

Developing beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching  
through a dialogic approach for professional development:  
A case study of English language teachers in Hong Kong



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**ABSTRACT**

Given the fundamental role beliefs play in guiding what individuals think and do, it is important to understand teachers' beliefs and their development in order to facilitate professional growth, which in turn has the potential to promote effective teaching and learning. While research efforts have been devoted largely to investigating teachers' beliefs, it is surprising that, despite its significance, there is little published data concerning vocabulary teaching, not to mention how professional training contributes to teachers' change in relation to the language area. This thesis, therefore, seeks to investigate teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, understand their relationship with actual practice, as well as exploring how they develop through a dialogic approach which emphasises interaction and self-reflection. The study reported herein is situated in the context of Hong Kong, where problems relating to the teaching and learning of English vocabulary have been repeatedly highlighted in the literature. It mainly involves six frontline teachers of English as a second language in a local secondary school selected using purposeful sampling. Of these six teachers, four participated in a teacher development programme which focused on dialogic reflection on beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, whereas the remaining ones did not. Adopting a case study research strategy, the research draws on four major sources of data, including lesson observations, semi-structured interviews, teachers' professional dialogues and reflective writing, to illuminate issues regarding vocabulary teaching and the process of change.

The findings of the study reveal the need to promote teacher professional development regarding vocabulary teaching and develop teachers' awareness of their own and alternative beliefs and practices. They also provide empirical support for the notion that dialogic

reflection helps foster teachers' change, and enable us to arrive at a better understanding of the complicated nature of teachers' cognitive and behavioural development. These shed new light on sociocultural theory, generate original insights into how dialogic interaction can be used as a mediational tool to facilitate and understand teacher change in beliefs and practice, as well as providing implications for second language education and teacher professional development.

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that my dissertation entitled:

**Developing beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching through a dialogic approach for professional development: A case study of English language teachers in Hong Kong**

is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.



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CHUNG Hiu Yui Edsoulla

Date: 10 August 2018



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BALLI	Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
COTAP	Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals
CPD	Continuing professional development
EMI	English as the medium of instruction
ERS	Extensive Reading Scheme
ESL	English as a second language
DSE/HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
IDZ	Intermental development zone
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
MFL	Modern foreign languages
NET	Native-speaking English teacher
PGDE	Postgraduate Diploma in English Language Education
REES	Refined English Enhancement Scheme
SCT	Sociocultural theory
SLA	Second language acquisition
TESOL	Teaching English to speakers of other languages
ZPD	Zone of proximal development



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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING THE THESIS

*An outstanding feature of our culture is that research is seen as the way of answering questions, solving problems and developing knowledge.*  
(Punch, 2014, p. 4)

### 1.1 Introduction

The beliefs we hold, whether we are aware of their existence or not, play an important role in different aspects of our life. They often help us make sense of ourselves and the world, influence how we interpret new information, form our judgement, and determine how we make decisions. Given that beliefs are commonly seen as one key factor which shapes our thinking and behaviour, it is perhaps unsurprising that researchers in the field of education have shown a continuously growing interest in studying teachers' beliefs (Fisher, 2012, 2017). While the study of language teacher beliefs has developed as a well-established line of inquiry, most studies are concerned with the nature of such beliefs about learning a language in general, their role in educational outcomes, and possible changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs. Our understanding of teacher beliefs can be expanded by focusing on certain areas, such as specific aspects of language teaching that lead to findings which are of unique relevance to the field, shifts in frontline teachers' beliefs and their relationship with behavioural change, and the development of beliefs and practices through reflection on beliefs, both collaboratively and individually. This thesis reports on a case study that set out to shed light on all these issues, exploring how in-service teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching can be developed through a dialogic approach in order to foster professional development in the context of English language education in Hong Kong. Punch's (2014) comment introduced at the beginning of the chapter summarises what I would like to achieve by conducting the research – answering questions, solving problems and developing knowledge are the keys.

Considering the importance of self-reflexivity, which refers to the researcher's honesty and authenticity with respect to him/herself, the research and the audience (Tracy, 2010), an important practice in qualitative research, I begin by describing how my experience of

learning and teaching English as a second language (ESL)<sup>1</sup>, as well as my research experience prompted the present study. The following sections of this introductory chapter provide further reasons that this research warrants thorough investigation by taking the current situation of vocabulary teaching and learning into account, as well as highlighting the importance of investigating teachers' beliefs and belief development. The purpose of the study, my approach to research and the structure of thesis are also introduced.

## **1.2 My learning, teaching and research experience**

Born and raised in Hong Kong, I grew up speaking Cantonese as my mother tongue and received formal English language education from preschool onwards. Thanks to my parents, who hired a native speaker of English to teach me English through games when I was 6, I cultivated my interest in the language and devoted much effort to learning it. Having studied at a secondary school which used English as the medium of instruction (EMI), I had much opportunity to expose myself to the language. With my passion for it, I completed my double degree in English studies and English language education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and subsequently pursued a postgraduate degree in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) at the University of Oxford to better equip myself as a teacher. I served as an English language teacher at a local secondary school prior to joining the English Language Teaching Unit of my *alma mater*, where I taught English for academic and specific purposes and started researching vocabulary learning.

### **My learning of English vocabulary and issues about vocabulary acquisition**

In retrospect, my learning of English vocabulary was rather monotonous, and my theoretical understanding of vocabulary acquisition mostly developed from my postgraduate studies

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<sup>1</sup> Here, it should be noted that the language education policy of the Hong Kong government aims at nurturing students to become “biliterate and trilingual” (Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, 2015). Secondary school graduates are expected to be proficient in writing Chinese and English, and be able to communicate confidently in Cantonese, English and Putonghua. While English is considered to be a foreign language to some citizens in Hong Kong, the language was found to be the second most commonly used in Hong Kong. In 2016, the proportion of Hong Kong residents aged 5 and over who could speak English accounted for 53.2 per cent (Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2017). ESL is thus used to describe the learning of English in Hong Kong and in the target school throughout the dissertation.

onwards. As far as I can remember, I learned vocabulary mainly through reading and traditional approaches to lexical instruction throughout my preschool and elementary school. These included verbal repetition, matching words to their pictures or definitions, and completing gap-filling exercises for consolidation of meaning. The English language teachers at my secondary school, however, seemed to pay relatively little attention to the teaching of vocabulary when compared to grammar and the four language skills. Most of them simply taught vocabulary while going through reading passages in the textbooks or examination practices by explaining the meaning of words.

In terms of my initial teacher training, there were courses that enhanced my understanding of lexical knowledge, but none focused specifically on the teaching or learning of vocabulary. Through taking two courses, namely *Improving pronunciation* and *Teaching the pronunciation of English*, I learned more about the individual sounds of English words using the International Phonetic Alphabet. I also became aware that I had been taught the pronunciation of some words wrongly, mainly because of improper word stress and the ignorance of silent letters. Having said that, most English language education courses related to the four language skills and grammar. Amongst all the lectures I attended, only one that focused on the development of reading skills touched upon why vocabulary might pose challenges to English language learners and discussed briefly how unfamiliar words can be tackled by employing different reading strategies.

It was only when I studied for my Master's degree that I was given the opportunity to explore vocabulary teaching and learning in depth through a module named *Vocabulary acquisition*. Covering a wide range of topics, such as the goals of vocabulary learning, the definitions of vocabulary knowledge, as well as the teaching and explanation of vocabulary, the module contributed to shaping my beliefs about vocabulary development. It sparked my interest in the topic and prompted me to reflect on issues related to it based on my learning experience.

### **Some reflection on my English language teaching**

How my teaching experience at the local secondary school and the tertiary institution shaped my beliefs about vocabulary teaching seemed to support Borg's (2006) proposition that classroom experience influences teacher cognitions. In the secondary school in which I served, I was responsible for teaching both the junior and senior classes. I found that most

students had problems with vocabulary learning, and the less proficient students, in particular, seemed to lack motivation to learn vocabulary. Students tended to learn and forget the expressions I taught in class rather easily, even when I tried to consolidate their learning through repeated exposure. Despite regular dictation, some students often made spelling mistakes, possibly because they relied on rote memorisation of the entire word instead of paying attention to letter-sound correspondence or dividing the words into chunks. In contrast, those who were more proficient tended to include sophisticated lexical items in their work to enhance it. This might be because they felt that doing so could help them gain higher marks in the public examinations. Nevertheless, some of them often simply focused on meaning but neglected the register and frequency of use of the expressions, resulting in problems with usage.

Similar problems were observed in the undergraduates I taught. I was surprised that some of my students were rather weak with regard to vocabulary, particularly because they were required to have satisfactory results in their public examinations and fulfil the English language requirements set by the university for admission. Very often, I tried to test my students' knowledge of word association by asking them to list as many synonyms for a lexical item as possible. When given the word 'beautiful', for example, most of them could only recall simple vocabulary, such as 'pretty' and 'good-looking', but not the more difficult ones, such as 'alluring' and 'spectacular'. All of my teaching experience reinforced my belief in the importance of direct vocabulary teaching, and the need to address a range of word knowledge aspects in class and consolidate vocabulary learning by enhancing lexical instruction.

### **Some reflection on my research experience**

I started researching teachers and learners of English from my postgraduate studies onwards. One project I conducted was a study of non-native online discourse in a community of practice which comprises prospective teachers, frontline practitioners, and teacher trainers in Hong Kong (see Tang & Chung, 2016). Although my research focused on the examination of interlocutory moves amongst the participant groups in discussing the postings about teaching during a five-week teaching practicum, its findings showed that some participants, despite being trained or having received training as English language teachers, were particularly concerned about tone, word choice and emoticons while expressing their ideas online. They

were worried about upsetting their interlocutors even though politeness can be conveyed with appropriate language to redress the face-threatening acts generated by the negative comments or disagreements. The study revealed the participants' low confidence in their mastery of English, possibly due to their identity as ESL learners, and thus the need to develop their linguistic competence so that they could develop the ability to participate in genuine communication.

Another study I undertook was an attempt to promote self-directed vocabulary learning through an e-learning platform which focuses on vocabulary knowledge and strategies (see Tang, Chung, Li, & Yeung, 2016). Based on the analysis of logbooks completed by 15 undergraduates who recorded their vocabulary learning experience over eight weeks, the study found that the students showed a clear interest in knowing the meaning, pronunciation, spelling and parts of speech of a new word, whilst neglecting other aspects of word knowledge. They also tended to use strategies which were useful and effective when learning unfamiliar words, but seldom adopted strategies to remember or consolidate their vocabulary learning.

Building on my learning and teaching of vocabulary, knowledge of vocabulary acquisition and research experience, I was motivated to conduct the present study to create a better understanding of vocabulary development from the teachers' perspectives. I was particularly interested in looking at teachers' cognitions about vocabulary teaching of English language teachers in Hong Kong and how dialogic reflection can facilitate teachers' cognitive and behavioural change, which may help foster vocabulary learning and teacher development. The following two sections provide the contextual background of my study and explain why I chose teacher beliefs as the scope of my research.

### **1.3 Vocabulary teaching and learning in Hong Kong**

In Hong Kong, all students commence their learning of English as a compulsory school subject in primary 1. Whereas official views on the direction of English language development, including the aims and design, learning targets and objectives, teaching strategies, assignments and assessment, as well as recommendations concerning planning for teachers, are presented in the English Language Curriculum Guides for primary and

secondary levels prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC), schools can choose their own teaching materials and English language teachers are generally given considerable autonomy when it comes to adapting their teaching materials and conduct their classes according to their own teaching style (Tang & Nesi, 2003).

Notably, vocabulary teaching appears not to have received much emphasis in Hong Kong, and it is only considered “part of the process of language skills development” (Tang & Nesi, 2003, p. 67), as opposed to the learning of grammar, which often serves as the main concern of the local English teachers when considering their teaching objectives (Ma, 2015). One plausible explanation for this is that the English language education curriculum documents in Hong Kong do not provide teachers with practical guidelines on how vocabulary can be taught. The role and function of vocabulary, for instance, have not been addressed in the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (The Curriculum Development Council, 2017). In addition, the syllabus does not specify a list of words to be taught.

It is, however, important to note from my own understanding and in my role as an English language teacher and learner in Hong Kong that some English language teachers are indeed aware of the importance of vocabulary development. In terms of vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong, Tang (2009) observes that English language textbooks serve as the major source of vocabulary input in most schools despite the weaknesses they have, such as the limited variety of words introduced and the negligible attention given to various aspects of word knowledge, like collocations and word parts. As Fok, Kennedy, Chan and Yu (2006) comment, “Hong Kong is famous for its examination-dominated culture, which heavily relies on the public examinations” (p. 1). Since it has been stated in the assessment framework for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) that students’ vocabulary knowledge shall be assessed in the different papers of their English language examination<sup>2</sup> (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2015), teachers may try to expand their students’ vocabulary bank and, in so doing, help them to handle their English

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<sup>2</sup> According to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2015), one objective of the HKDSE English language examination’s reading paper is to “assess the ability of candidates to identify the meaning of words and phrases”. Whilst students are assessed based on their ability to “convey meaning using varied vocabulary” in the writing paper, they are required to “pronounce words clearly and accurately” and express meaning “using a range of vocabulary... appropriate to the context, purpose and audience” for their speaking assessment (pp. 1-2).



Language examinations better. Given the complicated nature of vocabulary teaching and the lack of clear guidelines to follow, it seems reasonable that English language teachers in Hong Kong need to rely on their beliefs and the materials with which they are provided to teach vocabulary.

#### **1.4 The importance of investigating teachers' beliefs and belief development**

The significant role beliefs play in different educational contexts has frequently been emphasised in the substantial body of literature. As Xu (2012) notes, teacher beliefs determine how individuals organise and define different tasks and problems, and serve as effective predictors of how teachers behave in class. This notion seems to be supported by Bandura (1997), for instance, who asserts that “people’s level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true” (p. 2). According to his interpretation, beliefs play a prominent role in determining how individuals set goals, deal with emotions, make decisions and act. Consider, for example, why teachers’ beliefs are important. Generally speaking, teachers often need to meet the demands of their daily practice by solving the problems they encounter, which may not necessarily be addressed by academic theories or research implications for teaching and learning. This may be one of the reasons that teachers cling on to their beliefs, especially those that rely on their perception, automaticity, and experience to perform their duties both inside and outside class.

Given the significance of teacher beliefs, helping teachers to obtain a clear understanding of the beliefs they embrace is of vital importance, for it allows teachers to develop their thinking and practices (Zheng, 2009), thereby facilitating their professional development and enhancing the quality of their teaching. As Williams and Burden (1997) note, educators are encouraged to make sense of meaning from the situations they encounter and be reflective practitioners who act consistently in accordance with their expressed beliefs in order to avoid sending confusing messages to learners and to promote effective teaching. Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver and Thwaite (2001) further present various important reasons to justify the need for further research into identifying language teachers’ beliefs. Research can 1) go beyond describing what teachers understand about and how they explain their actions; 2) provide implications for pre-service teacher education and ongoing teacher development; 3) accommodate innovation in classroom practice within the teachers’ beliefs; and 4) help

create frameworks for language pedagogy which enhance teaching. All these seem to point to a call for further research into the field.

### **1.5 The present study**

The present study concerns English language education in Hong Kong with a specific focus on vocabulary teaching in secondary education. Given that the mastery of vocabulary is central to language development and that the limited vocabulary size of Hong Kong students is repeatedly reported in the literature (Choi & Ma, 2015; Fan, 2001; Tang et al., 2016), it is important to explore what teachers think and do about vocabulary teaching, and how their beliefs and practices can be developed as it is thought that teaching has a direct impact on learning (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Specifically, it was of considerable relevance to situate my study in Hong Kong due to the four individual rationales derived from my schooling experience and observation:

- Teachers may hold beliefs that underestimate or deny the importance of vocabulary teaching and learning.
- Teachers may only have partial understanding of their own beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning.
- Teachers who believe or claim that vocabulary teaching and learning is important may not reflect their espoused beliefs in their practice.
- Teachers may cling to certain beliefs about how to learn, what to teach and how to teach vocabulary. Such beliefs may shape their practice.

Since any of the four circumstances can plausibly prevent teachers from creating a language classroom conducive to students' vocabulary development, there seems to be a need for English language teachers in Hong Kong to reflect on their beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching. In a broader sense, it is fundamental for teachers to develop a disposition to reflect upon their beliefs and practice. With a readiness to question themselves and others' perspectives, teachers are more likely to embrace change when necessary.

### **1.5.1 Purpose and significance of the study**

The fundamental aim of my research was to understand professional development in relation to teacher beliefs, practice and change. Specifically, I focused on identifying the salient features of frontline teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their relationship with practice. I also sought to facilitate understanding of professional development by looking at how teachers' beliefs about, and practices relating to, vocabulary teaching are developed through interaction based on my assumption that a dialogic approach holds great potential for professional development. The overarching theme gave rise to the following research question: 'How does a dialogic approach which includes interaction and self-reflection contribute to the development of teachers' beliefs and practices as regards vocabulary teaching?' With this specific focus in mind, I focused on three areas of investigation in the current study:

- Identifying and examining different types of beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their relationship with practice through interviewing a group of English language teachers and observing their lessons.
- Exploring the ways in which the teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching evolve, if at all, through a dialogic approach to professional development, and the impact of such changes, if any, on the teachers' practices.
- Analysing the critical factors contributing to the teachers' change in beliefs and/or practices.

The study has three angles as regards implications. Theoretically, it extends a sociocultural view of learning to teacher professional development, contributing to the understanding of teacher cognition by examining how a dialogic approach can facilitate changes in teacher beliefs and practice. Methodologically, the study can be considered the first of its kind to examine the evidence of changes in teachers' beliefs and practice related to vocabulary teaching based on dialogic interactions which draw on multiple means of stimulating teachers' explicit discussion. It not only focuses on how teachers' beliefs and practices can be developed through a dialogic approach in order to foster professional development, but also the complexities of doing so by considering how different factors may promote or obstruct teacher change. Pedagogically, the study, as one of the few attempts to analyse the relationship between beliefs and practice

regarding vocabulary teaching, is likely to help teachers become aware of their lesson planning and classroom practices in terms of language teaching, encouraging them to engage in reflection and improve their instruction, thus facilitating their professional growth. It also enhances understanding of teacher beliefs and the teaching of second language (L2) vocabulary, which has implications for teacher development and provides insights into curriculum design.

### **1.5.2 A case study approach to investigating beliefs**

I decided upon a case-study approach to examining beliefs because of the explanatory nature of my research, which aimed to scrutinise how teachers' change in beliefs and practice can be fostered through a dialogic approach to professional development based on in-depth analysis and thick description. Case studies, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue, focus on individuals or groups and seek to understand their perceptions. They serve as attempts to portray the richness of the data obtained, and the researcher is integrally involved in the case. As a case-study approach is specifically known for its use of multiple sources of data which converge in triangulation (Yin, 2014), it allowed me to capture the complexities of beliefs and belief development in a multifaceted manner that employed a longitudinal design. In the study, data gathering lasted over a period of ten months. The investigation mainly involved the analysis of audiotaped lessons, in-depth interviews, teaching materials and vocabulary assessment tasks provided by teachers, teachers' professional dialogues and reflective entries, as well as researcher field notes. These methods enabled me to collect interesting and significant data to support my claims.

## 1.6 Structuring the thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters and relevant appendices. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 considers the reading I have undertaken as part of the research. I draw on a range of scholarly work to create better understanding of teacher beliefs and vocabulary teaching by 1) providing a conceptualisation of how beliefs can be defined; 2) reviewing research into language teacher beliefs; 3) highlighting the pivotal role of beliefs in vocabulary teaching in terms of the significance of vocabulary in L2 development and the taxing nature of vocabulary teaching and learning; and 4) examining studies that have focused on teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. Together they have allowed me to identify gaps in the literature, leading to the formulation of research questions presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for the present study. It begins with the research paradigm and describes the case-study approach adopted for the study. Following the discussion of my sampling decisions and summary of research stages, other methodological issues such as instrumentation, data collection and data analysis procedures are presented. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in my project and ethical considerations are also presented.

In Chapter 4, I discuss in detail the role of a dialogic approach in facilitating and understanding teachers' change in beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching in the study. The first section characterises teacher professional development from a sociocultural perspective. The second focuses on the notion of dialogue and dialogic reflection, explores how dialogue can be used to facilitate learning, and discusses how different concepts of dialogue can be related to teacher professional development. The final section explains how I established professional dialogues with the teacher participants by stimulating their critical reflection by means of four reflective lenses. It also introduces the procedures and tools I used to prompt teachers' dialogic interaction, as well as laying out my role and beliefs in the process, followed by the chapter summary. While it seems sensible for me to discuss the theoretical positioning regarding teacher learning in the literature review chapter (Chapter 2) and explain how a dialogic approach can be used to support professional development in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), I have decided not to do so but presented them together in this chapter. Doing so, I believe, helps create a more coherent picture of a dialogic approach

to teacher development, allowing readers to better understand how theory and research can inform practice in teacher education.

The next two chapters constitute my findings and analysis. Chapter 5 explores the epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, areas of alignment with, and incongruity between, such beliefs and teachers' practice, and the factors shaping the two. Chapter 6 examines the development of teachers' beliefs and practices fostered by dialogic interaction. After the introduction are four major sections presenting on an individual basis the cases of teachers who took part in the professional dialogue and the reflective writing that followed. Each section starts by introducing the teacher, followed by the salient features of the development of her beliefs and its relationship with behavioural change, and ends with the exploration of factors contributing to the teacher's change.

The penultimate chapter is the discussion of the findings. My answers to the research questions are presented and their implications are discussed. The final chapter of the thesis includes my concluding thoughts. It summarises the entire study, presents reflection on changes in my own beliefs as a result of my investigation, addresses the limitations of the study and highlights suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **READING TO DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER BELIEFS AND VOCABULARY TEACHING**

*We read to understand or begin to understand.*  
(Manguel, 1996, p. 7)

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Reading, as Manguel points out, informs our understanding or helps us seek better understanding. I thus regard my reading on teachers' beliefs and vocabulary teaching as part of my study in this chapter and consider how it enabled me to situate my research within the existing literature, thereby contributing to the understanding of the research problem being studied. The chapter comprises three main sections. In the first section I focus on the conceptualisation of teacher beliefs and note the importance of understanding them. I also provide a critical overview of the existing literature related to the area, discussing what language teachers believe, in what ways such beliefs are related to classroom practices, and the extent to which changes in belief can be fostered. Section two demonstrates the value of research into teacher beliefs about L2 vocabulary teaching. I start by highlighting the pivotal role that vocabulary plays in language acquisition, followed by an exploration of key issues concerning vocabulary teaching, emphasising its taxing nature, and a review of empirical studies on related teacher beliefs.

Although Boote and Beile (2005, p. 3) argue that the understanding of "what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean" is the precondition for conducting substantive, thorough and sophisticated research, it must be acknowledged that this chapter presents a selective, rather than a comprehensive, review of literature, which aims to sharpen my preliminary considerations relating to the topic of my study. Having noted after performing a systematic computerised search how teacher beliefs have been extensively investigated, I decided to include in my review studies that focus primarily on English language teachers' beliefs, though I did refer to some studies that examine the beliefs about the teaching of vocabulary in other school subjects. I also placed more emphasis on recent projects conducted in the Asian contexts, and Hong Kong in particular, as this enabled me to take the contextual factors reported by the studies into account so that the findings would be more comparable. Having said that, some other studies,

especially those that provide insights into methodological issues regarding the examination of teacher beliefs, are reported. Due to the paucity of literature on vocabulary teaching and learning in Hong Kong, I decided to refer to studies that are representative in other contexts as well.

Drawing upon the literature reviewed, the final section concludes the chapter by introducing the research aims and questions of the current study, pointing to the need for investigation into teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching, and how such beliefs can be constructed and developed through a dialogic approach to teacher professional development.

## **2.2 Reading about and understanding teacher beliefs**

While beliefs serve as one of the key constructs in philosophy, psychology, sociology and many other disciplines which focus on human behaviour, they are also “one of the most difficult to define and investigate” due to their nature (Li & Walsh, 2011, p. 40). Pajares (1992), in his comprehensive review of literature on teachers’ beliefs, for example, describes how defining beliefs is “at best a game of player’s choice”, for he observed that different terms commonly used in the literature, including ‘attitudes’, ‘conceptions’, ‘perceptions’, ‘theories’, ‘values’, to name but a few, are often perceived as beliefs in disguise (p. 309). In this section, I attempt to conceptualise teacher beliefs by considering how the construct can be differentiated from others, such as knowledge and attitudes, as well as describing how they have been examined. This is followed by a further discussion of the significant role they play in vocabulary teaching in the next section.

### **2.2.1 Conceptualising teacher beliefs**

Due to the complicated nature of beliefs, several definitions have been used by educational researchers interested in exploring teacher beliefs. For instance, beliefs are defined as simple “proposition(s), conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase ‘I believe that...’” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 113), “mental constructions of experience – often condensed and integrated into schemata of concepts” (Sigel, 1985, p. 351), as well as “psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 1996, p. 103). Kagan (1992), in an attempt specifically to define teacher beliefs, puts forward the notion that



“teacher belief is a particular provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre-or in-service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms and the subject matter to be taught” (pp. 65-66). For some researchers, teachers’ beliefs can be broadly categorised into epistemological beliefs (sometimes used synonymously with ‘epistemic beliefs’) and pedagogical beliefs. Flores (2001), for example, defines epistemological beliefs as “implicit or intuitive beliefs or theories about the nature of knowledge, knowing, and learning” (p. 276). This definition is in line with most scholarly views (e.g. Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Schommer-Aikins, 2004; Schommer, 1994) that such beliefs are about the nature of knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge. In contrast, pedagogical beliefs are referred to as educational beliefs about teaching and learning (Johnson, 2009, p. 1). Though the definitions refer to different areas of education pertinent to teacher beliefs, it is important to note that teacher beliefs are not merely about the broad topics presented in the aforementioned definition; rather, they are also about teachers’ perceptions of “confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy)” (Pajares, 1992, p. 316), as well as their presumptions about their roles and responsibilities, the curriculum, etc. Although there appears to be no consensus on a clear definition of the concept despite decades of investigation, a considerable number of studies and reviews pertaining to teacher beliefs (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Borg, 2001; Pajares, 1992; Zheng, 2009) have contributed to a better understanding of it.

In terms of the conceptualisation of beliefs, it is important to consider how they can be distinguished from knowledge. My view is that beliefs and knowledge are fundamentally different, yet intricately connected. In recent years, beliefs have been seen as psychologically held understandings or propositions subjectively accepted as true by an individual holding them (Borg, 2001; Richardson, 2003; Zheng, 2009), even though he or she may recognise that alternative beliefs may be held by others. In contrast to knowledge, which hinges on objective facts, beliefs are based on evaluation and judgment (Pajares, 1992), and may thus have an affective or emotional dimension. They are therefore not typically characterised as false or non-legitimate, but rather as not conforming to standard ways of justification, nor are other individuals able to arrive at a consensus about them (Skott, 2015). Concerning the differentiation between beliefs and knowledge, Abelson's (1979) review of the work on belief systems published almost 40 years ago highlights seven distinctive features of beliefs<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> These seven features include 1) being non-consensual; 2) denoting the existence or non-existence of conceptual entities, such as God and witches; 3) acknowledging ‘alternative worlds’; 4) depending

Important here, too, is the distinction between knowledge and beliefs based on an individual's awareness. Although it may be argued that not all types of knowledge can be explicitly articulated, individuals tend to be aware of their knowledge but not necessarily their beliefs, as beliefs may be held consciously or unconsciously (Fisher, 2014).

The view that 'beliefs should be distinguished from knowledge', however, has been challenged by researchers (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999; Woods, 2006) who emphasise that beliefs are a crucial aspect of knowledge. Kagan (1990), for example, uses the term "personal knowledge" to refer to teacher beliefs, possibly based on the rationale that teachers' knowledge is "highly subjective" (p. 421). From the realist perspective, knowledge is interpreted as beliefs that can be verified as 'true'. In other words, beliefs can be turned into knowledge or 'facts' by gaining the official approval of institutions, such as the scientific or subject community (Kuhn, 1996). For those who espouse a constructivist view of beliefs, knowledge is contextualised. According to Woods and Çakır (2011), knowledge involves a process which "evolve(s) first going beyond the terms and developing personal conceptions through experience, and then by re-theorizing them through verbal articulation, and sharing them through rhetorical expression" (p. 389). In this sense, knowledge is "a subset of beliefs" (Woods, 2006, p. 205), for it is built on individuals' interpretation of experience and reflection, which largely depend on culture. Admittedly, the complicated relationship between beliefs and knowledge has created much confusion in the literature, and it still remains a question to be solved.

Also relevant to the conceptualisation of beliefs is how they can be differentiated from attitudes, a term commonly used by researchers interested in exploring teacher cognition. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) describe attitude as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner toward an attitude object" (p. 6). For them, attitude differs from belief as the former is an individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of an object, whereas the latter represents the information an individual has about the object. In other words, attitudes can be associated with a person's likes or dislikes. An L2 learner can have a negative attitude towards the learning of English yet spend much time on it due to his or her belief that the mastery of a language is important for academic pursuits.

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on evaluative and affective components; 5) including episodic material drawn from cultural experience or folklore; 6) having open boundaries; and 7) holding variable degrees of credence.

Finally, how beliefs are conceptualised in relation to behaviour should be acknowledged. In general, beliefs are regarded as being closely connected to the practitioner's behaviour and practice, although the nature of this connection has led to considerable dispute. As Buehl and Beck (2015) observe, beliefs are often recognised as precursors to behaviour, meaning that the beliefs individuals hold guide their thoughts and actions. Some researchers (e.g. Basturkmen, 2012; Mansour, 2009), however, have argued that the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices is reciprocal. For them, beliefs and practices impact one another, and the strength of this relationship may vary between individuals in different contexts, depending on the type of beliefs and practices being examined. The contrary view, suggesting that teachers' beliefs and practices are unconnected, however, has emerged, as research studies (e.g. Jorgensen, Grootenboer, Niesche, & Lerman, 2010; Lim & Chai, 2008; Liu, 2011) have reported discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and their practices in class. Further complex aspects of the issue arise from Li's (2017) recent argument that it may not be appropriate to separate teachers' articulated beliefs from practice because their verbal comments, which also represent action if attention is placed on how they are made, can be regarded as "cognition-in-interaction" (p. 50). The lack of consensus amongst scholars suggests that scrutinising the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices is not straightforward, and consideration should be given to how beliefs can be operationalised and the ways in which institutional, sociocultural and other factors impinge on teachers' practice if a clearer and more comprehensive picture of teacher beliefs is to be drawn.

Based on the above discussion and the purposes of my study, I have adopted the following working definition of beliefs in this dissertation to avoid confusion:

Beliefs are understandings or propositions subjectively accepted as true. Either consciously or unconsciously held, they bear a close relationship with teachers' behaviour and thinking, can be broadly related to the nature and acquisition of knowledge as well as teaching, and are often developed through a process of social construction.

What underlies the definition is the view that teachers' beliefs may influence what they think and do, but that teachers are not necessarily aware of the beliefs they hold. Beliefs should thus be inferred from the verbal statements made by teachers and their actions. It also highlights the fact that teachers' thinking and behaviour are shaped by a

combination of factors, and that it is not necessary for teachers to uphold standard beliefs about teaching and learning, which may be subject to change, depending on the context.

### **2.2.2 Reviewing research into language teacher beliefs**

In the past few decades, there has been a surge of interest in three major areas of the study of language teacher beliefs - what teachers believe, how such beliefs relate to classroom practices, and the extent to which belief change can be fostered. All these issues merit special attention, for they contribute to our understanding of the complex nature of teaching.

#### **What does research say about the beliefs espoused by language teachers?**

Language teachers hold a wide range of beliefs that relate to teaching. While there is a body of literature regarding language teachers' beliefs, it seems clear that researchers who have explored the beliefs held by language teachers have been primarily concerned with ascertaining the nature of beliefs and/or comparing them with learners' beliefs, fostering teacher professional development by finding out what constitutes effective teaching and resolving problems encountered in the teaching process.

Empirically, studies which have sought to examine the nature of language teacher beliefs seem to have affirmed the notion that teacher beliefs are influenced by teaching experience. In an early study, Richards, Tung and Ng (1992) developed a questionnaire comprised of 32 items and examined the beliefs of 249 English language teachers in Hong Kong who had an average of seven years of teaching experience in relation to five major areas of concern about which language teachers have beliefs, including teachers' view of the ESL curriculum, language and language teaching, classroom practices, teachers' roles and the teaching profession. The results showed that teachers with more teaching experience and training differed from those with less experience in terms of their views of the aims of, and approach to, language teaching in Hong Kong, and certain aspects of their classroom practice, as well as the issue of professional development. For instance, experienced teachers considered training and in-service courses to be the most important resources for their teaching, whereas the less-experienced teachers tended to value their personal teaching philosophy more.

Further evidence of the relationship between teaching experience and beliefs comes from the work of Hindman and Wasik (2008), who conducted a relatively small-scale study to examine teachers' beliefs about language and literacy instruction by analysing how 28 teachers responded to a questionnaire and reported that teaching experience was related to beliefs about oral language and vocabulary.

A number of researchers have also examined teacher beliefs in an effort to identify problems related to language teaching and learning by focusing on the juxtaposition of teachers' and learners' beliefs. Kern (1995), using the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) designed by Horwitz (1985), a highly popular Likert-scale questionnaire with 34 items, compared the beliefs of 288 undergraduates with those of their teachers in the context of studying and teaching French. The study reported a strong overall correlation between the learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning but revealed substantial differences in terms of beliefs about the nature of language learning (instructors gave less credence to the importance of good accent and grammar rules than did the learners), and length of time required to become 'fluent', for instance. One important implication that was drawn is that teachers are recommended to become attuned to their students' expectations, to identify mismatches in beliefs, and to explain clearly to students why they do what they do in class so that students' frustration can be allayed.

In the context of the teaching and learning of German, Chavez (2014) undertook a questionnaire study with 23 teachers and 369 learners in four different year groups at a university in the United States to explore their beliefs regarding the need for accuracy in oral production. The results identified statistically significant differences in beliefs concerning the need for accuracy held by beginning learners of German and their teachers. Based on the findings, the study concluded that teachers need to reflect on how their pedagogic efforts to enhance learners' accuracy in oral production conform to their students' motivation to attain it and thus make proper decisions on teaching.

A third questionnaire study which compared language teachers' and students' beliefs was conducted by Hu and Tian (2012), with an emphasis on strategies for teaching and learning Chinese tones. By analysing the beliefs held by 15 teachers and 60 students in the United Kingdom, the researchers concluded that teachers and students held different beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the strategies and that beliefs can be affected by proficiency levels. It was

further suggested that teachers discuss with students the attention and time which should be allocated to topics during lessons, explaining to them the rationales for different teaching strategies and introducing self-learning strategies.

In summary, research findings seem to suggest that the investigation into teacher beliefs with reference to learners' beliefs is laudable, as it can help to bridge the gap between teachers' pedagogical decisions and students' expectations.

### **What does research say about the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice?**

Another extensively investigated issue concerning beliefs about language education is their relationship with teachers' classroom practices. Although it is widely accepted that beliefs guide people's thinking and actions (Borg, 2001), some of the research findings regarding grammar teaching, for instance, has shown that a discrepancy between teacher beliefs and practice often exists. The important question to address is perhaps not merely whether teacher beliefs align with practice, but why teachers' practice may be inconsistent with their beliefs in some situations, which may adversely affect their teaching performance.

Underwood (2012), by adopting the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2005), investigated three types of beliefs, namely, behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs, of senior high school English teachers in Japan concerning the integration of grammar with communication-oriented teaching. He found that teachers' intention to implement a reform-oriented approach to grammar teaching was determined by the interaction of the three belief areas related to the theory, and that factors such as misconceptions regarding high-stakes examinations, limited time and lack of training all acted as forces opposed to the adoption of a new standard of teaching grammar.

Farrell and Lim (2005), in their study which examined the espoused beliefs and actual classroom practices of two English teachers concerning grammar teaching in a primary school in Singapore over a period of two months, echo the findings of Underwood (2012), suggesting that time constraints seem to be a possible reason for the divergences between teachers' stated beliefs about grammar and their actual classroom practices. They further add that powerful emotions and attitudes attached to conventional grammar instruction may also explain why

teachers continued to employ traditional methods of grammar teaching in class despite their stated preference for a more communicative approach.

In an attempt to better understand the tensions between competing beliefs to which teachers adhere, Phipps and Borg (2009) undertook a multiple-source qualitative study over a period of 18 months that involved interviewing three experienced English teachers working at the preparatory school of a university in Turkey and observing their lessons that involved the teaching of grammar. Their research findings, which are reinforced by the results of Hos and Kekec's (2014) study, suggest that different forms of tension may occur when teachers' beliefs are different from students' expectations, motivation, performance or reactions, as well as curriculum requirements, and highlight the importance of teachers engaging in reflective analyses so that they become aware of the beliefs which shape their work.

The results of the studies briefly reviewed highlight the highly complex beliefs-practice relationship, and the need to understand how different factors shape such a relationship. In addition, the foregoing review of literature shows that there is still much room for investigation into the correspondence between language teachers' beliefs and practices, mainly because research studies on beliefs about teaching different aspects of language knowledge are somewhat unevenly distributed, with most of the projects aiming to explore grammar teaching.

### **What does research say about teachers' belief change?**

Besides the studies on the congruence between language teacher beliefs and practice, stability and change in teacher beliefs have been the focus of vast amounts of research in the last two decades or so. This section focuses on whether teacher beliefs are stable or subject to change, followed by a discussion of some factors which seem to be responsible for teacher change.

#### ***Are teacher beliefs static or subject to change?***

Previous research has established that teacher beliefs are not stable but subject to development and change, although data from several studies investigating the impact of teacher training on prospective teachers' belief development suggest that such change can be subtle. Peacock (2001) and Wong (2010) examined the effects of teacher education courses on teaching

English as a foreign language on the development of pre-service teachers' beliefs in Hong Kong and Malaysia respectively, both adopting BALLI as their data-collection instrument. They are unanimous in finding that the trainees' beliefs only changed slightly over years of study, which is consistent with the results of Urmston's (2003) study that pre-service teachers' beliefs are based on their experiences as learners within the education system but are changed relatively subtly by the teacher training they receive at tertiary level.

Encouragingly positive results showing the impact of education courses on prospective language teachers' beliefs, however, have been documented by other researchers (e.g. Borg, 2011; Busch, 2010; Yuan & Lee, 2014). Like that of Peacock (2001) and Wong (2010), the work by Busch (2010) was primarily based on Horwitz's (1985) questionnaire designed to investigate the changes in belief of pre-service language teachers, but the study she conducted was a relatively large-scale project. It involved 381 pre-service teachers, enrolled in a course on SLA in the United States, who participated in reflective and experiential activities. Her work provided evidence of change in prospective teachers' beliefs that resulted from undertaking professional coursework that incorporated reflective and experiential activities. Specifically, it found that the topics which revealed the most significant changes in the participants' beliefs were those most likely to be relevant to their future teaching, such as those relating to the length of time required for language acquisition, the role of grammar and vocabulary, and the importance of error correction. In addition to that of Busch (2010), various studies that attempted to explain belief change with the use of qualitative methods (for example, Liu & Fisher, 2006; Tang, Lee, & Chun, 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2014) have demonstrated the impact of teacher education on belief development and/or construction. Given that the studies have presented mixed results concerning the degree to which professional training effects change in beliefs among prospective teachers, it may be useful to look at belief change more closely by examining the process of such change and the factors which are responsible for the varying extents of change.

