes. Several teachers

commented on the fact that the teachers preferred to communicate with the managers and Chinese teachers. The language barrier could be cited as one reason because some parents might not feel comfortable expressing themselves in English. Another reason could be cultural since foreign teachers, especially native-speaking teachers are revered and parents would be more willing to voice their concerns, criticism, or expectations to the Chinese managers.

The second most robust theme the managers commented on was the Taiwanese environment. Managers commented on the importance of creating an English environment for students because students won't be exposed to much English outside of the classroom.

The third theme that received a lot of comments from managers was negative affective issues. Managers talked about anxiety in speaking English for young students, as well as the pressure that is put on learners to perform well.

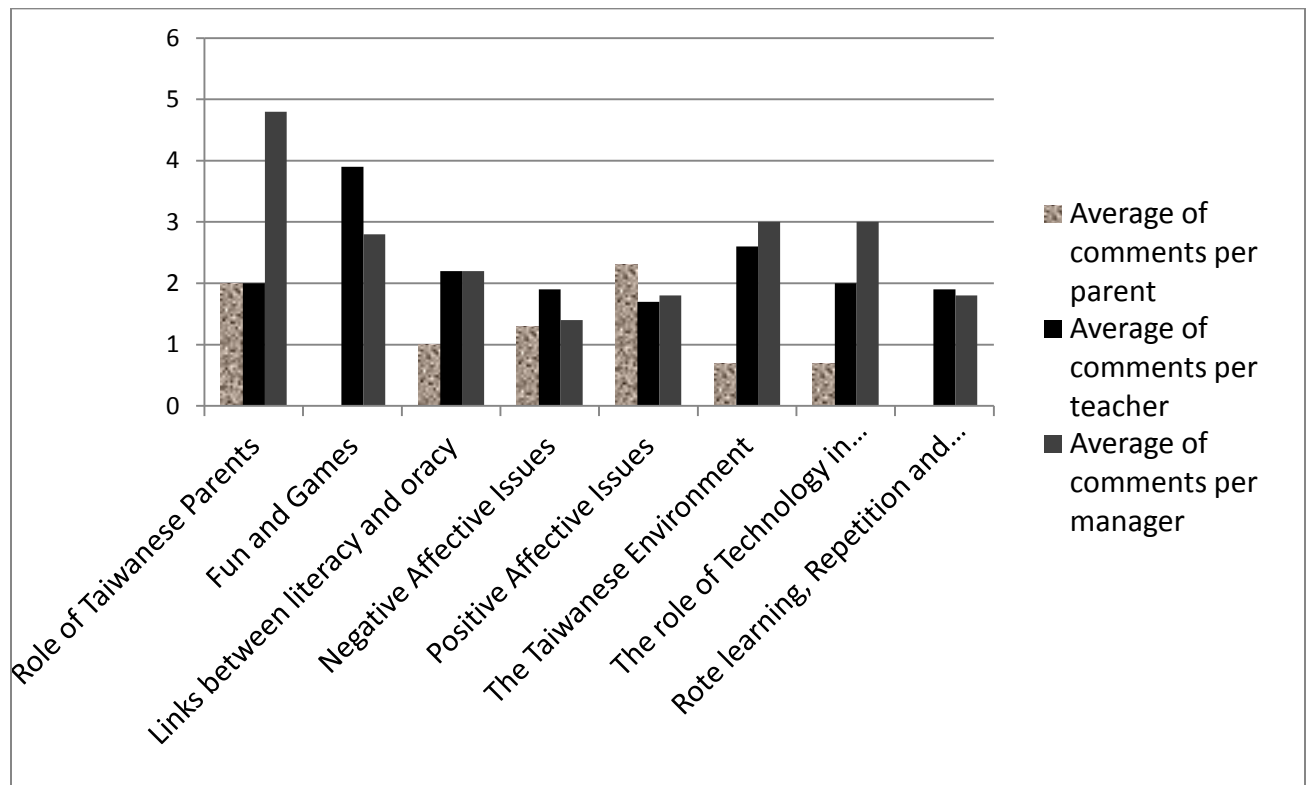
When comments made by these three groups are compared several inferences can be drawn from the data. A comparison of the three groups of participants' remarks by theme can be viewed in figure 2. Because the three groups had an uneven number of participants, I calculated an average of comments made by each participant in each group.

Looking at figure 1, there is a lot of variation in the foci of the three groups of participants. Considering that they are all stakeholders in the education of these young learners of English it was a surprising finding that these groups differed to such an apparent extent.

FIGURE 1

Graph: Average Comments per Theme per Participant

For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.