### ***What are some possible factors that are responsible for teachers' change?***

For Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) student teachers' belief change is "variable, cumulative and evolutionary" (p. 398). In their study involving 20 pre-service teachers attending a one-year postgraduate course on the teaching of modern foreign languages (MFL), the researchers elicited the beliefs about the roles of an MFL teacher and the perception of developments in such beliefs through a sequence of three in-depth interviews. They found that all student



teachers, except one, experienced change in their beliefs and identified 11 categories of belief change, demonstrating the complex nature of belief development. One important remark made by the researchers was that belief development can be facilitated by raising awareness of pre-existing beliefs through the employment of three strategies: using activities that comprise a direct experiential element, encouraging the explicit expression of beliefs, and providing the opportunity for an individual to examine his or her own beliefs by confronting other people who may offer alternative beliefs and analyses of the same teaching or learning events.

In her investigation into the changing beliefs of two Chinese trainee teachers attending a postgraduate programme on language teaching at a British university, Li (2012) found that the trainees' beliefs about language and language learning were more stable and less influenced by teacher education or contextual factors when compared to the beliefs pertinent to teaching and teacher-student relationship. She also concluded from her findings that pre-service teachers may experience identity shifts while developing their beliefs about teaching and learning. Some of the change processes highlighted, such as confirmation or consolidation of pre-existing beliefs, expansion of the pre-existing belief system, as well as re-construction of pre-existing and newly established beliefs, seemed to match those observed in the earlier study by Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000). Similarly, Yuan and Lee (2014), in their study designed to capture pre-service teachers' belief change in the course of their teaching practicum, which drew upon Cabaroglu and Roberts's framework, demonstrate how their participants underwent a range of belief change processes, including confirmation, realisation, disagreement and elaboration. What is noteworthy, however, is that their work extends our understanding of belief change by revealing the ongoing process of belief transformation. For instance, it explains how confirmation and realisation of pre-existing beliefs can accompany integration, a new concept that emerged from the study.

In terms of belief development, reflection has been found to be a determining factor which induces teachers' change. The study by Liu and Fisher (2006) examining the conceptual development of self based on multiple sources of data collected from three MFL student teachers, for example, found that the participants' conceptual development appeared to be largely dependent on effective reflection. Specifically, all the student teachers underscored the importance of immediate reflection in their process of change, demonstrating that it was highly effective to think about what went wrong in their practice straight away. Like that of Liu and Fisher (2006), the study conducted by Tang et al. (2012), which involves an in-depth

analysis of the development of beliefs and instructional practices of four pre-service teachers taking a four-year language teacher education course, highlights the pivotal role of reflection in teacher belief development. It was found that the teacher trainees appeared to have experienced a “hybrid process of formulating their teaching beliefs” (p. 103) but continued to adopt the traditional teaching approach of Asian English language classrooms, which relies on explicit teaching and mechanical drills that draw students’ attention to accuracy instead of promoting the learning of English through communication, despite it being the teaching philosophy of their teacher education programme. The researchers considers that it is crucial for pre-service teachers to reflect on their teaching experiences and be involved in continuous discussion with peers, mentors and faculty staff in order for changes in beliefs and practice to take place.

### **2.2.3 Some reflections on reading about and understanding teacher beliefs**

In this chapter I have set out to explore the study’s key concept of teacher beliefs and its nature by drawing on relevant work conducted by others. The foregoing review of literature on teacher beliefs seems to show that although teacher belief systems are complex, change in beliefs is possible if individuals have the opportunity for reflection and there is appropriate intervention, yet several issues still merit further attention.

Firstly, a number of researchers (Busch, 2010; Peacock, 2001; Urmston, 2003; Wong, 2010) have relied heavily on the use of Likert-scale questionnaires to investigate teacher beliefs. Their approach to teacher beliefs has been “cognitivist”, which perceives beliefs as “mental knowledge structure fairly fixed in nature” that can be studied by adopting standard procedures of data gathering and the quantitative means of analysis (Dufva, 2006, p. 132). It is nevertheless questionable whether the use of normative statements to capture an individual’s beliefs is appropriate due to the complex nature of the construct and whether the findings help to present a clear picture of the issue, as all the beliefs under such investigation are identified by the researchers, not the participants.

Secondly, while a fairly large number of studies have been published in the areas of language teachers’ belief change, the majority concern the belief development of pre-service teachers and there is still a dearth of work on changes in the beliefs of in-service teachers. As Tang et

al. (2012) suggest, pre-service teachers may be more open to change compared to experienced teachers as they have not developed actual routines in their teaching. The claim seems to be supported by an early study by Mok (1994), who found that inexperienced teachers underwent cognitive change at a much faster rate of growth when compared to more experienced teachers during their professional development. This raises the question of whether years of teaching experience plays an important role in hampering changes in belief.

Thirdly, most studies on belief change have merely consisted of evaluations of different teacher education or language programmes. Whilst the critical role played by reflection in facilitating teacher change is now recognised (Busch, 2010; Liu & Fisher, 2006; Tang et al., 2012), there have been few empirical investigations into how reflection contributes to the development of teacher beliefs and practices. Given that beliefs are closely related to cultural factors and institutional contexts, the sociocultural theory which focuses on the role of social interaction in influencing psychological development may provide insights into the process of change in teachers' beliefs and practices. No previous study, as far as I am aware, however, has examined how in-service teachers' beliefs about, and practices in, a specific language area can be developed through dialogic interaction which focuses on explicit reflection.

In view of the above, I argue that the exploration of how in-service teachers develop their beliefs and practices through a dialogic approach to promote professional development will contribute to a deeper understanding of language teacher cognition. Specifically, it is meaningful to conduct focused research on specific curricular aspects of language teaching, for this can lead to findings which are of unique relevance to the field (Borg, 2003). In the next section, I will discuss why teacher beliefs about L2 vocabulary teaching is a particularly important topic to research by highlighting its pivotal role in language acquisition and identifying related issues which may pose challenges for English language teachers. Empirical findings related to teacher beliefs about the area will also be examined.

### **2.3 Reading about and understanding the pivotal role of beliefs in vocabulary teaching**

In his review of research concerning what language teachers think, know, believe and do, published more than a decade ago, Borg (2003) highlights the fact that grammar teaching and teachers' use of technology have attracted researchers' attention, but there has been relatively

little discussion on other aspects of language teaching. In this section, I argue for the need to study beliefs about vocabulary teaching, an underexplored area that merits more empirical research. The importance of vocabulary development to the mastery of a language, along with its taxing nature, are two overarching reasons to investigate beliefs about L2 vocabulary teaching and learning.

### **2.3.1 Exploring the significance of vocabulary teaching and its taxing nature**

Learning vocabulary is a crucial part of mastering a language (Schmitt, 2010). In terms of SLA, Laufer (1998) found that the major difference between language learners and native speakers of the target language lies in their lexical competence. This view is in line with Vermeer's (1992) notion that vocabulary is the major concern if a high level of proficiency in an L2 is to be attained. Following a great deal of research effort over the last few decades, the value of vocabulary development has been widely recognised<sup>4</sup>.

It is, however, surprising to note that vocabulary teaching tends to receive little attention despite the pivotal role vocabulary plays in both language acquisition and academic study, with teachers spending limited class time on it (Harmon, Wood, & Hedrick, 2008), when compared to grammar teaching (Chacón-Beltrán, Abello-Contesse, & Torreblanca-López, 2010) and other language skills. Closely related to this may be the complicated nature of vocabulary teaching and learning. Nation (2008), for instance, comments that teaching vocabulary is considered to be “among the least important of a teacher’s jobs” (p. 5) as there are many words learners have to know, and teaching can deal with only a small proportion of these. In addition, the dynamic nature of the lexical system means that different word-formation processes often result in the derivation of new words from existing ones (Jackson &

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<sup>4</sup> There are at least four major reasons why vocabulary development is important to L2 learners:

- Knowing words is the key to understanding. Previous studies (e.g. Carver, 1994; Hu & Nation, 2000; Nation, 2006) seem to have established that a vocabulary threshold must be reached before successful reading is possible. It has also been suggested that more developed levels of lexical knowledge allow learners to read with less effort (Segalowitz, Segalowitz, & Wood, 1998) and perform better in comprehension (Chen, 2011; Nassaji, 2003).
- Vocabulary is an essential building block of verbal communication. Lexical knowledge is found to be the greatest barrier to spoken L2 fluency as lack of vocabulary often results in communication breakdown (Hilton, 2008).
- Lexical richness, in general, correlates with holistic assessment of writing quality (Astika, 1993; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Daller & Phelan, 2007).
- Vocabulary knowledge serves as a significant predictor of academic performance (Beglar & Hunt, 1999; Roche & Harrington, 2013).

Amvela, 2007), making it almost impossible for an individual to learn all the words of a language and posing challenges to whether and how teachers should select the words to cover in class. Finally, vocabulary teaching and learning can be taxing due to the absence of “a properly worked out theory of what factors contribute to lexical competence”, though a theory of this sort is “essential” if sensible suggestions for how to teach vocabulary in a foreign language are to be made (Meara, 1996, p. 37). Teaching vocabulary is thus particularly challenging as vocabulary development involves the mastery of a range of skills related to linguistic competence, including memory-based skills, inferencing skills, word study strategies, etc. Given the complexity of vocabulary teaching and learning, it will be valuable to explore teachers’ decision-making with regard to vocabulary teaching and learning in the classroom, despite the many unanswered questions concerning how its effectiveness can be enhanced (Gerami & Noordin, 2013).

### **2.3.2 Identifying key issues regarding vocabulary teaching**

As Schmitt (2000) argues, there is no ‘right’ or ‘best’ approach to teaching vocabulary. To ensure the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching and learning, teachers need to take many factors, such as the type of learners and the lexical items that are targeted, as well as the school system and curriculum, into consideration. For this reason, I do not aim to provide an overview of the effective vocabulary teaching strategies and techniques identified in previous studies in the section; rather, my intention is to explore issues that reveal the sophisticated nature of vocabulary teaching and learning, thus illustrating why teachers may need to rely on their beliefs about teaching vocabulary.

#### **To teach or not to teach vocabulary directly?**

The value of spending time on direct vocabulary teaching, particularly using rich instruction, is often questioned (Nation, 2013). For one thing, it has been suggested that plenty of vocabulary is needed to function in a language (Schmitt, 2010), and direct teaching can only deal with a limited number of words. For another, given that there is much to learn about a word (Nagy, 1997), substantial time is required for the teaching of each word to create an immediate effect on lexical knowledge. This poses a challenge to teachers because of time constraints. One more argument used against direct vocabulary teaching is that there are

alternative ways of increasing vocabulary size which require less teacher effort and class time<sup>5</sup>.

That said, there are several reasons why teachers are recommended to ensure that there are opportunities for L2 learners to learn vocabulary from direct teaching rather than just from incidental learning. According to Paribakht and Wesche (1999), L2 learners often choose to ignore the unknown words they encounter or fail to guess the meanings accurately due to insufficient contextual cues and/or low-level proficiency (Wesche & Paribakht, 2000). It is thus uncertain whether they can gain significantly from learning vocabulary incidentally in natural contexts. In addition, research indicates that guessing meaning from context is likely to help learners gain partial knowledge of unfamiliar words rather than the complex knowledge that underlies the capability to use them in a productive manner (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997). This might adversely affect vocabulary acquisition. Finally, incidental vocabulary learning does not necessarily lead to long-term retention (Hulstijn, 2001), possibly because a word is not further processed mentally once the immediate communicative need of a learner has been satisfied. Clearly, there seems to be a need for language teachers to acknowledge the role of explicit instruction in enhancing vocabulary teaching. Two obvious questions that arise here, then, are how many vocabulary items should be taught in the English language classroom and how teachers should select appropriate items for explicit treatment.

### **What vocabulary knowledge should be taught?**

Despite the widespread assumption that learning a word means understanding its meaning, researchers (e.g. Cook, 2008; Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2010) have consistently pointed out that knowing a word is not merely about comprehending its meaning. In his book, Nation (2013) lists nine aspects of vocabulary knowledge (see Table 2.1). These aspects can be categorised

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<sup>5</sup> As suggested by Huckin and Coady (1999), incidental vocabulary learning, which refers to the learning of new words as a by-product of an activity principally focused on understanding the meaning of a message rather than its form, has been found to have several advantages over explicit lexical instruction. Through meeting the words in reading and listening, learners acquire vocabulary by inferring the meaning of unknown words from context and by having multiple encounters with the words. Such an approach to learning vocabulary has been found to have several advantages over explicit instruction (Huckin & Coady, 1999). One advantage is that it is contextualised, which gives learners a richer sense of a word's use and meaning. Another advantage may be that it is pedagogically efficient as it helps improve a learner's vocabulary and reading concurrently.

into three broad areas: form, meaning and use, each having a receptive and a productive component.

Table 2.1 Aspects of word knowledge

Form	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	Word parts	R	What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning	Form and meaning	R	What meanings does this word form signal?
		P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	Concept and referents	R	What is included in the concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	Grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what patterns must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	Constraints on use such as register and frequency	R	Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word?
		P	Where, when and how often can we use this word?

(Note: R= receptive knowledge, P = productive knowledge; Source: Nation, 2013, p. 49)

One important concept concerning the direct teaching of vocabulary is the depth-of-processing hypothesis, which suggests that it is more likely that an individual will retain specific information if he or she manipulates, thinks about, and uses mental information (see Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). In other words, the more a teacher helps students engage with a word (deep processing), the more likely it is that the students will be able to retrieve the words for later use. Presumably, knowing a word will entail becoming familiar with all its properties. It may be beneficial for teachers to address all aspects of word knowledge to promote vocabulary learning through deep processing. In reality, however, even the advanced learners may only have partial knowledge of different words (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002). As Henriksen (1999) and Zhong (2012) argue, vocabulary is a multidimensional construct and the mechanism of vocabulary knowledge is

complex (see Figure 2.1).

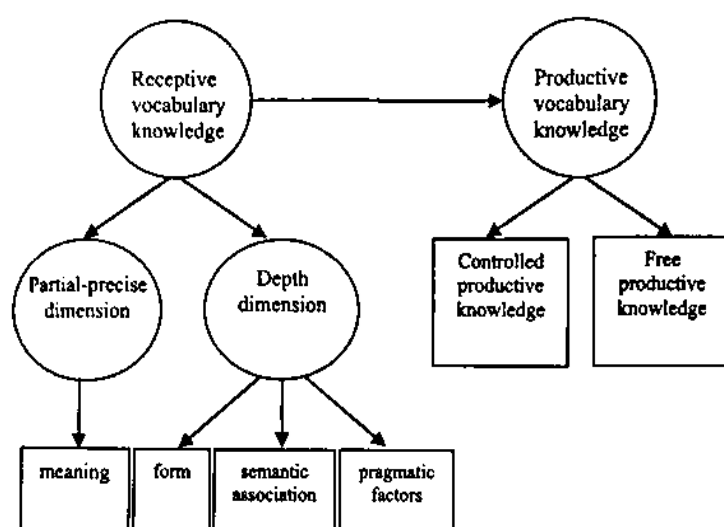


Figure 2.1 A framework showing the relations between receptive and productive word knowledge (Source: Zhong, 2012, p. 33)

Whilst deep processing appears to facilitate retention of vocabulary items, more teaching time may be required, thus leading to the conclusion that only “certain important words make excellent targets for explicit attention” (Schmitt, 2000, p. 121). All these lead to the question of whether teachers are aware of the pros and cons of direct vocabulary teaching, and why they make decisions about which vocabulary items to teach on the basis, for example, of their beliefs, usual practice or professional judgment.

### **To what extent does the use of textbooks facilitate vocabulary teaching?**

Very often, teaching materials are used in language classrooms and they play an indispensable role in language learning. In particular, textbooks have long been considered “the most powerful device” used to help transmit ideas through teaching (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 190). They still remain at the centre of the curriculum and syllabus in most English classrooms (Vellenga, 2004) despite the trend toward increased technology use in primary and secondary education (Macaro, Handley, & Walter, 2012), probably because they help teachers save time and resources (Tomlinson, 2012). According to Liu and Fisher (2010), the textbook-governed teaching style has been perceived as “the best way to achieve the purpose of knowledge transmission” in the Confucian cultural tradition (p. 189). Teachers in China, for instance, spend most of the class time explicitly teaching the lexical items highlighted by textbook



writers (Tang, 2011). I thus consider it important to explore to what extent the use of textbooks can facilitate vocabulary teaching.

Whereas textbooks exert considerable impact on classroom practice and serve as the basis for most language classes (McDonough & Shaw, 2013), it is only recently that studies have been conducted to explore the presentation of lexical items in such teaching materials. One of these was the study by Reda (2003), which involved analysis of six coursebooks widely used throughout the world. It was found that the coursebooks for different proficiency levels focused on various topics of ‘general interest’, which restricted the lexical content incorporated into the English courses. Another relevant study was conducted by Tang (2009), who analysed the lexical input from English textbooks for Hong Kong students. In her study, Tang discovered that both primary and junior secondary students in Hong Kong are exposed to a “disappointingly impoverished” lexical environment (p. 42), in terms of lexical richness, the nature of vocabulary and the variety of words presented in their textbooks. Similarly, O’Loughlin (2012) sought to explore the vocabulary presented in coursebooks, but his emphasis was on the vocabulary coverage of a commercially published coursebook series at the elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. The findings demonstrated that learners having completed all the levels merely received exposure to fewer than the first 1,500 most frequently used lexical items in English. This seems to suggest the need for teachers to supplement their teaching with graded readers or other appropriate reading matter to expand the learners’ vocabulary.

Among the different scholars interested in examining the use of vocabulary in textbooks, Brown (2010) seems to be one of the few who have attempted to scrutinise the teaching of vocabulary through textbooks by analysing the aspects of word knowledge addressed. Having analysed nine different general English textbooks at three proficiency levels (beginners’, pre-intermediate and intermediate) from six publishers, Brown concluded that form and meaning received the most attention, whilst aspects such as word parts, collocations, associations and constraints on use received negligible or even no attention. As Tomlinson (2001) comments, a textbook is “inevitably superficial and reductionist in its coverage of language points and in its provision of language experience” (p. 67). The claim appears to be reinforced by the results from the studies reviewed, which suggest that textbooks fail to provide students with the lexical input they need. The situation is particularly worrying, as vocabulary instruction is

not commonly considered, planned or organised by teachers (Sanaoui, 1996). In other words, language teachers may simply teach vocabulary based on the textbooks they use without adapting them despite their shortcomings.

In brief, it remains unclear how teachers 1) select lexical items for explicit treatment in the English language classroom by taking the strengths and weaknesses of direct vocabulary teaching into account; 2) reach their decisions about the ways they deal with different aspects of vocabulary knowledge in class despite their time constraints; and 3) teach vocabulary in ESL classrooms despite the shortcomings of the materials they use. It is understandable that teachers who lack clear guidelines on vocabulary teaching may rely on their beliefs to make their own judgments and pedagogical decisions about their practice. Studying the beliefs about vocabulary teaching held by teachers may offer useful insights into these issues.

### **2.3.3 Reviewing research into teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning**

While a considerable amount of literature has been published on vocabulary acquisition, there has been little that looks at vocabulary teaching in relation to teacher beliefs. Using a self-reporting survey, Hedrick, Harmon, and Linerode (2004) examined social studies teachers' beliefs, instructional practices and the use of textbook manuals, and found that the teachers were not consistent in what they believed about vocabulary learning and how they actually provided vocabulary instruction in class. The reported practices showed that they highly valued traditional notions of vocabulary instruction found in various social studies textbook manuals, though their stated beliefs appeared to mirror what was currently accepted as effective vocabulary instruction. For instance, a considerable number of teachers reported that their vocabulary tests involved requiring their students to explain the words, even though these teachers endorsed the importance of processing word meanings in an in-depth manner, thereby encouraging learners to use the target words in different contexts.

In a later study, Gao and Ma (2011) examined the nature of beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning by inviting 250 prospective and in-service teachers in Hong Kong and mainland China to complete a questionnaire that involved both a six-point Likert scale and open-ended questions adapted from Gu's (2005) work. Based on the content analysis of their teacher participants' responses to the open-ended questions, the researchers identified four categories of vocabulary teaching beliefs, including those concerning teaching content, teaching

approach, teaching aims and teaching resources. They further concluded that the participants' beliefs were mediated by their contextual conditions and educational experiences, and called for English language teachers in both contexts to diversify their pedagogical activities designed to enhance vocabulary learning because of the popular use of dictation and memorisation tasks in Hong Kong and the mainland respectively. Further evidence of the significance of contextual factors which influence vocabulary teaching emerged from another comparative study by Macalister (2012), who attempted to find out how the beliefs about vocabulary held by Malaysian pre-service teachers were different from those of their teacher educators in Malaysia and in New Zealand. Of the 82 participants who completed a questionnaire, 12 pre-service teachers and 22 teacher educators took part in an interview in which they were requested to imagine how they would deliver their lessons in an upper primary class based on two texts provided. The results indicated differences in beliefs between the two groups and showed that the trainees devoted minimal attention to vocabulary and no consideration of vocabulary learning strategies when asked to describe their imagined teaching. This raised questions regarding the possibility of change in the prospective teachers' beliefs.

Unlike the majority of researchers who investigated teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning by relying solely or heavily on the analysis of questionnaire data to investigate teachers' reported practice, Zhang (2008) examined the knowledge of vocabulary instruction and beliefs of seven competent and experienced university teachers who taught an English reading course to non-English major students by adopting three major qualitative techniques, namely, interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall, for data collection. The results showed that the teacher participants acquired their knowledge regarding vocabulary teaching from various sources and held well-established beliefs concerning how vocabulary should be learned and taught. They not only adhered to principles related to effective teaching in general (e.g. being interactive and establishing rapport with students) and advocated the notion of communicative language teaching, which promotes the teaching of vocabulary using an inductive approach, but also adopted traditional ways, such as dictation, translation and reading aloud, to facilitate students' learning. Yet the study also reported the participants' criticism that only a limited number of courses in their formal teacher education focused on vocabulary teaching and learning. The role of vocabulary in both teacher education programmes and English language teaching programmes was thus highlighted. Overall,

studies seem to have revealed the need to foster vocabulary development by helping teachers to match their beliefs with practice and raise their awareness of vocabulary teaching.

## **2.4 Aims of the study and research questions**

This chapter has highlighted the importance of teacher beliefs, the nature of belief development and the paucity of study regarding specific language teaching aspects. It has also examined the need to investigate teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching because of its crucial role in language acquisition and taxing nature. Given that teachers' beliefs are likely to guide teachers' thinking and behaviour, I argue that the opportunity for teachers to develop awareness of their own and others' beliefs may help them make informed pedagogical decisions before, during and after teaching, thereby improving teaching and learning. Accordingly, the aim of the study reported herein was to answer the following overarching research question: How does a dialogic approach which includes interaction and self-reflection contribute to the development of teachers' beliefs and practices as regards vocabulary teaching? This question was answered by addressing three sub-questions:

1. What are the salient features of the Hong Kong secondary school English language teachers' professed epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, and how do such beliefs relate to the teachers' practice?

As already noted, the review of literature has revealed an imbalance in the distribution of investigation into beliefs about teaching particular aspects of language knowledge, with a paucity of work on in-service English language teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. To address the issue, I looked at the epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development held by the English language teachers of a local secondary school in Hong Kong through the analysis of audiotaped lessons and in-depth interviews. Whilst the current interest in the area of epistemological beliefs dates from the pioneering work of Schommer (1990, 1994), who suggests that what learners believe about the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition in general consists of five epistemological dimensions (i.e. beliefs about the source, certainty, organisation, control and speed of knowledge acquisition), I argue that epistemological beliefs can be finely grained and related to more specific aspects of language teaching. In the present study, epistemological beliefs about vocabulary development are defined as beliefs about the nature of vocabulary knowledge, which

can be broadly categorised as beliefs about the importance of vocabulary knowledge, the role of vocabulary in SLA, and the notion of knowing a word. In contrast, the term ‘pedagogical beliefs’ is used to denote teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching. Such beliefs can be classified into six kinds, which are beliefs about 1) teaching aims; 2) teaching content; 3) teaching approaches; 4) teaching resources; 5) learners and learning; and 6) assessment.

To better understand teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching, I also examined how teachers’ professed beliefs and their actual practice are related. This was based on my assumption that teachers’ beliefs may be manifested in their practice, for they often determine teachers’ actions. Yet there may be discrepancies between what teachers think and do due to different variables, such as time constraints and institutional factors, as discussed in Section 2.2.2. Also, evidence seems to show that English language textbooks serve as the major source of learners’ lexical input in Hong Kong’s classrooms, despite their weaknesses. I thus considered it particularly meaningful to explore the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practice as it may help to ascertain how teachers view vocabulary teaching and learning, and to what extent instructional materials mediate between teacher beliefs and vocabulary instruction, for example, which words are taught and how they are taught in class.

2. In what ways do the teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching evolve, if at all, through explicit discussion of beliefs and the self-reflection that follows? How does the change in beliefs have an impact, if at all, on the teachers’ practices?

The assumption supporting this question was that dialogic reflection helps create “human forms of higher-level thinking” (Johnson, 2009, p. 1), which is an important tenet of sociocultural theory as considered in Chapter 4. The present study, primarily qualitative and longitudinal in nature, made use of dialogic interaction as a means of effecting belief development and as a research tool to understand teachers’ change. To present an in-depth analysis, I analysed teachers’ evidence of change, at both cognitive and behavioural levels, through multiple sources of data, including teachers’ audiotaped lessons, interview data, reflective journals, and professional dialogues, collected during the three phases of the study.

### 3. What are the critical factors contributing to the change in teachers' beliefs and/or practices?

Important here is the exploration of factors which trigger and/or prevent teachers' cognitive and/or behavioural change. By analysing the multiple types of data collected during the different phases of the study, I identified the characteristics of teachers' participation in scaffolded professional dialogues, whereby issues related to vocabulary teaching were clarified and new levels of understanding achieved, as well as their reflective writing that followed to identify critical factors contributing to the shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices.

The findings of the study, which aimed to ascertain teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and its relationship with practices, as well as to develop understanding of how belief construction and development can be facilitated by dialogic interaction and self-reflection, should make an important contribution to the field of teacher cognition and advance the understanding of the conceptualisation of teachers' belief development and reflective processes.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MAKING METHODOLOGICAL DECISIONS**

*Qualitative inquiry... identifies meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world – kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests – focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning.*  
(Erickson, 2017, p. 36)

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodological rationale and research methods of my study, which was conducted in a typical local secondary school in Hong Kong. Erickson, in the quotation which starts this chapter, highlights the value of qualitative inquiry in the present study that focuses largely on meaning-making. Specifically, with the adoption of a case-study approach, the study focuses on exploring what vocabulary teaching meant to the teacher participants by analysing their beliefs and practices. It also focuses on understanding teacher change through a dialogic approach to teacher professional development, which itself is a process in which teachers made a difference in terms of what vocabulary teaching means to them, and possibly to their colleagues and students, by reflecting on their own and others' beliefs and practices based on reflection.

There are ten sections in the chapter. The following two sections focus on the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions underpinning the research project, as well as the justification for adopting a qualitative case study as the research strategy. Then the discussion of my sampling decisions and the different stages involved in the present study are presented. The subsequent sections detail the issues related to data collection and the methods used for data analysis. Finally, the strategies adopted to ensure trustworthiness and the consideration of research ethics are introduced.

### 3.2 Making my ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions

Various approaches to social and educational research have arisen to examine different lines of inquiry. As suggested by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995), ontological assumptions (suppositions concerning the nature of a phenomenon or of reality) give rise to epistemological assumptions (assumptions about the ways of attaining knowledge), which then generate methodological considerations and raise issues relating to data collection techniques (p. 21). However, axiology should not be overlooked. This is because “all researchers bring values to a study”, and it is common practice for qualitative researchers, in particular, to “make their values known” (Creswell, 2013, p. 20).

Ontology and epistemology are two important aspects of philosophical concerns underpinning research paradigms. According to Taber (2013), a failure to make such assumptions explicit in the early stage of the research process may result in the researcher taking poorly considered decisions and failing to obtain the kind of evidence required to respond to the research questions (p. 48). Table 3.1 shows the major ontological and epistemological questions taken into consideration, which helped to determine the research approach and devise the research plan.

Table 3.1 Key ontological, epistemological and axiological questions guiding the study

Ontological concerns	Epistemological concerns	Axiological concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What are teacher beliefs?</li><li>- What are the different aspects of teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning?</li><li>- Are teacher beliefs fixed, or can they be altered?</li><li>- In what ways are teacher beliefs and practices developed?</li><li>- What is the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practice?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How can teacher beliefs be examined?</li><li>- What types of evidence can be obtained to demonstrate changes in teacher beliefs and practice?</li><li>- How can trustworthiness in qualitative and interpretive research be ensured?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What is the role of values in the research project?</li><li>- As a researcher, how should I position myself in the study?</li><li>- In what ways should my values in the study be made known?</li></ul>

The ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the present study are interpretivist, hinging on “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67) to understand the world. To be more specific, interpretivism is markedly different from positivism, which “strives for objectivity, measurability, predictability, controllability, patterning, the



construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 31) by following the methods of natural sciences. It is primarily concerned with individuals’ experience and their interpretations of different social phenomena. In addition, the research is informed by social constructivism, which is often combined with interpretivism and seen as a typical approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). As argued by social constructivists, individuals develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences by seeking understanding of the specific contexts in which they live and work. These subjective meanings are “not simply imprinted on individuals”, but are developed through “interaction” (thus social construction) and “historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Such a view is consistent with my intention to investigate teachers’ beliefs from an interactionist perspective, which emphasises the emergence of beliefs in interaction and places high value on their actual practice. My position is that beliefs are fluid and they emerge from teachers’ interactions with different contexts and people. Nevertheless, I have reservations about the interactionist view that beliefs and actions should be treated as a unified entity (Li, 2017). While I acknowledge that teachers are active thinkers who often make decisions based on their understanding in situ, I maintain that teachers may not be aware of their beliefs and always find justifications for their behaviour. Having a dual focus on what teachers say and do, exploring how these relate, and asking the teachers to explain the inconsistency between their beliefs and practice, if any, is crucial to creating a full picture of teacher cognition.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007), in their discussion of qualitative research for education, highlight the importance of interpretation and its link with social interaction:

Individuals interpret with the help of others – people from their past, writers, ... and persons they meet in settings in which they work and play – but others do not do it for them. Through interaction, the individual constructs meaning. People in a given situation ... often develop common definitions ... since they regularly interact and share experiences, problems, and background; but consensus is not inevitable. While some take “shared definitions” to indicate “truth”, meaning is always subject to negotiation. It can be influenced by people who see things differently. When acting on the basis of a particular definition, things may not go well for a person. People have problems and these problems may cause them to forge new definitions, to discard old ways – in short, to change. (pp. 27–28)

Clearly, it has been argued that human experience is mediated by interpretation and there is a

need for the researcher to value the complexity of participants' views and be engaged in an inductive process which enables the generation of meaning from the data collected. My study entailed two primary levels of interpretation, and can be referred to as "double hermeneutic", using Giddens's (1984, p. 284) term, underscoring the nature of social research. Specifically, it concerned the exploration, through their lessons and in-depth interviews, of the teacher participants' interpretation of vocabulary teaching, possibly shaped by different contextual, social and cultural factors, such as the students' needs and expectations, school environment, general teaching practice in Hong Kong, to name a few. A double process of interpretation was involved, however, as the teachers' views, values and interpretations, could hardly be investigated directly. My interpretations based on my personal and cultural experience were necessary to make sense of the meanings expressed by the teachers, particularly in analysing the interview data, professional dialogues and reflective entries.

Finally, the axiological assumption underlying the research is that the study is value-laden and that biases may be present, though efforts have been made to minimise them. Like other researchers who have adopted the interpretive paradigm in their work, I intended to openly discuss values that shaped the narrative and incorporated my own interpretation when analysing data collected from the participants. My presence is thus apparent in the text, and the first person is used to indicate the interpretive nature of my study.

### **3.3 Adopting a case-study approach**

Case-study research is a "qualitative approach" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97) which makes use of "multiple sources of evidence" (Yin, 2012, p. 4) to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). I adopted a case-study research approach as it is not only perceived as "the preferred strategy" to answer "how" and "why" questions in situations in which the researcher has limited or no control over behavioural events, but it is also the research approach which "offers most to teachers" due to its principal notion that social action is reproduced in its natural setting (i.e. classrooms and workplaces) and its capability to verify existing theory or practice (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, pp. 322–323). In discussing how qualitative case studies can be characterised, Merriam (2009) describes such studies as being "particularistic", descriptive", and "heuristic" (p. 43), and the three features are evident in my research. The present case study is particularistic, as it

reveals vocabulary teaching beliefs and practices through detailed examination of English language teachers working at a typical secondary school in Hong Kong. It is descriptive, since it aims to help interpret the meaning of vocabulary teaching by scrutinising its complex relationship with teacher beliefs and produce an in-depth understanding of teachers' belief change in the Chinese context. Finally, it is heuristic, in that it illuminates issues related to vocabulary teaching and teacher professional development, resulting in a reconsideration of the phenomenon that was being studied. Based on Stake (2005)'s classification of cases, the study can be considered an instrumental case study as the focus of the case itself is secondary to understanding teachers' beliefs, practices and changes.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) further comment that a case is characterised as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 28). This view seems to be supported by Merriam (2009), who maintains that the most crucial characteristic of case study research lies in “delimiting the object of study” (i.e. the case). To elaborate, what defines a case is its “bounded system” (p. 39) forming the unit of analysis, which can be a particular programme, school, group of teachers, learner, and so forth, rather than its method or methodology. Evidently, defining the boundaries of a case has been considered vital by different researchers (e.g. Creswell, 2013; Simons, 2014; Stake, 2000). The major reason is that such practice helps determine the scope of data collection, enabling a researcher to distinguish data pertinent to the focus of the study from data external to the case (i.e. the context) (Yin, 2014).

This study encompasses two levels of analysis and is thus an ‘embedded multiple case study’. The first level involves a cross-case analysis examining the beliefs and practices of teachers in the English language department of the target school. The second level involves individual teachers. As discussed earlier, teachers are not necessarily conscious of their beliefs regarding vocabulary teaching, nor are they likely to notice their changes in beliefs triggered by the professional dialogues. It may thus be challenging to explain any change in beliefs simply by relying on teachers' linguistic representations of their beliefs identified in the interviews, and during the discussion sessions. To address this limitation, I examined six teacher cases from the target school, attempting to explore the complexity of the individuals, and analysing the ways their beliefs had emerged by examining their words and actions. Of these six teachers, four participated in the dialogic interaction which focused on explicit discussion of beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, whereas the remaining two teachers did not. The

analysis of data collected from the two groups of teachers made it possible to create a more comprehensive understanding of teacher change. Due to the minimal change identified in the two teachers who did not engage in dialogic reflection, I managed to limit the possibility that “observed changes” in the other teachers “might have happened anyway” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 302).

### **3.4 Making sampling decisions**

Taking sampling decisions which contribute to the selection of the case and the collection of information pertaining to the case is a crucial element of case-study research (Creswell, 2013). Aiming to investigate vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong, I adopted a purposeful sampling approach to selecting my case and after careful consideration I decided to conduct my case study at one of the schools where I had previously worked as a full-time English language teacher for a year. My decision to do so was mainly based on my familiarity with it, and the fact that it represented a typical local secondary school in Hong Kong, which provided me with easy access. What was no less important was the fact that I had already developed the necessary rapport with the participants, which was likely to enable me to obtain rich data for analysis.

The selection criteria started with the “representativeness” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 157) of the school. While my study sought to shed empirical light on a dialogic approach to teacher professional development with a specific focus on vocabulary teaching, my decision to choose a typical local school in Hong Kong as the main research site was not an attempt to make statistical generalisation since the participants would be “too small in number to serve as an adequately sized sample to represent any larger population” (Yin, 2014, p. 40). Rather I believed such an arrangement would allow my readers to compare my research findings with those relating to other teachers in Hong Kong more easily due to the familiarity of teaching context. Admittedly, it was not easy to define a ‘typical’ Hong Kong secondary school. Based on my experience as a student who received primary, secondary and tertiary education in Hong Kong and as a former English language teacher there, I defined a ‘typical’ secondary school in Hong Kong by taking the qualities highlighted in Figure 3.1 into consideration.

**The features of a typical secondary school in Hong Kong include:**

- Offering the Hong Kong curriculum, either in Cantonese or English, be it public or private. International schools or those schools run by English Schools Foundation, which provides English-medium international education in Hong Kong was not be considered.
- Providing both junior and senior secondary education - Po Leung Kuk Vicwood K. T. Chong Sixth Form College, which is a senior secondary college in Hong Kong, for example, was thus excluded.
- An ordinary, rather than a special school, which aims to offer schooling to students with visual or hearing impairment, or physical or intellectual disability.
- A co-educational school instead of one which provides single-sex education.
- Possessing an average class size of approximately 28 students (Education Bureau, 2018).
- Utilising textbooks as the main teaching materials for different subjects, including the English language.

Figure 3.1 Characteristics of a ‘typical’ Hong Kong secondary school

The second consideration was my “familiarity” (Thomas, 2016, p. 98) with the school. As proposed by Thomas, there are two principal routes for researchers to follow when selecting the subject of a case study. While the first route leads to a local-knowledge case characterised by the researcher’s familiarity with the subject, the second route, which can be further categorised into a key case (i.e. a good example of something, a classic or exemplary case) or an outlier case (i.e. a case noticeably different from the norm), leads to one case being selected on the basis of its inherent interest. Since my concern was to acquire in-depth information from teachers who took part in my case study, I considered it more appropriate for me to conduct my study in a school about which I had considerable knowledge and where I had established a personal network. As I noted from my informal conversations with the two panel heads of the English department of the target school, some teachers seemed to be rather concerned about their students’ limited vocabulary but had only vague ideas regarding how vocabulary teaching and learning could be consolidated. I thus believed that my investigation into teacher change at the target school would probably yield fruitful data for my work.

The last consideration was about the “access to the research site” and the “rapport” I could establish with the participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 151). Given the importance of collecting multiple sources of data in creating rich and thick descriptions of beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, active involvement was expected from the teacher participants. It was vital that they were prepared to spend time on the study, engage in honest

discussion with their colleagues, and share with me their genuine thoughts. I also preferred a school with a record of participating in educational research, as it was particularly important that my research activities should be supported by the different parties in the school, including the principal, teachers, students and teaching assistants, to make it possible for me to collect research data without too many restrictions. The principal's agreement to my proposals that the teacher professional development programme be held on the staff professional development days of the school and that the time teachers spent on interviews, dialogic interaction and reflective writing (if applicable) should be counted towards the continuing professional development (CPD) requirement proposed by the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (COTAP) in Hong Kong<sup>6</sup> contributed to the successful collection of data for analysis.

### **3.4.1 The school**

The study was conducted in a typical secondary school in Hong Kong, where students were expected to take the HKDSE upon completing their studies after six years. It was an aided co-educational secondary school classified as a 'band one' secondary school, meaning that the academic ability of the students was above average when compared to that of the whole secondary school student population in Hong Kong. It adopted EMI for all academic subjects, except Chinese language, Chinese history, and biblical knowledge. In 2016-17, the total student enrolment was around 750, approximately 43 per cent of them were male and 57 per cent of them were female. It had an average class size of 31, which was close to a typical classroom in Hong Kong with around 28 students.

With respect to the development of students' English language proficiency, textbooks were used across all forms in English language lessons. In addition to allocating approximately a minimum of 200 minutes to English language lessons per week for all classes, the school emphasised students' English learning experience by creating a language-rich environment to encourage the use of English for purposeful

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals (2015), teachers in Hong Kong are encouraged to achieve a soft target of participating in no less than 150 hours of CPD over a three-year cycle, including both structured learning, such as seminars and staff development days, as well as other modes of learning, such as collaborative practices and mentoring. In the target school, teachers' participation in CPD is one of the criteria for their performance appraisal.

communication, both inside and outside class, and promoting language development strategies, values and attitudes conducive to effective, independent and lifelong learning<sup>7</sup>.

Another notable feature of the school was its teacher professional development and research activities. Apart from conducting school-based staff development workshops that were held periodically to cater for teachers' professional needs, the school encouraged teachers to attend courses, seminars and training programmes regularly for enhancement and perspectives. It also appeared to support a range of educational research studies, one of which was the Language-across-the-Curriculum Project, launched in collaboration with the Education Bureau under the Refined English Enhancement Scheme (REES), with the major aim of enhancing language learning effectiveness.

### **3.4.2 The teacher participants**

Ideally, all English language teachers would be involved in the first phase of my study as its aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their relationship with practice by focusing on the target school. Prior to the data collection of my study, in late August 2016, formal invitation was sent to the principal and all English language teachers of the target school, including one native-speaking English teacher (NET) and 11 local English language teachers. Information relating to my study, such as its nature, purpose, methods of data collection, expected benefits, as well as issues concerning confidentiality and anonymity, were explained in detail. Unfortunately, only eight teachers who had shown interest in my study agreed to participate in it by audiotaping their lessons and attending the interviews throughout the academic year. Of these teachers, two of them withdrew from the study due to unexpected health conditions and family issues respectively.

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<sup>7</sup> To cultivate students' reading habits and widen their scope of reading, for instance, all students were required to join the Hong Kong Public Library Reading Programme for Children and Youth for extensive reading in English. Furthermore, students' language learning experiences were enriched through a variety of activities such as English debates, drama performances and English-Speaking Fridays, when students were required to communicate with their peers, teachers and school staff in English except when attending lessons conducted in Chinese. Other types of activities conducive to English learning that were conducted regularly included English Funfair, English song dedication and English singing contests. Through small-class teaching and/or remedial classes, consolidation of English language was also made possible (Appendix A).

As a result, five local teachers and a native-speaking English teacher took part in my research project over the course of the academic year. Table 3.2 below shows the demographic information about the six teacher participants.

Table 3.2 Biographical information on the teacher participants

Name <sup>8</sup>	Professional qualifications	Years teaching	Years serving at the target school	Nationality	Gender
Laura	BA, BEd, MA	4	4	Chinese	F
Louise	BA, BEd, MA	5	5	Chinese	F
Lydia	BA, PGDE, MA, MEd	7	7	Chinese	F
Mark	BA, BEd, MA	12	3	Australian	M
Michelle	BA, PGDE, MA	14	14	Chinese	F
Monica	BA, PGDE, MA	21	21	Chinese	F

As revealed in the table, one possible drawback of choosing the school as the research site was that almost all the teacher participants were female. It might thus be argued that having a more balanced proportion of male and female teachers could help create a more holistic picture of the issue. Having said that, I contended that gender difference would lead to no or minimal difference in terms of vocabulary teaching beliefs and practices on the basis of my assumption that teachers' experiences as learners, which in Brookfield's (1995) view are "deep" and form the "foundations" of teachers' practice (p. 31), were more likely to have a profound influence on their teaching. I also maintained that the findings of the study, to a large extent, reflected the actual situation in most schools, where language teachers are typically female. Akin to most local English language teachers, the five female teachers were native Cantonese speakers who had received their teacher training in Hong Kong. All of them had only taught at the target school since embarking on their careers as full-time teachers, and they had teaching experience ranging from 4 to 21 years when the data collection started. In contrast, the NET had received his initial teacher training in Australia and completed his postgraduate degree in TESOL by web-based distance learning. Before joining the target school as a full-time teacher, he had taught at language centres and tutorial centres in Japan

<sup>8</sup> All names of the teacher participants have been changed into pseudonyms. For analytical purposes, teachers in this study were categorised on the basis of their years of teaching experience. The assigned initial letters for the less experienced teachers and the more experienced teachers are 'L' and 'M' respectively.



and Korea. Despite being different from the other teacher participants in terms of his education and teaching experience, the NET was included in my study for two main reasons. For one thing, he had teaching duties and responsibilities similar to those of other local teachers at the target school in the sense that he also had to deliver English lessons to the students and organise extracurricular activities promoting the use of English in the target school. More importantly, the NET seemed to be enthusiastic about my study as he was active in sharing his views with me regarding his teaching even at our first encounter. I felt that he might provide much information that would help in answering the research questions by offering a different perspective due to his background.

### **3.4.3 The senior members of the school**

In addition to the teacher participants, two senior members of the school, namely Patrick and Victor, were interviewed as I thought they could help to provide me with some account of the reception of the dialogic approach to teacher professional development within schools<sup>9</sup>. I chose to interview Patrick as he was the headmaster of the school, responsible for making important decisions on school management and leadership development which helped to guide the school to enhance its teaching and learning. There were two vice-principals in the target school, and I believed Victor would be more suitable for interview as he had been serving as the chairperson of the school's development committee for some years. Also noteworthy was the fact that he was due to be promoted to principal at the target school in the next academic year, implying that he would play a crucial role in shaping the school's direction and teacher professional development. Despite having collected interesting data from the two senior members of the school, I decided to limit the discussion to a more manageable degree by focusing on the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching and their change when reporting my findings as these were the most relevant to the overarching aim of the study. The interview data collected from Patrick and Victor were thus mainly used to explain the contextual background of the school and the teaching of English

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<sup>9</sup> The names of the two senior members I interviewed are fictitious. For easy reference, I used initial letters 'P' and 'V' to refer to the principal and vice-principal respectively. Both Patrick and Victor are Chinese. They had taught at the target school for more than 25 years, with the former serving as principal or vice-principal of the school for 22 years and the latter serving as vice-principal for eight years.

from the administrative perspective.

### **3.5 Planning the stages of the study**

The data collection process of this study comprised three phases. Akin to most cases which adopt a three-phase design, its first phase aimed to establish “through naturalistic and/or elicited data collection techniques a baseline against which future understandings and/or behaviours can be compared” (Faltis, 1997, p. 148). The second phase entailed my description and interpretation on the teachers’ dialogic reflection, including their participation in the professional dialogue and reflective writing; and the third stage was associated with my attempt to justify whether the dialogic reflection or parts of it could account for the noticeable change(s), if any, identified from Phases One to Three. Figure 3.2 and the description below further explain the details of different stages in the study.

#### **Phase One: Elucidating beliefs and/or practice regarding vocabulary teaching**

The initial phase of the research project, which lasted approximately three months, aimed to identify the teachers’ epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development through consideration of the participants’ practice and semi-structured interviews. Although I intended to select six teachers at the target school to join the discussion sessions for in-depth analysis based on the data collected, only eight teachers agreed to participate in my study by audiotaping their lessons and attending the interviews throughout the academic year. As previously noted, two of these teachers withdrew from the study due to unexpected health conditions and family issues, respectively. Other teachers seemed to be keen to take part in the professional dialogues, but two teachers who were particularly concerned about the amount of time required to be devoted to the discussion decided that they preferred just to audiotape their lessons and share their views in the interviews. Also involved in this research stage was the collection of students’ views regarding vocabulary development through questionnaire surveys and scholarly views obtained from a literature search concerning how vocabulary teaching should be conducted in class. These contributed to materials that I produced to provoke teachers’ discussion on beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning during the teacher professional development programme.

## **Phase Two: Opening the professional dialogue and gathering evidence of teacher change**

The second phase of the study involved the teacher professional development programme, which focused on teachers' explicit discussion of their own and others' beliefs about vocabulary teaching. The topics and content of discussion were mainly based on the results of the literature search concerning L2 vocabulary teaching and learning, analysis of student questionnaire results, interview and observational data obtained from teachers in the initial stage. Teachers were asked to reflect on experience of discussing their beliefs with their counterparts by writing reflective journals to record their thoughts each time after taking part in professional dialogue. The recorded lessons were analysed, and then semi-structured interviews using stimulated recall were conducted in this phase in order to understand the teachers' interpretation of their practice, and encourage them to discuss their recent experience of vocabulary teaching and identify the shifts in beliefs and/or practices, if any, based on dialogic reflection.

## **Phase Three: Scrutinising change in teachers' beliefs and practice**

Lesson observations and interviews took place in the final phase of the study so that teachers could articulate their beliefs about vocabulary teaching by reflecting on the remarks they had made at the beginning of the school year and explaining the changes identified in their practices. In addition to inviting the teachers involved in the professional development programme to share their views on their experience, two senior members of the school were also interviewed about the value of a dialogic approach to teacher professional development and how it would fit in or conflict with existing teacher development policies. Relevant parts of the research report were shown to individual participants for them to comment on the findings so that my researcher's bias could be minimised, and the accuracy of my work could be ensured.

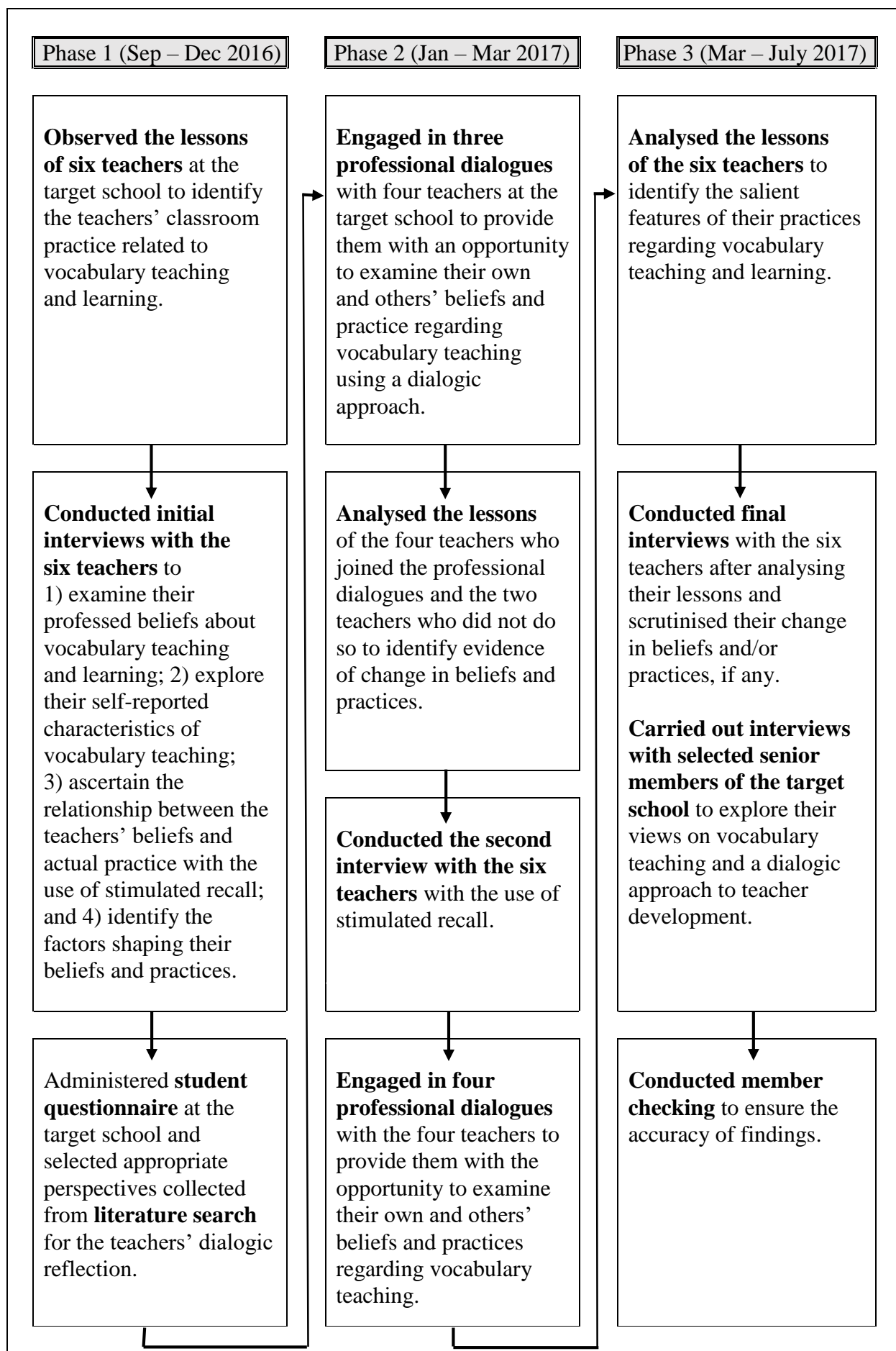


Figure 3.2 Stages in the research

### 3.6 Gathering case-study evidence from multiple sources

It is widely acknowledged that a qualitative case study should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013), and this can be achieved by gathering multiple forms of data to create “completeness” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 157). For this reason, the study relied on five primary data collection methods, namely, lesson observations, semi-structured interviews, professional dialogues, teachers’ reflective entries, as well as field notes to ascertain teachers’ beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching and changes in them, if any. Table 3.3 summarises their relationship with the research questions and my epistemological assumptions, followed by an elaboration on why and how the five types of evidence were gathered, as well as their potential strengths and limitations.

Table 3.3 Research questions, epistemological assumptions and data collection

Research questions	Epistemological assumptions	Major sources of data
What are the salient features of the Hong Kong secondary school English language teachers’ professed epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, and how do such beliefs relate to the teachers’ practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individuals are not necessarily conscious of their beliefs. While the teachers’ interview responses serve as an important means to ascertain their beliefs about vocabulary teaching, they may not be able to create a full picture of their thoughts.</li> <li>- Individuals may be inconsistent in what they say and do. On the one hand, tacit beliefs not expressed by the teachers may be realised in their classroom practice<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, teachers’ professed beliefs may be different from their actual practices due to different factors. Exploring the relationship between teachers’ stated beliefs and actual practice with the use of stimulated recall may help provide insights into teacher cognition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation and interview data collected from the six teacher participants in Phase One.</li> <li>- Field notes.</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

<sup>10</sup> Relevant here is the notion of ‘hotspots’, which is particularly important in the study of teacher beliefs. According to Woods (1996), ‘hotspots’ (or ‘inconsistent beliefs’) arise as individuals may utter belief statements that “they feel they should utter (or even believe)”, though such statements are inconsistent with what they truly believe. This is because teachers may prefer to “claim allegiance to beliefs” congruent with “what they perceive as the current teaching paradigm rather than consistent with their unmonitored beliefs and behaviour in class” (p. 71).

Table 3.3 (Continued)

In what ways do the teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching evolve, if at all, through explicit discussion of beliefs and the self-reflection that follows? How does the change in beliefs have an impact, if at all, on the teachers' practices?	- There is a close relationship between what teachers believe and do. Teachers may not notice their change in beliefs, but such change may be reflected in their practice.	- Professional dialogues and reflective entries gathered from the four teachers who joined the teacher development programme. - Observation and interview data collected from the six teacher participants in all phases. - Field notes.
What are the critical factors contributing to the change in teachers' beliefs and/or practices?	- A dialogic approach to professional development enables teachers to (re)construct their beliefs through intramental and intermental processes. My theoretical purpose is to develop a framework which explains how teachers' critical reflection can be enhanced through interaction.	Same as the above.

### 3.6.1 In-depth interviews with teachers

Interviews were one of the key research instruments in the current study. An important question to consider regarding the data collection methods of my study was the use of interviews to examine teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning rather than questionnaire surveys. As was apparent from the literature review, questionnaire surveys employing Likert Scale measurements have commonly been used in existing studies to investigate teacher beliefs. Nonetheless, whether the use of normative statements can capture the complex nature of beliefs and create a full understanding of the participants' beliefs remains somewhat debatable. Taking the limitations of questionnaire surveys into account, I decided that interviewing my informants was necessary as such a "powerful" tool would enable me to "press not only for complete answers but for responses about complex and deep issues" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). Although "not always [...] sufficient", interviewing is "an active process" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 21) which provides "the best avenue of

inquiry” in most cases as it allows a researcher to gain access to the context of the interviewees’ behaviour and, in so doing, creates a better understanding of that behaviour through interaction (Seidman, 2006, pp. 10–11).

### **The use of semi-structured interviews**

To begin with, interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured or unstructured depending on their general structures (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). Of these, semi-structured interviews were chosen because of my assumption that this would benefit the research<sup>11</sup>. In the construction of semi-structured interview schedules, I referred to the work by Gao and Ma (2011) and Zhang (2008), two of the few studies investigating teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. Some questions were adopted or adapted from the two studies because they were both conducted in the Asian context (either in Hong Kong and/or mainland China), making them relevant to the context of my research. The construction of my semi-structured interview schedules in this study built upon Gao and Ma’s work, which posited four types of vocabulary teaching beliefs, namely, beliefs about teaching content, approaches, aims and resources, because they were derived from teachers’ responses to open-ended questions rather than existing categories based on researchers’ presumptions, although I made several adaptations. Specifically, I acknowledged the possibility of teachers holding a range of beliefs about approaches to vocabulary teaching and considered it to be more meaningful not to narrow the scope of analysis to whether vocabulary learning is promoted through presentation or practice, as Gao and Ma (2011) did. I opted instead to scrutinise their beliefs with reference to the use of such vocabulary instruction strategies as analysing affixes and roots, paraphrasing the meaning of a target vocabulary, studying the spelling of a word, using synonyms and antonyms, etc.

The initial interviews with the teachers (see Appendix B for details), the aim of which was to probe deeply into teachers’ beliefs, their relationship with teachers’ practice, and the factors shaping these, comprised five main parts. As outlined in Table 3.4 below, questions

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<sup>11</sup> As Brinkmann (2014) comments, semi-structured interviews enable the interviewers to enjoy greater autonomy to focus the conversation on issues they deem important in relation to their studies when compared to unstructured interviews. At the same time, they provide the interviewer with “much more leeway” when compared to structured interviews, allowing him/her to follow up the different angles that the interviewees deem important and become engaged in knowledge construction in the process of interaction, without being highly constrained by a pre-set interview guide (p. 286).

relating to the participants' beliefs about vocabulary knowledge, teaching, learning and assessment, their teaching experience, as well as what contributed to their beliefs and practices, were included. Amongst these areas, questions pertaining to the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge were added subsequent to my pilot study with two English language secondary school teachers, which was conducted prior to gathering data for the main study to enhance the clarity and comprehensiveness of my interview protocols. The wording of some interview questions was also revised to improve its precision based on the two teachers' feedback.

Table 3.4 Summary of the major emphases of the initial interview protocol

Focus	Description
Beliefs about vocabulary knowledge	<i>Beliefs about vocabulary knowledge</i> are epistemological beliefs that teachers have regarding the value of vocabulary knowledge for the learning of English as a second / foreign language, the importance of vocabulary building in relation to the development of four skills and grammar knowledge, as well as the notion of a word.
Beliefs about vocabulary teaching	<p><i>Beliefs about vocabulary teaching</i> refer to the pedagogical beliefs teachers hold regarding 'what' and 'how' vocabulary should be taught. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Beliefs about teaching aims</i>;</li> <li>- <i>Beliefs about teaching content</i> (i.e. beliefs about what to cover in class when teaching vocabulary, which can be further divided into beliefs about the teaching of lexical knowledge and beliefs about the teaching of vocabulary learning strategies, the aspects of word knowledge that should be addressed in class and the choice of lexical items for explicit treatment);</li> <li>- <i>Beliefs about teaching approach</i> (i.e. beliefs concerned with teachers' views on the preferred use of vocabulary instruction strategies, in-class activities, and ways to promote autonomous vocabulary learning to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning);</li> <li>- <i>Beliefs about teaching resources</i> (i.e. beliefs that reflect teachers' thoughts on the pedagogical resources required to use when teaching vocabulary).</li> <li>- <i>Beliefs about vocabulary assessment</i> relate to teachers' pedagogical beliefs regarding how lexical knowledge should be evaluated.</li> </ul>
Beliefs about vocabulary learning	<i>Beliefs about vocabulary learning</i> represent teachers' pedagogical beliefs about two major issues concerning vocabulary acquisition, including students' expectations about vocabulary learning in the English language classroom, and the common problems students encounter in vocabulary development.

(continued on next page)



Table 3.4 (Continued)

Vocabulary teaching practice	To ascertain the relationship between beliefs and practice, questions concerning the teachers' vocabulary teaching experience were included. Some sample areas of concern relating to <i>vocabulary teaching practice</i> included the process of planning their vocabulary teaching (if any), the kinds of materials they use and the vocabulary activities they conduct.
Factors accounting for vocabulary teaching	To truly understand the nature of teacher beliefs and practice, it was necessary to explore what teachers believe are the possible <i>factors shaping their vocabulary teaching</i> . I hypothesised that teachers' schooling, professional development, contextual factors (e.g. the English language curriculum, school and departmental policies, student factors, social expectations, etc.) and their self-confidence in the knowledge and ability to teach vocabulary may be relevant and I included questions to ask about the extent to which, and in what ways, these factors are influential. Questions about teachers' perception of their change in beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching throughout their years of work and their reasons accounting for the change, if any, were also included.

Whereas the second interview mainly focused on the teachers' recent vocabulary teaching practice and their change in beliefs and practice, if any, as well as their comments on the three professional dialogues they participated in where applicable (Appendix C), the final interview emphasised the teachers' transformation throughout the study and elicited views from those who joined the teacher professional development programme on the overall experience of engaging in dialogic reflection upon vocabulary teaching. As can be seen in Appendix D, the final interview comprised four main parts. It started with the teachers' sharing of their recent practice regarding vocabulary teaching, followed by their perception of change in their beliefs, if any, since the commencement of the research project and the rationales for that. Most questions included in the second part of the final interview protocol were the same as those in the initial interview, except that the focus was on asking the teachers to compare their existing beliefs with those they reported in Phase One of the study. This was mostly done by telling or showing the participants those responses they had given in the initial interview and inviting them to comment on whether they felt that their current beliefs were the same as before, whether they would like to elaborate on their previous responses, and whether they felt they had changed their beliefs. The third part of the interview focused on change in practice. Teachers were asked to describe the perceptions of their change in practice, as well as the impact of such change on students' vocabulary learning, if any. They were also shown

an overview of my analysis, which summarised their practices regarding vocabulary teaching, and asked to talk about how they felt and to explain the reasons for the salient features of the analysis. The last part of the final interview protocol only concerned the teachers who participated in the professional dialogues. Questions about the implementation of a dialogic approach to teacher professional development and the areas for improvement were addressed. Also noteworthy was that teachers were not asked about the *factors accounting for their vocabulary teaching* as these should have been addressed in the initial interviews. I considered that such repetition would not be meaningful, since it was anticipated that any change in the teachers' views on this matter would have been tracked when the participants were asked to discuss any changes they had undergone since the commencement of the research project and the corresponding reasons. To leave room for teachers to discuss any other important issues they deemed significant, I ended all the interviews by asking if they had any questions to ask or comments to add regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. This enabled me to add emergent beliefs representing new categories or to explore issues I might have overlooked so that a holistic picture of teachers' vocabulary beliefs and practice could be depicted.

### **The use of stimulated recall in the interviews**

Given that the use of stimulated recall can effectively enhance the richness of interview, individual teachers were asked to read extracts of the transcript highlighting episodes of their vocabulary teaching to elicit their relevant thoughts during all three interviews so that the relationship between their beliefs and practice could be better analysed. The underlying idea was that stimulated recall serves as “an information processing approach whereby the use of and access to memory structures is enhanced, if not guaranteed, by a prompt that aids in the recall of information” (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 17). When teachers were reminded of a specific teaching experience rather than only being asked to describe their lesson practice related to vocabulary teaching in general, their practice relating to vocabulary teaching and relevant beliefs seemed to be better captured. Having said that, I found it important not to focus solely on what the teachers did, but also to address what they did not do in the interviews. By asking teachers to offer possible explanations to account for different situations, a more comprehensive picture of their thoughts and actions could be drawn.

## Details of implementing the interviews

Different key decisions need to be made when it comes to conducting an interview, three of which being the number of interviewees, the language to be used in the interview, and the method of recording. With respect to the format, I chose to conduct individual interviews rather than group interviews as the former allows for more confidentiality (Brinkmann, 2014). As it was expected that teachers would be asked to discuss their beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their practice, they might have preferred not to share their views with their colleagues due to their worries about being judged, for instance. As for the language to be adopted, it was my intention to conduct the interviews in English, as the teacher participants are all proficient English users. Transcribing the interview data verbatim without the need to translate the language can help to avoid loss of meaning. However, I asked the participants if they preferred the use of their mother tongue before the commencement of the interviews and was prepared to conduct an interview in Cantonese if that was their preference in order to ensure more effective communication. In addition, all interviews were audio-recorded, as I believed doing so would enable me to focus on the topic and the dynamics of individual interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)<sup>12</sup>.

While interviewing is widely used in social research, the fact that interviews and their outcomes are pervasive in certain fields of qualitative research “does not of itself guarantee their value” (Atkinson, Delamont, & Housley, 2008, p. 37). Sarantakos (2005), for instance, has argued that interviews are often influenced by the “interviewer factor” and the possible bias related to it (p. 286). There is also a possibility that interviewees could “change their minds about what they think and say” over time, or might be inconsistent in what they say and do (Gibbs, 2007, p. 94). I nevertheless maintain that interviews served as an effective way to explore the teachers’ beliefs and practice in the study, as data triangulation (e.g. analysing teachers’ lessons) was used to strengthen the findings and reveal the complexity of the relationship between beliefs and practice by focusing on the reasons that teachers did not act consistently.

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<sup>12</sup> Although it may be argued that the use of videotaping is preferable since that makes it possible to capture the informants’ expressions, actions and body language for a more in-depth analysis (Brenner, 2006), I found it more appropriate to use audio recordings as the teachers might have been more nervous and uneasy about sharing their thoughts while being video-recorded. More importantly, the main focus of the interviews in my study was on the content of what was said. I believed there would be no noticeable difference between audiotaped and videotaped interviews as long as the messages conveyed by the interviewees could be comprehended clearly.

### 3.6.2 Lesson observations

Observation has been considered a useful research instrument for case-study research (Thomas, 2016; Yin, 2014). It enables researchers to obtain direct information for investigation rather than relying on self-report accounts for analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, observations were conducted across all three phases to investigate the relationship between beliefs and practices, as well as identify evidence indicative of the teachers' change in beliefs. Specifically, I regarded myself as a "nonparticipant-observer" conducting "structured observations" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 179). This was because I attempted to reduce the Hawthorne effect, which refers to the participants' alteration of their natural behaviour due to awareness of being observed (Cohen et al., 2011), as far as possible by being only involved in the teachers' lessons to a minimal extent. Also, I examined the practices regarding vocabulary teaching based on an observational schedule I designed primarily to juxtapose the participants' professed beliefs with their practice for in-depth analysis. For the purposes of the study, the observation protocol corresponded to three key areas addressed in the interviews and served as an attempt to unravel vocabulary teaching with respect to *teaching content*, *teaching approach*, and *teaching resources*. In addition to the lesson observations, other forms of data, such as the teaching materials used and the vocabulary assessment tasks conducted, were also collated for analysis.

In terms of observing the teachers' lessons, two particularly important decisions that I made concerned the time and format of observations. Whilst most teacher participants were responsible for teaching three English classes, including at least one junior and one senior secondary class, Mark and Monica were given rather different teaching assignments as they were both responsible for teaching English readers in the ERS lessons with the junior secondary students. As I suspected that students' proficiency levels might play a role in shaping the teachers' practices, I decided to collect data from both the junior and the senior secondary classrooms of individual teachers, but examining the difference between how teachers' practice differed in the terms of the level of students was beyond the scope of this research. Table 3.5 summarises the teaching duties of the six participants during the academic year in which my study was conducted and the classes selected for observation with the agreement of the participants:

Table 3.5 Classes taught by the participants in the present study

Teacher	Classes taught in 2016-17	
	Classes involved in the present study	Classes not involved in the present study
Laura	3E, 4A	6D
Louise	2B, 5E	1D
Lydia	3B, 4E	6E
Mark	English Reading Scheme: 1B, 2B	English Reading Scheme: 1CD; 2CD
	Language Art: 1E, 2E, 3E	Language Art: 1AE; 2AE; 3ABCDE
	Short Stories: 4A, 5A	Short Stories: 4AE, 5ABCDE
	Oral Practice: None	Oral Practice: 6ABCDE
Michelle	3A, 5A	4D
Monica	English Reading Scheme: 1E, 2E, 3C	English Reading Scheme: 1A, 2A, 3ABDE
	5D	

In terms of the format of lesson observations, I found it the ideal situation to be one in which I could observe the teachers' practice for a complete cycle in each phase of the study in person and videotape their lessons as doing so would enable me to record the visual data (e.g. the vocabulary items teachers wrote on the board) and attend to details related to students' learning that might otherwise be lost if I were to rely solely on the audio input for data analysis. Nonetheless, the teachers did not seem to feel comfortable with such an option, possibly because they were not used to being videotaped and they tended to associate classroom observations with evaluation of teaching performance. Considering it unethical to add extra pressure and burden to the participants, I decided to invite the teachers to audiotape their lessons and conduct overt classroom observations only once or twice at each stage of my research project after seeking their permission. In retrospect, the recorded lessons and interviews with teachers seemed effective in terms of helping me to create a clear picture of their beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching. The direct observations in some of the lessons also enhanced my understanding of different contextual factors (e.g. the classroom atmosphere, teacher-student interaction, physical setting of the classroom, etc.) that might be relevant.

As presented in Figure 3.2, lesson observations took place across all three stages of the study. While the teachers were expected to record all the lessons they conducted in the selected

classes for an entire cycle<sup>13</sup>, not all the lessons were recorded successfully, despite the trial use of the audio recorders, due to technical problems and change in class arrangements. As a result, a total of 238 single lessons were audiotaped for analysis (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Total number of lessons recorded

Teacher	Phase 1			Phase 2			Phase 3			All phases
	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Total
Laura	8	8	16	8	8	16	9	7	16	48
Louise	8	7	15	8	7	15	8	7	15	45
Lydia	5	5	10	6	8	14	9	9	18	42
Mark	4	2	6	5	2	7	5	2	7	20
Michelle	8	9	17	8	9	17	9	8	17	51
Monica	2	8	10	3	8	11	3	8	11	32
Total	35	39	74	38	42	80	43	41	84	238

Also noteworthy was the fact that all classes in the summer time lasted for 35 minutes, and those in the winter time took 40 minutes. Whilst all teachers were asked to audiotape their lessons once they had entered the classroom, the actual class time depended on different factors, one of which included the location of the classroom. It can thus be seen in Table 3.7 that the total amount of class time involved in the recorded lessons varied across individual teachers.

Table 3.7 Total amount of lesson time recorded, with the duration rounded to nearest minute

Teacher	Phase 1 (mins)			Phase 2 (mins)			Phase 3 (mins)			All phases
	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Junior	Senior	Subtotal	Total
Laura	279	248	527	279	288	567	319	258	577	1,671
Louise	287	201	529	278	225	503	289	193	482	1,514
Lydia	163	174	530	155	287	442	360	322	682	1,654
Mark	160	76	236	172	64	236	180	76	256	728
Michelle	265	355	528	291	332	623	331	294	625	1,776
Monica	73	267	340	82	209	291	94	171	265	896
Total	1,227	1,321	2,690	1,257	1,405	2,662	1,573	1,314	2,887	8,239

<sup>13</sup> The school ran a six-day cycle in which most of the English teachers conducted eight lessons with their senior-level students and nine lessons with their junior-level students, respectively.

### **3.6.3 Teachers' professional dialogues**

In addition to interviews and lesson observations, the professional dialogues audio-recorded during the teacher development programme that was conducted in the second phase of the study served as an important source of data. Specifically, seven sessions of dialogic interactions totalling approximately 15 hours, details of which are further presented in section 4.4.2 below, were all transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcripts of the four teachers' conversations served three major purposes. Not only did they facilitate my understanding of the teachers' beliefs and practices, they also made it possible for me to explore how dialogic reflection contributed to the development of beliefs and practices, as well as allowing me to examine the characteristics of individual teachers' dialogic interactions that might shape such development. To better understand the teachers' participation in the dialogic reflections, the booklets distributed to the teachers, which served as a stimulus for discussion, were scanned and analysed. Reading the notes individual teachers jotted down in the booklets, in particular, helped me to understand the teachers' contributions to the professional dialogues and identify areas to which teachers had drawn attention.

### **3.6.4 Teachers' reflective writing**

The reflective writing of research participants, because of the richness, depth and extension of the information that can be provided, has been perceived as a well-established data source in qualitative research (Jasper, 2005). While the reflective entries written by the four teacher participants who took part in the professional development programme served as a record of reflection, it is important to note that such writing is also the teachers' "reflection in itself" (Mann & Walsh, 2013, p. 299). As Mann and Walsh (2017) put it, "the process of writing down thoughts, comments and introspections is more than simply a record of reflection. The act of writing *about* reflection equates *with* reflection – they are one and the same thing" (p. 130). This explains why I aimed to identify the evidence of teachers' change in their reflective writing, learn from their comments about their experience of engaging in dialogic interactions with a specific focus on vocabulary teaching, and explore what had contributed to their change, if any, by examining the features of such writing.

For the purposes of the study, only teacher participants in the professional development programme were invited to produce self-reflective written accounts. I assured the teachers that they could write freely about their feelings and ideas in whichever way they wanted but provided them with the questions presented in Figure 3.3 to guide their self-reflection.

**Teachers were given the following guiding questions for their reflective writing on the professional dialogues:**

- Have you gained any insights into vocabulary teaching and learning after participating in the professional development session? If so, what have you learned? To what extent will the insights inform your future teaching or practice? If not, why do you think the session was not useful?
- What do you think about the professional development session (in terms of its format or structure, for example) and your experience of participating in it? Do you have any suggestions for improving the session?

Figure 3.3 Guiding questions for teachers' reflective writing

Although I planned to ask the teacher participants to write about their thoughts using a logbook if they preferred to do so, as I thought they might have limited time and low motivation to write the reflective entries, the teachers decided that they would complete their written reflection and send me their writing within two weeks of taking part in a professional dialogue as they found it important to record their ideas shortly after the dialogic interaction. While this enabled me to collect rich data and analyse the teachers' thoughts in great depth, some teachers suggested in their final interviews that the reflective entries could have been written after the implementation of certain new practices in class. I felt that it might have been better if I had given teachers more flexibility regarding the time when their reflective entries needed to be written.

### **3.6.5 Field notes**

A final source of data I used to analyse beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary teaching was the qualitative field notes of my observations taken while conducting the research. In qualitative research, field notes refer to "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 118–119). They can "take a variety of forms"



and be “a result of the interviews, observations, or document analysis” (Yin, 2014, p. 124). Although it is sometimes argued that a researcher may simply impose his or her interpretation upon the data while writing field notes (the issue of validity), my view is in line with Silverman's (2013), namely, that the use of field notes enables researchers to be “in a better position” to analyse “what participants take to be routine or obvious” (p. 243). Attending to details regarding what teachers do in their everyday work and teaching can be helpful.

In the current study, I kept a field diary, which mainly recorded what I observed both inside and outside of the English language classroom. This allowed me to take different contextual factors (e.g. the practical concerns, situations and constraints teachers encountered) into consideration while analysing the data and to present rich descriptions. The field diary also recorded details relating to the interviews and dialogic interactions, which might be helpful in strengthening my analysis. These included the time and place of the interviews and professional dialogues, the ways in which the teachers engaged in conversations, as well as their non-verbal body language, for example.

### **3.7 Analysing and synthesising the research data**

The study employed a predominately qualitative methodology for data collection and analysis. Amongst all the data gathered, only the lessons recorded were subjected to quantitative analysis, which was mainly used to show the salient features of vocabulary teaching and ascertain the relationship between the teachers' beliefs and practices. The statistics generated were thus descriptive rather than inferential. Given the highly interpretative nature of the study, an iterative, back-and-forth process (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 251) was involved in my data analysis that emphasised illumination, understanding and extrapolation (Barcelos, 2006; Golafshani, 2003; Hoepfl, 1997). Since there are no fixed rules for qualitative analysis, I followed Patton's (2002) advice to monitor and report my own analytical procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as I could to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and make replication possible. Despite being informed by different scholarly books and articles on research methodology, such as those published by Cohen et al. (2011), Dörnyei (2007), as well as Ritchie and Lewis (2003), I largely drew on Yin's (2016) work in the data analysis of this study. This section provides details of the ways

in which I analysed my data following the five analytical phases proposed by Yin (see Figure 3.4).

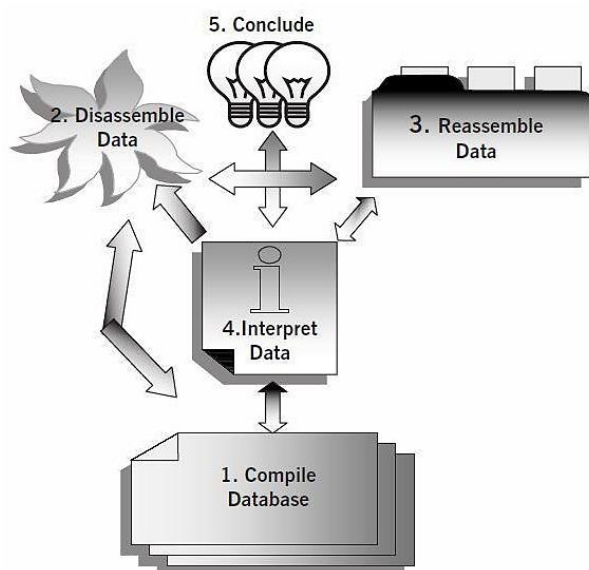


Figure 3.4 Five stages of qualitative data analysis and their interactions (Source: Yin, 2016, p. 178)

### **Transcribing the recorded spoken data and compiling the database for analysis**

The first stage of my data analysis started during data collection, when I began to compile and sort the field notes amassed from my fieldwork and other data collection. An important process involved here was the transformation of the recordings of the English language lessons, interviews and professional dialogues into a textual form. Given that these three types of recorded spoken data were of crucial importance in ascertaining the teacher participants' beliefs and change, all of them were transcribed verbatim to "conduct a fully-fledged qualitative investigation" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 248). I hired several research assistants to assist me with the transcription due to the huge amount of data collected and time-consuming nature of the process involved. However, I listened to all the audio-recordings of the spoken data against the transcripts to verify their accuracy, and more importantly, to familiarise myself with the data as much as possible prior to coding. Doing so helped to save me time when it came to transcription and preliminary data analysis during the rather intensive data gathering process. To make sure that the data collected could be retrieved easily, I organised all the transcriptions saved in Word format by placing them in different folders on my computer and naming them systematically. The completed compilation formed a database for my analysis.