Looking at the averages of comments made, the teacher group and manager group commented similarly, that is they had a similar amount of comments, on the following themes: fun and games; links between literacy and oracy; the Taiwanese environment; and rote learning, repetition and substitution. All three groups had a similar amount of comments about negative affective issues and positive affective issues. Just looking at the theme with the most average comments by each participants, one could observe that the role of Taiwanese parents was the most prominent theme for managers; fun and games was the most prominent theme for teachers; and positive affective issues was the most prominent theme for parents. Where managers and

teachers emphasized fun and games in their interviews, the parents made no comments about this theme. Similarly, parents made no comments about rote learning. A possible explanation is that parents don't see fun and games as very important in learning English. This could be due to their high expectations or due to the way they were taught as children. Even though parents did make statements about wanting their children to do more creative writing, none of the parents criticized a rote learning approach to learning English. This idea could be connected to the impression that Taiwanese parents have really high expectations when it comes to their children's academic performance.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

In this chapter I examine the results from the previous section by discussing them in further detail for each research question. I then continue by indicating the pedagogical implications that arise. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this study and some suggestions for future research. The research questions were:

1. What are the participants' views on teaching literacy skills?
2. What are the teachers' methods of teaching literacy?
3. What percentage of time is allocated to reading, writing, and oral practice in class?
4. What are the participants' views on the links between literacy skills and oral production?

Research Question 1

The first research questions investigated the participants' views on teaching literacy skills. Several of the themes can be tied to the first research question, namely, creativity, independence, time constraints, affective issues, and the Taiwanese environment.

The parents who were interviewed indicated that they wanted their children to read and write in English. Not only do they want their children to read more, they also want their children to be able to read independently. Parents want children to be able to express themselves creatively in writing activities at school. The parents are not only worried about their children's English writing ability, but also their Chinese writing ability. Parents mentioned that Chinese writing at the high school level had received some attention in the Chinese media recently. The Taiwanese Ministry of Education has made it public that Taiwanese students' writing ability in Chinese has deteriorated and it is a reason for national concern. Several managers echoed this sentiment.

Even though the participants acknowledge the value of teaching reading and writing, they often have insufficient time to spend on teaching literacy skills. Teachers admitted that they usually allow students to read books during transition times but they felt it was insufficient. Classes often have between 18 to 20 students and teachers expressed that they would have liked to spend more one-on-one time with learners while they read, but the classroom sizes make that virtually impossible. Many teachers mentioned that teaching writing is time consuming and they just don't have enough time. Some teachers feel overwhelmed by an already full curriculum. Parents' expectations and the Chinese culture of learning also seem to have an influence of what happens in the classroom. One teacher aptly noted that "...the curriculum is too jam-packed and often the culture in Taiwan is don't try to do something well... just do a lot" (Teacher A)

Teachers who are happy with the current curriculum are in the minority; they feel that reading and writing are emphasized enough. They want more time to allow these young learners to play. The Canadian manager and a few teachers mentioned that the private school system expects a lot from these learners: "They are just five years old. We would never expect that from our children, I mean from North American children." (Manager N)

To recapitulate, managers and teachers' views on teaching literacy were influenced by time constraints and the Taiwanese context. It seems that all participants view literacy skills as important, but factors such as time constraints and perceived expectations from parents hinder teachers in focusing more on literacy skills. Parents interviewed indicated a need for more independent and creative literacy skills for their children.

Research Question 2

The second research question investigated the teachers' methods of teaching literacy. To answer this research question I incorporated both interview data and observation data. Several

themes tie in with the second research question: reactions to time constraints; drama/role-play/skits; fun and games; and rote learning/repetition/substitution.

In reading and writing instruction most teachers mentioned that teaching spelling, repetition, and rote question and answer format prevails. This was confirmed in the classroom observations as well as in the curriculum materials.

Most participants considered correct pronunciation the most important focus of reading instruction. Only one teacher considered phonics skills and decoding as the focus on reading instruction. Wang (2000) warns against a too heavy emphasis on native-like competence. This view is detrimental to English learners in Taiwan because learners might avoid learning opportunities due to self-consciousness or the idea of native competence is so unattainable that it lessens their interest in learning English. Wang also reported that most English learners in Taiwan considered the most important factor in improving English communication to be excellence in pronunciation. My research was in accord with Wang's findings. There is a lot of focus on pronunciation and managers, teachers, and parents mentioned that the young learners in Taiwan were often afraid or unwilling to speak English, even though it seems to be the focus on English instruction at the institute.

Most teachers were oriented towards fun in learning English and several participants mentioned criticized the pressure that Taiwanese children are placed under in the *bushiban* setting. Their views are at odds with the managers and parents' beliefs. This could be that the NSTs western backgrounds conflict with the culture of learning in teaching in Taiwan.

Research Question 3

The third research question investigated what percentage of time is allocated to reading, writing, and oral practice in class. I attempted to answer this research question by combining data from interviews and classroom observations.