## **Disassembling and reassembling the data**

The second and third stages of data analysis involved the breaking down of the compiled data into smaller fragments and reorganising the disassembled fragments into different groups and sequences, which were, in Yin's (2016) words, "a disassembling procedure" and "a reassembling procedure", respectively (p. 178). Content analysis was undertaken to identify, code, categorise and label the relevant data (Patton, 2002, p. 463) collected from teachers' interviews, recorded lessons, professional dialogues and reflective entries. This inductive process made data condensation (Kvale, 1996) possible, reducing the large volumes of information gathered by synthesising them into "managable elements and interpretation" as I brought "meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants" (Marshall & Hooley, 2011, p. 210). Whilst I believed the use of NVivo, a commonly used computer software package for qualitative data management, would greatly facilitate my data analysis as it has been suggested that the software may serve as an "able assistant and reliable tool" (Yin, 2014, p. 134), I decided not to use it having attempted to code a number of interviews as I felt that I was somewhat bound by the software's inevitable limitations and rigidity. To avoid distractions caused by the technical issues associated with the use of software in the coding process, I opted instead to use my own computer-based techniques for analysing the qualitative data.

The disassembling and reassembling stages were recursive. Prior to the coding process, I read and reread the transcripts in order to develop a thorough understanding of the data. I then went through the data line by line to code the transcriptions, electronically highlighted relevant extracts of the transcribed data, and wrote a descriptive code by the side of each piece of datum so that they could be easily identified and retrieved (Cohen et al., 2011). I went back and forth through the data to modify certain codes to ensure consistency, refinement, modification and exhaustiveness of coding (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 560). I also proactively sifted and sorted my ideas, looking for recurring themes and patterns, and reflected on how these could be related to my research focus. Here, it is important to highlight the fact that the specific methods and procedures I used to examine different sources of data were slightly different, though the analytical process was based on my description above.

### *Analysis of interviews*

The coding process of the teachers' interviews mainly consisted of identifying, labelling and examining teachers' responses to the areas I intended to explore, such as teachers' beliefs about vocabulary acquisition, aims of vocabulary teaching, approaches to teaching and assessing vocabulary, and factors shaping the teachers' beliefs and practices. The interview data collected from all phases of the study were thus mainly analysed by categorising the teachers' responses to the interview questions and finding possible relationships between them. To minimise any bias arising from my reading and understanding of the literature, I decided not to limit myself by predetermined constructs and used open coding to categorise the interview responses. The code names were thus my own creation or the words derived from spoken by the participants. This was followed by axial coding, whereby I worked at a higher conceptual level and combined some of the open codes to make connections between ideas (see Appendices E and F for the coding scheme developed and sample pages of a transcribed interview). Finally, the codes assigned to individual teachers' interview responses were tabulated to create a clear picture for further analysis and interpretation. A challenge that arose from the coding of the interviews concerned how I differentiated between teachers' beliefs and their knowledge regarding vocabulary teaching. Though I tried to do so by paying special attention to the expressions used by teachers, the process was not straightforward, especially because the distinction between teachers' beliefs and knowledge was certainly not clear cut. There were thus cases where I could only rely on my interpretation and professional judgment to draw the line between these two constructs.

### *Analysis of teachers' practice*

Three sources of data, including the teachers' recorded lessons, teaching materials and the vocabulary assessment tasks, were used to examine the participants' practice in vocabulary teaching. The recorded lessons served as a particularly important focus of the analysis as they helped me to identify teachers' practices regarding the content of, and approach to, vocabulary teaching, and contributed to the understanding of teachers' beliefs and change. For the purposes of the study, the lessons were coded selectively, with only the relevant parts relating to the explicit treatment of vocabulary examined. In spite of Walliman's (2006) claim that qualitative research focuses on people, general beliefs or customs, and only involves "information expressed in words" (p. 129), the analysis of data I collected from lesson observations involved

counting and dealing with numbers as this helped to identify characteristics and patterns of vocabulary teaching demonstrated by individual teachers and to strengthen the interpretative validity of my study. Specifically, Nation's (2013) model explaining what is involved in knowing a word was chosen because of its comprehensiveness to study the aspects of word knowledge teachers addressed in class. To the best of my knowledge, no analytical framework has been developed to examine the ways in which teachers provide students with lexical instruction to facilitate vocabulary development. In view of this, Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies was adapted to analyse how teachers encouraged the discovery of a new word's meaning and consolidated the learning of target vocabulary. Whilst Schmitt's work focuses on vocabulary learning, I adapted it to analyse teachers' lexical instruction as most of the vocabulary learning strategies (e.g. connecting the word to its synonyms and antonyms, using the new word in sentences, etc.) can be related to vocabulary teaching<sup>14</sup>. Also, the teachers' delivery of vocabulary instruction, from my viewpoint, can be interpreted as modelling or an implicit way of giving strategies-based instruction (Cohen & Weaver, 2006) that helps students develop their own strategies to approach vocabulary learning. These two frameworks, together with the types of vocabulary activities identified in the teachers' lessons, teaching resources used to facilitate lexical development, and vocabulary assessment tasks collected from teachers, formed the basis of my analysis (see Appendices G, H, I for the coding scheme, a sample of coded lessons and an overview of one teacher's practices in lexical instruction for analysis).

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<sup>14</sup> Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies is organised according to the discovery/consolidation distinction and the strategy system established by Oxford (1990). It consists of five strategy groups: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive. In the current study, I used the taxonomy to analyse vocabulary teaching and the five types of strategies are defined as follows:

- Determination strategies (DET) describe the strategies used by a teacher to prompt learners discover a new word's meaning without recourse to another person's expertise;
- Social strategies (SOC) refer to the strategies adopted to encourage students' interaction with others to improve vocabulary learning;
- Memory strategies (MEM) involve teaching approaches which relate the learning of words to previously learned knowledge, thus assisting retrieval;
- Cognitive strategies (COG) are similar to memory strategies, but do not focus specifically on manipulative mental processing. They mainly include repetition and the use of mechanical means to promote vocabulary learning;
- Metacognitive strategies (MET) are used to help students control and evaluate their vocabulary learning.

There are two major changes I made to the taxonomy. Firstly, I changed the wording of some items to make them more teacher-centred. For example, I changed 'take notes in class' to 'encourage students to take notes in class', and 'study the spelling of a word' to 'draw students' attention to the spelling of a word'. Secondly, the item 'use cognates in study' has been changed to 'use L1 translation' to fit the research context.

Here, it should be noted that the lesson materials and vocabulary assessment tasks collected were mainly used to help complement the observation and interview data. These two types of data helped to validate the teachers' reported beliefs and provide me with additional information about the research context. I started the analysis by flipping through the lesson materials in order to construct a general picture of them. I then examined such materials more closely with reference to the teachers' interview responses to ascertain the extent to which they mediated between the teachers' beliefs and practice. This was done by identifying the lexical items in the reading passages and analysing the tasks related to vocabulary learning, for example. Comparatively speaking, the analysis of the teachers' vocabulary assessment was rather straightforward. It mainly involved identifying the types of assessment tasks and examining their design.

### ***Analysis of teachers' professional dialogues and reflective writing***

The teachers' professional dialogues and reflective writing were mainly used to analyse the individual trajectories of change in beliefs and the factors shaping such change. I began by reading the teachers' reflective writing (Appendix J) and transcripts of professional dialogues (Appendix K) repeatedly to familiarise myself with the data. Teachers' beliefs reported in the reflective writing were then categorised and compared across the interviews conducted in all phases of the study to identify evidence of change. I drew on Cabaroğlu and Roberts' (2000) framework to further examine the belief change processes identified because their work, which was based on empirical data collected from a group of student teachers taking a course on the teaching of MFL, had considerable relevance to the present study.

Comparatively speaking, the analytical process of teachers' professional dialogues seemed to be less routine due to the variation amongst the teachers in terms of their participation in the dialogic interaction. To ensure that I could gain a thorough understanding of individual teachers' contributions to the professional dialogues, I extracted stretches of conversation representing each of their contributions to the dialogic reflection on vocabulary teaching during the professional development sessions for in-depth analysis (Appendix L). Then I categorised the extracts on the basis of the four critical lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995) to see whether the discussion focus might have affected the teachers' contributions, examined how the teachers' reflection might have shaped their belief change, identified the characteristics of teachers' reflection in terms of content and language, and also analysed the

notes written by the participants about the participation in the professional dialogues. In the process, I used Word to create notes based on my analysis of each participant, which I drew on when writing an in-depth account about them together with my interpretation.

### **Interpreting the data and drawing overall conclusions**

The final stages of my analysis involved giving my own meaning to the reassembled data and bringing my entire analysis together. Specifically, I conducted cross-case analysis to identify the teachers' beliefs and analyse their relationship with the teachers' practices based on the data collected in the initial phase to shed light on L2 vocabulary teaching. I also compared the individual cases to identify factors shaping the change in teachers' beliefs and practices. The literature reviewed and other relevant studies were referred to so that I could strengthen my interpretation, in the hope that I could draw conclusions that would capture the broader significance of my study and point to new research in need of being conducted.

### **3.8 Establishing trustworthiness and credibility**

Building trustworthiness into qualitative research is crucial, for it helps to ensure the quality of research by making it publicly accessible, creating room for discovery and constructing meaning based on an explicit set of evidence (Yin, 2016). Informed by Shenton (2004), who discusses how credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability should be addressed based on Guba's (1981) seminal work, his own experience of undertaking a qualitative study, and studies by other researchers, such as Creswell (2014), I employed different procedures to establish the trustworthiness of the present study. Some of the strategies I used for data collection, analysis and reporting are shown in Figure 3.5.

### **Strategies used for data collection:**

1. Spending prolonged time in the field to develop a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation: ten months were spent on data collection to ascertain the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching and identify evidence of change.
2. Adopting tactics to ensure honesty in the informants: this was mainly done by giving the participants opportunities to refuse to take part in the research. This helped to ensure that my data collection involved only those who were genuinely willing to participate and prepared to offer data freely. I also reminded the participants that they could be frank in expressing their views from time to time, adopted iterative questioning, and used probes to elicit detailed data and return to matters previously raised through rephrased questions.
3. Using data triangulation: multiple sources of data, including interviews, lesson observations, professional dialogues and reflective writing, were analysed.
4. Reducing the Hawthorne effect: given that participants might change their natural behaviour due to the awareness of being observed (Cohen et al., 2011), I tried to minimise the obtrusiveness of lesson observations by having the lessons audiotaped rather than videotaped. Also, I only sat at the back of the classroom and avoided walking around while observing the lessons in person, especially when the participants were teaching.
5. Clarifying my research bias: the researcher's reflectivity is a core characteristic of qualitative studies. Aiming at creating an open and honest narrative of my work, I kept a notebook to record my thoughts during data collection and reflected on how they might affect the research process. Doing so, as Stake (1995) describes, helped to explain how conclusions about the research findings were reached.

### **Measures employed for data analysis and reporting:**

1. Checking transcripts to ensure that they did not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription (Gibbs, 2007).
2. Enhancing dependability or qualitative reliability: this was achieved by documenting the research design and its implementation as clearly as possible to allow other researchers to repeat my work. I also adopted an iterative process of coding and selected around 30 per cent of all the interviews conducted and 20 per cent of the lessons recorded in Phase One of the study for cross-checking with two research assistants I trained. The consistency of the coding reached approximately 95 per cent, and the disagreements were resolved through discussion.
3. Using member checking to bolster the credibility of the study: I invited the participants to read relevant parts of my final report and provided them with the opportunity to comment on my work. All of them felt that the descriptions of their beliefs and practices were accurate. They also confirmed with me that my interpretation was reasonable.
4. Developing transferability of the findings: this was achieved by giving thick description of the actual situations being investigated and relevant contextual background which allowed comparisons to be made. The research findings were also related to scholarly views and previous research findings to assess the extent to which the project's results were congruent with those in the existing literature.

Figure 3.5 Strategies used to establish trustworthiness of the study



While various strategies were adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the present study, it should be acknowledged that the intrusion of my researcher's bias seemed inevitable. For example, I was unable to eliminate selectivity and might well have focused on the observations I found interesting and important, thus failing to report other findings. In addition, limitations of the study might have impacted the results and conclusions. These will be further discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

### **3.9 Taking research ethics into considerations**

Finally, ethical issues often arise in qualitative work involving people, and ethics should undoubtedly be “at the heart of research from the early design stages right through to reporting and beyond” (Webster, Lewis, & Brown, 2014, p. 78). Four moral dimensions of conducting educational research, namely, the 1) external / ecological, 2) consequential / utilitarian, 3) deontological, and 4) individual / relational dimensions (Flinders, 1992; Seedhouse, 1998; Wilson & Stutchbury, 2009), were the overarching ethical considerations which guided my study.

The external / ecological dimension underscores the need for researchers to be sensitive to the context in which the research takes place. In studying vocabulary teaching at the target school, it was crucial for me to take the culture and norms of the institution and its surrounding environment into account. Having previously taught at the target school, I was aware that the teacher-participants of my study, like other Hong Kong teachers who found their work “very or extremely stressful” due to “heavy workload related to the daily teaching routine” and different non-teaching duties (Jin, Yeung, Tang & Low, 2008, pp. 161–162), had to cope with a great deal of pressure. As it was inevitable that the teacher participants, especially those who joined the professional development programme, would need to devote a considerable amount of time to my research project, I communicated with the principal and all teachers involved to learn about their expectations in person. The professional dialogues were held during school time as requested and the interview schedule was negotiated with the teachers to minimise the burden imposed on them.

The consequential / utilitarian dimension is concerned with the “rightness or wrongness of an action” being judged with respect to whether the benefits of its intended outcomes outweigh

the disadvantages for the greatest number of people (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009, p. 490). As my study aimed to explore teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, as well as to examine the effects of a dialogic approach to professional development on such beliefs and practices, I envisaged that the study would pose no harm to the teachers involved, but would benefit them by enabling them to develop their awareness of their own and others' beliefs about vocabulary teaching, foster their reflection on their classroom practice, and possibly enhance their teaching quality. Though it might on the surface seem unethical for me to offer the two teachers who did not join the professional dialogues my feedback on their vocabulary teaching only after their final interviews, I did not consider it much of a problem as I believed they would still benefit from discussing their beliefs about vocabulary teaching with me during the interviews and discovering what I had observed about their lessons.

Also pertinent to the consequential / utilitarian approach to research ethics is that informed consent should be obtained from participants. In essence, this suggests that people should be given adequate information and understanding to make a sensible decision for themselves about whether or not to participate in a study (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012a). Prior to the commencement of my study, informed consent was sought from the participants. A letter which highlighted the key information pertinent to my study, including its purposes, potential benefits, duration, proposed content, as well as issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity, was sent to the principal and the potential teacher participants (Appendix M). I checked that the participants understood what was involved in my work, obtained their voluntary consent to proceed, and reminded them of their right to withdraw from my study at any time.

Moving on to the deontological dimension, the term "deontology" denotes the meaning of "necessity or obligation" (Flinders, 1992, p. 104). From a deontological perspective, ethics are assessed on the basis of "conformity to general rules about right action" (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012b, pp. 20–21), as opposed to the desirability of consequences. A major deontological concern highlighted by Wilson and Stutchbury (2009) is truth-telling. In relation to my study, it means that I needed to consider the extent to which I should communicate to the participants the aims and objectives of my research project, as well as how I intended to handle sensitive findings the participants, their department or school might consider problematic. One of the ethical challenges I faced relates to the complete disclosure of my research aims and purposes. On the one hand, it was my deontological obligation to

maintain honesty and openness when explaining the research aims and purposes of my study to the participants. On the other hand, telling the participants that I intended to explore how dialogic reflections contributed to the development of their beliefs and practices might create “the Hawthorne effect” (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 189), resulting in the teachers’ deliberate change in their behaviour. To resolve this ethical tension, I decided to disclose only partial information regarding the nature of my study. Teachers were only told that my study sought to scrutinise their own and others’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning, which had the potential to enable them to gain considerable insight into their work.

One further ethical dilemma I considered was about how I could maintain respondents’ confidentiality while presenting rich or thick description. According to Wengraf (2001), the research participants may insist on a certain degree of confidentiality, resulting in the “loss of detail” which will “degrade the value of the report” (p. 187). As I believed that the value of my research study would be less likely to be undermined if the participants found the details of their involvement to be acceptable (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013) and were convinced that I would protect them from being recognised by others (Walford, 2005), I assured those involved that I would “listen well” to their responses for signs of concern (Stake, 2008, p. 140) and guarantee anonymity using different means, such as concealing their names with the use of pseudonyms before data analysis, avoiding naming their school when reporting the findings, and keeping certain identifying details confidential. The participants were also given the opportunity to read the drafts of my report revealing how they were presented to ensure that no information they did not intend or expect to be made public would be disclosed.

Finally, the individual / relational dimension places an emphasis on our “respect” and “consideration” for those we attempt to understand (Flinders, 1992, p. 101). As a former teacher at the research site, I believed I had established good relationships and trust with most of the English language teachers based on our collaboration and mutual support. This allowed open and genuine communication between the teachers and myself, enabling us to take part in intellectual exchange and discuss our expectations. Moreover, I tried to remain non-judgmental and to avoid evaluating the teachers’ views and their teaching quality while conducting the study. Based on the notion that there is no ‘best teaching method’, I considered it crucial to value the diversity that exists among individual teachers and learn with the teachers in the process.

## CHAPTER 4

### DEVELOPING TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES THROUGH A DIALOGIC APPROACH

*We create opportunities for people to change, but we can't change them.  
They have to change themselves. (Sheff, 1996)*

#### 4.1 Introduction

Given that teachers' commitment to continuous professional learning is fundamental for pedagogical improvement and student achievement (Lee Bae, Hayes, Seitz, O'Connor, & DiStefano, 2016), it is important that teachers view themselves as lifelong learners and continue their growth as professionals (Haneda, Teemant, & Sherman, 2017) by developing their beliefs and practices through constant reflection. If we perceive teacher professional development as a learning process, we need to make sense of how theories of learning may inform development and examine the ways in which it can be best situated within a theoretical framework. Sheff's quote above reflects my view of teacher professional development. While I acknowledge that teachers' beliefs are shaped by different sociocultural factors, I argue that we should create opportunities for teachers to engage in critical reflection, which enable them to embrace change, rather than forcing their transformation.

This chapter adopts a sociocultural view of learning and teacher development, taking the position that learning is a social process which involves the construction and co-construction of meaning through the use of language as a mediational tool for understanding. Among the different forms of professional development that adopt a sociocultural approach, such as the use of mentoring, as well as co-lesson planning and lesson observation, dialogic reflection serves as the focus of the present study as I believe new understandings are likely to emerge when teachers engage in explicit discussion of their beliefs and practice.

The first section explains why the sociocultural theory (SCT), rooted in the work of Lev Vygotsky and his colleagues (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995), serves as a powerful theory for examining belief development for the purpose of the study. This is achieved by introducing the tenets of SCT and looking at how teacher professional development can be characterised from a sociocultural perspective. The second section explores the potential of dialogic

reflection as a sociocultural approach that facilitates the development of teachers' beliefs and practices. It begins with the definition of dialogue, followed by the relevance of SCT to a dialogic approach to teacher professional development, and the evidence that demonstrates why such an approach may be conducive to teachers' belief development. The third section is an overview of how I entered into professional dialogue regarding vocabulary teaching with the frontline teachers of my study. Specifically, I explain how I designed the programme for teacher development by drawing upon Brookfield's (1995) work and planning the series of events, along with a description of how my role in the teachers' professional dialogues and beliefs about vocabulary teaching might have contributed to the practitioners' shared inquiry and co-construction of meaning.

## **4.2 Characterising teacher professional development from a sociocultural perspective**

As Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) argue, the sociocultural theory "situates the locus of learning in the dialogic interactions that arise between socially constituted individuals engaged in activities which are co-constructed with other individuals rather than in the heads of solipsistic beings", thus allowing the observation of learning "in all of its fuzziness" to emerge ( p. 116). Central to the theory is the notion that human thinking develops through mediation. As Scribner (1990) writes:

Vygotsky's special genius was in grasping the significance of the social in things as well as people. The world in which we live in is humanized, full of material and symbolic objects (signs, knowledge systems) that are culturally constructed, historical in origin and social in content. Since all human actions, including acts of thought, involve the mediation of such objects ('tools and signs') they are, on this score alone, social in essence. This is the case whether acts are initiated by single agents or a collective and whether they are performed individually or with others (p. 92).

Clearly, three tenets of sociocultural theory, namely, tools and signs, social interaction, and individual activities, have been highlighted by Scribner. This section focuses on how these sociocultural concepts can be related to teacher learning.

## **Language as a mediational tool to facilitate intermental and intramental functioning**

Mediation, the ways in which learning is influenced by artefacts and tools, is a central component of SCT. Vygotsky's primary focus is on what he names 'psychological tools', which are considered the semiotic systems (most prominently, language) that mediate thinking (Moll, 2001). Advocates of SCT contend that we need to understand learning by studying what people say and do, instead of merely exploring what they think. This, very often, entails the study of language and interaction (Mann & Walsh, 2017). From a sociocultural perspective, language not only serves as a means of communication, allowing individuals to negotiate meanings with others, but can also be used to mediate thoughts internally through inner speech.

In Vygotskian terms, all learning is mediated by language. With language, children develop their thinking through intermental functioning (e.g. by thinking aloud and interacting with other people) and making them intramental (e.g. by internalising the dialogue) (Spouse, 2001). Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that adults cease any intermental functioning. As Vrikki, Warwick, Vermunt, Mercer, and Van Halem (2017) point out, interaction for intellectual purposes, in the pursuit of shared goals, is a "common and essential feature of adult human life and one that is particularly prevalent in well-run professional groups" (p. 214). Development does not proceed as the unfolding of inborn capacities, but as "the transformation of innate capacities once they intertwine with socioculturally constructed mediational means" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995, p. 109). In this sense, I consider Vygotsky's (1978) two-step approach to be a fundamental theoretical concept underpinning the present study, which examines change in teachers' beliefs as a process of learning through the use of language. It is my belief that language functions as a 'symbolic tool' to help clarify and understand beliefs and practices in the study. It can also be used to reflect on and justify what has been learned as new ideas are internalised.

## **Teacher learning as a social process in the zone of proximal development**

The second principle of sociocultural theory pertinent to teachers' developmental process lies in the role of human agency, particularly social interaction. SCT embraces the notion that "human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities", emphasising the "social, dynamic and collaborative dimensions of learning" (Walsh, 2013, p. 8) in creating

“uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking” (Johnson, 2009, p. 1). In other words, learning is “essentially” a “social process rather than one generated within the individual” (Norris & Ortega, 2003, p. 724).

What needs to be acknowledged when it comes to Vygotsky’s psychology concerning learning and social interaction is the concept of the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD), commonly referred to as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Put succinctly, individuals’ development of mental abilities occur with “the collaborative construction of opportunities” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17)<sup>15</sup>. The value of the ZPD, according to Walsh (2013), is manifested in its considerable potential for “enabling consideration of the give and take in any teacher development process” (p. 9). Here, it is important to note that the term ‘intermental development zone’ (IDZ) (Mercer, 2000) may be preferred when it comes to relating ‘dialogue’ to professional learning because ZPD is invoked by Vygotsky as a “temporary tool or scaffold to help in a direction of individual development that is known in advance” (Wegerif, 2013, p. 23). As in the present study, the collaborative construction of opportunities for learning is created by means of dialogic reflection in which teachers collectively examine vocabulary teaching. While there are “no standard beliefs teachers should hold about teaching or learning” (Li, 2017, p. 33), we may not speak of one belief being at a higher level than another. Nevertheless, I suspect that teachers may become more aware of their own and alternative beliefs, which then results in a higher level of cognitive understanding and thinking, if they are invited to discuss their own beliefs about vocabulary teaching with their counterparts who hold different perspectives. The assumption of a teacher leading a learner, therefore, seems inappropriate.

### **Teacher learning as appropriation or internalisation**

The third main idea in SCT pertains to ‘appropriation’ or ‘internalisation’ (Bakhtin, 1981), terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, which refer to ‘individual activities’ that involve “making something one’s own” (Daniels, 2008, p. 66). In order for culturally

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<sup>15</sup> While different key terms that relate to the definitions of the ZPD given by Lantolf and Vygotsky include ‘collaboration’, ‘construction’, ‘opportunities’ and ‘development’, other scholars use “occasions for learning” (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 320) and “affordance” (van Lier, 2000, p. 252) to refer to learning opportunities.

mediated thinking to occur, it is crucial to rely on both “the artefacts through which behaviour is mediated” (i.e. language) and “the circumstances in which the thinking occurs” (Cole, 1996, p. 131). Clearly, teacher development not only means a process of enculturation into the current social practices related to teaching and learning, but also a dynamic process which involves the reconstruction and transformation of the practices to respond to individual and local needs. As such, teachers are advised to “appropriate and reconstruct the resources that have been developed and made available to them while simultaneously refashioning those resources to meet new challenges” (Johnson, 2009, p. 13). In my view, teachers’ professional dialogue focusing on the explicit discussion of beliefs can be one of the ‘circumstances’ that create opportunities for teachers to think. It is, however, equally important for teachers to internalise the social interaction, which may be facilitated by reflecting on their own beliefs and classroom practice. Here, the notion of ‘reflection-on-action’ proposed by Schön (1983) seems highly relevant, as it may contribute to individuals’ transformation by developing their cognitive readiness for intermental and intramental development. In his model of pedagogical reasoning and action, Shulman (1999) defines reflection as a process of “reviewing, reconstructing, reenacting and critically analysing one’s own and the class’s performance, and grounding explanations in evidence” (p. 71). I consider this deliberate and conscious thinking about beliefs in relation to practice, through interaction with counterparts and the reflective writing that follows, is likely to raise teachers’ awareness of their teaching and issues concerning vocabulary teaching, thus improving teaching quality.

### **4.3 Exploring the potential of dialogic interaction designed to promote teacher development**

In this section, I propose that dialogic interaction, a form of collaborative reflection informed by the fundamental concepts of SCT, should be promoted amongst teachers. In its first part, I seek to define the notion of ‘dialogue’ and focus on the conceptualisation of dialogic reflection in the context of professional development. The relevance of SCT to a dialogic approach to teacher development, and an overview of the empirical evidence examining the effectiveness of educational dialogue on promoting learning are subsequently discussed.

#### **4.3.1 Defining a dialogic approach to teacher professional development**

Dialogue, in everyday use, means conversation or discussion, which involves two or more



people engaging in talk. Within a sociocultural framework of understanding, however, dialogue refers to “any kind of human sense-making, semiotic practice, interaction, thinking and communication, as long as these phenomena are ‘dialogically’ (or ‘dialogistically’) understood” (Linell, 2009, p. 990). It can be regarded as a tool which empowers people to arrive at an understanding of one another’s knowledge and perspectives through ‘interthinking’, a term coined by Mercer (1995) to suggest how the cognitive and social functions of group talk can be used to foster collective thinking and the engagement with ideas through spoken language. Similarly, Alexander (2008) affirms that dialogue has the power to engage people, stimulate and extend their thinking, and promote their learning. His work describes how strategic use of classroom talk can be used to support teaching and learning according to five principles, highlighting the importance of dialogic teaching in terms of being ‘collective’, ‘reciprocal’, ‘supportive’, ‘cumulative’ and ‘purposeful’ (p. 38).

Drawing on the five indicators of dialogic talk in the classroom and the work by Wilkinson et al. (2017), which interprets dialogic teaching as metacognitive, I suggest that dialogic reflection to promote teacher professional development can be defined by the qualities presented in Figure 4.1.

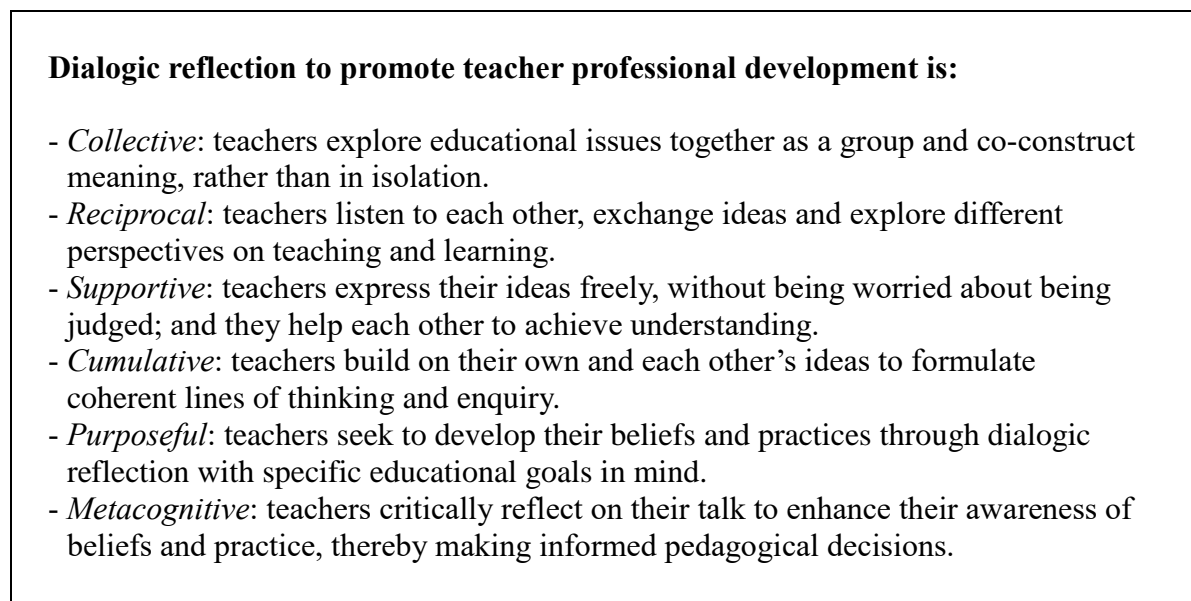


Figure 4.1 Qualities of dialogic reflection to promote teacher professional development

Here, it is important to note that my view of ‘dialogue’ is notably influenced by Burbules (2000), who argues that it should not be simply perceived as “a form of question and answer” or “a momentary engagement between two or more people”, but a discursive practice

involving “a relation constituted in a web of relations among multiple forms of communication, human practices, and mediating objects or texts” (pp. 263-265). The chief intention of dialogue lies not in its results *per se*, but in the process which requires individuals to be “critically conscious of their own thinking” (Johns, 2002, p. 33). Dialogic, therefore, is “not simply a way for a subject to know about a world out there beyond the subject but it is also about a way of being in the world” (Wegerif, 2011, p. 182). The essence of a dialogue is its potential to help enhance one’s ability to think clearly, insofar as it can penetrate and help people develop their thinking about issues, allowing new ways of seeing and reacting to issues to emerge (Krishnamurti, 1996).

As Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast (1997) point out, “discourse is dialogic not because speakers take turns, but because it is continually structured by tension, even conflict between the conversants, between self and other, as one voice ‘refracts’ the other” (p. 8). Admittedly, individuals who hold diverse views and adopt different practices may create tension when asked to participate in dialogic reflection. Yet I share Johns’s (2002) view that the aim of dialogue is to “understand and challenge the perspective(s) of others” with the intention of achieving understanding (p. 33). As such, dialogic reflection to promote professional development is seen as divergent in nature (Burbules, 1993), meaning that teachers do not necessarily need to agree with what is being said, and multiple conclusions are perfectly acceptable. It is thus of paramount importance for teachers to be reminded of the need to avoid passing judgment so that they can “communicate freely in a creative movement in which no one permanently holds to or otherwise defends his (or her) own ideas” (Bohm, 2004, p. 4).

#### **4.3.2 Reviewing research into the use of dialogue to support learning**

Over the last few decades, there has been an increasing amount of research examining the use of educational dialogue in primary and secondary classrooms, particularly in English-speaking countries (Howe & Abedin, 2013). The recognition that it helps facilitate students’ learning and growth appears to be permeating the literature (Muhonen, Rasku-Puttonen, Pakarinen, Poikkeus, & Lerkkanen, 2017). Mercer (2008), in his attempt to examine Vygotsky’s claims about the effects of dialogue on children’s intellectual development for educational purposes, found that classroom dialogue not only stimulates children’s collective thinking but also enhances individual reasoning capabilities. In a later study, Rojas-

Drummond, Torreblanca, Pedraza, Vélez, and Guzmán (2013) analysed how scaffolding is enacted through dialogic interaction to promote understanding and learning. They conclude from their study that ‘dialogic scaffolding’, which refers to how the responsive support offered by a teacher is enacted through teacher-student interaction, gradually results in better understanding on the part of the children. Whilst a considerable body of research has demonstrated how dialogue can be effective in promoting students’ learning outcomes, dialogue seems to have much more to offer than just improved academic attainment. Alexander’s (2008) dialogic teaching project is a good illustration of how such an approach can be useful in promoting learning by taking affective conditions into consideration. Its preliminary results suggest how a dialogic approach may help to create a more inclusive classroom by empowering students who do not normally speak in class to express themselves with increased confidence, thus contributing to the establishment of learning communities.

Investigation into how dialogue can be used to effect professional learning and development, despite not having received as much attention as those studies concerned with children and young learners, further reveals the value of talk. To scrutinise how secondary school science, mathematics and English teachers develop assessment for learning practices, Harrison (2005) and his research team provided teachers with feedback on classroom observations, offered support through discussion during school visits and helped to create a community that engaged in dialogue within meetings to promote shared reflection amongst teachers. With his analysis drawing on multiple sources of data, including interviews, teachers’ reflective writing, lesson observations and field notes of the meetings, the researcher found that the participants’ understanding was developed as they discussed their evolving practice with other practitioners who shared similar views and were trying to implement similar changes in their own classrooms. As such, the role of professional dialogue in helping practitioners to formulate ideas which may possibly be honed into effective practice is highlighted. In their study investigating dialogic interaction, Haneda et al. (2017) looked at how an experienced coach assisted a kindergarten teacher in developing an understanding of ‘critical stance’ as a pedagogical principle. Based on the analysis of a series of instructional coaching sessions, the researchers conclude that the strategic use of dialogue as inquiry has the potential for creating a dialogic space which provides teachers with the opportunity to challenge, explore, appropriate, and eventually develop their practice.

Overall, the use of dialogue appears to be positively related to learning and professional

development. As dialogic reflection is likely to contribute to cognitive development and foster communities of learners, it is recommended that teachers be given opportunities to engage in professional talk in order to develop their beliefs and practices.

#### **4.3.3 Some reflections on SCT and a dialogic approach to teacher development**

Clearly, the concepts related to ‘dialogue’ correspond closely to the notion of SCT, which emphasises how social interaction makes it possible for an individual to undergo intermental and intramental development, thus achieving a higher level of thinking. Given that it seems well established, both theoretically and empirically, that dialogic interaction promotes learning, the question at this point is: How can different concepts related to ‘dialogue’ fit into the overall design of a teacher professional development programme by drawing on a sociocultural approach to promote belief construction and reconstruction, which may ultimately improve teachers’ practices?

#### **The notion of ‘novice’ and ‘expert’ teachers and the transactional nature of learning**

One important issue to consider when it comes to dialogic reflection concerns ‘who’ are the individuals engaged in dialogue. As Burbules and Bruce (2001) argue, a dialogue is “not an engagement of two (or more) abstract persons, but of people with characteristics, styles, values and assumptions that shape the particular ways in which they engage in discourse” (p. 1110). In the current study, the teachers may share certain similar beliefs and characteristics related to vocabulary teaching and learning as they all work in the same context, yet it is reasonable to speculate that there may be individual differences with respect to beliefs and practice due to their diverse experiences of English language learning, teacher training, teaching experience, etc. The nature of learning, according to Bruner (1983, 1985), is “transactional”. In other words, learning takes place when novices and experts who have accumulated sufficient experience give guidance and support in collaborative, scaffolded interaction (Markee, 2015). Nevertheless, identifying novice and expert teachers is not straightforward as there seems no reliable way of distinguishing them (Li, 2017). Although researchers have used years of teaching experience, reputation, identification by educational authorities and additional criteria, such as student achievement and peer nomination, to compare the two (see, e.g. Gattbonton, 2008; Li, 2013; Tsui, 2003), it may be problematic to distinguish ‘novice’ and ‘expert’ knowers based on the criteria suggested above. There is, for

example, no guarantee that a vastly ‘experienced’ teacher will know more than a rather ‘inexperienced’ teacher. Similarly, having students whose achievement is outstanding does not necessarily mean that a teacher is an ‘expert’. More importantly, the presence of an ‘expert’ knower may not be crucial when applying SCT to teacher professional development. It is my belief that teachers can learn collaboratively and benefit from engaging in the dialogue with their counterparts even if their dialogues are similar, because the discussion itself may help to ascertain the teachers’ thoughts and encourage them to reflect on their beliefs and practice. Although the value of ZPD is closely related to the ‘give and take’ in the process of teacher professional development, new understandings may be created when teachers, be they ‘novice’ or ‘expert’, jointly construct meaning through dialogic interaction, in an intermental development zone (IDZ).

### **Teacher learning as an intermental and intramental development**

Whilst it appears that dialogic interaction amongst teachers can serve as a sociocultural approach to professional development, it is important to consider how teachers can be supported to establish such interaction and be able to benefit from appropriation or internalisation after taking part in the intermental activity that aims to foster critical reflection. As Brookfield (1995) suggests, critical reflection can be difficult because we are “all prisoners trapped within the perceptual frameworks that determine how we view our experiences” to some extent (p. 28). This explains why it seems important for teachers to unearth their assumptions by reflecting on their beliefs and practices from as many unfamiliar perspectives as possible in order for critical reflection to take place. Given that appropriation or internalisation is central to teacher development, we also need to consider how teachers can make sense of the understanding they gain from the professional dialogues by internalising it and making it their own. Written forms of reflection can be useful, for they provide teachers with the time and space required to organise and structure their thoughts, allowing them to make changes as they write (Farrell, 2013).

#### **4.4 Entering into professional dialogues with teachers**

As stated earlier, the purpose of my project is to arrive at a better understanding of how teachers’ beliefs and practices can be developed through a dialogic approach to professional development. Specifically, I focus my investigation on vocabulary teaching because of its

importance to SLA and its taxing nature. This section focuses on how I created the opportunity for teachers to take part in professional dialogue regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. I start by discussing how I stimulated teachers' critical reflection through a structured approach, allowing teachers to view their own and others' beliefs through different lenses. I then introduce the tools and procedures I adopted to support teachers' dialogic reflection, followed by a brief description of how my beliefs and role as a researcher might have influenced the teacher participants, their interaction and belief development.

#### **4.4.1 Stimulating critical reflection through four reflective lenses**

According to Johns (2002), "reflection is the way to access one's assumptions and see them for what they are"; but it can be "profoundly difficult" since our assumptions reflect who we are and can be "taken for granted" (p. 33). A key challenge in planning for teachers' dialogic interaction to promote critical reflection therefore concerned finding an effective means of raising teachers' awareness of their own and alternative beliefs by triggering constructive discussion between them. For me, one way of doing so was to create opportunities for teachers to explore issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching and learning from different perspectives.

In *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*, Brookfield (1995) recommends using four perspectives, namely "autobiographies", "students' eyes", "colleagues' experiences", and "theoretical literature" (p. 29), to draw teachers' attention to distorted or incomplete aspects of their assumptions which warrant further examination. These four perspectives, as presented in Table 4.1, formed the basis of the professional dialogues, though not exclusively, stimulating teachers' reflection on their own and others' beliefs. What is noteworthy is that individuals are recommended to unearth their assumptions and examine what they do from as many angles as possible so that they can benefit from examining alternative perspectives. The teacher participants of my study were thus encouraged to look at vocabulary teaching and learning through the four lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995) without neglecting other perspectives, such as those of textbook writers, educational policy-makers, newspaper reporters and teacher trainers. It was hoped that they could be able to 'stand outside' themselves, unearth their beliefs, re-examine their teaching and gain new insights, thereby developing their beliefs and/or practice.

Table 4.1 Brookfield's (1995) four lenses for critical reflection

Lens	Description
Autobiographies	<i>Autobiographies</i> represent teachers' self-reflection on their experiences as learners and teaching practitioners. As Brookfield (1995) suggests, teachers may better understand why they gravitate toward particular ways of teaching and avoid certain others by recalling dimensions of their autobiographies as learners, since pedagogical preferences which appear instinctive can often be traced back to circumstances in which the teachers felt inspired or demeaned as learners. It may also be useful for teachers to reflect on their autobiographies as teachers since such practice may enable them to enhance their effective practice, identify areas for improvement and plan for action.
Colleagues' experiences	<i>Colleagues' experiences</i> serve as 'critical mirrors' which reflect back to teachers images of their actions. The sharing of thoughts and experiences may help teachers identify aspects of their beliefs and practice that are usually hidden from them, enabling them to view their practice in a new light.
Students' eyes	<i>Students' eyes</i> present teachers with useful information which enable them to check whether their learners understand the meanings they intend to convey, respond to students' needs, and avoid making ill-informed or inappropriate methodological choices.
Theoretical literature	<i>Theoretical literature</i> offers multiple perspectives on familiar situations encountered by teachers. Specifically, getting teachers to reflect on educational theories and research findings may help them understand their experience by interpreting it in alternative ways.

Figure 4.2 illustrates how the four major lenses proposed by Brookfield were adopted to trigger teachers' intramental and intermental development by reflecting on their own experience and sharing their thoughts aloud. In retrospect, the dialogic reflection amongst teachers focused largely on the four lenses, with other relevant perspectives used only sporadically. It might have been better if I had encouraged the teacher participants to examine vocabulary teaching and learning by reflecting more in terms of textbook design, the English language curriculum documents, media reports and their teacher training, though time constraints made it impossible for me to do so.

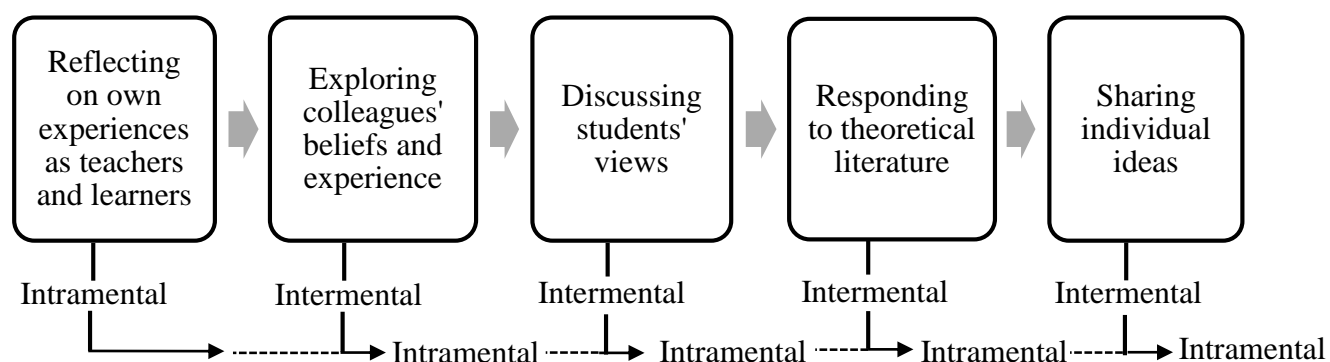


Figure 4.2 Design of the teacher professional development programme

#### 4.4.2 Procedures and tools for teachers' dialogic reflection

To foster teachers' reflection which would enable them to develop their beliefs and practice through collaborative inquiry and learning, 'structured reflection' was used to organise the professional dialogues. As Mann and Walsh (2017) note, one advantage of a structured approach to reflection is that participants are given specific areas to focus on. In each professional development session, teachers were provided with written prompts to help them look at vocabulary teaching and learning through multiple lenses. Prior to collegial exchange, they were given some guiding questions to reflect upon a specific aspect of vocabulary teaching and learning. Such an arrangement allowed teachers to be better prepared for the sharing of their own beliefs and practices with each other in the next section focusing on the 'colleague lens'. This was followed by the discussion of student voices collected from surveys and the exploration of theoretical perspectives, which mainly made use of the extracts from scholarly books and articles as the mediating tool to stimulate teachers' interaction. Note that the primary goal of the professional dialogue was to prompt teachers to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching. It was significantly different from typical teacher professional development courses, seminars and workshops in which the participants rather passively gain knowledge based on the speaker's input. That is, it followed a bottom-up approach, allowing the co-construction of beliefs and critical reflection practice, and rejected a top-down, didactic approach that would seek to impose changes. The following explains the planning and implementation of dialogic reflection in the study.

As Sampson (2004) points out, "any gaps in a research design begin to show up" only when the data have been collected and evaluated (p. 399). A pilot study was thus performed to help



me identify problems that might arise during teachers' dialogic reflection, allowing me to ensure that the study moved in an appropriate direction in terms of the lines of enquiry of the research and their implementation. Specifically, the first three sessions of professional dialogue were trialled with four English language teachers in Hong Kong in September 2016. The teachers were generally positive about the pilot discussion, and only small amendments were made to the content of the materials for critical reflection.

### **Planning for the dialogic reflection: exploration of topics**

Each session of professional development centred on a specific topic related to vocabulary teaching and learning. The topics and major discussion questions were identified based on my reading of scholarly work published by key researchers in the field of L2 vocabulary teaching and learning (e.g. Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2000; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). To ensure that these topics were worth exploring, they were shown to the chairperson of the school's development committee responsible for shaping the school's policies and the teachers who would participate in the dialogic reflection for comments. Table 4.2 presents the focus of the professional dialogues, provides an overview of the major questions for discussion and highlights how the contents of the professional dialogue is related to the exploration of beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning.

Table 4.2 The focus of professional dialogues and the major questions for discussion

Session	Topic(s)	Major discussion questions	Exploration of beliefs
1	The role of vocabulary and the notion of 'knowing a word'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How important is vocabulary knowledge?</li> <li>- What is the role of vocabulary in second / foreign language acquisition?</li> <li>- What is meant by 'knowing a word'?</li> </ul>	Epistemological beliefs about the role of vocabulary, the importance of vocabulary and the notion of a word.
2	Vocabulary in the English language classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How many words should be taught in class?</li> <li>- Should teachers select particular types of words to teach (or not teach)? If so, how? If not, why?</li> <li>- Can teachers, textbooks and curricula cover second language vocabulary adequately?</li> <li>- Should teachers encourage multiple contacts with target words in class? Why or why not?</li> <li>- What are other important issues concerning vocabulary instruction in the English language classroom?</li> </ul>	Pedagogical beliefs about the aims, content, approach and resources regarding vocabulary teaching.
3	Vocabulary instructional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can English teachers help students learn a word effectively in class?</li> <li>- What can be done to help students consolidate the learning of a word?</li> <li>- Should vocabulary be taught directly in class? Why (not)?</li> <li>- Should L1 translation be used in the English language classroom to teach vocabulary?</li> </ul>	Pedagogical beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching (presentation).
4	Vocabulary enhancement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How important is it to conduct vocabulary activities in English lessons? What can be achieved by conducting vocabulary activities in class?</li> <li>- What kinds of activities can be introduced in English lessons to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning?</li> <li>- Is / are there any activity / activities you commonly conduct in class to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning?</li> <li>- What should teachers consider when designing class activities for vocabulary enhancement?</li> <li>- What kind(s) of vocabulary activities do you think your students like / dislike? Why?</li> </ul>	Pedagogical beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching (practice).

(continued on next page)

Table 4.2 (Continued)

5	Autonomous vocabulary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What challenges do learners face when learning vocabulary?</li> <li>- What are some factors that make it challenging for Chinese learners of English to learn vocabulary?</li> <li>- What can be done to promote autonomous vocabulary learning?</li> <li>- What are some examples of effective strategies which may be conducive to autonomous vocabulary learning?</li> </ul>	Pedagogical beliefs about the learners and learning of vocabulary.
6	Vocabulary assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How important is it for teachers to assess students' vocabulary learning?</li> <li>- What can be achieved through vocabulary assessment?</li> <li>- What should be taken into consideration when it comes to assessing vocabulary?</li> <li>- How do you usually assess your students' lexical knowledge? Do you think your students like the way(s) you use?</li> <li>- What are different effective ways to test vocabulary?</li> <li>- How can tests be used to monitor and encourage vocabulary learning?</li> </ul>	Pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary assessment.
7	Round-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you think about our discussion on vocabulary teaching and learning?</li> <li>- What have you learned from taking part? What impresses you most / least?</li> <li>- What do you think about the writing of reflective entries after our discussion?</li> <li>- Would you like this kind of professional development to be conducted again? Why (not)?</li> </ul>	All of the above

## **Preparing the stimulus for dialogic reflection**

As explained earlier I attempted to facilitate teacher dialogic reflection using the four lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995). Whilst the autobiographical and collegial perspectives arouse from the participants' self-reflection and their sharing respectively, I relied on the survey responses collected from students studying at the target school to foster teachers' reflection from learner perspectives and summarised the scholarly views from a range of academic books and articles I read for their theoretical discussion.

### ***Student voices for teachers' reflection***

To help teachers reflect on vocabulary teaching through the 'students' eyes', I designed an online questionnaire based on the topics I identified and invited all students, except the students in their sixth-year of secondary education (equivalent to students undertaking Year 13 in England), to complete it during their English language lesson<sup>16</sup>. While I acknowledged that there were limitations to using questionnaire surveys to capture students' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning, especially because the use of normative statements may not be able to capture the complex nature of beliefs, I nonetheless decided to collect students' views using a questionnaire as the data collected were not intended to serve as the primary data of my research. More importantly, using such a method enabled me to collect data from a wider target population, possibly generating more perspectives on vocabulary teaching and learning for teachers' discussion. It should also be noted that I had deliberately included open-ended questions in the survey so that respondents could "answer as much as they wish" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 382) and deal with the complexity of beliefs to some extent.

As can be seen in Appendix N, the questionnaire was divided into five major parts. In addition to investigating students' epistemological beliefs about vocabulary development, it focused on identifying the students' beliefs about vocabulary learning (e.g. those relating to vocabulary learning difficulties and the most effective ways to learn vocabulary); vocabulary teaching (e.g. those relating to the need for direct vocabulary teaching, teachers' lexical instruction, the use of materials for vocabulary development, etc.); activities for vocabulary

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<sup>16</sup> The students in their six-year of secondary education were excluded because they were expected to focus on their academic studies and examination preparation, and it was considered inappropriate for them to complete the questionnaire in class, which would have taken around half an hour.

enhancement; and vocabulary assessment. Piloting had taken place in a different school where two classes of secondary school students (N=51) were asked to complete an earlier version of the survey. The results proved very helpful in allowing me to critically evaluate the questionnaire for improvement<sup>17</sup>. Based on the responses I collected from all 572 students of the school, I tabulated the quantitative data and included them in the materials for different professional development sessions to facilitate teachers' dialogic reflection. The qualitative responses were categorised on the basis of thematic analysis (see Appendix O). Teachers were reminded that the students' written responses might not indicate what the majority of the student population believed. This was because they were chosen based on my judgment that they could stimulate teachers' critical reflection and make it possible to explore diverse opinions.

### *Scholarly perspectives*

In addition to students' voices, I considered it important to facilitate teachers' critical reflection by creating the opportunity to explore the propositions and empirical findings of scholarly work as the literature and theory had the potential to equip them with an enlarged vocabulary and enhanced knowledge to describe and understand their beliefs and practices. Being aware of some teachers' scepticism about educational literature because of its formal and objective writing style, which creates the impression that there is lack of connection between the reality of classroom life and academic publications (Brookfield, 1995), I prepared ways to stimulate teachers' theoretical discussion based on the four major principles summarised in Figure 4.3.

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<sup>17</sup> There are several points to note regarding the design of the questionnaire. Firstly, I adopted a bilingual approach to data collection, in which all questionnaire items were presented in English and the participants' mother tongue (i.e. Chinese) as the piloting suggested that students seemed to find it difficult to understand all questionnaire items when only English was provided. In addition, students were allowed to respond to the open-ended questions using either English, Chinese or both, so that they could express their ideas without being constrained by their English language proficiency. Secondly, an even-numbered scale system was adopted to prevent respondents giving neutral answers as the results of my piloting, which tested two different sets of online questionnaires, seemed to confirm Cohen et al.'s (2011) observation that East Asian participants are inclined to choose the mid-point of a scale (i.e. 'neither agree nor disagree' in some questionnaire items of the piloted survey). Thirdly, the option of 'no idea' was included as forcing a choice may result in respondents having an opinion on matters which they really have no opinion about (Cohen et al., *ibid*). I was also aware that such information might provide the teachers with insight, as it would enable them to identify issues which attracted limited attention from the students or areas in which the learners had limited understanding.

**The following principles were used to design the materials for teachers' theoretical discussion:**

- Dividing the summary into different sections and presenting the key points in bullet form to enhance clarity;
- Avoiding lengthy excerpts from academic publications and including visual aids to stimulate teachers' interest in reading;
- Paraphrasing the academic writing and providing brief explanation of the jargon presented to ensure teachers' understanding;
- Including not only the empirical findings and claims made by scholars, but also some practical suggestions as to how vocabulary teaching and learning can be conducted to make the reading of scholarly work meaningful and useful to teachers.

Figure 4.3 Principles applied to the design of materials for teachers' theoretical discussion

In terms of the scholarly work I cited, I referred to several academic books which cover a wide range of topics about vocabulary teaching and learning<sup>18</sup>. On the basis of my assumption that teachers might be more motivated to read well-organised and reader-friendly materials, I decided that individual teachers would be given the stimulus for critical reflection in the form of a booklet (see Appendix P for a sample chapter). Based on the time schedule of the professional development programme, each teacher was given three booklets, one covering the first three sessions of dialogic reflection, and the remaining ones each covering two sessions of the programme. All the chapters of the booklets, except the last which covered the round-up session, included some guiding questions for self-reflection and collegial exchange, followed by my analysis of student voices and the summary of scholarly views. Teachers were asked not to go over the sections on student voices and theoretical literature without being asked to do so due to my decision that a structured approach to dialogic reflection would be adopted. This was because I believed the stimulus could serve as scaffolded support for teachers, and

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<sup>18</sup> Some examples of major works consulted included *Insights into non-native vocabulary teaching and learning* (Chacón-Beltrán et al., 2010); *Learning vocabulary in another language* (Nation, 2013); *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques* (Nation, 2008); *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997); *Vocabulary in language teaching* (Schmitt, 2000); and *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research into classroom teaching* (Folse, 2004). As I found it important to help teachers to relate the reading materials to their beliefs and practice, I deliberately included recent publications relating to vocabulary teaching and learning in Asian contexts, such as the book by Ma (2009), who dedicated an entire chapter to discussing vocabulary learning difficulties for Chinese learners, and the journal articles by Tang (2007, 2009), who studied the vocabulary size of Hong Kong students and the lexical input from English textbooks in Hong Kong.

that it was important to prompt teachers' reflection through a gradual process which would enable them to explore issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching and learning through one specific perspective at a time so that a holistic picture could be formed.

### **Facilitating teachers' dialogic reflection**

The professional development programme took place on three different days, one in January and two in March. As described, there were seven sessions for teachers' dialogic reflection in total. The first six sessions focused on issues pertaining to vocabulary teaching and learning, with each lasting for approximately one and a half to two hours. The final session was a round-up session, which took about an hour. Prior to the commencement of teachers' interaction, I introduced teachers to the aims of our discussion, provided them with a brief overview of the topics to be covered, and described the overall structure of our sessions. I also made it explicit that the sessions would be different from the typical teacher professional development workshops they had attended, in which knowledge transmission was emphasised and made possible through lecturing. The divergent nature of the discussion was explained, and teachers were encouraged to contribute to dialogic reflection and benefit from the co-construction of knowledge by expressing their ideas, building on others' contributions, inviting ideas and/or elaboration, to name but a few. Whilst I was aware that my role as a researcher might lead the teachers to think that I had considerable expertise to give them guidance on how vocabulary teaching and learning could be improved, I made it clear to the teachers my role as a facilitator and a participant trying to share my views. The following excerpt from the beginning of session three relating to lexical instruction illustrates how I attempted to facilitate the interaction amongst teachers:

Researcher: *We are going to focus on lexical instruction in this session. Specifically, we will examine how vocabulary can be taught and explained more effectively. Now, shall we spend around five minutes to think about the four questions on p. 18 and reflect on our experiences as 'teacher' and 'learner' prior to the exchange of ideas?*

Michelle: *Explicit instruction means giving the definition?*

Researcher: *As far as I know, teachers who give explicit vocabulary instruction focus attention directly on the lexical items to be learned... They may teach students the meaning and use of a word directly to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Providing students with the definition, as you suggested, can be an example of explicit vocabulary instruction...*

- Now, shall we start our discussion? In your view, how can we help students learn a word more effectively in class?*
- Michelle: *Teach the words in context.*
- Researcher: *Could you elaborate on that?*
- Michelle: *With the context, students can know how to use the words.*
- Researcher: *Any other thoughts?*
- Laura: *I assume that students have a map in their mind, so they can recall a word better by linking it to other words that share the same theme. I also think they should link the new knowledge with their prior knowledge.*
- Researcher: *That is to say, you believe teachers should introduce new words by associating them with the words students have learned? Any other comments?*
- Louise: *I think encouraging students' output can help them learn the words more effectively...*
- (Excerpt from PD-3 conducted on 9 January 2017)

As shown, each discussion session began with my brief introduction to the focus of professional dialogue. After around five minutes for self-reflection, I attempted to initiate the discussion by asking teachers to share their thoughts on the guiding questions. Seeing that the teachers might be reluctant to express their views, I often made efforts to invite teachers' contributions by asking if they had ideas to share or comments to add. Whilst I tried to ask teachers to share their understanding of certain concepts they were unsure about and encouraged them to construct knowledge collaboratively, I facilitated the discussion by presenting my perspective at times and thought of ways to engage the teachers. For example, I noted that the teachers were rather passive in expressing their ideas after the five-minute self-reflection in the first few sessions. I thus asked the teachers to form pairs to discuss the guiding questions before sharing their views with the group in the subsequent sessions.

What followed the self-reflection and collegial exchange was the exploration of student beliefs. Specifically, teachers were asked to spend time reading through both the quantitative and qualitative data from the student questionnaire and to individually reflect on whether their own thoughts prior to discussion were different from, or similar to, those of the students. Of the different parts of a session, the teachers seemed to be most interested in the exploration of student voices and spent more time on this. This was followed by the individual reading of theoretical literature, after which teachers usually raised questions regarding the concepts and suggestions they were uncertain about and discussed the ideas they found to be new,



interesting or useful. Each session ended with teachers sharing what they had learned or found impressive.

### **Fostering individual reflection and coming to understand teachers' dialogic experience through their writings**

One final issue I considered when designing the professional development project was about how teachers could benefit most from the dialogic reflection, using it as a catalyst for development and transformation by internalising their dialogues with others. Beliefs, according to Arnold (1999), “act as very strong filters of reality” (p. 256). As they are value-related and tend to be held tenaciously (Alexander & Dochy, 1995; Wenden, 1999), it is likely that change in teachers' beliefs involves “continuous, reflective and generative processes” (Lee & Gables, 2004, p. 69) which combine reflection and practice. Critical reflection, from this standpoint, cannot focus only on reflection in the group (intermental), but should also consider the teachers' individual (intramental) reflection on their beliefs and practice. Bearing this in mind, I considered it helpful to ask teachers to conduct ‘reflection-on-action’ and record their thoughts on each professional development session in written form after taking part in the collaborative dialogic reflection. Conceivably, such practice not only fostered teachers' reflection, but also generated data which enabled me to explore teachers' belief development and understand their experience of dialogic reflection.

#### **4.4.3 My own role and that of my beliefs in the teacher participants' dialogic reflection**

As explained in the earlier section, my major role in the professional dialogue was to facilitate the teachers' interaction. This mainly involved inviting teachers' participation, asking for clarification, keeping the discussion on track, summarising viewpoints, offering teachers my interpretation of the students' voices, and sharing with teachers' my understanding of different issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching and learning. Inevitably, my participation and sharing of perspectives might have affected the dynamics of interaction amongst the participants and influenced how they interpreted issues regarding vocabulary teaching and learning. For example, I introduced the teachers to a recent study I had conducted with my colleagues (Tang et al., 2016) in one of the sessions and explained to them how the student participants focused only on certain aspects of word knowledge and relied on a limited range of strategies when learning vocabulary, which might have hindered their lexical development. I shared with the

teachers my belief that it is important to enhance the learners' language awareness by drawing their attention to the notion of a word and equipping students with various strategies to help them to learn vocabulary independently. This might have led the teachers to reflect on the importance of addressing certain word knowledge aspects and helping students to develop vocabulary learning strategies. Another example of how my beliefs might have contributed to teachers' reflection concerned the use of different resources to promote vocabulary learning. In the discussion of learners' voices, for example, Louise pointed out that most students relied on Google Translation to learn vocabulary. In response to her remark, I drew the teachers' attention to a student's comment on the accuracy of this translation service and shared my view regarding how we might cultivate independent learning of vocabulary in students by introducing to them different useful resources. I observed that some teachers seemed not to be aware of the availability of some online resources, such as the Oxford Collocations Dictionary. My sharing might have enhanced teachers' understanding of the use of resources to promote vocabulary learning and stimulated their reflection upon the need to promote independent vocabulary learning in class. Having said that, I paid special attention to how I expressed my ideas and deliberately avoided the use of phrases or statements conveying any strong views on my part. I believe my sharing did not impose beliefs on the teachers but simply provided teachers with an alternative perspective for critical reflection.

#### **4.5 Concluding remarks**

This chapter reports on the design, theoretical underpinnings, content and implementation of a dialogic approach to developing teachers' beliefs and practice. It explores the features of dialogue which have the potential to facilitate teacher professional development through collaborative reflection and highlights the importance of individual reflection that follows. By providing teachers with the opportunity to engage in critical reflection and allow learning to progress from the group (intermental activities) to the individual (intramental functioning), the approach formed the basis of the present study. It not only served as a tool to effect teacher change, but also was a means through which belief development could be better understood. The following chapters examine teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching and explore the evidence of change in such beliefs and practices after teachers' participation in the professional dialogue. Major factors that account for the extent of teachers' change will also be presented.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES REGARDING VOCABULARY TEACHING**

*Whatever one believes to be true either is true or becomes true in one's mind.*  
- John C. Lilly

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the first research question by examining the salient features of the six Hong Kong teacher participants' beliefs about vocabulary development and their relationship with the teachers' practices by focusing on the emerging findings from the initial phase of my study that generated two main sources of data, namely, lessons audiotaped by the teachers and semi-structured interviews that used stimulated recall. It also explores the factors that shaped the teachers' beliefs and behaviour.

There are three sections in the chapter. In the first section I explore the teachers' professed beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. I begin by examining the teachers' epistemological beliefs about the nature of lexical knowledge, focusing on beliefs about 1) the role of vocabulary; 2) the importance of vocabulary acquisition; and 3) the notion of a word. I then analyse the teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the aims, content, approach, resources and assessment related to vocabulary teaching and learning (see Figure 5.1). While I constructed the semi-structured interview protocols with reference to the work of Gao and Ma (2011) and Zhang (2008) to unravel teachers' beliefs about vocabulary development, the frameworks became less explanatory in terms of data analysis. I thus decided not to adopt any a priori codes for the analysis of interviews but to allow the themes relating to teachers' beliefs to emerge from the data gathered. In the second section I identify areas of alignment or lack thereof between their beliefs and practice. I argue that the teachers' belief system was complex and that teachers might or might not have been conscious of the pedagogical decisions they made and the fact that their beliefs were not translated into their practices. The final section is an attempt to explore how the teachers' beliefs were formed and in what ways the tensions between the teachers' beliefs and practice were created. I consider the analysis of the contributory factors that had shaped teachers' beliefs and practice to be crucial as they may help explain teachers' changes.

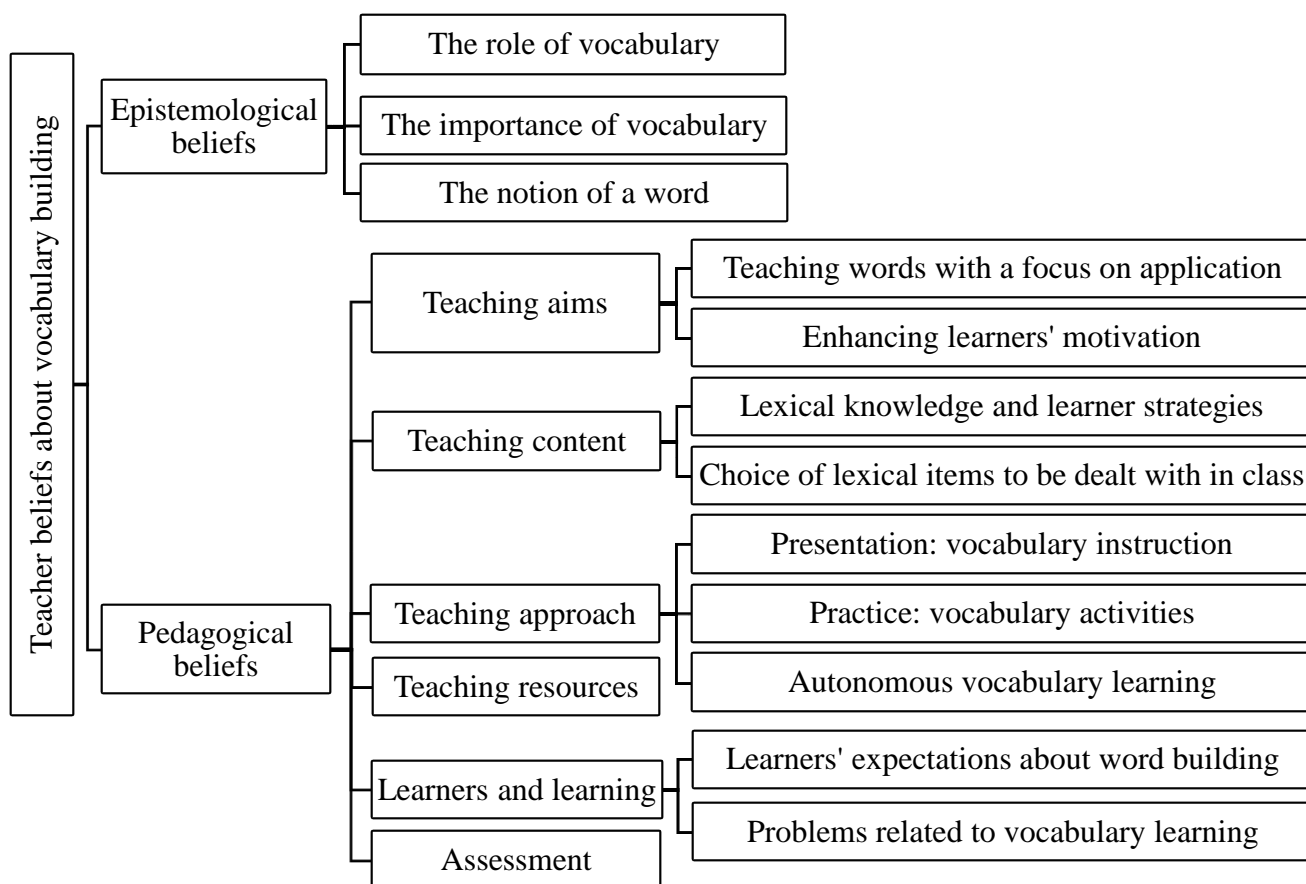


Figure 5.1 Teacher beliefs about vocabulary development

By providing an overview of the teachers' beliefs and practices when the study commenced, the chapter lays an important foundation for the research project as it suggests the need for teachers to raise their awareness of their own and others' beliefs about vocabulary teaching, which in turn informed the content of the discussion sessions I designed. It also serves as the basis for the two subsequent chapters that look at how teachers changed over time as a result of the discussion sessions by focusing on the analysis of the longitudinal data I gathered from different stages of my study.

## 5.2 What are teachers' epistemological beliefs about vocabulary development?

To answer this question, I look at teachers' beliefs pertinent to the nature of vocabulary knowledge and learning that arose from my initial interviews with the six teachers. An analysis of the beliefs about the role of vocabulary in SLA will be presented, followed by the beliefs relating to the importance of vocabulary and the notion of a word.

### 5.2.1 Beliefs about the role of vocabulary in second language acquisition

As Table 5.1 shows, four major themes relating to the role of vocabulary in SLA emerged from the initial interviews with the teachers. They were: 1) developing comprehension and communication skills; 2) meeting daily needs; 3) enhancing motivation toward language learning; and 4) facilitating cultural understanding.

Table 5.1 Teachers' beliefs about the role of vocabulary in SLA in Phase One

Functions	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Developing comprehension and communication skills	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Mark, Michelle and Monica	<i>Students need to have prior knowledge of the vocabulary items so that they can understand what different passages mean... [They also] need vocabulary to express themselves and convey meaning in their writing and speaking because vocabulary items include content words like nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. (Laura)</i>
		<i>Vocabulary is one of the most important things in terms of language learning. You need vocabulary to understand different messages... You can't speak a language or learn a language without learning the vocab. (Mark)</i>
		<i>You need vocabulary for everyday reading... If you don't know the expressions, you can't express yourself properly or communicate with people... (Monica)</i>
Meeting daily needs	Laura, Michelle and Mark	<i>I think vocabulary is really important for us to survive in the world. For example, students may have a problem making a restaurant reservation if they don't know how to express themselves because they don't have the vocabulary. (Laura)</i>

(continued on next page)

Table 5.1 (Continued)

Meeting daily needs	Laura, Michelle and Mark	<i>One can't survive without vocabulary. If you walk in the street and see some signs that you don't know the meaning, it can cost your life sometimes. Some notices convey warnings. (Michelle)</i>
Enhancing motivation toward language learning	Louise	<i>When students have better vocabulary, they might have higher motivation to learn English and perhaps get better understanding. (Louise)</i>
Facilitating cultural understanding	Lydia	<i>The teaching and learning of vocabulary probably helps us understand different cultures better. (Lydia)</i>

While ‘developing comprehension and communication skills’ was the most common role of vocabulary mentioned, followed by ‘meeting daily needs’, ‘enhancing motivation toward language learning’ and ‘facilitating cultural understanding’ were mentioned by only one participant. To start with, the teachers were unanimous in their view that vocabulary is pivotal to comprehension and communication. They believed “*students need to have prior knowledge of the vocabulary items*” to “*understand what different passages mean*” and “*convey meaning*” because vocabulary items are often content related (Laura). Some also indicated that it can be perplexing for students who lack vocabulary when it comes to understanding different texts, be they in written or spoken form, and expressing their ideas properly. Three teachers spoke about the role of vocabulary in meeting students’ needs by presenting situations in which vocabulary is crucial in our daily life. While Mark stressed the importance of vocabulary when one is “*stuck at the train station*” and Laura commented that students’ poor vocabulary may result in their inability to make reservations, order food and check the bill, Michelle warned against failing to learn vocabulary by explaining how individuals may lose their life due to their inability to understand notices or road signs. Enhancing students’ motivation to learn a language and facilitating cultural understanding were respectively mentioned by Louise and Lydia only. The teachers considered that students with better vocabulary “*might have higher motivation to learn English*” since the mastery of words lays “*the foundation*” of the four language skills (Louise). The learning of idiomatic expressions can also be useful in helping individuals to understand the cultures those expressions come from (Lydia).

### 5.2.2 Beliefs about the importance of vocabulary

The view of the teachers was that vocabulary is important in terms of SLA. The interview results, as summarised in Table 5.2, show that all teachers considered vocabulary building and the development of the four language skills to be equally important. It is, however, interesting to note that two teachers found vocabulary more important than grammar, although the other four teachers saw no difference between the two in terms of their importance.

Table 5.2 Teachers' beliefs about the importance of vocabulary in Phase One

Perceived importance	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Vocabulary building and the development of the four language skills are equally important.	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Mark, Michelle and Monica	<p><i>Vocabulary is the foundation of the four language skills. Without a solid foundation [of vocabulary], they [students] cannot read, listen, speak or write. Nonetheless, it is also essential to acquire the four language skills. They can't perform different tasks only with vocabulary. (Louise)</i></p> <p><i>Even if a student has a wide range of vocabulary, that doesn't mean that he or she is very competent in English; and it's true for the other way round. (Lydia)</i></p>
Lexical knowledge and grammar knowledge are equally important.	Laura, Louise, Lydia and Mark	<p><i>Some students are really good at grammar as the rules can be memorised, but even if they have very good grammar knowledge, they still have problems expressing themselves if they lack vocabulary. One should pay attention to both grammar and vocabulary in order to master the English language. (Louise)</i></p> <p><i>The question of whether vocabulary or grammar is more important is like asking whether water or oxygen is more important. They're as important as each other. (Mark)</i></p>
Lexical knowledge is more important than grammar knowledge.	Michelle and Monica	<p><i>Grammar is not that important [when compared to vocabulary]. Even if you make [grammatical] mistakes, you can still communicate with others... You have to attain a certain level of vocabulary knowledge to understand something. (Michelle)</i></p> <p><i>Vocabulary knowledge is more important. I don't think the papers in the DSE examination test students' grammar knowledge a lot. (Monica)</i></p>

As was apparent in the interviews, the teachers regarded vocabulary knowledge and the four language skills to be equally important as they considered the relationship as a complementary one, but they expressed diverse views regarding the importance of vocabulary in relation to grammar. The notion that vocabulary knowledge enables language use and, conversely, language use results in the consolidation of lexical knowledge was put forward. Although it has been argued that vocabulary is more important than grammar because nothing can be conveyed without words, Lydia maintained that it is not necessary to use vocabulary in all situations as body gestures can sometimes be used to deliver messages effectively. Her view was shared by Louise, who indicated that both vocabulary and grammar should be given considerable attention as neither the expression of ideas nor accuracy should be overlooked. When it came to a comparison of vocabulary with grammar, Michelle and Monica appeared to think more highly of vocabulary. Michelle's focus was on the expression of ideas, and she attached more importance to vocabulary due to her belief that grammatical inaccuracy, in most cases, does not hinder communication. By contrast, Monica considered vocabulary more important than grammar because she did not think "*the papers in the DSE examination test students' grammar knowledge a lot*". Although I had assumed that teachers' epistemological belief would be specifically related to the nature of knowledge and knowing, Monica's comment suggested that the context of teaching may have an important role to play in shaping the teachers' epistemological beliefs, affecting how they perceive language learning.

### **5.2.3 Beliefs about the notion of a word**

In response to the question "What is meant by knowing a word?", the teachers focused on certain aspects of word knowledge, while paying negligible attention to others in the initial interviews (Table 5.3). Specifically, all six teachers cited meaning and pronunciation, but only three of them mentioned spelling, word form and constraints on use. More strikingly, word parts and association were addressed by just two teachers, and collocation was mentioned once. None of the teachers spoke about concept and referents.



Table 5.3 Teachers' beliefs about the notion of a word in Phase One

		Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
Form	Pronunciation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Spelling			✓	✓	✓	
	Word parts	✓	✓				
Meaning	Meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Concept and referents						
	Association			✓	✓		
Use	Word form	✓	✓		✓		
	Collocation	✓					
	Constraints on use		✓	✓	✓		

Whereas two teachers (Michelle and Monica) only addressed a limited number of word knowledge aspects when describing the notion of a word, the other four teachers seemed to possess a more rounded view concerning lexical knowledge. In the initial interviews, Laura, Louise and Lydia acknowledged five aspects of word knowledge, whereas Mark cited six of them. Lydia considered that individuals should know the meaning, the synonyms and antonyms for a word, its spelling, pronunciation and proper usage in appropriate contexts (i.e. formal and informal situations). Her view was congruent with that of Mark, except that Mark cited word form as an important aspect of word knowledge that individuals should acquire. Notably, Monica seemed to find it particularly difficult to acknowledge certain aspects of word knowledge when describing the notion of a word, despite her repeated attempts to do so. She said, “*Knowing a word... I think that means... pronunciation and meaning... pronunciation and meaning, and... I don't know*”. Talking about the notion of a word, Michelle focused on pronunciation and meaning, as Monica had done, but she also cited spelling. It is also interesting to note that all teachers explicitly referred to meaning and use when answering the question, though some of them did not focus on specific aspects of word knowledge in these areas.

Laura and Mark were the only teachers who referred to the receptive / productive distinction as a way of describing different types of lexical knowledge. Mark's comments on the degrees of knowing a word were remarkable. For him, receptive vocabulary knowledge is about “*being able to decipher just the basic semantic meaning of a word uttered and knowing what a word sounds like*”, whereas productive word knowledge refers to “*the appropriate production or reproduction of a word or a phrase. It's the ability to recall without assistance*”. Laura's reflection on her students' vocabulary learning provided a clear

illustration of why the receptive/productive distinction is relevant to vocabulary development. Having observed that her students had no problem understanding the words she taught but often failed to apply them in their own writing because they “*could not think of the words when they needed them*”, Laura firmly believed that “*knowing a word is not just about knowing the meaning but also understanding how to use*” it.

Thus far, the discussion of the teachers’ epistemological beliefs based on the data collected from the initial interviews reveals that the teacher participants considered vocabulary development to be pivotal, though some of them tended to focus only on certain aspects of lexical knowledge when asked to clarify what is meant by ‘knowing a word’.

### **5.3 What are teachers’ pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development?**

In contrast with epistemological beliefs that focus on the nature of knowledge and knowing, pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development concern conceptions of vocabulary teaching both inside and outside the classroom. To expand the understanding of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs about the teaching and learning of vocabulary, five core questions that formed the basis of my investigation will be addressed in this section. These are:

1. What are the goals of vocabulary teaching?
2. What should be taught when teaching vocabulary?
3. How should vocabulary be taught?
4. What pedagogical resources should be utilised when teaching vocabulary?
5. How should vocabulary be assessed?

Similar to the analysis of teachers’ epistemological beliefs, I allowed the teacher participants’ stated beliefs about vocabulary teaching to emerge from the data collected from my initial interviews. No predetermined codes were used for data analysis. This was to prevent preconceptions and a priori theoretical knowledge from colouring the findings.

### 5.3.1 Beliefs about the aims of vocabulary teaching

Regarding the question of “What are the goals of vocabulary teaching?”, teachers’ beliefs fell into two main areas, namely 1) teaching word knowledge with a focus on learner application, and 2) enhancing learner motivation (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Teachers’ beliefs about the aims of vocabulary teaching in Phase One

Teaching aims	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Teaching word knowledge with a focus on learner application	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Mark, Michelle and Monica	<i>We [teachers] have to ensure that students know how to spell the word and how to pronounce the word... If they don't know how to pronounce it, they won't use it in the speaking exam. The word is simply gone. They also have to know how to fit it in a sentence; otherwise, they won't use it in their writing. (Lydia)</i>
		<i>We [teachers] have to teach the family of a word and the related words. We should teach them the root, the prefix, the suffix and the different forms of it. These help students to... recognise the words in comprehension and use them in their writing. I think we also need to teach the pronunciation well. We have to make students aware that for English, they need to divide a word into different parts when it comes to accurate pronunciation and spelling of the words. (Michelle)</i>
		<i>Vocabulary teaching involves the explanation of meaning and how to use the word or in what situation you are using that word. (Monica)</i>
Enhancing motivation in learning English and vocabulary	Laura, Louise and Lydia	<i>Vocabulary teaching involves helping students to develop the love of, and interest in, the English language. I always think that students who are interested in English will try to remember the words no matter how difficult it is to do so. (Laura)</i>
		<i>We should try to make vocabulary teaching and learning interesting so that students will be more motivated to learn and sustain their learning. (Louise)</i>
		<i>I think we should also try to make sure that fun is involved. Students think learning vocabulary is boring sometimes because they have to memorise a lot. (Lydia)</i>

All teachers emphasised the importance of addressing various aspects of word knowledge in the English language classroom and focused on learner application. For example, Monica

referred to vocabulary teaching as “*the explanation of meaning and how to use the word*”. This point was elaborated by Michelle, who felt it was obligatory for teachers to enhance learner application of lexical knowledge by teaching different aspects of word knowledge. As regards learner application of vocabulary, three teachers (Laura, Louise and Mark) made further comments that words should be taught in context so that students have a better chance of understanding how they can be used. Louise, for instance, felt that students might find it “*very awkward*” for teachers to “*suddenly*” teach vocabulary out of context, and she thus preferred introducing different expressions to students while teaching the four language skills. Mark was rather explicit in describing the importance of context in vocabulary learning. In his view, “*there is no vocabulary without context. If you read the dictionary and you just learn words that way, you learn them outside of context. You don't learn whether it's formal or informal*”.