Interviews suggested that teachers are mostly aware of the unequal time allocation. Most teachers mentioned that they think they spend less than 25% of their day on reading or writing. Observation data confirmed comments made by teachers. Possible reasons for low time allocation to the teaching of literacy came up in the themes time constraints and the role of Taiwanese parents.

When asked about reading activities, one participant answered, “The tricky part with the curriculum is that you don’t have a spare minute to devote to things like that”. (Teacher A) Most teachers guessed that they spend about 50% of their teaching time on oral practice. The teachers expressed that repetitive practice of the vocabulary, games with regard to vocabulary, and practice of the sentence patterns take up the majority of their class time.

The curriculum writer admits that the literacy component in the curriculum is insufficient to prepare students for English classes at elementary school. He noted that the curriculum was rewritten three years ago and one of the reasons for the new curriculum was to improve the writing component. Three years later he became aware again of complaints that children were still not ready for elementary school with regards to their literacy skills. Constant changes “in the market” (as he referred to it) and in the Taiwanese education systems are some of the factors he mentioned.

With the exception of two teachers and the curriculum writer, all participants mentioned that there isn't enough emphasis on reading and writing in the curriculum or in the classroom as one can see from the quotes below:

“I would like to see more emphasis on having a book in your hand, reading it and understanding it.” (Teacher A)

“We need more writing. There is a big gap to what is expected but it is not enough.” (Teacher E)

Most participants alluded to a more balanced time allocation in the classroom as the ideal, “Right now I spend nearly 50% of my time just on speaking practice, about 30% on reading and the rest on writing. But ideally I would like to split the time equally between the three.” (Teacher E)

Because of the fact that the Taiwanese government emphasizes oral communication in their elementary school English curricula, Butler (2004) discovered that Taiwanese teachers felt that they needed a more balanced proficiency level across all skill domains, not only speaking. Many Taiwanese teachers also questioned the government's current policy and commented that students need to have instruction in written English to aid their learning (Butler, 2005). Speaking and listening are the primary focus and according to the government, “reading and writing should not be neglected” (Butler, 2004, p. 249). The current study also indicated participants' beliefs in a more balanced curriculum for young learners of English in Taiwan, for example, “I think a 30% time allocation to each will be best.” (Teacher F)

Data from the class observations and interviews showed the inequality of time allocations to the different modalities. Several factors could play a role in these findings. The classes were observed near the end of the semester and several teachers expressed that they had been

neglecting story time in favor of writing practice, because they were obligated to finish the writing books before the end of the semester. Another factor that could play a role is that several teachers do different activities on different days. Some teachers do most of the writing activities on Thursdays and Fridays and two classes were observed on a Friday. No classes were observed on days when the students go the library. That could have resulted in different time allocations.

The question as to why there is such a higher focus on oral proficiency could have several diverse answers. The nature of the bilingual system at the site could be part of the problem. These learners study English in the morning and Chinese in the afternoon. Other learners in immersion classes (also offered by the same institute) don't have the same complaints about literacy. The obvious conclusion is that the teachers and learners just don't have enough time to spend on literacy and due to time constraints reading and teaching writing get the short end of the stick, so to speak.

Research done by Buckwalter and Lo (2002) implies that bilingual programs (similar to the program at the site of this research study) do not cause confusion or interference with literacy in either language. One could assume that the apparent inadequate time allocation to reading and writing could be a result of the possibility that teachers might think that becoming literate in two languages at the same time might cause confusion for these young learners. Teachers could thus benefit from learning that literacy in one language actually promotes the literacy skills in another.

Research Question 4

The final research question investigated whether the participants were aware of the link between literacy skills and oral production. The theme of links between literacy and oracy is linked with this research question.

Most participants expressed some limited knowledge about the link between literacy skills and oral production. Most participants mentioned the benefits that reading has for speaking skills, for instance, it provides learners with new vocabulary, good sentence structures, and good examples of grammar. But only a few participants acknowledged that writing skills will help with oral proficiency. The curriculum writer is also aware of the possible benefits of using literacy skills on oral ability but most participants felt that oral ability was the focus of instruction.

“I think they can learn more words through reading and writing.” (Parent 2)

“The more reading they do the better they will speak. Making them read all kinds of stuff and the more good patterns they have going in, the more good patterns they have going out.” (Curriculum writer)

It appeared that most participants viewed reading and writing as separate skills but once they started thinking about the possible influence, more participants could see a link between reading and oral proficiency, but not a link between writing and oral proficiency.

“Normally I would think reading would influence the speaking. I didn’t really think that writing will influence speaking.” (Manager L)

“Could writing help improve speaking? It has been rare that I have seen it.”

(Manager M)

Implications

This study has pedagogical implications in the area of literacy instruction for young learners. In this study, it is evident that not all participants are aware of the potential benefit of reading and writing on speaking proficiency. This may indicate that managers, teachers and parents need to be instructed in the potential benefit of the written modality on the oral modality.