When compared to the teaching of word knowledge, enhancing motivation in vocabulary learning seemed to have received less attention from the teachers as it was only addressed by Laura, Louise and Lydia. For these teachers, it is essential to pique students' interest in the English language and/or vocabulary learning so that they are motivated not only to learn but also to sustain their learning. This can be achieved by trying to make sure that fun is involved so that students do not only associate their learning with rote memorisation or boredom.

### **5.3.2 Beliefs about the content of vocabulary teaching**

Teacher beliefs about the content of vocabulary teaching can be grouped into two broad types: those related to 1) the teaching of vocabulary knowledge and learning strategies; and 2) the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment in class. Apart from expressing the belief that some kinds of word knowledge should receive special attention in the English language classroom, the teachers highlighted the necessity to select lexical items for explicit treatment in class based on the usefulness of the expressions, word difficulty and cultural appropriateness.

#### **Beliefs about the teaching of vocabulary knowledge and learning strategies**

Data elicited from the interview question “What is involved in vocabulary teaching?” seemed

to reveal that the teacher participants greatly appreciated the importance of teaching lexical knowledge but placed little emphasis on equipping students with vocabulary learning strategies. Table 5.5 below, which details the teachers' professed pedagogical beliefs about the types of lexical knowledge that should be addressed in class, is revealing in several ways.

Table 5.5 Teachers' beliefs about the teaching of lexical knowledge in Phase One

		Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
Form	Pronunciation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Spelling		✓	✓			✓
	Word parts	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Meaning	Meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Concept and referents		✓				✓
	Association		✓				✓
Use	Word form		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Collocation		✓			✓	✓
	Constraints on use	✓	✓			✓	✓

The first is related to the connection between teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the teaching of lexical knowledge and their epistemological beliefs regarding the notion of a word. All teachers cited pronunciation and meaning when asked to discuss the notion of knowing a word and the content of vocabulary teaching. This implies that the two aspects of knowledge were of fundamental importance from the teachers' viewpoint.

The second, and relevant to the above, is the observation that teachers found it important to address some aspects of word knowledge but did not mention them when asked to discuss the notion of a word, and vice versa. For instance, Lydia did not mention word parts and word form when explaining the lexical knowledge required to know a word but stressed that it is crucial for teachers to address them in class. She said, *"Teachers should teach different forms of the word, and hopefully the family of the word. It doesn't make sense if you simply teach the students 'entertaining' without teaching them 'entertained'."* Likewise, Michelle only cited pronunciation, meaning and spelling when discussing what constitutes a word, but deemed it important for teachers to focus on various aspects of lexical knowledge relating to vocabulary use, including word form, collocation and constraints on use. She declared that *"teachers should teach collocation"* in addition to meaning, pronunciation and part of speech because *"students need to know how to use the words correctly"*. Nonetheless, she confessed to not

having addressed connotation in class and asserted that teachers should focus on it only if they have time. A similar observation can be seen in the case of Mark, who mentioned spelling only in the discussion of the notion of a word but added word parts when speaking of the lexical knowledge that should be taught. Mark proposed that teachers should teach meaning, the phonological and lexical aspects of a word. He said, “*Surely they have to know how to use the words if they have to write a really good assignment. Some students even can’t pronounce ‘foreigner’ properly. That’s probably because someone in their life didn’t teach the pronunciation aspect right*”. For Mark, “*less is more. It’s better to over-teach three vocabulary items in a lesson than to under-teach six because those under-taught six will eventually result in zero*”. Although it is unclear why neither Mark nor Michelle cited spelling as an aspect of lexical knowledge that teachers should address in class, it is perhaps that they considered it the learners’ responsibility to master spelling on their own through memorisation.

Finally, we note that only two teachers (Louise and Monica) deemed it crucial to address all aspects of lexical knowledge in the English language classroom. During the initial interview, Monica commented that “*teachers can teach everything*”. Her view was supported by Louise, who maintained that vocabulary teaching “*theoretically involves introducing to students all aspects of word knowledge*”. Although such beliefs espoused by Louise and Monica are presented in the table, considerable caution must be used when interpreting the data. Given that the two teachers only referred to certain types of knowledge when asked to describe the notion of a word, it remains largely questionable whether they were in fact aware of all nine aspects of word knowledge. As discussed in the preceding section concerning teacher beliefs about the notion of a word, Monica only addressed pronunciation and meaning despite her repeated attempts to cite the other aspects. This may suggest her inability to acknowledge different types of lexical knowledge.

### **Beliefs about the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment in class**

The teachers’ beliefs about the choice of lexical items to be explicitly treated in class are also closely related to the content of vocabulary teaching. Broadly speaking, the perceived usefulness, levels of difficulty and cultural appropriateness of words were three major concerns for teachers in selecting the lexical items which should or should not be taught in class. A summary of my findings in relation to these is presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Teachers' beliefs about selecting lexical items for explicit treatment in Phase One

Selection criteria	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
<b><u>Usefulness of the words</u></b>		
Frequency of use	Laura, Louise, Mark and Monica	<p><i>I'd consider whether a word is frequently used or not. If students can manage the high-frequency words, they can manage their daily communication. (Laura)</i></p> <p><i>I guess what you should do is to teach students the words they are likely to find useful and use frequently. You should start with something less specific, like you teach them the colour 'blue' before 'aquamarine', 'arm' before 'ulnar head', or 'hand' before 'micro muscles' in your hand. (Mark)</i></p>
Relevance to learners' daily life	Laura and Monica	<p><i>We should consider whether the words are relevant to their [the students'] life. If I have to teach a unit on travelling, I'll introduce them to vocabulary they may encounter on their journey, including what they see in the airport, [and] on the plane. (Laura)</i></p> <p><i>Teachers should try to teach at least the words students can use in their everyday life. (Monica)</i></p>
The avoidance of jargon, formulaic expressions and/or proverbs, which are not tested in the examination	Laura, Lydia and Monica	<p><i>If students are taught too many expressions like these [formulaic expressions and proverbs], the style [of the students' writing] will be very, very awkward... A marker can probably tell that this kind of expression is not the students' own. (Lydia)</i></p> <p><i>For very technical words, of course not. They are not very useful to examinations. (Monica)</i></p>
<b><u>Word difficulty</u></b>		
The teaching of advanced vocabulary	Louise, Lydia and Monica	<p><i>We should choose the words students are not likely to use without our teaching... They need new words. I asked them [the students working on a complaint letter] to tell the recipient of the letter they will 'enclose' photos of the rats and cockroaches in the letter for their 'reference'. Though students don't even know how to spell the words, I still teach them those expressions. (Lydia)</i></p>

(continued on next page)

Table 5.6 (Continued)

The avoidance of expressions that are “too sophisticated”	Laura and Michelle	<p><i>I do see that some students are keen on learning sophisticated words as they think that their English is good if they can manage the difficult and infrequently used words. This is worrying. It is important for teachers not to teach the difficult words all the time. (Laura)</i></p> <p><i>We have to teach at a level which is relevant to the cognitive level. If they are too young, they can't really understand some sophisticated words. (Michelle)</i></p>
<b><u>Cultural appropriateness</u></b>		
The avoidance of coarse language	Laura, Louise and Michelle	<i>I don't think the use of foul language is appropriate in class and I won't teach that. (Laura)</i>
The avoidance of expressions related to taboos	Michelle	<i>Teaching in a formal school, we are not allowed to say those [coarse language and taboos] in class. If I do so, I'll probably receive complaints. Of course, students need to learn all these... but we don't talk about these in a formal school. If I were teaching an interest class at a night school, I would. These can be fun. (Michelle)</i>

The most commonly cited criterion for selecting words to teach in class was the perceived usefulness of lexical items, which can be further classified into 1) the expressions' frequency of use; 2) relevance to learners' daily life; and 3) potential connection to the examination.

### ***Frequency of use***

Four teachers (Laura, Louise, Monica and Mark) asserted the importance of making students' vocabulary learning meaningful by teaching high frequency words. In particular, Mark talked about the issue from a slightly different perspective by focusing on the sequence of introducing different lexical items based on the likelihood that students would use them. In terms of choosing words that are relevant to students' lives, Monica proposed meeting students' needs by teaching words that can be used in everyday situations such as shopping and dining in a restaurant. Similarly, Laura explained that she would try to make her students learning meaningful by encouraging them to anticipate the words they need for sightseeing and learn vocabulary items they may encounter on their journey. Focusing on examination



requirements, several teachers (Laura, Monica and Lydia) also suggested it was not necessary to teach jargon, formulaic expressions and proverbs. For instance, it was proposed that teachers should not spend time on the technical names of drugs or diseases (Laura) and should avoid putting too much emphasis on proverbs (Lydia) as such expressions are rarely used in the examinations and not encouraged in the DSE.

### ***Word difficulty***

Mentioned by five teacher participants, word difficulty seemed to be the second most overriding concern related to the selection of words for teaching in class. This was followed by the notion of cultural appropriateness, which was highlighted by three teachers. There was no consensus amongst the teachers regarding whether advanced vocabulary should be taught. While Louise, Lydia and Monica believed that teachers should be responsible for teaching students more advanced vocabulary items in fulfilment of the examination requirements, Laura and Michelle voiced their reservations about this issue. They emphasised that words which are too sophisticated should be avoided in class if they are not frequently used or so difficult that they are beyond students' cognitive ability to understand.

### ***Cultural appropriateness***

On the matter of determining what words to teach, Michelle shared Laura, Louise and Monica's view that vulgar words should not be taught, and also proposed the avoidance of taboo subjects. She felt that the teaching of coarse language and words associated with taboo subjects should be avoided despite their usefulness as the introduction of such expressions in class is against school norms and parental expectations. Clearly, the teachers' interview data about the content of vocabulary teaching reveal the complexity of teachers' beliefs about lexical development, for they are closely related to a range of factors, such as teachers' knowledge, students' proficiency and social expectations.

### **5.3.3 Beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching**

One focus of the initial interviews was to scrutinise teachers' beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching. Teachers in the present study largely related vocabulary teaching to

lexical instruction, and they introduced different strategies that should be used to teach vocabulary and ways to promote autonomous vocabulary learning when prompted to do so. In contrast to this, the teachers seemed to have been less concerned about the application of learned lexical knowledge. Despite reporting that activities should be conducted which could facilitate vocabulary development, they referred to several issues relating to the design of such activities, some of which were factors that constrained them from promoting vocabulary development through in-class activities.

### **Beliefs about the direct teaching of vocabulary**

When asked for their views on the direct teaching of vocabulary in class, all teachers found it crucial to give students direct instruction, although two felt that teachers should not rely solely on direct instruction to promote vocabulary learning. Lydia, Mark, Michelle and Monica seemed to be particularly concerned about not giving students direct vocabulary instruction. Michelle, for instance, was straightforward about the difficulties involved in not teaching lexical items directly. She said, “*Students will ask you the meaning of this and that [if you don’t give direct instruction], and you still have to explain the words*”. For Lydia, “*students may be too confused*” and lack confidence to use the words if teachers simply use the target vocabulary items in their speech without explaining the meaning of words. Despite thinking that it is essential for teachers to give direct vocabulary instruction in the English language classroom, Laura and Louise emphasised that teachers should focus on target vocabulary items in class. As teachers “*may not be able to cover every single word in lessons due to the very limited time*” (Louise), students should be encouraged to check the meaning of some advanced vocabulary items using the dictionary before class (Laura).

### **Beliefs about the use of vocabulary instruction strategies**

In terms of the direct teaching of vocabulary, the teachers demonstrated a marked preference for the use of memory strategies to teach vocabulary overall (see Table 5.7). Connecting a word to its synonyms and/or antonyms, studying the part of speech of a word, studying the sound of a word and using the target language to teach a target word were the most commonly cited strategies for consolidation. Other memory strategies suggested by the teachers included analysing affixes and roots, using new words in sentences and making use of pictorial representation.

Table 5.7 Teachers' beliefs about the use of strategies for vocabulary teaching in Phase One

Strategies for vocabulary teaching addressed	Taxonomy	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
Analyse affixes and roots	MEM	✓				✓	
Connect a word to its synonyms or antonyms	MEM	✓				✓	✓
Use new words in sentences	MEM	✓					
Study the part of speech of a word	MEM		✓			✓	✓
Study the sound of a word	MEM				✓	✓	✓
Study a word using pictorial representation	MEM		✓				
Use the target language	MEM		✓	✓			✓
Encourage students to guess the meaning	DET	✓	✓			✓	
Repeat a word verbally	COG				✓		

Encouraging students to discover the meaning of a new word by guessing it from the context and using verbal repetition were the only determination strategy and cognitive strategy cited, respectively. Equipping students with the skill to discover word meaning, according to Louise and Michelle, is important. This is not only because it seems impossible for students to check the meaning of every single new word, but also because the use of dictionaries is forbidden during assessments. Laura explained that “*when they [students] take exams, nobody will tell them the meaning. They should develop a habit of guessing the meaning of words without others' assistance. Perhaps we [teachers] should also give [sample] examples... Doing so will help students remember a word better*”. For Laura, encouraging students to guess the meaning of a vocabulary item is the first step in teaching vocabulary. Teachers should also provide students with sample sentences containing the target words to consolidate vocabulary learning. Mark regarded the use of verbal repetition as particularly important. He claimed that mastery of the phonological aspect of a new word is crucial; without it students might not be able to remember the word and use it.

One marked observation to emerge from the interview data was the opposition to the use of first language (L1) translation as a strategy to teach vocabulary. Three teachers (Louise, Lydia and Monica) emphasised that the target language should be used for vocabulary development. Lydia indicated that she was strongly against the use of L1 translation in class even though it could help ensure that students would understand the meaning of a vocabulary item. Hence, her usual practice, she claimed, was to ask the students who had explained a new word correctly in their L1 to speak in English. She further commented that English words which convey similar meanings may be confusing to students after being translated into the mother tongue because of their different usage in English. This was exemplified by her remark about students' inability to

explain the difference between expressions such as ‘apart from’, ‘besides’ and ‘except’ that resulted from their reliance on L1 translation. Louise also expressed scepticism about the use of L1 in class, asserting that the use of L1 should be prohibited because it is neither beneficial to vocabulary learning nor helpful in terms of enabling teachers to monitor learning by analysing students’ English output in class. Despite encouraging the use of English in class to help to compensate for students’ limited exposure to the language, Monica seemed to be more flexible about using Cantonese to explain word meaning of lexical items which may appear rather complicated to students. Nonetheless, she underscored the necessity of speaking English in class because it was the policy of the school. Monica’s remark illustrates that school and departmental policies seemed to play a role in the construction of the teachers’ reported beliefs about the use of the target language to teach vocabulary.

### **Beliefs about the design of class activities for vocabulary learning**

In discussing the approach to vocabulary teaching, the teachers generally believed that the incorporation of vocabulary activities, such as games, crossword puzzles and filling in the missing lyrics in songs, can be conducive to vocabulary development. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of encouraging vocabulary learning through practice. Four major issues concerning the use of vocabulary enhancement activities in the English language classroom introduced by the teachers appear in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Teachers’ beliefs about the design of vocabulary activities in Phase One

Design issues	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Learner factors	Laura, Louise, Lydia and Monica	<i>Some students are more active, while some are more passive. If you know that your students just like sitting and writing something, more dictation may be preferable. Competitions and games would be useful for the more active ones who would like to leave their seats to stretch themselves. (Louise)</i>
		<i>We should consider whether the students are disciplined. I remember once I was teaching form one a few years ago, I was playing a game with the students about eating breakfast. They were overexcited, and I couldn’t stop them even after the lesson. I think that’s because I asked them to come up, put up pictures [of different breakfast items] on the board and tried to write the words. (Monica)</i>

(continued on next page)

Table 5.8 (Continued)

Opportunities for learning for pleasure	Lydia and Monica	<i>Fun should be involved. Students think learning vocabulary is boring sometimes because they have to memorise a lot.</i> (Lydia)
Relevance to the school's syllabus and/or examination	Mark and Michelle	<i>We should think about the DSE. I guess guiding them [students] towards that is our ultimate objective. If, for example, I were to teach words on family, I'd get some articles that mention family, [introduce to students different] fun words that they need to know and stress the importance of understanding these words. Students need to be given opportunities to use the expressions so that they know how to use the words in the examination.</i> (Mark)  <i>I think the tasks should be aligned with the reading texts and writing tasks in the scheme of work.</i> (Michelle)
Variety of activities	Laura	<i>I prefer not to rely on just one or two activities to teach vocabulary. By varying the variety of activities, I try to show students that we can learn vocabulary in different ways instead of always focusing on one single method.</i> (Laura)

As can be seen from the table above, learner factors, such as students' learning styles and discipline, which were highlighted by four of the teachers, appeared to be the most prominent amongst the issues mentioned. By stark contrast, task variety seemed to have received rather scant attention and was only cited by one person. While three teachers (Laura, Louise and Lydia) gave suggestions for how activities can be designed by taking students' preferences and learning styles into consideration, Monica's emphasis was on student discipline. Specifically, Laura proposed asking visual learners to draw mind maps, Louise recommended playing games with active learners, and Lydia suggested using songs to help motivate students who lack interest in learning. From a rather different way of looking at learner factors, Monica described how students' behavioural problems can adversely affect the learning of vocabulary through games by sharing her own teaching experience of playing a game about eating breakfast with a group of students a few years ago to illustrate her point.

Other than learner factors, teachers were concerned about ensuring that activities were in line with the school syllabus and assessment, promoting learning through fun activities and

conducting a variety of tasks to facilitate vocabulary development. Regardless of the teachers' generally favourable views of conducting activities to foster vocabulary development, some commented that time constraints and their heavy workload often precluded them from designing and employing interesting vocabulary activities in class.

### **Beliefs about the ways of promoting autonomous vocabulary learning**

One further categorisation of teachers' beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching relates to the ways in which autonomous learning can be promoted. Although the teachers did not cite the promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning as one of the goals of vocabulary teaching, they came up with different suggestions for how it can be facilitated when they were asked to discuss the topic. While all teachers highlighted the need to help students gain exposure to English and to foster the development of positive learning habits, three teachers (Louise, Mark and Michelle) also addressed the importance of drawing students' attention to the value of learning vocabulary. It is interesting to note that monitoring students' autonomous learning was suggested by two teachers.

Table 5.9 Teachers' beliefs about ways to develop autonomous vocabulary learning

Ways to promote autonomous vocabulary learning	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
1. Help students gain exposure to English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Ask students to watch movies and/or videos	✓		✓	✓	✓	
- Introduce interesting learning resources		✓			✓	✓
- Encourage students to read English texts						✓
2. Foster the development of positive learning habits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
- Encourage the use of newly learned vocabulary		✓	✓	✓	✓	
- Ask students to continue to study words over time		✓				✓
- Promote the use of dictionaries		✓				✓
- Ask students to keep a vocabulary notebook		✓	✓		✓	✓
- Promote note-taking	✓					
- Encourage students to guess the meaning of words					✓	
- Ask students to make word associations		✓				
3. Draw student attention to the importance of vocabulary		✓		✓	✓	
4. Monitor students' independent learning		✓	✓			

All of the teachers described how autonomous vocabulary learning can be fostered by exposing students to the target language. Some suggestions included encouraging students to watch English films and videos, introducing interesting learning resources and asking students

to read different English texts. To illustrate, Mark believed students who are interested in kung fu should be encouraged to watch related films with English subtitles. His presumption was that students' intrinsic motivation to acquire vocabulary will be developed as the opportunities for film appreciation will enable students to "*concentrate on the vocabulary when they feel like it*".

Helping students to develop positive habits with respect to learning vocabulary was also mentioned by all the teacher participants. Different habits that favour to vocabulary development, namely, asking students to continue to study the lexical items over time, promoting the use of dictionaries, encouraging note-taking and asking students to make word associations, were mentioned. In particular, encouraging the use of newly learned vocabulary and asking students to keep a vocabulary notebook seemed to have received the most attention. Louise's comments offer much insight into the use of vocabulary. Based on her observation that "*a lot of capable English learners have a deep interest in reading and writing*", she felt that students should be encouraged to "*write their diaries in English*" as vocabulary learning is about daily practice. Four teachers (Louise, Lydia, Michelle and Monica) highlighted the benefits of using a vocabulary notebook. For instance, Michelle considered it "*a good start*" for students to keep a vocabulary log and write down the new expressions they come across regularly. Lydia, who regarded the use of vocabulary notebook as the usual practice of good English learners, insisted that learners should form sentences based on the new words to enhance their learning instead of simply creating a list of vocabulary.

Three teachers conveyed the idea that students' awareness of the importance of word building should be raised. Michelle, for instance, talked about "*creating a need for vocabulary learning*" and "*asking the students to relate the words more to their daily life*". To her, this could mean encouraging a group of health-conscious students "*interested in knowing the ingredients and the nutritional value of certain kinds of food*" to "*look at the words on the packet*" so that they will know whether the food is healthy or not. The same idea was introduced by Louise and Mark. In particular, the latter suggested helping students to see the need to understand different vocabulary items for practical reasons, such as making hotel reservations in English.

One final remark regarding the promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning is the teachers'

suggestion about checking students' learning progress. Though the notion of autonomous learning is to encourage students to set appropriate learning goals and be responsible for their own learning, two teachers felt that they should help students to check their learning progress. To illustrate, Lydia suggested reading the students' vocabulary notebook by looking at the sample sentences that are written down, and Louise proposed evaluating the students' independent learning progress by paying attention to students' vocabulary use in class. As shown, teachers seemed to feel that they should play a central role in students' vocabulary acquisition, even when it comes to of their learning outside class.

### 5.3.4 Beliefs about the preferred instructional materials for vocabulary teaching

With respect to the preferred instructional materials for vocabulary teaching, all teachers seemed to consider the use of authentic materials to be ideal. Different types of authentic materials helping students to understand the “*natural use*” of vocabulary were recommended (Table 5.10). Specifically, newspaper and magazine articles seemed to be the type of instructional material most preferred by teachers. Both Laura and Louise, for instance, concurred that newspaper articles should be used to complement textbook teaching because students might find it boring to learn vocabulary through textbooks alone.

Table 5.10 Teachers' beliefs about the preferred materials for word building in Phase One

Materials	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Newspaper and/ or magazine articles	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Mark, Michelle and Monica	<i>Newspaper and magazine articles are what we should use. If we focus on the textbooks every day, students will find the lessons very boring. (Laura)</i>
		<i>Authentic materials like newspaper articles would be the best, but I can't really find the time to collect authentic reading materials. It's kind of difficult to find something good. (Michelle)</i>  <i>You can give them [students] some authentic reading materials from magazines or newspapers. For example, the game Pokémon Go was very popular in September, and I gave them some newspaper articles about that. They shouted, 'POKÉMON GO!' after receiving the articles and started to read them on their own. I think they will have the motivation to learn more [when they are given interesting materials to read]. (Monica)</i>

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Table 5.10 (Continued)

Songs	Lydia	<i>If I remember a song that has the target words, I may play it to the class. Students find it fun as I ask them to fill in the missing words of the song lyrics. They won't find the words too intimidating and are more likely to remember the words. (Lydia)</i>
Web-based resources	Mark	<i>The use of Internet articles needs to be encouraged. Bulletin/discussion boards or online application forms are things that they are going to use... The DSE exam covers a wide range of topics... That's tough. So, as much as you can, allow students to read authentic materials about current affairs and learn vocabulary in context. Hopefully, they can apply what they have learned in their exam. (Mark)</i>

When compared to newspaper and magazine articles, the use of songs and web-based texts seemed not to be particularly popular. Lydia was the only teacher who suggested facilitating vocabulary learning by playing songs in class to draw students' attention to the target vocabulary items through gap-filling activities. Similarly, the use of web-based resources to promote vocabulary development seemed to be the distinct preference of Mark, who maintained that the use of Internet articles needs to be encouraged as it will help to create meaningful learning experiences by focusing on a wide range of topics and promoting the practical application of vocabulary learning.

Although all teachers indicated that the introduction of authentic materials is effective in facilitating vocabulary learning, the use of such materials is not without constraints. For instance, teachers were likely to feel that they can hardly “*find the time to collect authentic reading materials*” and that it is “*difficult to find something good*” (Michelle). Also, the adaptation of some authentic texts cannot be avoided, as students “*may think they need to comprehend the difficult language rather than recycling the words they have learned when performing different tasks*” if a text is too difficult (Lydia). The potential benefits authentic materials can bring to vocabulary teaching and learning notwithstanding, it was evident that there were concerns over the difficulty and time-consuming nature of finding appropriate authentic materials to suit students' differing proficiency levels.

### 5.3.5 Beliefs about the learners and learning of vocabulary

Regarding teachers' pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, two types of beliefs about the learners and learning of vocabulary were explored. They were teachers' beliefs about: 1) the learners' expectations of vocabulary development in class; and 2) the problems related to vocabulary learning. Such investigation is important in order to understand the beliefs about vocabulary teaching as it is believed that teaching and learning are often interrelated.

Table 5.11 Teachers' beliefs about learners' expectations with regard to vocabulary learning

Learners' desire	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Learners' desire to be spoon fed	Laura, Louise, Mark, Michelle and Monica	<p><i>My students, especially those who are in their junior secondary, expect me to spoon feed them. They think I should explain the meaning of words and teach them the pronunciation. (Laura)</i></p> <p><i>Most learners, especially the weak ones, depend a lot on their teachers to introduce new vocabulary to them. They don't really try to discover [word meaning] on their own. (Louise)</i></p> <p><i>Students expect teachers to teach them everything. They kind of think that some of the local teachers are gonna do some magic and get them to somehow remember all the words. (Mark)</i></p> <p><i>They expect the teachers to explain every word to them. Some lazy students don't even want to look at the dictionary. When they want to express some ideas while writing the composition, they just ask, "what words should I use?" (Monica)</i></p>
Learners' desire to be taught based on examination requirements	Laura, Lydia, Mark and Michelle	<p><i>They expect to learn words that are more likely to be tested in tests and exams. They couldn't see the purpose of learning different expressions because they have no idea where the words can be used other than exams. (Lydia)</i></p> <p><i>They expect to be introduced to different words useful for exams. Some may wish to ask just for a vocabulary list and try to memorise all the words given to prepare for exams. (Michelle)</i></p>
Learners' desire to be asked challenging questions on vocabulary	Louise	<p><i>The capable learners expect us to challenge them as they may have already known a lot of vocabulary. In this case, they expect us to ask them challenging questions regarding the use of vocabulary in class. (Louise)</i></p>

### **Beliefs about the learners' expectations with regard to vocabulary development in class**

The most common theme that emerged in the teachers' initial interviews concerning learners' expectations with regard to vocabulary development was the students' wish to be spoon-fed, and the next most common category was the students' desire for their teaching to be based on examination requirements in the English language classroom. That some capable students might expect to be asked challenging questions when it comes to word building was only addressed by Louise.

All the teachers in the inquiry except Lydia expressed concern about their students' expectation to be spoon-fed. As reported, students generally "*depended a lot*" on their teachers to learn vocabulary. They expected to be introduced to "*a lot of words*" in class with an explanation given for every word. Amongst the teachers, Monica seemed to be particularly worried about her students' heavy reliance. She deplored the fact that the students did not seem to benefit much from her teaching despite her attempts to address their needs by explaining the meaning of words.

Most teachers also talked about their students' expectation that the teaching would be based on examination requirements. For example, Mark stated that some of his students would like him to simply focus on what would be tested. Likewise, Lydia said her students often asked her if the words she taught in class would be tested. Such questions frustrated Lydia, as they made her feel that the students failed to see the purpose of learning different expressions after discovering she could "*hardly guarantee whether the vocabulary would be tested*". Overall, the teachers' comments implied students' tendency to neglect the learning of any lexical items that did not appear to be clearly relevant to assessment and to look for a 'quick fix' for their limited vocabulary. All these indicate the need for teachers to facilitate vocabulary development by stimulating autonomous learning.

### **Beliefs about the problems related to vocabulary learning**

To ensure the effectiveness of vocabulary teaching, teachers need to take the factors that may hinder students' learning into account and take corresponding action to tackle the problems. In addition to students' desire to be spoon-fed and for teaching to be based on examination requirements, which were considered to be factors that exerted a negative impact on

vocabulary learning, the teachers identified six other problems regarding vocabulary development, as presented in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Teachers' beliefs about the problems with vocabulary learning in Phase One

Problems	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Learners' limited exposure to the target language	Laura	<i>They struggle since they're not exposed to English often. They can't memorise the words as they're not exposed to the words.</i>
	Louise	<i>One major problem is about the lack of exposure to the outside world. The English activities they [students] have at school mainly focus on the delivery of information. As they can basically express themselves in terms of the school context, they don't actually care about the range of vocabulary they use.</i>
	Mark	<i>I always asked my students how much English they used in the summer holidays, and half of them said none. They came to school. They did revision. They did the bridging course. They had the summer tutorial lessons twice a week. Outside of that, [they] never [use English].</i>
	Michelle	<i>Students don't use a lot of English outside class. They don't really speak English to each other.</i>
L1 interference	Lydia	<i>Students simply memorise the Chinese translations of the words and then use them in a wrong way in a sentence.</i>
	Michelle	<i>For Chinese, ...students tend to recognise a word well from the shape of the words. That's why they're only able to spell the beginning and the ending of a word. They struggle with the exact spelling... They don't have the knowledge of connecting the pronunciation with the sounds of the letters.</i>
	Monica	<i>Some of them [the students] have very strange ideas and mindset. They just learn English in the way they learn Chinese. For example, some students came to me and asked, 'How do we say 興 (xīng)? How do we say 奮 (fèn)? In English, 興奮 (xīngfèn) is 'excited'. It is not formed by two words.</i>
Tendency to acquire only partial word knowledge	Laura	<i>I think it's about the mastery of receptive and productive knowledge of vocabulary. My students don't have problem understanding a word sometimes... It's just that they can't use the words and apply the words in their own writing.</i>
	Louise	<i>A lot of the students only focus on the meaning of a word, and they don't know how to pronounce the words.</i>

(continued on next page)

Table 5.12 (Continued)

Reluctance to learn English	Laura	<i>They [students] don't spend much time on English learning because they think they can't revise for languages. They don't see the need for revising the vocabulary they have learnt.</i>
	Michelle	<i>Some of them think that English is too difficult for them. They fear the language. They just tend to use those words they know. I think it's also a part of the culture. They think they look stupid when they make spelling mistakes or use the words wrongly. They're afraid of being teased.</i>
Learners' tendency to downplay the importance of vocabulary development	Lydia	<i>They just think that they can't spend much time on vocabulary building because they are busy. They probably don't really see the importance of practising the new expressions and expect to gain full control of a word after using it once or twice.</i>
	Monica	<i>Some students just do not bother [learning new words]. They don't even want to look at the dictionary.</i>
Learners' preference for simple vocabulary	Laura	<i>My students can manage only the very simple vocabulary items. In junior form, they are given a list of vocabulary items. They think that if they can manage all these words, they're good at learning vocabulary.</i>
	Monica	<i>When marking the students writing, I can see that they keep using very simple words ... I tried to encourage the students to use more difficult words, like 'anxious', but they asked me why they couldn't use 'worry'.</i>

### ***Learners' limited exposure to the target language***

Constituting the largest category of teachers' concerns about vocabulary learning, with four responses overall, was learners' limited exposure to the target language. According to Laura and Michelle, students struggle with vocabulary because they seldom use English outside class and are thus not exposed to English words very often. Mark disappointedly recounted his interaction with students and found that students do nothing apart from receive different forms of education like joining a bridging course or attending tutorial lessons to improve their vocabulary. He found it problematic that students do not spend time on vocabulary learning in their daily life and see no difference between learning vocabulary and studying a compulsory school subject. In Louise's opinion, students can generally express themselves in

terms of the school context and they do not think highly of expanding their vocabulary because they seldom expose themselves to “*the outside world*”.

### ***L1 interference***

The second largest category of vocabulary learning difficulties mentioned by the teachers was concerned with L1 interference. Three teachers, namely, Lydia, Michelle and Monica, clearly regarded it as a factor that adversely affects vocabulary development. For the teachers, L1 interference poses problems for learners, as students who “*simply memorise the Chinese translations of the words*” are likely to “*use them in a wrong way*” (Lydia). Michelle further explained that students “*don't have the knowledge of how to connect the pronunciation with the sounds of the letters*”, thus having a “*struggle with the exact spelling*” of different vocabulary items as Chinese, whose words are semantically transparent because of their pictographic origin and are linguistically different from English. In accordance with Michelle, Monica observed that some of her students have “*very strange ideas and mindset*” because they try to “*learn English in a Chinese way*”. The problem, as suggested by Monica, is particularly acute among students with low English language proficiency and has created enormous difficulty in vocabulary teaching.

### ***Tendency to acquire only partial word knowledge***

In addition to the two aforementioned problems, two teachers (Laura and Louise) talked about how the nature of vocabulary learning has resulted in students’ tendency to acquire only partial word knowledge, which has led to problems relating to vocabulary usage and retrieval. While Louise commented that most of her students only try to understand the meaning of a word and can barely pronounce the words accurately or use them in their conversations, Laura stated that some of her students only have receptive knowledge of some words but fail to retrieve the words when they need to. Seemingly, the learning of a word is not straightforward as vocabulary is a multidimensional construct.

### ***Other attitudinal problems related to vocabulary learning***

Other problems addressed, details of which can be found in Table 5.12, were each cited by two teachers in the initial interviews. Such problems were attitudinal, and they included students’ reluctance to learn English, the tendency to downplay the importance of vocabulary development and preference for simple vocabulary.

In brief, the teachers' perception that most learners experience problems related to vocabulary learning, including lack of exposure to the target language, L1 interference and partial word knowledge, appeared to explain why enhancing learners' motivation, teaching word knowledge with a focus on learner application, and using the target language to teach vocabulary were referred to in the discussion of the aims of, and approach to, vocabulary teaching.

### 5.3.6 Beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge

While all local teacher participants stated that vocabulary knowledge should be assessed by dictation, quizzes and/or tests as well as writing and speaking tasks, with Monica being the exception who claimed that she rarely held vocabulary quizzes in class, Mark was the only teacher who highlighted the importance of designing assessment tasks to enable students to take ownership of their learning (see Table 5.13).

Table 5.13 Teachers' beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge in Phase One

Method	Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Dictation	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Michelle and Monica	<p><i>Dictation is compulsory. It's a departmental policy.</i> (Laura)</p> <p><i>Dictation forces students to memorise specific words. It's a focused and direct way to test students' learning.</i> (Louise)</p>
Vocabulary quizzes	Laura, Louise, Lydia and Michelle	<p><i>Once they [the students] have managed the spelling, it's important to move a step further and focus on how to use the words. I'll create quizzes with contextualised gap-filling to test word knowledge after the dictation.</i> (Laura)</p> <p><i>It's important to design quizzes to test whether students know how to change the word form. You don't provide the words and then ask the students to copy those words into the blanks.</i> (Michelle)</p>
Speaking and writing tasks	Laura, Louise, Lydia, Michelle and Monica	<p><i>I think free writing would be a good way. I find it useful because they are less guided. For the guided tasks, students simply show [their teachers] what they have learned. In free writing, you'll be quite shocked to find out that they don't really know how to express themselves with the right words.</i> (Louise)</p> <p><i>If students use the words in their writing and speaking correctly, they have mastered the language.</i> (Lydia)</p>

Table 5.13 (continued)

Student-centred assessments	Mark	<i>It will be useful if you get the students to read an article and ask them to create a set of questions with which they will test the other students' ability to understand different words of the passage in class. By creating the questions, they'll probably acquire the vocab much better than writing 80 lines or spelling a sentence and then forgetting about it. (Mark)</i>
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As can be seen in the table, all the local teachers cited dictation as a way of assessing mastery of vocabulary, but its use appeared to be more controversial than the use of quizzes and tasks. Whilst Louise perceived dictation as an effective method of evaluating vocabulary knowledge since it allows teachers to measure learning progress, Laura commented that she is required by the departmental policies of her school to conduct dictation in class, despite her belief that vocabulary quizzes are more effective. Regarding the use of vocabulary quizzes, most local teachers recommended the use of gap-filling exercises to evaluate learners' ability to retrieve and use target vocabulary items in their proper forms. The analysis of student output through writing and speaking tasks was also suggested, as it was generally agreed that knowledge of target lexical items can be confirmed by production of a piece of writing in which those items are used appropriately. Remarkably, Louise suggested the use of “*free writing*” to test students' actual vocabulary knowledge and considered it more useful than the guided tasks as it enables teachers to see how students have trouble expressing themselves “*with the right words*”.

Amongst the teacher participants, Mark was the only teacher who recommended examining students' vocabulary through student-centred assessments. Despite his claim that gap-filling exercises seemed to be a practical method for assessing vocabulary, Mark admitted to not being sure about the merits of conducting dictation and vocabulary quizzes. Having “*always learned something perfectly*” when he “*needed to teach it*”, he saw no need for teachers to “prepare everything” as vocabulary acquisition may be most effective when learners are given responsibility for their own learning. Getting the learners to set questions relating to vocabulary for peer assessment, in Mark's view, was “*the best way*” of evaluation because of the thinking process involved.



As was expected, the local teachers seemed to be almost unanimous in proposing the aforementioned types of vocabulary assessment, for the methods are commonly used in typical Hong Kong classrooms. Nonetheless, Mark's remark which highlighted the importance of designing assessment tasks that enable students to take ownership of their learning seemed to be meaningful, as students may benefit from student-centred learning by engaging in the discovery and gathering of knowledge for themselves.

### **5.3.7 Summary of teachers' professed beliefs about vocabulary development**

In short, the chapter has so far discussed the professed epistemological and pedagogical beliefs of the six teacher participants' pertaining to vocabulary teaching. The salient features of such beliefs are summarised in Figure 5.2 below.

- Vocabulary plays an important role in SLA, for it is the key to comprehension and communication.
- Individuals who claim that they know a word must know the meaning and pronunciation of a word.
- To enhance vocabulary learning, teachers should address multiple aspects of lexical knowledge, focus on learner application and select lexical items for explicit treatment in the English language classroom based on usefulness, levels of difficulty and cultural appropriateness.
- One principle of effective vocabulary teaching is to identify and tackle the different types of problems which hinder students' vocabulary development, examples of which include poor learning attitude, lack of exposure to the target language and L1 interference.
- Vocabulary instruction strategies should be adopted to enhance lexical development. Specifically, different kinds of memory strategies should be used to consolidate students' learning of words once they have been encountered. Cognitive strategies (verbal repetition in particular) and determination strategies (asking students to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar vocabulary item in particular) are also recommended.
- Autonomous vocabulary learning should be promoted by drawing students' attention to the importance of lexical development, helping students to gain exposure to the target language, fostering the development of positive learning habits and monitoring students' independent learning.
- Vocabulary activities such as games, crossword puzzles and song appreciation should be incorporated in class to enhance lexical development.
- Different types of authentic materials should be used to enhance vocabulary teaching and learning in the English language classroom.
- Vocabulary knowledge should be assessed regularly by means of writing and speaking tasks, dictation, as well as quizzes.

Figure 5.2 Summary of the teachers' beliefs about vocabulary development in Phase One

As tensions between what teachers say and do serve as a reflection of their belief sub-systems and of the different forces which impact their thoughts and behaviour, the question as to whether teachers' beliefs and action are in alignment seems particularly meaningful. This is considered in the next two sections which focus on examining the teachers' beliefs in terms of the extent to which they are translated into actual practice and the contributory factors that shape the teachers' beliefs and practices.

#### **5.4 The relationship between teachers' professed beliefs and actual practices**

By comparing the teachers' beliefs presented earlier with the analysis of data collected from classroom observations, as well as the materials (such as relevant chapters in the textbooks, handouts and samples of vocabulary assessment) collected from the six teacher participants in the first phase of the study, this section investigates the extent to which the teachers' reported beliefs correspond with their actual practices. Although the analysis may not present a full picture of the teachers' practice as it was impossible to observe all the teachers' lessons and analyse all the materials used by the teachers to facilitate vocabulary development, I believe it gives an in-depth account of the teachers' actions, which allows the potential complexity of beliefs and practice to emerge. To capture an authentic picture of teachers' vocabulary practices, the classroom data collected from all teachers took place over the course of an entire school cycle. A total of 74 lessons, which lasted approximately 35 minutes each, were audiotaped and examined. Given that it is difficult to see how every facet of teachers' beliefs is translated into practice, the section is based on the salient findings regarding the consistencies, or lack thereof, in the correspondences between the teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to vocabulary teaching and assessment.

##### **5.4.1 Major areas of alignment between teachers' beliefs and practices**

The analysis of interviews and lesson observations shows that there was close correspondence between teachers' beliefs and practices in five major areas.

***Finding 1: The teachers' epistemological belief that word building is important can be reflected in the number of lexical items explicitly and repeatedly dealt with in class.***

It can be seen from Table 5.14 that most teachers taught approximately ten lexical items in each of their English lessons on average. One notable finding was the large number of lexical items addressed in some of the teachers' lessons conducted at the beginning of a module to prepare students for later reading and/or whilst reading a passage. Laura, Louise, Lydia and Monica, for instance, taught as many as 40 expressions in a double lesson, suggesting that they found it important to promote students' lexical development in class by helping them to expand their vocabulary to enhance comprehension.

Table 5.14 Number of lexical items explicitly dealt with by the teachers in Phase One

Teacher	No. of single lessons audiotaped	Total no. of lexical items taught	Average no. of lexical items taught per single lesson
Laura	16	154	10
Louise	15	153	10
Lydia	10	102	10
Mark	6	50	8
Michelle	17	104	6
Monica	10	102	10
Total	74	665	9

What is important here is that the numbers presented do not provide a straightforward answer as to the degrees of importance different teachers attached to word building. While Mark and Michelle seemed to teach a relatively small number of vocabulary items in their lessons, it is worth noting that some of the audiotaped lessons involved no vocabulary teaching. Two such examples included one of Michelle's lessons which focused on unseen dictation, and one of Mark's lessons, which solely concerned Mark's instructions about a class activity and the students' discussion. This is not particularly surprising given that teachers were asked to audiotape their English lessons regardless of whether or not vocabulary teaching was involved, my intention being that the data collected would, as far as possible, reflect the actual picture of the teachers' practice in the course of a six-day school cycle. Also, Mark and Monica differed from other teachers in terms of their teaching duties. Monica only had a regular class of senior secondary students, while Mark had none. That is to say, all the lessons Monica conducted with her junior secondary students and those that Mark conducted with his students were either related to the content of class readers or language arts, such as poetry and drama. In the cases of both teachers, very limited time could be devoted to vocabulary teaching because of the nature of their lessons and the fact that they only had the opportunity to spend one single lesson with the students once every cycle.

Important here, too, is the fact that individual teachers varied in terms of how they treated different lexical items. While the amount of class time teachers allocated to vocabulary development is unclear as it is beyond the scope of the research, it was not difficult for me to gain the general impression that some teachers tended to spend more time on recycling the target vocabulary items in order to consolidate learning (see Table 5.15), teaching a target word by addressing various aspects of lexical knowledge or using different strategies, possibly resulting in the smaller number of lexical items covered in class.

Table 5.15 Lexical items that received repeated treatment by teachers in Phase One

Teacher	No. of lexical items that received repeated treatment	Total no. of lexical items taught	Percentage of lexical items that received repeated treatment (per cent)
Laura	61	154	40
Louise	23	153	15
Lydia	42	102	41
Mark	15	50	30
Michelle	14	104	13
Monica	4	102	4
Total	178	665	27

For the various reasons mentioned, we should by no means draw the conclusion that the teachers who taught fewer words considered vocabulary development less important when compared to those who explicitly covered more items. Instead, we can reasonably conclude that teachers seemed to find vocabulary development important in their classroom practice as the quantitative data can be interpreted as evidence of the teachers' consistent efforts to teach new vocabulary items and consolidate vocabulary learning in the English language classroom.

***Finding 2: The teachers' epistemological belief that meaning and pronunciation are two principal aspects of word knowledge and their pedagogical belief that multiple aspects of word knowledge should be taught in class are reflected in the considerable teaching effort which they put into addressing specific aspects of lexical knowledge in class.***

A glance at Table 5.16 clearly shows that pronunciation and word meaning were the two most prominent aspects of word knowledge addressed in the English language lessons conducted by each of the six teacher participants.

Table 5.16 Word knowledge aspects addressed by the teachers in Phase One

		Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
Aspects of lexical knowledge addressed in class		per cent (N=154)	per cent (N=153)	per cent (N=102)	per cent (N=50)	per cent (N=104)	per cent (N=102)
Form	Pronunciation	91	88	81	96	93	87
	Spelling	5	16	5	8	9	12
	Word parts	5	25	5	0	15	12
Meaning	Meaning	85	64	78	98	70	67
	Concept and referent	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Association	29	22	13	32	28	26
Use	Part of speech (word form)	17	22	46	2	33	29
	Collocations	0	3	0	0	1	4
	Constraints on use	8	12	1	0	6	7

Out of the 665 expressions explicitly covered in class, the pronunciation of 592 words (89 per cent) and the meaning of 499 words (75 per cent) received attention from teachers. Seemingly, this aligns with the teachers' professed beliefs that it is necessary for individuals to learn the pronunciation and meaning of a word if they are to master a word, as well as with their pedagogical beliefs that teachers need to pay specific attention to these two aspects of word knowledge in English language lessons. The teachers' pedagogical beliefs that various aspects of word knowledge should be addressed in class may also be manifested in their classroom practice. Although specific types of word knowledge received negligible or even no attention, the findings made it clear that the teachers endeavoured to address multiple aspects of word knowledge when giving vocabulary instruction. All of them focused on no less than seven aspects of word knowledge, with Mark, being the exception, who dealt with only five.

***Finding 3: The teachers' propositions that learners' problems which hamper lexical development should be tackled was enacted in practice to some extent.***

It was evident that the teachers who highlighted L1 interference as a problem, including Michelle, Monica and Lydia, deliberately avoided the use of first language when teaching vocabulary in class. As revealed by the analysis of lessons in the initial stage of my research project, Monica and Lydia's vocabulary teaching only occasionally made use of the L1 to translate words. An example chosen from each teacher's lesson demonstrating how the first language was employed when teaching vocabulary is shown as follows:

- Monica: *Do you know **assertion**?*  
 Student: 聖旨 (shèngzhǐ)?  
 Monica: *No. In English. Speak in English, please. **Assertion** means to declare, to tell people firmly and strongly that something happens... That means he is very definite and he has very strong belief.*  
 (Excerpt from Monica's lesson on 22 September 2016)
- Lydia: *What is the meaning of **distraction**?*  
 Student: 分心 (fēnxīn)?  
 Lydia: *In English. What is **distraction**? **Distraction** is very similar to another word.*  
 (Excerpt from Lydia's lesson on 5 October 2016)

From the sample excerpts, it is clear that Monica and Lydia tended to discourage students from giving the meaning of words in their mother tongue, regardless of the accuracy of their students' explanation. Apart from teaching the word 'distraction', only two lexical items were associated with the use of L1 translation in Lydia's lessons. While teaching her students 'extra' and 'laugh your head off', Lydia introduced the expressions '茄喱啡' and 'laugh die me', which were commonly adopted by her students to draw their attention<sup>19</sup>. She explained:

*I wasn't trying to introduce the word with the L1 translation. I just wanted to show them that some students made mistakes because they used Chinglish. I'm pretty much against giving them a Chinese translation. Even if some students shouted out the correct Chinese translation, I'll tell them to speak in English because I don't think the habit helps.*

Similarly, Michelle did not see the need for direct translation in her lessons as the school uses English as a medium of instruction. The only situation in which she drew her students' attention to Cantonese in class occurred when she intended to teach them how a Chinese expression can be described in proper English:

- Michelle: *What did they say?*  
 Student: **Raining cats and dogs.**  
 Michelle: *Yes. It means heavy rain. It's an idiom. **Raining cats and dogs.** In Cantonese, we have similar thing, but who wants to say it?*  
 (An excerpt from Michelle's lesson on 28 September 2016)

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<sup>19</sup> 茄喱啡 is a Cantonese expression. It means 'extra' in English, which can be translated as 群眾演員 (qúnzhòng yǎnyuán) for formal usage. As for the expression 'laugh die me', the proper way of saying it in English is 'laugh your head off'. It is an example of Chinglish.

Evidently, the teachers considered it crucial to minimise the use of L1 translation in class as they were worried about the negative impact of L1 interference on vocabulary learning.

***Finding 4: The teachers' strong preference for memory strategies to consolidate students' vocabulary learning seemed to correspond to their use of such strategies in class overall.***

Teachers perceived the use of memory strategies to be conducive to vocabulary learning and they seemed to have adopted a range of memory strategies for lexical instruction (see Table 5.17).

Table 5.17 Memory and cognitive strategies adopted by the teachers in Phase One

Taxonomy	Strategies adopted	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
		per cent (N=154)	per cent (N=153)	per cent (N=102)	per cent (N=50)	per cent (N=104)	per cent (N=102)
MEM	Teach word with a pictorial representation of its meaning*	12	0	17	4	8	9
MEM	Create an image of the word's meaning	1	0	1	10	0	2
MEM	Connect word to personal experience	21	9	25	40	21	13
MEM	Associate word with its coordinate	3	1	2	0	0	1
MEM	Connect word to its synonyms and/or antonyms*	29	21	13	36	28	25
MEM	Group words together to study them	82	74	81	12	65	35
MEM	Create sample sentences*	1	0	0	2	4	2
MEM	Group words together within a storyline	0	0	0	0	0	9
MEM	Draw students' attention to the spelling	10	15	5	8	10	10
MEM	Study the sound of a word with students*	9	9	9	6	10	4
MEM	Draw students' attention to a word	91	86	83	96	93	87
MEM	Draw students' attention to affixes and roots*	7	24	4	0	16	7
MEM	Draw students' attention to part of speech*	18	22	46	0	33	33
MEM	Paraphrase the word's meaning	60	45	54	56	48	38
MEM	Use L1 translation to explain word meaning*	3	1	3	8	1	3
MEM	Use physical action when teaching	2	0	4	2	0	3
COG	Use / encourage verbal repetition*	88	86	82	94	93	87
COG	Ask students to take notes in class*	25	34	1	0	7	25
COG	Ask students to read the vocabulary section in the textbook	0	0	0	0	8	0

(Note: The strategies with an asterisk have been mentioned by the teachers in the initial interviews)

While it is worth noting that not all the strategies in use were introduced by the teachers when they were asked to discuss the approach to effective vocabulary teaching, this does not necessarily mean that the teachers' beliefs and practice were in conflict with one another. By paraphrasing the word meaning, for instance, the teachers were likely to draw students' attention to meaning, which was considered an important aspect of word knowledge.

The use of stimulated recall in the initial interviews was particularly helpful, for it enabled me to gain insights into teachers' beliefs by asking for clarification regarding the use of some frequently used memory strategies, which were not mentioned in the teachers' discussion on the features of effective vocabulary teaching. As Table 5.17 demonstrates, all teachers tried to teach vocabulary by relating the target vocabulary to a personal experience, whether it was their own experience or that of their students. An illustration of how teachers used personal experience to teach vocabulary is as follows:

- Student: *"I don't want a blood stain in my library," said Mrs Otis.  
"Please remove the stain..."*
- Mark: *Thank you. So, **stain**. Can you guess what **stain** is? Blood **stain**...*
- Student: *Ketchup.*
- Mark: *Yes, that's a **stain**. But what's a **stain**?*
- Student: *When the blood is...*
- Mark: *Dried or what?*
- Student: *Dried.*
- Mark: *Yes. When the blood falls on something, and you try to wash it and there is still something there.*
- Student: *Like red wine.*
- Mark: *Do you drink red wine? That's an interesting example... **Stain** is not only related to food... You can get different things - Mud, water... One thing in Hong Kong that is very annoying. Air-conditioner drips water, dirty water. When you cannot wash your clothes... **Stain**!*
- (Excerpt from Mark's lesson on 21 September 2016)

Although Mark did not cite using his personal experience as an effective means to teach vocabulary, he commented that the strategy might help his learners "*make better sense*" of a new word and enhance their memory when prompted to talk about it. Similarly, other teachers who did not cite the strategy as an effective way of giving vocabulary instruction made positive comments on it. While Lydia believed that drawing students' attention to their



personal experience would create a context for her to show the students how a word is used, and Laura explained that the use of personal experience served as a means for her to vary her teaching techniques for promoting vocabulary learning in class, Louise and Michelle opined that they related vocabulary teaching to the students' experience to "*arouse their interests in learning*". Michelle said:

*Teaching students something that they haven't experienced or seen before is like telling them something from Mars...It's too distant for them. If the students feel that what they learn is closely related to their daily life, they may have more interest in learning. It also helps them to retain the words.*

As shown, teachers were quite positive about the use of personal experience in order to enhance vocabulary learning in class, though they did not address the importance of it when asked to discuss effective vocabulary instruction.

A similar observation can be made about the teachers' use of cognitive strategies. It is particularly interesting to note that verbal repetition was one of the strategies most frequently adopted by all the teacher participants, though Mark was the only one who attached importance to it when discussing effective means of lexical instruction. When asked to explain the pedagogical rationale underpinning their practice, Laura and Lydia seemed to be rather surprised to find that they often verbally repeated saying the vocabulary items they taught in class. Both responded by asking, "*Did I?*", implying that they were unaware of how frequently they adopted this strategy when giving lexical instruction. Like the other teachers, however, they contended that verbal repetition is likely to help students master the pronunciation of a word better. Of the six teachers, Monica was the only one who did not consider verbal repetition a strategy for vocabulary teaching. In her words, repeating a target vocabulary item was usually what she did in her lessons with her senior secondary students as they were "*talking all the time*". Monica said, "*I need to repeat quite a lot of times whenever I teach an expression. Nobody was listening to me, so I needed to repeat the words to make sure that they know which words I was talking about.*" Indeed, it was not a particularly challenging task to identify situations when Monica had to ask her students to stop chatting. The following episode extracted from a lesson conducted by Monica illustrates how she continually repeated the word 'graffiti' while teaching it because of poor classroom discipline:

- Monica: *Keep quiet please...What is **graffiti**? **Graffiti**... What is **graffiti**? What is **graffiti**?*
- Student: *Pictures.*
- Monica: *Pictures... Have you seen any **graffiti**?*
- Student: *Yes.*
- Monica: *All right. So, **graffiti**. Can you explain it in English?*
- Student: *Ugly drawing.*
- Monica: *Ugly drawing? Tom, can you return to your seat? So, **graffiti** is some drawings, writings... usually drawn on walls of the buildings.*  
(Excerpt from Monica's lesson on 22 September 2016)

As demonstrated above, Monica had to repeat herself four times before getting an initial response from her students. This example highlighted the fact that a fine-grained analysis of teachers' comments on the reasons underlying their decision-making is crucial to ascertaining the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice.

***Finding 5: The teacher belief that vocabulary activities should be incorporated in the language classroom to enhance lexical development was reflected in several teachers' lessons.***

The use of vocabulary activities, such as crossword puzzles and role-play activities, in several teachers' lessons seems to reflect the correspondence between the teachers' beliefs and practice. Laura, for instance, discussed the importance of employing a variety of activities in her interview and made use of two activities to facilitate the teaching of adjectives when describing films in her junior secondary classroom. These included asking students to complete a crossword puzzle and discuss the movies they like and dislike with the use of adjectives they learned (Appendix Q). The crossword puzzle related to the use of adjectives to describe movies was also used by Lydia. Through my informal contacts with the two teachers, I found that they sometimes shared teaching materials with each other to save time on lesson preparation. One of Louise's lessons with her junior students was about the learning of vocabulary items related to purchases and sales like 'bargain', 'redeem' and 'refund'. After teaching, Louise carried out a role-play activity which encouraged learners to apply the newly learned expressions. Students were asked to work in pairs, playing the role of a customer not satisfied with a pair of jeans because of poor stitching and a sales assistant required to deal with the complaint. As for Michelle, group discussion seemed to be the most common activity conducted. In her lessons with both her junior and senior secondary students, Michelle asked them to form small groups and discuss their views. In a lesson with her senior class, for instance, she asked her students to talk about their favourite type

of pop culture after teaching them vocabulary items such as ‘blogs’, ‘comic strips’ and ‘vox pops’. This was followed up with students’ sharing of their discussion with the class, which encouraged learners’ multiple encounters with the target words. Overall, most teachers endeavoured to facilitate lexical development through class activities focusing on learner output, samples of which are included in Appendix R. This shows the correspondence between the teachers’ beliefs and practice regarding the use of class activities for vocabulary learning.

***Finding 6: The local teachers’ belief that vocabulary knowledge should be assessed by dictation and quizzes was evident in their assessment practice.***

To fulfil school requirements, all local teachers conducted dictation with their junior secondary students every school cycle (Appendix S). Teachers were required to follow the guidelines concerning how the marks for dictation, both seen and unseen, should be calculated and how students should make corrections. As the teachers were asked to submit their students’ dictation to the panel heads for inspection every term, teachers seemed to have no choice but to conduct dictation as requested. This probably explained why all local teachers cited dictation as a means of vocabulary assessment. Except for Monica, who did not recommend the use of vocabulary quizzes for evaluation in the initial interviews, all local teacher participants designed quizzes to test students’ vocabulary mastery in class. As illustrated in the samples of vocabulary quizzes used by Laura, Michelle and Lydia in Appendix S, teachers relied on the use of gap-filling exercises to test vocabulary. This aligns with their comments that gap-filling, which requires learners to supply the target words from memory, enables them to check whether students have mastered the word form and meaning of the target vocabulary as they are recall tasks. Since the study did not aim to examine the written feedback teachers give with regard to students’ writing, the question of whether teachers assess vocabulary knowledge through writing tasks, as stated in their interviews, remains unanswered.

#### **5.4.2 Major areas of incongruity between teachers’ beliefs and practices**

Although the previous section provides evidence that the professed beliefs and actual practices of the teachers were in alignment, this has by no means led to the conclusion that the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice is straightforward. Rather, the findings on the discrepancies between the teachers’ thoughts and actions elucidate the complex nature of

teachers' belief systems. This section summarises the findings in terms of four areas of incongruity between teachers' beliefs and practices:

***Mismatch 1: Teachers considered it crucial to select lexical items for explicit treatment in class but relied on the materials provided by the school, despite their insufficiency.***

Whilst most teachers claimed that vocabulary which received special attention in class should be selected based on usefulness, levels of difficulty and cultural appropriateness, all teachers explained that the vast majority of words they covered in their lessons were those from the materials provided by the school, even though there were clearly drawbacks to using such materials with respect to vocabulary teaching and learning.

In addition to Michelle, who commented that almost all the words she taught were “*from the textbook*”, Louise, Lydia and Monica clearly regarded textbooks and/or class readers as the major source of the target vocabulary in the lessons with their students. For instance, Louise explained in the initial interview that while “*all the words*” she explicitly taught in her junior secondary classroom, including ‘loyalty card’, ‘redeem’, ‘voucher’ and ‘bargains’, were from the coursebook’s “unit about sales presentation”, the lexical items she introduced to her form five students, examples of which included ‘thrilling’, ‘coherent’, ‘skilful’, and ‘spectacular’ were “all about the textbook unit” on film commentary. Likewise, lexical items introduced by Lydia, such as ‘animation’, ‘apocalyptic’, ‘fast-paced’, ‘suspenseful’ and ‘gripping’, were from a chapter in the textbook about entertainment. Students “*had to learn the different types of films for reading a passage and different words to describe the movies*” for the writing of a film review.

To fulfil examination requirements, teachers seemed to use a wider range of materials to teach their senior secondary students vocabulary. For instance, Michelle devoted considerable amount of time to teaching words related to popular culture from the textbook, like ‘blogs’, ‘tabloids’ and ‘viral videos’, in the lessons with her form five students but also made use of a handout to draw students’ attention to the common mistakes related to the use of vocabulary items like ‘concerned’, ‘cooker’ and ‘discuss’ reported by the examination authority. Of the four teacher participants who conducted regular classes with junior secondary students, only Laura commented that some of the words she taught were chosen to supplement the textbooks as she would like to have her students “*see the importance of learning more*” and considered

it her responsibility to “*stretch the students’ potential*” by teaching them words other than those from the textbooks.

While the teachers’ beliefs that lexical items explicitly taught in class should be chosen on the basis of their usefulness and cultural appropriateness seemed to correspond to their practice<sup>20</sup>, it should be noted that some teachers did not find it meaningful to teach some of the words covered in the textbooks. Typical comments regarding the target items highlighted by the textbook publishers were: “*They don’t really suit the students’ interest. Most of them are related to Western culture but not the Chinese culture or even Hong Kong*” (Michelle). Similarly, Laura felt that the textbook writers’ selection of topics “*can be problematic sometimes*”. She recalled her experience of teaching a unit on Macau even though she believed the students would have little need to describe the attractions in Macau after their learning.

Evidently, teachers were constrained by the school syllabus and their priority was to teach vocabulary items according to the textbook units and materials provided. Even though only a small proportion of words addressed in class were deliberately taught in addition to those from the textbooks, there seemed to be little flexibility for teachers to introduce “*extra*” lexical items that they found truly useful and relevant to students’ lives. It should also be noted that none of the teachers mentioned whether they chose the words they taught on the basis of word difficulty despite their belief that it was an important issue to consider. The above seems to suggest that teachers’ beliefs about the choice of lexical items they taught and the words they addressed in the English language classroom were inconsistent to some extent.

***Mismatch 2: Teachers seldom adopted strategies which promoted the discovery of word meaning in their English lessons but thought that students should be trained to guess the meaning of a vocabulary item they had newly encountered.***

While the importance of guessing word meaning was emphasised in the interviews, teachers tended not to encourage students to do so in class, as can be seen in Table 5.18 below. Encouraging students to analyse affixation and guess from textual context were the only two determination strategies adopted to promote the discovery of word meaning.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the vocabulary items explained in class included neither taboos nor coarse language, and they were practically related to the comprehension of reading passages, preparation of the writing tasks students were required to complete and to the examination.

Table 5.18 Strategies adopted to promote the discovery of word meaning in Phase One

Taxonomy	Strategies adopted in class	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
		per cent (N=154)	per cent (N=153)	per cent (N=102)	per cent (N=50)	per cent (N=104)	per cent (N=102)
DET	Encourage students to analyse affixes and roots	0	0	1	4	2	2
DET	Encourage students to guess the meaning of a word from textual context*	1	1	0	4	5	2
/	Other strategies	0	0	0	0	0	0

The following excerpt demonstrated how Michelle encouraged students to guess word meaning by analysing the prefix and root of a target item of vocabulary:

- Michelle: If you visit India, you will experience sensory overload. So, what is **overload**? *Over*?
- Student: Too much.
- Michelle: Too much. Yes. *Load*?
- Student: The amount of something.
- Michelle: Right. So, **overload** means having too much of something.  
(Excerpt from Michelle's lesson on 21 September 2016)

Here, Michelle provided her students with the explanation of the word after encouraging them to decipher its meaning by drawing their attention to the prefix and root of the word. A similar example was identified in another lesson conducted by Michelle:

- Michelle: *What does it mean by **shoddy**? The set design is **shoddy**. Can you make a guess at the meaning of this word? ... Look at the words behind **shoddy**...*
- Student: *Rough.*
- Michelle: *Rough... Which words follow **shoddy**?*
- Student: *Cheap.*
- Michelle: *Cheap and...?*
- Student: *Fake.*
- Michelle: *Is it good?*
- Student: *No.*
- Michelle: *Okay. Is that made nicely or badly?*
- Student: *Badly.*
- Michelle: *Right, **shoddy** can be used to describe something that is made badly. It means second-rate.*  
(Excerpt from Michelle's lesson on 22 September 2016)

In this example, Michelle explicitly asked her students to guess the meaning of ‘shoddy’ from the context by asking them to reflect on the connotation of the word. Laura adopted a similar strategy, and the way she taught the word ‘cityscape’ serves as an illustration:

- Laura: *Question number 2, discussing whether this kind of architecture is for better **cityscape**. Now, please learn this word. Do you know the word **cityscape**? What does it mean by **cityscape**? Geography students? How about the word **landscape**? New Zealand is a country with very beautiful **landscape**. What does it mean?*
- Student: *Countryside?*
- Laura: *Right. Very beautiful natural scenery. Now, can you guess the meaning of **cityscape**?*  
[Silence]
- Laura: ***Cityscape** means the scenery of our city. **Cityscape**.*  
(Excerpt from Laura’s lesson on 3 October 2016)

Nonetheless, Laura’s students seemed to be rather reluctant to guess the meaning of the word irrespective of her efforts to encourage them to do so through the use of guiding questions and only responded the question she asked of which they had knowledge. One possible reason to account for the limited use of determination strategies in class was provided by Monica. She said rather pessimistically, “*In the past, I asked the students to tell me the meaning or ask them to guess the meaning... But now, I tell them the meaning... Maybe in these years, I have been discouraged by my students’ lack of response*”. Michelle added that the students’ behaviour could be attributed to the culture that prevents them from “*saying something that they are not confident with*”. As students often “*try to make sure that everything is accurate when they speak in class*”, it is not difficult to understand why they show considerable reluctance to guess the meaning of a new word. To sum up, it seems that the mismatch between teacher beliefs and practice regarding the use of determination strategies in class can be attributed to student factors, such as lack of confidence and their fear of making mistakes.

***Mismatch 3: Teachers only very rarely encouraged their students to gain exposure to English outside class and develop positive habits with regard to vocabulary learning, despite citing these as effective ways to promote independent vocabulary learning.***

While four teachers (Laura, Lydia, Michelle and Mark) recommended asking students to learn vocabulary outside class through films and/or videos, three of them watched film trailers with their students because they were required to follow the scheme of work and introduce

vocabulary items related to films and popular culture in class. To illustrate, Laura and Lydia played trailers for such films as *Into the Woods*, *Night at the Museum* and *Inside Out* in their lessons, focusing on the teaching of words related to film genres, including ‘fantasy’, ‘action’ and ‘animation’. Nonetheless, the underlying reason for them to do so was to help students enhance their memory instead of encouraging independent learning of vocabulary through film appreciation. According to Laura, the use of visual images is likely to consolidate students’ vocabulary learning. It is “*better than just giving students the words on a piece of paper*”. Unlike Laura and Lydia, who played film trailers in their junior secondary classroom, Michelle played the trailers for *Cloverfield* and *Enchanted* in one of the lessons because a listening task in the textbook involved the reviews of these films (see Appendix T). Michelle played the trailers as a lead-in activity to prepare students for the listening task, and her doing so did not involve the intention to promote vocabulary learning. Regarding Louise, Michelle and Monica’s suggestion about the introduction of interesting learning resources to foster students’ independent learning, no corresponding classroom practice could be observed.

How teachers devoted their efforts to encourage the development of positive habits on the part of their learners with regard to vocabulary learning also seemed to demonstrate the lack of congruity between their beliefs and practices concerning the need to promote independent vocabulary. While in their interviews four teachers (Louise, Lydia, Michelle and Monica) strongly advocated the use of a vocabulary notebook and learner application of newly learned vocabulary, such beliefs seemed to have been reflected in the lesson practice of just two teachers. To be more specific, only Louise and Michelle asked their students to use a vocabulary notebook. Although Louise claimed that she asked her students to jot down new vocabulary items in their vocabulary notebooks, the junior students’ exercise books were mainly for keeping the handouts distributed in class and completing different short tasks, whereas the notebooks for the senior secondary students were for jotting down “*some commonly used words in examination papers*”. Seemingly, Louise associated the use of a notebook with student assignments and examinations rather than independent learning based on students’ interests. Concerning the use of notebook, Monica commented, “*They [students] should get a notebook to write down the words they come across and try to revise them, but I don’t think they do it*”. This possibly explained why I observed no sign of Monica’s students using a vocabulary notebook as Monica appeared not to have encouraged them to do so.



***Mismatch 4: Teachers rarely used authentic materials to support vocabulary acquisition in class although they found them beneficial to students' learning.***

Although all the teachers claimed that the use of authentic materials should be advocated to foster vocabulary development in class, the use of such materials could hardly ever be identified during the first phase of the study. Laura was the only teacher who distributed a newspaper article downloaded from the BBC News website to teach students vocabulary items related to virtual reality. She also described how she used a newspaper article from the South China Morning Post about hostile architecture to teach her senior secondary students expressions related to social issues, including ‘cityscape’, ‘tarnish’ and ‘underprivileged’. According to Laura, one of the departmental policies required English teachers to do a newspaper commentary once a month with the students. Nonetheless, she usually asked her students to do it “twice a month” and gave them feedback on their work with a focus on vocabulary because she felt that “using social issues to learn English is the one of the best ways to learn English”. Both Michelle and Lydia, when asked to talk about how their English lessons can be improved or whether they had additional comments on their teaching, admitted that they would like to support their teaching with the use of authentic materials, though they had not done so. Michelle said: *“If I were given more time, I would find some authentic materials rather than depending all on the textbooks.”* Like Michelle, Lydia expressed her wish to facilitate vocabulary teaching in class with the use of authentic materials. She claimed that she had tried to find online materials that group different colours to teach vocabulary to *“make the lessons more fun”* in the past but was constrained by the tight class schedule and considered it inefficient to spend much time on finding appropriate materials and doing lesson planning only for vocabulary learning. From the interview data, it is possible to speculate that time constraints prohibited teachers from using authentic materials to teach vocabulary in their lessons, resulting in dissonance between their beliefs and practices.

### **5.5 Factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practice**

The interview data show that teachers' beliefs can predominantly be attributed to three factors, namely, their own language learning experience, their professional development experience and contextual factors. They also suggest that the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices seems to be interactive. While teachers' behaviours are, by and large,

guided by their beliefs, teachers' thinking also appears to be shaped by their own practices, which may encourage them to reshape their beliefs.

### 5.5.1 Language learning experience

It is clear from Table 5.19 that teachers' own language learning experience was found to be a major contributory factor to the construction of their beliefs about vocabulary teaching.

Table 5.19 The role of language learning experience in shaping beliefs and/or practices

Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Laura	<i>I adopt some of the strategies used by my English teachers... After doing the writing compositions, the English teachers would give us very detailed feedback, and there is always a part related to vocabulary building. I do the same with my students as I find that useful.</i>
Louise	<i>It [my schooling experience as an English learner] influences me a lot. I was not really immersed in... an English-rich environment, so I think they [students] need some shortcuts and suggestions from me to let them learn more efficiently.</i>
Lydia	<i>My teachers did not put much emphasis on vocabulary teaching.... That's why I didn't think it was important. It's after I became a teacher that I gradually realised its importance.</i>
Mark	<i>I think I learned nothing about English teaching from my education as a student... I was in mainland China eight years ago and I had to book a ticket. I remember key vocabulary like 明天 (ming tian) as I had to book a ticket for 'ming tian', tomorrow. I'll never ever in my life forget 'ming tian' because I had an authentic experience with success - I got the ticket... I reached my destination... Authentic language learning happens in context.</i>
Michelle	<i>When I was in primary school, my teacher taught us vocabulary through songs. It was quite an innovation at that time. I also used this sometimes.</i>
Monica	<i>I always ask my students to remember the words, ...because in my secondary school days, my teacher told me to remember a lot of useful phrases. Even until now, I remember them. I think it's useful.</i>

Whilst the native-speaking English teacher suggested that he “learned nothing” about English teaching when he was a high school student and described how his experience of learning Chinese vocabulary through authentic experiences enabled him to recognise the importance of teaching vocabulary in context, almost all the local teachers acknowledged their English

teachers' influence on their own beliefs and/or practice. For example, Laura reported that her teachers had given her "*very detailed feedback*" on her writing assignments as "*part of vocabulary building*", a practice that shaped her beliefs about the efficacy of evaluating students' word knowledge through writing tasks. Also, Monica's beliefs about learning vocabulary through memorisation seemed to be based on her own "*successful*" learning experience. Unlike other local teachers who commented on their positive schooling experience, which had in turn shaped their beliefs, Lydia explained how she had paid little attention to vocabulary teaching because her English teachers had not attached much importance to it. Clearly, schooling influenced Lydia's beliefs about the significance of vocabulary teaching in the early years of her career.

### **5.5.2 Teachers' perceived self-identity as an English learner**

One prominent contributory factor that seemed to have shaped the teachers' beliefs about their confidence in teaching vocabulary was their perceived self-identity as a learner of English. It is worth noting that although Mark, the native-speaking English teacher, felt that he was "*a hundred per cent confident*" about his knowledge of vocabulary and his ability to teach vocabulary, all the local teachers expressed concerns about their lexical knowledge and/or teaching of vocabulary. While Michelle considered herself "*better than average*" but "*not good enough*", two teachers (Lydia and Monica) used "*not very confident*" to describe their vocabulary teaching. Monica, for instance, commented that she was "*not very capable of teaching vocabulary*" as she found her foundation "*not very good*". Insufficient vocabulary size, as mentioned by three of the teachers, seemed to be associated with their lack of confidence. To be more specific, Laura explained that she did not know all the vocabulary items in English as there are too many of them, Louise acknowledged her need to "*check the word meanings while preparing for the lessons*" because of her identity as "*an ESL learner*"; and Lydia did not see herself as "*somebody having a wide range of vocabulary and a range of techniques to teach words*". From the interview data, we can reasonably conclude that the local teachers' relatively low confidence with respect to vocabulary teaching could be attributed to their perception of self-identity as ESL learners. The lack of corresponding training caused them to further doubt their ability to teach vocabulary.

### 5.5.3 Teacher professional development

Professional development in various forms, including teacher education and formal training, the reading of scholarly books and journal articles, and academic exchanges with colleagues, also seemed to have played a role in shaping the teachers' beliefs to varying extents.

#### Teacher education and formal training

Table 5.20 provides a summary of how the teacher participants perceived their teacher education and formal training with regards to the construction of their beliefs about vocabulary teaching. Strikingly, almost all the teachers considered their formal teacher education and training to have played a somewhat minimal role in shaping their beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning.

Table 5.20 The role of teacher education and training in shaping beliefs and/or practices

Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Laura	<i>I did have a course called Vocabulary Building...but the entire course was about very basic things like the steps for teaching vocabulary...The instructor said that you have to help students to deconstruct the words and identify prefixes, suffixes...</i>
Louise	<i>There's one course called Reading and Writing but none focused on vocabulary. I was taught the importance of contextualisation... You have to consider students' needs... to make vocabulary learning meaningful and useful.</i>
Lydia	<i>There's only one workshop offered annually by the Education Bureau, titled Vocabulary Acquisition for Junior Form Students. The instructor gives a lot of suggestions about exposing students to a wide range of vocabulary like using language arts... as if the students will learn the expressions naturally.</i>
Mark	<i>My Master's is probably the best bit of education I've ever done in my whole life. It's connected with... how vocabulary is acquired.</i>
Michelle	<i>I can't remember what I've learnt. I don't think there was a particular course related to vocabulary teaching.</i>
Monica	<i>When I had my teacher training, there were courses related to the teaching of reading, writing, listening and speaking, but none related to teaching vocabulary.</i>

Out of the six teacher participants, only Mark seemed to be completely positive about how teacher training had shaped his beliefs about vocabulary teaching. The courses in his postgraduate programme taught him “*how vocabulary is acquired*” and how vocabulary

knowledge can be assessed properly through the use of different question formats. By contrast, most local teachers did not seem to perceive formal teacher education and training as an important contributory factor to the formation of their beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. This can be ascribed to the teachers' perception that the teacher education courses, seminars and workshops did not have a specific focus on vocabulary acquisition, simply offering general suggestions about how vocabulary can be taught, or merely covering "very basic things" related to the topic.

### The reading of scholarly work

Four out of six teachers interviewed appeared not to find the reading of scholarly work on vocabulary teaching and learning a key factor influencing their beliefs (see Table 5.21).

Table 5.21 The role of scholarly work in shaping beliefs and/or practices

Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Laura	<i>I once read an article about how a student can remember one single new vocabulary item. It said that students have to be exposed to the word for at least seven times in order to remember it. That's why I find this important and purposely repeat the words again and again in class so that students can really learn the words.</i>
Louise	<i>I'm not fond of research. I don't often read those research articles, but I would like to try out new methods. I don't really care a lot about the results suggested.</i>
Lydia	<i>Every year we have to come up with new strategies for the department. We had to do some research and think of some new plans, but we were not required to come up with any new strategies for vocabulary teaching and learning. That's why I haven't read anything about that.</i>
Mark	<i>The textbooks teach me how to teach, and the journal articles are what the textbooks are based on. They enable me to go beyond the textbooks... The reading of the articles has blown my mind. It's magical. It's absolutely important.</i>
Michelle	<i>They [the scholarly books and journal articles] are quite theoretical. When you're in class, ... you're a lone fighter. You have to think of something practical.</i>
Monica	<i>I don't read academic journal articles or books often - only in the long holidays when I have free time.</i>

In contrast to Laura and Mark, who described how the reading of academic publications shaped their vocabulary instruction and enabled them to apply what they had learned in class,

those who seemed not to be keen on scholarly work mostly saw little need to read academic work or were concerned about the practicality of research and theories when it came to supporting teaching. For instance, Louise admitted to having a lack of interest in research results and reading scholarly work only when she was required to complete her university assignments. Likewise, Lydia displayed no desire to read about vocabulary development because her department “*did not require teachers to come up with any new strategies*” for improvement. Michelle and Monica’s opinion about academic publications was that they were of little practical value. Having purchased “*a lot of*” academic books on teaching and learning vocabulary through games and activities, Monica reported that she only read those books during “*the long holidays*” and found them to be purely applicable to young learners. According to Michelle, teachers should “*think of something practical*” rather than relying on theories.

### Professional exchanges with counterparts

Similar to teacher training and the reading of scholarly work, collegial exchanges appeared to have played a minor role in shaping the teachers’ beliefs about vocabulary teaching.