If young learners (aged 6-7) are expected to meet the high demands of the curriculum, it seems that it would be important to devote class time equally to the written and the oral modalities.

As I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, the curriculum of the particular institute has been written with the methodology of integrating several ways of learning simultaneously. One could assume that the company's methodology would allow ample opportunities for learners to practice English in several ways, both in the written and oral modalities. The current methodology doesn't seem to be the reason why there is such an inequality with regard to practicing the written and oral modality in the classroom. A closer look at the curriculum didn't reveal much inequality with regard to the oral and written modalities either. In the context of the current study, the issue boils down to the following question: Why then are reading and writing not getting as much attention as oral practice in this particular EFL environment?

One possible explanation could be to look at language ideology in Taiwan. Language ideologies are intrinsically implicated in language use and language socialization processes. Cultural beliefs about language acquisition affect the language socialization routines used by caregivers and educators (Riley, 2011). Language ideology might determine what linguistic resources are deemed valuable and in the case of private language schools in Taiwan, good pronunciation seems to be the most valuable. Even though the prescribed teaching methodology and curriculum allows for a more equal focus on the written and oral modalities, language ideology overrides and the focus is on oral skills because that is what is perceived as most valuable.

In the age where Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that focuses on interaction is used all over the world, one would assume to see some elements of this approach to teaching in such a modern environment, like Taipei city. So in actual fact I went into this research with the

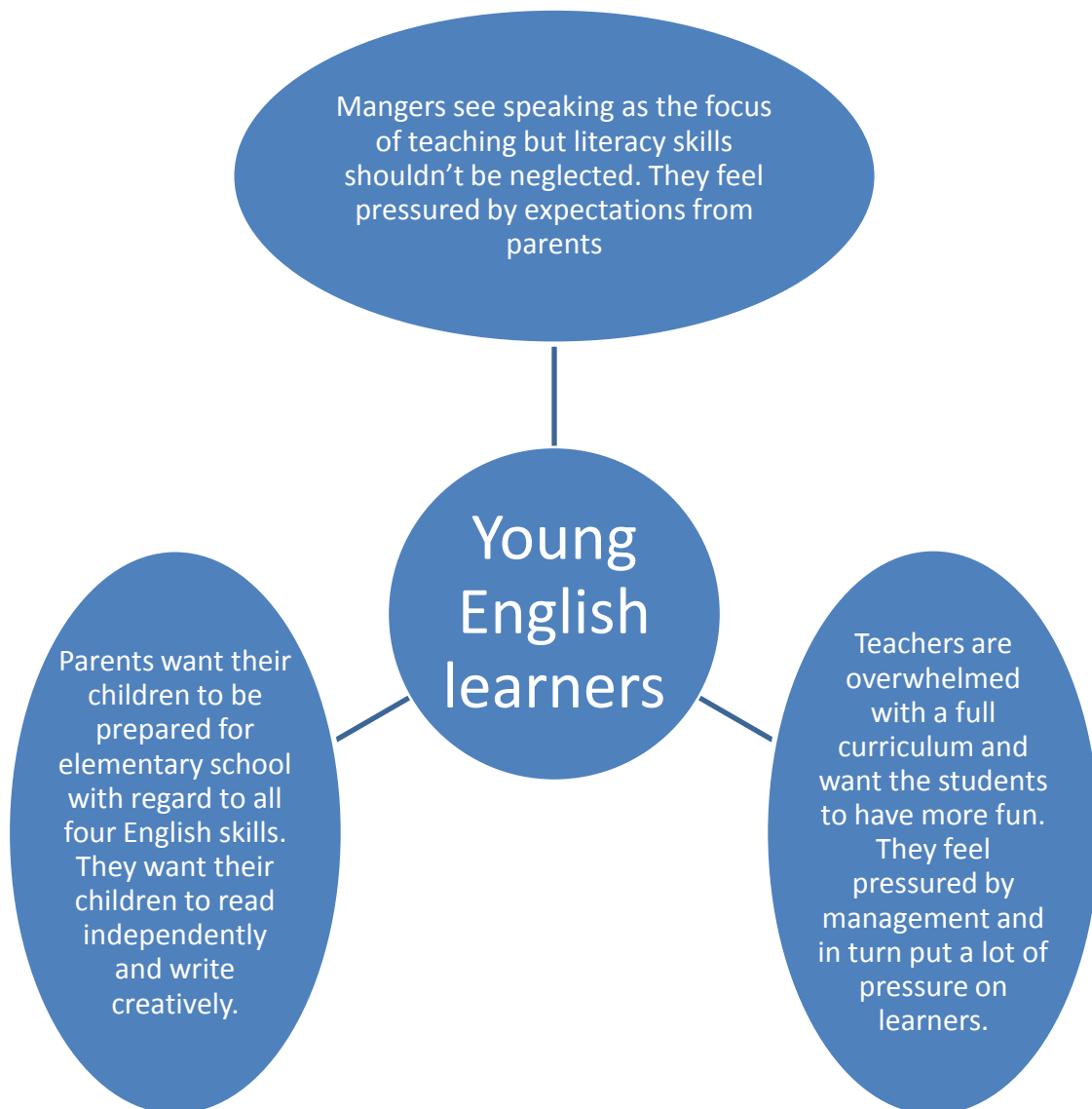
focus on the different modalities and the benefits the written modality has for speaking proficiency. But I came out of this research with a lot of questions about the overall teaching approach used in *bushibans*. What is considered oral practice is a mere repetition and drilling of rote formulaic language and what is considered writing practice is just rote question and answer format. There is a lot of emphasis on repetition and accuracy and in the end not very effective in helping these young learners master the target language. Teachers expressed that their students experience anxiety when they have to express themselves so one can assume that oral responses beyond repetition cause learners to be apprehensive. Utilization of more CLT might be beneficial in this context despite research that has shown that it is difficult implementing CLT in certain Asian contexts (Butler, 2005; Gorsuch, 2000; Liao, 2004).

Detailed information on the type of training the teachers and managers have was not available but the implication is that these teachers are not qualified TESOL teachers and they are not trained in CLT. Responses to the questions also yielded several interesting comments from teachers with regard to training. The majority of the teachers mentioned a wish to receive training on how to teach reading and writing to young learners in the EFL environment. Several teachers acknowledged some caveats with regard to potential training, such as their busy teaching schedules and the possibility that the training sessions might be unpaid. Most teachers are contract workers and receive hourly compensation so employees are often paid for attending training sessions or other company meetings. The other participants, that is, the school managers and curriculum writer didn't mention the issue of training in their responses. Whether or not teacher training would change the amount of time spent on literacy skills is another area for further exploration.

This study brought forth similar findings as other studies done in Asia. Yu (2008) found some factors that cause discrepancies between language teachers' beliefs and practices as well as an expressed need for a more balanced curriculum. Factors like the prescribed curriculum, Chinese culture of learning, and a lack of resources played a role in teachers behaving differently in classrooms, more explicitly, not teaching how they want to teach. In the current study teachers also believed that a more equal distribution of time to literacy skills but in practice these beliefs were not born out. Time constraints due to an already full curriculum and Taiwanese parents' high expectations can be cited as reasons for this behavior.

FIGURE 2

Visual Presentation of Main Findings



Findings indicated a discrepancy between what the parents and managers *assumed* parents wanted. A visual presentation of the main findings can be found in figure 2. Parents do want their children to speak English well, but not at the price of neglecting reading and writing it would seem. Most parents want teachers to focus more on writing, especially creative writing, but the teachers believe parents only care about the oral proficiency of their children. The present

study yields results that are unanticipated. As such it lays the ground work for future research that might elucidate these findings.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A mention of a number of shortcomings of the study is in order. First of all, there is a lack of generalizability of findings—the question of transferability and relevance in other contexts. Participants in this study were drawn from a certain population or group of Taiwanese in a very privileged urban setting and therefore the results of this study may not be generalized to the Taiwanese population as a whole.

Secondly, the low English proficiency of some of the participants could also have had an influence on the findings. Even though these participants had an intermediate English proficiency in everyday conversations (as observed by me), some questions in the interviews were perhaps too difficult or contained some unfamiliar vocabulary. Some Taiwanese managers and parents needed me to explain or circumlocute on some of the questions during the interviews and it could have influenced the participants' responses. Another factor that had bearing on the findings is that only five classes were observed. More classroom observations on different days throughout the week might have resulted in different outcomes.

Even though it was not the purpose of the current project, findings revealed that CLT practices were not evident at the research site and rote formulaic language practices were common. This lends itself to further exploration and research as to why CLT practices are not implemented in this setting.

The data obtained from the current study indicated that the written mode was underutilized and underappreciated in the realm of young learners of English as a second or foreign language in Taipei. It is generally accepted that children perform better in the oral mode

than the written mode and further research should address how proficiency levels and age might affect processing in one modality versus another. The findings of my research, entrenched in local circumstances as they are, cannot provide answers to the many issues that surround teaching and learning spoken and written English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, they imply that schools can successfully provide beginners in English with opportunities for becoming literate in English as they learn to speak it.

As in Blake (2009) I found that parents, teachers and managers are skeptical about the use of writing and reading to improve oral fluency and therefore more studies are needed to promote the idea of reading and writing as important factors in oral fluency. Future studies examining the reasons why literacy skills are neglected for the sake of oral proficiency should be done over a longer period of time and in varied populations. This way the link between written and oral modalities can be explored further.

Research provided evidence for children 3 – 5 years of age collaborative writing activities with parents were more effective for literacy development than joint reading. These joint writing activities improved children's performance on phonological awareness and word writing (Levy et al., 2006). Considering these findings, shouldn't NSTs, managers and Taiwanese parents be made aware of the importance of writing, even at an early age? Or will this overwhelm young learners already under pressure from a full curriculum to do even more? The echoing phrase throughout the interviews seemed to be: "We can do more". But will something have to be sacrificed in the curriculum in order to incorporate more time for the written modalities? And will managers accept less time spent on teaching speaking and pronunciation during class time? Or are these teachers in actual fact just teaching pronunciation? These questions remain unanswered.

Given the fact that English is currently introduced at younger and younger grade levels as a foreign language in many parts of the world, more research is needed on this topic. In this regard, I believe that this study could be a promising start toward understanding the ways in which English is being taught and how teaching can be improved.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SHEET

Class:

Date:

Teacher:

Number of students:

Student Modality	Time	Notes: Type of activity/materials used
Speaking (e.g. vocabulary repetition, pronunciation practice, teacher asks students to repeat etc.)		
Reading (including story time and phonics reading)		
Writing (e.g. in workbooks, ABC books or whiteboard writing)		

APPENDIX B- TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Classroom activities

If you could do anything in the classroom, what would you focus on?

What in your opinion are the students' goals? Will reading and writing help them achieve these goals?

How do you teach reading?

How do you teach writing?

Do you believe that reading and/or writing will improve a student's spoken ability?

How much anxiety, if any, do your students experience while reading/writing?

If the open-ended questions are not addressed sufficiently, I will ask the following:

How often do you have reading instruction and/or do reading activities with the students?

What is the primary focus of your reading/ writing lesson/instruction?

When you have reading instruction and/or do reading activities with the students, what resources or kind of text do you use?

How do you prepare for reading/writing instruction?

- Do you make use of the HESS curriculum when you are preparing your writing/reading instruction?

Do you ever use computer software as part of reading instruction? If so, what are the materials like?

Do you ever use workbooks or worksheets during reading instruction? If so, what are the materials like?

Do you use different materials with students at different reading levels? If so, what are the materials like?

Do you use mind-maps/story maps in the classroom with your reading lesson? If so, how?

How often do you:

- Read aloud to the class
- Ask students to read aloud to the whole class
- Ask students to read aloud in small groups or pairs
- Give students time to read books of their own choosing
- Ask students to read silently on their own

After students have read something, how often do you ask them to do the following?

- Write something about or in response to what they have read
- Answer oral questions about or orally summarize what they have read
- Talk with each other about what they have read
- Do a project about what they have read (e.g., a play or art project)

Do you teach students strategies for decoding sounds and words? What are they?

Thoughts/beliefs about reading

How important is reading in the EFL environment?

What is the role of parent involvement in writing skills / reading skills?

What can significantly affect student achievement level in reading?

Do you believe that children need to learn to read in order to learn to write, or do you believe that writing and reading go hand-in-hand, so students should learn them both at the same time? How much contact do you have with parents and do they express their needs with regard to their child's literacy to you?

Did you receive any training in the past year on teaching writing or reading?

Do you encourage learners to improve their reading fluency and/or comprehension? If so, how?

Do you have a library or reading corner in your classroom?

- How often do you take or send the students to a library other than your classroom library?
- About how many books and magazines with different titles are in your classroom library?
- How often do you give the students in your class time to use the classroom library or reading corner?
- Can the students borrow books from the classroom library or reading corner to take home?

Thoughts/beliefs about writing

What can significantly affect student achievement level in writing?

What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write, meaning composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces?

Do you think in today's world there is a greater need or less of a need than there was twenty years ago for a person to be able to write well in order to succeed?

Do you think in general that computers and other new technologies are helpful or harmful in teaching students to write well?

In your own view, does school emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount?

Do you think that students need to understand the process of writing?

Do you think there is a need to focus on written composition, even at the sentence level?

How often do your students write? What do these activities look like?

- Do they write answers to questions?
- Do they self edit the spelling of their own writing?
- How often do you employ collaborative writing in the classroom?

APPENDIX C – PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What are your goals for your child's English learning?

What do you expect from your child's English teacher with regards to reading activities at school?

Who plays the most important role in teaching children how to read and write?

What do you expect from your child's English teacher with regard to writing activities at school?

How much contact do you have with your child's teacher and do you express your needs with regard to their child's literacy to him/her?

Do you believe that reading and/or writing will improve your child's spoken ability?

How much anxiety, if any, does your child experience while reading/writing?

If the open-ended questions are not addressed sufficiently, I will ask the following:

How often do you expect the teacher to have reading instruction and/or do reading activities with the students?

How often do you expect teachers to:

- Read aloud to the class
- Ask students to read aloud to the whole class
- Ask students to read aloud in small groups or pairs
- Give students time to read books of their own choosing
- Ask students to read silently on their own

After students have read something, how often do you expect teachers to ask them to do the following?

- Write something about or in response to what they have read
- Answer oral questions about or orally summarize what they have read
- Talk with each other about what they have read
- Do a project about what they have read (e.g., a play or art project)

What resources or types of text do you expect the teacher to use while doing reading activities?

Thoughts/beliefs about reading

How important is reading in the EFL environment?

How important is reading in English to you?

What can significantly affect student / your child achievement level in reading and writing?

Do you believe that children need to learn to read in order to learn to write, or do you believe that writing and reading go hand-in-hand, so students should learn them both at the same time?

Thoughts/beliefs about writing

What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write, meaning composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces?

Do you think in today's world there is a greater need or less of a need than there was twenty years ago for a person to be able to write well in order to succeed?

Do you think in general that computers and other new technologies are helpful or harmful in teaching students to write well?

Do you think that students need to understand the process of writing?
In your own view, does school emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount?

Literacy at home

What is the role of parent involvement in writing skills / reading skills?

At what age did you begin reading to your child?

Do you prefer your child to read in Chinese first? Write in Chinese first?

How many books does your child own?

How often do you go to the library or bookstore with your child to select books?

How often does your child write at home? For how long?

- Do they write answers to questions?

- Do they self edit the spelling of their own writing?

How much time do you spend reading with your child in Chinese? In English?

How many pages with print do you typically read at one sitting?

Do you notice your child pretending to read? (turning pages in a book and “reading” the words)

How often?

Do you notice your child asking for help in reading words such as street signs or food packages?

How often?

How would you describe your child’s drawing/writing abilities?

APPENDIX D – SCHOOL MANAGER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Classroom activities

What should be the focus of reading/writing instruction?

What in your opinion are the students' goals? Will reading and writing help them achieve these goals?

How do you expect the teachers to teach reading?

How do you expect the teachers to teach writing?

What is the role of parent involvement in writing skills / reading skills?

Do you believe that reading and/or writing will improve a student's spoken ability?

How much anxiety, if any, do your students experience while reading/writing?

If the open-ended questions are not addressed sufficiently, I will ask the following:

How often do you expect the teacher to have reading instruction and/or do reading activities with the students?

What resources or kind of text do you expect the teacher to use while doing reading activities?

Do you recommend teachers to use computer software for reading instruction?

Do you recommend teachers to use workbooks or worksheets during reading instruction? If so, what materials would you recommend?

Do you recommend teachers to use different materials with students at different reading levels?

How often do you expect teachers to:

- Read aloud to the class
- Ask students to read aloud to the whole class
- Ask students to read aloud in small groups or pairs
- Give students time to read books of their own choosing
- Ask students to read silently on their own

After students have read something, how often do you expect teachers to ask them to do the following?

- Write something about or in response to what they have read
- Answer oral questions about or orally summarize what they have read
- Talk with each other about what they have read
- Do a project about what they have read (e.g., a play or art project)

How much contact do you have with parents and do they express their needs with regard to their child's literacy to you?

Thoughts/beliefs about writing

What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write, meaning composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces?

Do you think that students need to understand the process of writing?

In your own view, does school emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount?

Do you think in today's world there is a greater need or less of a need than there was twenty years ago for a person to be able to write well in order to succeed?

Thoughts/beliefs about reading

Do you think in general that computers and other new technologies are helpful or harmful in teaching students to write well?

Do you believe that children need to learn to read in order to learn to write, or do you believe that writing and reading go hand-in-hand, so students should learn them both at the same time?

In your own view, does school emphasize reading too much, too little, or about the right amount?

APPENDIX E – CURRICULUM WRITER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Classroom activities

What should be the focus of reading/writing instruction?

What in your opinion are the students' goals? Will reading and writing help them achieve these goals?

How do you expect the teachers to teach reading?

How do you expect the teachers to teach writing?

How does the curriculum address reading fluency and comprehension?

How does the curriculum address writing skills?

Do you believe that reading and/or writing will improve a student's spoken ability?

How much anxiety, if any, do your students experience while reading/writing?

If the open-ended questions are not addressed sufficiently, I will ask the following:

How often do you expect the teacher to have reading instruction and/or do reading activities with the students?

What resources or types of text do you expect the teacher to use while doing reading activities?

Do you recommend teachers to use computer software for reading instruction?

Do you recommend teachers to use workbooks or worksheets during reading instruction? If so, what materials do you recommend?

How often do you expect teachers to:

- Read aloud to the class
- Ask students to read aloud to the whole class
- Ask students to read aloud in small groups or pairs
- Give students time to read books of their own choosing
- Ask students to read silently on their own

After students have read something, how often do you expect teachers to ask them to do the following?

- Write something about or in response to what they have read
- Answer oral questions about or orally summarize what they have read
- Talk with each other about what they have read
- Do a project about what they have read (e.g., a play or art project)

What methods do you incorporate in the curriculum to improve reading fluency?

What methods do you incorporate in the curriculum to improve reading comprehension?

Does the curriculum often use mind-maps/story maps in the classroom with reading or writing instruction?

Does the curriculum focus/ pay attention to written composition (even at sentence level)?

How much time is allocated in the curriculum for writing in class?

Does the curriculum expect students to write answers to questions?

Does the curriculum expect students to self edit the spelling of their own writing?

Does the curriculum expect students to partake in collaborative writing in the classroom?

Thoughts/beliefs about reading

How important is reading in the EFL environment?

How important is reading in English to you?

What is the role of parent involvement in writing skills / reading skills?

Do you believe that children need to learn to read in order to learn to write, or do you believe that writing and reading go hand-in-hand, so students should learn them both at the same time?

Do you think in general that computers and other new technologies are helpful or harmful in teaching students to write well?

Thoughts/beliefs about writing

What grade in school do you think is the right grade to start teaching children to write, meaning composing sentences, paragraphs, and longer pieces?

Do you think in today's world there is a greater need or less of a need than there was twenty years ago for a person to be able to write well in order to succeed?

In your own view, does the curriculum emphasize writing too much, too little, or about the right amount?

Do you think that students need to understand the process of writing? Does the curriculum provide for this understanding?

APPENDIX F – EXMAPLES OF THEME CODING IN NVIVO

Examples of Coding

Major theme	Example
1. Affective issues	
a. Positive	My students are interested in reading, not scared. (TI)
b. Negative	They find it stressful because they don't want to do it and I have to find a way to motivate them to do it. That makes it stressful because it is required of me and it is required of them and they are six years old and sometimes they just want to play with their friends. (TF)
2. Enjoyment	
a. Drama/ Role-plays / Skits	I would like to see a lot more drama orientated activities – the reason why I say that is I feel like a lot of the students especially when it comes to language, they are shy with the language and they are not willing to risk and make mistakes. I think that language in an environment like a drama environment that you can create the students can play a lot with the language and have fun with the language and even if they feel they can still learn from it. (TG)
b. Fun and games	And the first thing I have to set up in the classroom in a way for them to relate and enjoy it. And those are usually starting with games and myself enjoying it I set an example for them in the beginning. (TF)
3. The Status of English	English has become the business language of the world to a great extent therefore it became more and

more necessary to convey yourself with meaning and clarity and that in itself indicates pressure to be fluent and articulate.(TF)

4. The Taiwanese context

- a. The role of Taiwanese parents Parent expectations: they want their kids to be a genius so of course they want to achieve the highest possible level. But if their kids come home and the kids are speaking in English and singing a song they are going to be excited. They want speaking more, they can see it quickly. (MO)
- b. The environment in Taiwan That is difficult because we only have a Chinese environment. So when they grow up they just pick up the most convenient language – Chinese. (P3)
- c. Taiwanese elementary schools And that is the difficult thing-everything they start in Taiwan elementary school is beginners level because not all kids went to kindergarten. They insist to go to *bushiban* to make sure they don't fall behind. (MK)

5. Time issues

- a. Time constraints It is difficult to include writing and finish all goals in just over two hours.(MK)
- b. Reactions to the time constraints Basically what ends up happening is that kids are fast at different activities and when that happens they have free reading time and they can go grab a book in the library and read silently But other kids don't get that opportunity if they are slow. (MO)

6. Views of learning and teaching

I would tell them focus on proper pronunciation as they are reading aloud I would tell them to give lots of encouragement to the kids. Don't tell them every single word so challenge them. Teach them some fundamental building blocks with sight words and phonics. With writing: go through it step by step and know your stroke orders. Really emphasize that writing beautifully is important. If they can write beautifully speed will come later. Build the muscles in their hands. (MO)

a. Creativity

I hope teachers can do more creative writing in the classroom. (P3)

b. Independence

A lot of the activities we do is created for student empowerment so that they can do it by themselves after we give them an example and they extend it. (CW)

c. Rote learning/ repetition/
substitution

There are two separate main goals for me in writing: first the basic rote memorization or being able to repeat a particular pattern. (TF)

d. Self-expression

I really think the most important thing to write are these sort of the basic interpersonal expressions, how do you feel, what do you like and they can express things they do in daily life. (TF)

7. Links between literacy and oracy

The reading part in my opinion just actually sets the model. The more you read the more of the model is set for you are always trying to catch up to reading, cause reading is always a step ahead and writing is a step behind. There should always be concepts in

reading that are new to you or challenging so for the reading you get these wonderful models set for you not just grammar but also for constructive thought.

(TF)

8. The role of technology in the classroom I honestly don't know if technology matters or not for learning. Because I believe kids can learn just as well with pieces of paper and writing grids as they could with an iPad. (MN)
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