Table 5.22 The role of collegial exchanges in shaping beliefs and/or practice

Participant(s)	Illustrative comments
Laura	<i>We don’t really discuss how we should teach vocabulary. Our consensus is reached based on the content of the textbooks.</i>
Louise	<i>Very often, when we have panel meetings, we criticise students’ lack of vocabulary to express their ideas. I guess most teachers value vocabulary a lot, but we seldom discuss how vocabulary teaching can be conducted.</i>
Lydia	<i>I talked to my friend who basically knew somebody teaching in a better school than ours. That teacher said that junior form students should be taught more difficult words so that they would have more chances to recycle words before they take [the] DSE [the public examination] and remember the words better. I would say, if more colleagues are aware of this, then it’s a big improvement.</i>
Mark	<i>We don’t discuss with each other how vocabulary should be taught. What I teach doesn’t inform other teachers, and what they teach doesn’t inform me.</i>
Michelle	<i>We exchange ideas sometimes but not specifically related to vocabulary teaching.</i>
Monica	<i>I don’t think there is consensus [on the role and teaching of vocabulary among English language teachers at school]. We are working on our own. I seldom discuss how I teach vocabulary with my colleagues, even in the meetings.</i>

As can be seen in Table 5.22, all teachers except one commented on the lack of opportunity to discuss issues related to vocabulary development with their counterparts. On this point, Louise suggested that the teachers in the target school rarely addressed issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching despite holding regular panel meetings. What they did was simply highlight students' inability to express their ideas due to limited vocabulary without discussing how the situation could be improved. Laura revealed that the teachers' consensus about vocabulary development was "*reached based on the content of the textbooks*". This could be because teachers were simply "*doing their own things*" (Monica) and did not inform each other of their vocabulary teaching (Mark). Of all the teachers, only Lydia mentioned engaging in professional exchange with her counterparts in other schools when asked about the factors that had shaped her beliefs about vocabulary teaching. Thus far, the teachers' own language learning experience was reported to be a more significant factor that contributed to the construction of beliefs about vocabulary teaching when compared to different forms of teacher professional development.

#### **5.5.4 Contextual factors**

A final determining factor shaping the teachers' beliefs and practices was contextual factors, which mainly included school and departmental policies, textbooks, examination pressure, the English language curriculum in Hong Kong, as well as student factors such as learning motivation and self-discipline. While the interview data seemed to suggest the impact of contextual factors on the development of teacher beliefs, it was also evident that what teachers did was sometimes restricted by contextual factors, resulting in the misalignment between their beliefs and practices. A summary of my findings is presented in Table 5.23.

##### **School and departmental policies**

While the panel heads of the English department suggested that the school did not "*come up with a lot of policies outlining how vocabulary should be taught*" (Lydia) as it was "*unrealistic*" for teachers to be given specific guidelines on the ways to teach (Michelle), it became evident during the interviews that school and departmental policies influenced the teachers' beliefs and practices about lexical development, particularly those related to vocabulary assessment and lexical instruction. As already noted, all the local teachers found it

important to evaluate students' lexical knowledge through writing exercises and dictation. This is probably because they are asked to "*do dictation with the students and ensure that students use a word with [the] appropriate part of speech when doing their composition correction*" (Monica). Moreover, as also noted, some teachers considered it crucial to teach vocabulary using the target language because of school policies. Although Mark did not give specific examples as illustration, he commented that what the principal and panel chairs expected "*absolutely formed*" what he taught.

### **Commercial textbooks and teaching resources**

Closely related to the influence of school and departmental policies was the use of commercial teaching materials. All the teachers highlighted the role of commercial textbooks and/or teaching resources in either shaping their beliefs or determining the choice of words they explicitly taught in class or both. According to Louise and Michelle, teachers basically taught vocabulary based on "*the themes set in the textbooks*". The latter further explained that the textbook design had raised her awareness of, and shaped her belief about, the significance of repetition in vocabulary acquisition. Two plausible reasons for the teachers' reliance on published materials were provided by Laura and Mark. According to Laura, the use of textbooks "*helps save a lot of time*". Also, teachers might not be "*good enough to create the whole curriculum*" or English syllabus at school. As for Mark, the textbooks taught "teachers how to teach, and teachers' responsibility was to maximise learning based on the materials provided.

### **Examination pressure**

Examination pressure, which was also highlighted by all six teachers in their interviews, seemed to be another significant contributor to teachers' beliefs and practice with regard to vocabulary teaching. This may not seem too contentious in the light of the fact that students in Hong Kong are expected to aim for excellence and excel in public examinations. To illustrate, three interviewees (Laura, Louise, Michelle) claimed that they often encouraged students to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word because they perceived that to be an effective examination strategy. "*Examination pressure*" was also the explanation Mark and Monica gave, respectively, for the aforementioned view that teachers should use authentic materials to facilitate vocabulary learning and that it is inappropriate to "*play lots of games with senior*



*form students*”. Further, such pressure gave rise to Laura’s belief that she should teach students how to use words that had the correct degree of formality and purposely introduced different choices for a given word in class to help students to fulfil examination requirements.

### **The English language curriculum in Hong Kong**

Notwithstanding the curriculum’s influential role, it is interesting to note that only Lydia and Michelle explained how they benefited from the English language curriculum guide with respect to vocabulary teaching. By contrast, other teachers seemed not to think highly of the curriculum guide in general. This could be because they found it to be “*not useful*” (Louise) and not reader-friendly. In the teachers’ opinion, the document does not offer many “*insights into how vocabulary should be taught*” (Laura) and has more than “*a hundred and fifty*” pages, looking as if it was “*created not to be read fully*” (Mark).

### **Student factors**

Student factors seemed to be another notable factor shaping teachers’ beliefs and practice. While two teachers (Lydia and Monica) revealed how their beliefs about vocabulary development were reconstructed as a result of their teaching experience, most teachers (Laura, Louise, Mark and Michelle) explained by what means student factors affected their teaching. To be specific, Lydia’s comments revealed how she reconstructed her beliefs about the importance of vocabulary based on students’ actual needs and subsequently allocated more time to word building in class. Also, Monica’s pedagogical belief about the use of standardised materials was influenced by her students who “*lost all the supplementary reading materials*” and wasted the effort she had put into lesson preparation. Other teachers talked about taking learner factors into account when teaching vocabulary. As previously mentioned, Louise was likely to incorporate more vocabulary activities in her class if most of the students were actively engaged, whereas Michelle tended to teach high achievers a new vocabulary item by addressing various aspects of word knowledge instead of focusing solely on the word meaning.

## Time

Finally, time was found to be a key influential contextual factor in all of the teachers' beliefs and practice. In particular, limited class time and lack of time for lesson preparation were often cited by the teachers to justify the misalignment between their beliefs and practices. For example, Louise and Mark reported the difficulty of revisiting the vocabulary items and the need to prioritise the teaching of different lexical items because of time constraints respectively. Other teachers explained how limited time precluded them from designing interesting activities and using authentic materials to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning. While Lydia said that she could not "*afford the time to design a specific task*" solely for teaching expressions, Laura, Michelle and Monica claimed that they would either develop their own teaching materials or find more interesting materials for vocabulary development instead of relying on the textbooks "*if given more time*".

Table 5.23 The role of contextual factors in shaping beliefs and/or practices

Factors	Participants' illustrative comments					
	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
School and departmental policies	<i>If we're asked to cover certain modules, we must deal with the vocabulary items related to those modules first... Having dictation is compulsory. It's a departmental policy.</i>	<i>I deliberately try to avoid the use of Chinese in my lessons. Our school uses English as the medium of instruction.</i>	<i>The school and departmental policies influence my vocabulary teaching to a great extent. One of the ways we promote vocabulary learning is by asking students to do newspaper commentary.</i>	<i>The school and departmental policies influence everything I teach. What the panel chairs said to me and what the principal expects absolutely form what I teach.</i>	<i>We have to follow the school policies. For our department, we basically follow the textbooks and teach vocabulary relating to the themes set in the textbooks.</i>	<i>When the principal walks around and hears that you speak in Chinese, he will send you an email reminding you that it's important to speak in English. It is the policy of the school.</i>
Commercial textbooks and teaching resources	<i>Our consensus [about vocabulary building] is reached based on the content of the textbooks. With the textbooks, you save a lot of time.</i>	<i>The textbooks affect my teaching as I teach vocabulary items...based on the modules covered in the textbooks.</i>	<i>It's because of the design of the textbook that I teach compound words. The unit I'm teaching is about compound words.</i>	<i>I'm not good enough to create my own whole curriculum. The textbooks teach me how to teach.</i>	<i>I think the design of the textbook has helped me to be more aware of recycling words for the students.</i>	<i>We need to teach based on the textbooks.</i>
Examination pressure	<i>Guessing the meaning is very important for examinations. When they take the exams, nobody will tell them the meaning.</i>	<i>These days, more parts in the public examination require students to change the word form. That's why I focus more on parts of speech in class.</i>	<i>We have to ensure that students know how to...pronounce the word... If they don't know how to pronounce it, they won't use it in speaking exam.</i>	<i>We all strive to achieve high scores in the exams. Students need to be given opportunities to use the words so that they know how to use them in their examination.</i>	<i>I'd like to ask them [students] to guess the unfamiliar words by themselves. I emphasise that I won't be with them in the exam room. They can't bring the dictionary.</i>	<i>Because of examination pressure, I don't think we are expected to play lots of games with senior form students.</i>

(continued on next page)

Table 5.23 (Continued)

Factors	Participants' illustrative comments					
	Laura	Louise	Lydia	Mark	Michelle	Monica
The English language curriculum in Hong Kong	<i>The curriculum guide doesn't give me any insights into how vocabulary should be taught.</i>	<i>It [the curriculum document] is not useful. It's really rare for teachers to read those documents.</i>	<i>The curriculum guide places a lot of emphasis on task-based learning. So, I basically do not introduce vocabulary out of context.</i>	<i>It has more than a hundred and fifty pages. I had a quick look at it and I am pretty sure it was created not to be read fully. It's ridiculous.</i>	<i>There are some suggested themes [in the curriculum guide]. They give us direction on what is to be taught in the lessons.</i>	<i>Our teaching is closely related to the curriculum. Yet, I read the guidelines a long time ago. I don't even know whether there's a revised version.</i>
Student factors	<i>I think it [the teaching of vocabulary] really depends on the [proficiency] level of students. In junior form, I'll focus more on pronunciation and the meaning.</i>	<i>Some students are more active, while some students are more passive. So, if you know that your students just like sitting and writing something, more dictations may be preferable...</i>	<i>It's after I became a teacher that I gradually realised its importance [the importance of vocabulary teaching] because of my students' [poor] performance.</i>	<i>Students' prior knowledge is important. If you've got a student whose parents are jewellers, it's a waste of time to teach him all the precious stones' names as he has already learned them.</i>	<i>It [my vocabulary teaching] depends on the students' ability. For the high achievers, I'd probably address more aspects of word knowledge in class.</i>	<i>They [students] just lost all the supplementary reading materials. Now, I believe it's best to teach vocabulary by focusing only on the standardised materials.</i>
Time	<i>Given the very limited class time, how can we make sure that we can help students get exposed to a word repeatedly, like seven times?</i>	<i>Time is important as you need to...make sure they [students] will revisit the vocabulary items they've learned. Without sufficient time to do so, I don't think students can consolidate their vocabulary learning.</i>	<i>I can't afford the time to design a specific task for teaching different expressions. I will probably give more input through vocabulary instruction.</i>	<i>Time does influence my teaching. Given the limited class time, I need to be able to prioritise the teaching of words by importance.</i>	<i>If I were given more time, I would really like to develop my own teaching materials [for vocabulary building] - If I had only one class to teach, I think I would have that space to do it.</i>	<i>If I have more time, I can find more interesting materials.</i>

## 5.6 Concluding remarks

Drawing upon the empirical data gathered from six in-service English language teachers at Phase One of the study, the three major sections of this chapter have examined the teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, scrutinised the relationship between the teachers' professed beliefs and actual practices, and provided a contextualised account of how such beliefs and practices were shaped respectively. This final section of the chapter covers several important areas in which the findings reported in this chapter have contributed to the understanding of the teachers' vocabulary teaching and which warrant further attention.

One important finding to emerge from the analysis of teacher beliefs in the first section is that although the teachers appeared to consider vocabulary development important, their epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word and pedagogical beliefs about lexical instruction seemed to represent only a partial picture of what constitutes word knowledge and effective vocabulary instruction strategies according to the literature. Specifically, they appeared to hold the common conception that vocabulary acquisition can be equated with the mastery of pronunciation and meaning, while overlooking other aspects of lexical knowledge. Such beliefs about the notion of a word possibly reflect the teachers' lack of a rounded view concerning lexical knowledge. Undue reliance on memory strategies to foster vocabulary learning was also clearly evidenced in the teachers' espoused beliefs about the use of vocabulary instruction strategies in class. While the use of determination strategies (i.e. encouraging students to guess the meaning) was cited by three teachers and cognitive strategies (i.e. repeating a word verbally) was only addressed by one, there was the lack of any mention of social or metacognitive strategies when teachers were asked to talk about how vocabulary should be taught in class. Some teachers even voiced their opposition to the use of L1 translation as a strategy to teach vocabulary notwithstanding its usefulness in the explanation of word meaning. Although it may be argued that there is no best method to teach vocabulary, the interview data seemed to show that the teachers clung to certain beliefs about vocabulary development and might not have developed strong awareness of how vocabulary teaching and learning can be fostered.

The second section looking at how beliefs translated into actual practice has demonstrated how the inconsistencies between the teachers' thinking and action stemmed from the constraints imposed by contextual factors such as limited time, examination pressure, institutional policies and student factors, despite the interactive relationship between the two. Examples of teachers' behaviour which contrasted with their stated beliefs included relying on the materials provided by the school to teach vocabulary rather than using authentic materials to support learning, focusing on the teaching of vocabulary instead of promoting the discovery of word meaning, as well as demonstrating limited attempts to encourage students' exposure to English outside class and help them develop positive habits with respect to vocabulary development. One possible implication of this is that teachers should reflect on the conditions they encounter and act consistently in accordance with their expressed beliefs so that they can avoid sending confusing messages to learners.

Finally, in the third section of the chapter, language learning experience and different contextual factors were found to be two major influential factors shaping the teachers' beliefs and practices, while various forms of professional development, by contrast, seemed to have had a limited impact on their thinking and behaviour. The teachers not only reported few opportunities to participate in professional development activities with an explicit focus on vocabulary teaching and learning, but also demonstrated unfavourable views of reading scholarly work and expressed limited confidence in teaching vocabulary. It thus remains doubtful whether they are being equipped with the professional knowledge required to ensure effective vocabulary development and encouraged to reflect upon their own and others' beliefs about, and practice of, vocabulary development so that informed pedagogical decisions can be made both inside and outside class to maximise vocabulary learning.

In the chapter that follows, I analyse the extent to which the teachers' beliefs and practices might remain relatively stable or be considered susceptible to change by comparing the findings presented in this chapter with the data collected over a seven-month period following the first phase of data gathering. My intention was to understand how teacher change can be facilitated by a dialogic approach to professional development.

## CHAPTER 6

### TEACHERS' CHANGE IN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

*It is through the eyes of others that we get to know ourselves and others.*  
(Kramsch, 1993, p. 222)

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to facilitate understanding of teachers' change in terms of belief development and its relationship with behavioural change. It relates to the second research question which seeks to examine how teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching develop through a dialogic approach to professional development. The chapter presents the cases of four teachers (Laura, Louise, Lydia and Michelle) who participated in professional dialogues and engaged in reflective writing that aimed to facilitate critical reflection on vocabulary teaching, viewing it through the four different lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995), namely, autobiographical, student, collegial and scholarly, over a seven-month period subsequent to the first phase of data collection. This is done by analysing the evidence of change in beliefs and practices, and examining the contributory factors to the changes based on the teachers' accounts and the analysis of the characteristics of teachers' reflection derived from multiple sources, including interview responses, teachers' audiotaped lessons, teaching materials and vocabulary assessment tasks collected from the three phases of the study; teachers' professional dialogues; remarks written on the materials provided for discussion and pieces of reflective writing gathered in Phase Two; and researcher fieldnotes.

Given the small scale of the study and the primarily qualitative focus of my research design, however, I was not seeking to suggest that the educational dialogue conducted had a direct cause-effect relationship with the shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices. Rather, I intended to explore the development of teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching by providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and practices through professional dialogues, which aimed at developing heightened awareness of their thinking and action, thereby empowering them to make informed pedagogical decisions and change their practice when necessary. In addition, while the results of the study have demonstrated similarities in the four teachers' belief change (e.g. all teachers who participated in the professional dialogues found vocabulary development "*more important*" when compared to

the past and “*put more emphasis*” on it), each frontline teacher who participated in the professional dialogues was taken as a unit of analysis so that rich and thick descriptions of their change and how such changes emerged could be presented. This not only helped me to explore how teacher professional development can be facilitated by a dialogic approach which focuses on the explicit discussion of beliefs (intermental engagement) and self-reflection (intramental meaning construction), but also enabled me to arrive at a deeper understanding of the complexity of belief change.

To provide in-depth descriptive and analytical accounts that contribute to the understanding of teachers’ belief development, each case study presented in this chapter begins with a brief description of the participant, mainly drawn from my research fieldnotes. Then the salient features of belief change identified from the multiple sources of data collected from the participating teacher will be discussed with reference to the belief development processes introduced by Cambaroglu and Roberts (2000) and the teacher’s corresponding practices. This will allow me to establish the trustworthiness of the data by taking the complicated relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices into account, as already noted in the previous chapter, and to gain a more in-depth picture of the teacher’s change. Although investigating the effects of teachers’ change on students’ actual learning is beyond the scope of this research, I will discuss how each informant perceived the change in their students’ vocabulary learning because of their shifts in thinking and behaviour as I felt that this also formed part of the teacher’s beliefs about their teaching. Finally, the case ends with my attempt to scrutinise the specific characteristics of the teacher’s reflection to which change in beliefs and practices may be attributed, and a summary which draws findings together<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> For clarity and conciseness of presentation, specific codes are used to denote the interviews (I) conducted during different phases of the study, the reflective entries (RE) written at three different time intervals and the seven professional dialogues (PD) focusing on different topics of discussion in the second phase. The number that follows the code indicating the source of data represents the chronological sequence in which the data were collected. For instance, the interview data collected from the first phase of the study is referred to as I-1, whereas I-2 and I-3 refer to those interview responses gathered from the second and third phases of the study, respectively. It should also be noted that the teachers included comments on their experience of participating in the professional dialogues in addition to discussing their insights into vocabulary teaching that they gained from each of the seven professional dialogues (RE-1 to RE-7). RE-R is used to indicate such remarks (R).



## 6.2 Case one: Laura

Having only four years of teaching experience when the research project started, Laura was relatively less experienced when compared to the other teachers at the school, including those who participated in the professional dialogues. Often focusing on marking students' assignments and doing lesson preparation rather than interacting with other teachers in the staff room, Laura gave the impression of being relatively reserved. This might be one of the reasons that she barely expressed any of her opinions during the professional dialogues without being prompted.

A humble and highly dedicated teacher, Laura seemed to yearn for improvement. In terms of teaching vocabulary in the English language classroom, she was the only teacher who reported having enrolled in a course that sought to provide grounding in the concepts, theory and research underlying approaches to vocabulary teaching while completing her initial teacher training. Nonetheless, she seemed not to be satisfied with her learning and lamented the limited insights she gained from the lectures, thinking that they only covered basic concepts and ideas (I-1). On many occasions, Laura demonstrated high expectations of herself and her strong desire to improve her teaching, despite being one of the two outstanding teachers amongst more than 50 full-time teaching staff nominated by the target school in 2015-16 to receive commendation from the Committee on Respect Our Teachers Campaign. For example, Laura expressed her wish to learn about different interesting approaches to teaching as she sometimes found her lessons boring (I-2). She described herself as “*a very reflective teacher*” who often considered how her teaching could be improved and indicated that it requires thorough planning to teach effectively (I-3).

How Laura attached importance to effective teaching, even at the expense of her spare time and pleasure, can be shown in her words and deeds. Her determination for success can be revealed by her saying: “*Even if I hate doing something, I will still do it if it is useful*” (I-3). Laura's concern about her teaching was evident in different instances. For instance, in our initial interview she took the initiative to ask if I could provide her with some useful strategies to help to expose students to a word repeatedly. She further requested that the questions on self-reflection be given to her prior to the discussion sessions, despite feeling uncertain about whether other teachers might share her view, as she wished to spend time on recalling specific

examples of her vocabulary teaching to make the professional dialogues more fruitful (RE-R).

### **6.2.1 Shifting away from teacher-centred approaches to building vocabulary**

Laura's case was illustrative of someone who engaged in meaning-making by establishing connections between different beliefs. Whilst Laura appeared to adhere to certain beliefs about vocabulary development throughout the ten-month study, claiming that her beliefs about the role of vocabulary in SLA, the aims of vocabulary teaching and the perceived difficulties of vocabulary learning remained static, different data sources showed that she had undergone various processes of change in several other aspects of beliefs about vocabulary teaching, most of which had been translated into practice, since Phase Two of the study. Whereas in Phase One Laura perceived a strong need for the direct teaching of vocabulary and highlighted the importance of teaching word knowledge with a focus on learner application, she had relatively little to say about promoting autonomous vocabulary learning and merely suggested asking students to watch some films or videos with English subtitles and learn vocabulary through note-taking (I-1). Also, she considered it important to create quizzes with contextualised gap-filling based on the target vocabulary she taught for assessment purposes and consolidation of students' learning. This is probably because she felt that her students were reluctant to learn English and they saw little need to revise the vocabulary they had been taught (I-1). Nonetheless, Laura seemed to have shifted from adopting a teacher-centred approach to teaching vocabulary to promote autonomous vocabulary learning. This was evident in the remarkable change in several aspects of her beliefs and her comment highlighting how she was "*no longer sticking to teacher talk and the traditional way of assessing vocabulary*" (I-3).

### **Realisation of beliefs about the learners' expectations of vocabulary development**

Laura used to espouse the belief that her students were passive when it came to learning vocabulary, expecting her to teach them the pronunciation and meaning of different lexical items in class. This possibly explained why she did not find it astonishing to read the survey results that showed students' heavy reliance on English teachers when learning vocabulary but was surprised to note that approximately half of the student respondents would like to have autonomy to choose the vocabulary items they wanted to learn (RE-2). Having reflected

on how students see the role of teachers in their vocabulary learning, she realised the importance of having students “*take a more active role and adopt a more self-directed approach in vocabulary building*” (RE-2). Such belief was further elaborated at a later stage of the study, when Laura discussed her insights into autonomous vocabulary learning after exploring relevant issues through the professional dialogues and wrote that teachers should help students “*see the ownership of their learning*” by “*creating more opportunities*” for them to gain exposure to English (RE-5). Laura’s comment in the final interview about the learners’ expectations of vocabulary development clearly showed her shift in beliefs. She explained, “*I started to think that they [students] don’t always expect the teachers to tell them everything explicitly... Students would like to be given autonomy sometimes*” (I-3). Her view was that students may wish to take control of their own learning, but that teachers need to teach them how (I-3).

### **Rejection of existing beliefs about the need for direct vocabulary teaching and the criteria for selecting lexical items for explicit treatment**

Apart from her beliefs about learners’ expectations, Laura reported a notable change in her perception of the need for direct vocabulary teaching and the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment. Despite initially finding it important to cover the target vocabulary by direct teaching in class, Laura expressed her disagreement with such a belief toward the end of the study: “*I used to think that it’s always a good idea to explicitly explain the word meaning to students...; but now I believe it’s rather important for me to let them try and make guesses on their own*” (I-3). Such rejection of existing beliefs can also be identified in Laura’s remarks on the choice of lexical items for explicit treatment in class. Although Laura preferred not to teach the use of coarse language in class as she found it inappropriate to do so (I-1), she changed her mind and stated that “*there’s no word teachers should avoid*” because students need to learn how to use the English language in their everyday life (I-3). When students use vulgar words in class, for example, teachers should intervene and ask students not to use the words rather than simply ignoring them (I-3). As Laura explained, English language learners tend to segregate learning English from their everyday life and they should be informed of the benefits of vocabulary learning and how their learning can be made useful and meaningful (RE-4). To make self-regulated learning possible, teachers are recommended to help students see the purposes and ownership of vocabulary learning, which can be achieved by getting them actively involved in the learning process (e.g. inferring meaning of

unknown words on their own) and raising their awareness of word choice (e.g. understanding how words can be used appropriately in different contexts) (I-3).

Having said that, there appeared to be little evidence in Laura's practices that demonstrated the change in belief she described. Based on the analysis of lessons, Laura did not seem to have supported the discovery of word meaning often. For example, only a small number of words she explicitly taught (consistently only 1 per cent of the total words explicitly taught across the three phases) involved students' guessing of word meaning from textual contexts. Laura confessed that it was not easy for her to change her old habit: "*I usually explain everything to them. I can't stop myself*" (I-2). Also, hardly any explanation of culturally inappropriate expressions was found in any of the recorded lessons. It might be that Laura had seen no opportunity to teach students such expressions because of the school syllabus she had to cover.

### **Development of beliefs about the use of vocabulary instruction strategies by discovering new concepts, enhancing awareness of and reconstructing existing beliefs**

In terms of Laura's beliefs about vocabulary instruction strategies, one major aspect of reported change related to the realisation that more creative ways should be used to teach vocabulary. Specifically, Laura started to see the value of adopting different techniques, such as using physical actions, mnemonic strategies and explaining the origin of a word to arouse students' interest in vocabulary learning and consolidate the learning of lexical items that students were likely to find difficult to remember. This seemed to be related to Laura's belief that "*if students are not interested or motivated to learn English vocabulary, autonomous or self-regulated learning is almost impossible*" (RE-5). To illustrate, Laura described how she taught the meaning of 'bear market' and 'bull market' by inviting students to demonstrate how bears and bulls attack their opponents by swiping their paws and using their horns, respectively, so that they can relate such movements to these terms (I-3). She also talked about how she made use of mnemonic strategies to help her students remember the word 'discus' using its shape and sound by telling them that a "*discus looks like biscuit*" (I-2). Finally, the following excerpt provides an interesting illustration showing Laura's attempt to arouse her students' interests in learning the word 'spear' by relating it to the Chinese expression 耍花槍 (shuǎ huāqiāng) after participating in the professional dialogues:

- Laura: *Have you ever heard of the term 耍花槍 in Cantonese? Do you know the meaning? ... You can kill people with a **spear**... We use this weapon in Cantonese opera... Do you think the performers would really attack each other?*
- Student: *Yes! They do!*
- Laura: *In fact, they only pretend that they're attacking one another. They aren't harming each other... If we describe the situation in a love affair using 耍花槍, it means a couple argues with one another sometimes, but they aren't actually harming each other... It originates from Chinese opera... So, that would be the equipment, **spear**.*  
(Excerpt from Laura's lesson on 9 February 2017)

According to Laura's description, the students got excited when they were asked if they had heard of the Chinese expression (I-3). She seemed to be rather impressed by how her change in lexical instruction had drawn students' attention. One interesting observation from the analysis of Laura's lessons, however, was that Laura seemed not to have used such strategies regularly. For instance, it appeared that Laura used physical action to support the teaching of expressions such as 'a slap on the wrist', 'itchy feet', 'freestyle', 'facelift' and 'swaying hair' in Phase Two but only 'taboo' in Phase Three. Although such finding may suggest that Laura's newly developed beliefs were not deeply embedded in her thinking, thus resulting in only a short-term change in her behaviour, it must be acknowledged that the analysis of lessons within a specific school cycle in each phase made it impossible to capture all the instances in which the strategies were used. Also, the audiotaping of lessons might have prevented me from identifying the use of physical action to illustrate word meaning in class, and the use of strategies was likely to vary due to the nature of different words. From Laura's reported practices and the examples identified, we can reasonably conclude that Laura's change in beliefs about vocabulary instruction seemed to have been translated into behaviour.

### **Construction of beliefs about the implementation of vocabulary activities through realisation, consolidation, elaboration and integration**

Another aspect of beliefs about which Laura reported considerable change was the implementation of class activities to promote autonomous vocabulary learning. After participating in the professional dialogues, Laura became more convinced of the benefits of conducting class activities to encourage vocabulary development. Recalling her teaching

experience in the interviews, Laura commented that she frequently used to ask students to complete a lot of worksheets with gap-filling questions (I-3) and work on vocabulary quizzes (I-2), but rarely conducted games for vocabulary development (I-2). Nevertheless, she described in the second interview how she “*intentionally added*” some games for teaching vocabulary in her lessons and further explained in the final interview that she “*would consciously think of interactive activities*” for vocabulary expansion and consolidation. This might have been partly due to Laura’s strengthening of her belief that vocabulary learning should be “*a lifelong process*” of enriching one’s vocabulary bank (I-3) rather than the rote memorisation of spelling and meaning, the cramming of words in a vocabulary list found in the textbooks or the monotonous completion of gap-filling worksheets (RE-4). Being more convinced that students should not be trained to be “*machines for the exam*” (RE-4), Laura consolidated her beliefs about helping students to learn vocabulary with “*pleasure and enjoyment*” and equipping them with the skills to learn independently.

Clearly Laura’s repeated attempts to incorporate a variety of activities to promote student-centred learning of vocabulary showed her change in beliefs and practice. One such example concerned the endeavour Laura undertook to conduct a vocabulary-sharing activity she had not implemented in class before, which involved inviting one student to give a presentation on an idiom every day and asking other students to take notes spontaneously (I-2). The following excerpt is from the beginning of a lesson Laura conducted in February:

- Student:      *Today, I’m going to introduce an idiom, **take the bull by the horns**, to all of you. In the bull-fighting games, people have to grab the horn of the bulls to beat it off instead of being kicked out of the way or being hurt by the bull. This idiom means doing something difficult in a determined way...*
- Laura:        *Shall we give her a big clap?*
- Students:    [Applause]
- Laura:        *Very good! Amanda talked about the origin of the idiom...  
Very clear explanation!*
- (Excerpt from Laura’s lesson on 9 February 2017)

According to Laura, the group of students she taught always showed “*the thirst for knowledge*” and she wanted to give them more autonomy by conducting the vocabulary-sharing activity that allowed students to decide on which idiom they would work based on their personal interests and preferences (I-2). Laura’s attempt to ask students to do preparation

before class further exemplified her change in practice. In the interviews, Laura described how she encouraged her students to prepare for the vocabulary items they might need for the lessons (I-2) by asking them to “*check the dictionary online, surf the net and identify vocabulary items relevant to a topic*” (I-3). Figure 6.1 shows the sample work completed by Laura’s students who looked for expressions associated with the unique culture of Hong Kong before class in preparation for their vocabulary sharing and the writing of an email giving advice.

**S.4 English Language**  
Unit 3 A friend from New York  
Pre-writing – Understanding the unique culture of Hong Kong  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Read LE p.75-77 to familiarize yourself with some facts about Hong Kong. Search for useful vocabulary/ phrases on the Internet and jot down relevant ideas in the table below.

1. Food e.g. must-try local food/ restaurants; adjectives for describing food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- beef brisket</li> <li>- Malt cake</li> <li>- egg tart</li> <li>- roast goose dinner</li> <li>- pineapple bun</li> <li>- milk tea</li> <li>- shrimp noddle</li> <li>- Curry fish ball</li> <li>- tender</li> <li>- egg roll</li> </ul>
2. Shopping e.g. which districts? Any recommended shopping malls/ Sunday markets; souvenirs of HK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cat street (antiques)</li> <li>- Apia Street</li> <li>- Stanley Market</li> <li>- Ladies' Market</li> <li>- Temple Street</li> <li>- Smeaton Street</li> <li>- Bird Market</li> <li>- Time Square</li> <li>- Tai Yuen Street</li> <li>- Landmark</li> </ul>
3. Etiquette and manner e.g. greeting habit; table manner; gift-giving culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- uncomfortable with body contact</li> <li>- never shake with your index finger</li> <li>- tea is served at meetings</li> <li>- names, shells are put on the table (setting)</li> <li>- present a small gift at the 1st meeting</li> <li>- never go to a Chinese home without a gift</li> <li>- Do not open a gift upon receiving it</li> <li>- do not speak loudly</li> <li>- greet people with 2 light handshakes</li> <li>- Do not give odd no. as money are considered unlucky.</li> </ul>
4. Lifestyle e.g. pace, ways of living (recall the scenes in MTR stations/ compartment/ streets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fast pace</li> <li>- efficient</li> <li>- work hard, play hard</li> <li>- long</li> <li>- lot of job opportunities</li> <li>- follow the trend</li> <li>- live in an apartment</li> <li>- stressful</li> <li>- poor health life style.</li> </ul>
5. Special events in May e.g. unique festival(s) in May; any special arts events / entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To the Museum's Buddha Birthday Ceremony</li> <li>- Dragon Boat Festival</li> <li>- Cheung Chau Bun Festival</li> <li>- Birthday of Ten King</li> <li>- Birthday of Tai Hwa</li> <li>- LB Festival May 19th Festival 2017</li> <li>- Bixby Springtime Festival</li> <li>- King's Cross of Sweets, the Exhibition (Annual for)</li> <li>- Shui Tin His Festival</li> <li>- Buddha's Birthday - Double Festival HK Lamah Bury</li> </ul>

B. Enriching your knowledge!

1. SCMP: 480 things that can represent HK's culture

2. IN FULL: The Hong Kong cultural heritage list

**S.4 English Language**  
Unit 3 A friend from New York  
Pre-writing – Understanding the unique culture of Hong Kong  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Read LE p.75-77 to familiarize yourself with some facts about Hong Kong. Search for useful vocabulary/ phrases on the Internet and jot down relevant ideas in the table below. (> 10 words)

1. Food e.g. must-try local food/ restaurants; adjectives for describing food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egg roll</li> <li>Egg tarts</li> <li>Pineapple buns</li> <li>Milk tea</li> <li>Snake wine</li> <li>Salted fish</li> <li>Cha chaan teng restaurants</li> <li>Curing fish ball</li> <li>Spring rolls</li> <li>Dumplings</li> </ul>
2. Shopping e.g. which districts? Any recommended shopping malls/ Sunday markets; souvenirs of HK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apia</li> <li>Cityplaza</li> <li>Design Gallery</li> <li>Fashion Walk</li> <li>Citygate Outlets</li> <li>Design Gallery</li> <li>Landmark North</li> <li>New Town Plaza</li> <li>Stanley</li> <li>Times Square</li> </ul>
3. Etiquette and manner e.g. greeting habit; table manner; gift-giving culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't pat someone on the back, Use chopsticks correctly,</li> <li>Don't hug and kiss others, Never present four gifts,</li> <li>Stand close to one another during conversation,</li> <li>Don't use your phone while dining, Don't drink too much in public,</li> <li>Never show up without a gift when invited,</li> <li>Be careful of smoking, keep eye contact while others speaking</li> </ul>
4. Lifestyle e.g. pace, ways of living (recall the scenes in MTR stations/ compartment/ streets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Umbrella making, environmentally friendly</li> <li>Fast-paced, highly stressed</li> <li>Shoe-shining, disparity</li> <li>Diverse culture, Labour force</li> <li>Fashionable, Stressed</li> </ul>
5. Special events in May e.g. unique festival(s) in May; any special arts events / entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Annual Hindu Diwali Festival, Bangladesh's</li> <li>International Mother Language Day, Hakka folk songs,</li> <li>Kung Fu, The Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society's</li> <li>annual festival of women, Cheung Chau Bun Festival,</li> <li>Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade, Tai Hang fire dragon</li> <li>dance, Tin Lan Ghost Festival</li> </ul>

B. Enriching your knowledge!

1. SCMP: 480 things that can represent HK's culture

2. IN FULL: The Hong Kong cultural heritage list

Figure 6.1 Sample work completed by Laura’s students

In Phase Three, Laura made it explicit that “*teachers should ask their students to do more activities for their independent vocabulary building*”, an example of which included allowing students to “*take the role of a teacher*” (I-3). Although she stated that “*it’s easier said than done when it comes to getting rid of commercial textbooks*” as her tight schedule made it difficult for her to frequently design extra learning materials to supplement students’ vocabulary learning (RE-2), she seemed to have embraced a new belief that promoted learners’ ownership and enabled her to rely less on the textbooks for vocabulary teaching. This in turn prompted her to incorporate corresponding activities for vocabulary development in class.

## Construction of beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge through the discovery of new concepts

A final area in which Laura's beliefs seemed to show remarkable change was that of vocabulary assessment. In the final interview, Laura commented that she used to design vocabulary quizzes that focused only on testing the vocabulary items she chose (see picture one in Figure 6.2) but found it inspiring to learn about how she could introduce assessments that would promote learner autonomy (I-3). For instance, she reported being inspired by Louise's sharing of how she asked her students to work in pairs and recall as many vocabulary items they had learned as possible, with some guiding questions to assess their vocabulary (I-3). Being introduced to something she "*didn't consider before*", Laura later adapted the practice and turned it into her new practice of vocabulary assessment, as demonstrated by picture two in Figure 6.2. She assessed her students' ability to describe different professionals by asking them to recall the adjectives she had covered in a module regarding workplace communication and rewarded those who included other expressions they had learned on their own with bonus marks. In Laura's words, this new form of assessment not only took better account of learners' diversity, but also helped ease her workload (RE-6).

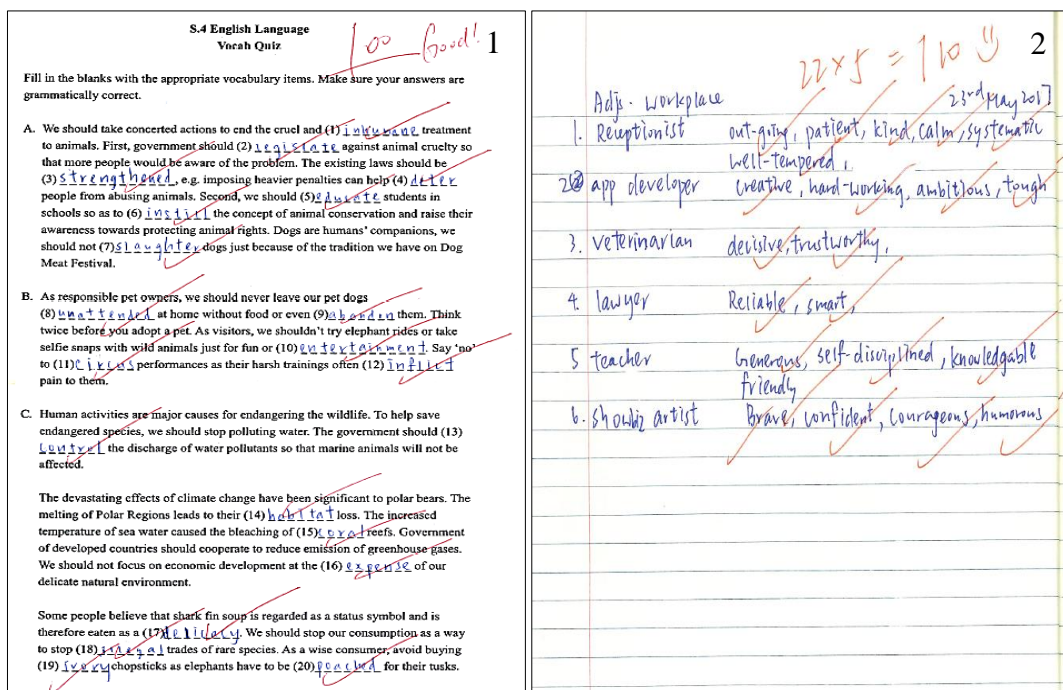


Figure 6.2 Samples of vocabulary quizzes conducted by Laura

Reflected in her comments on the professional dialogues, it seemed that Laura recognised the



discussion as useful since she had been introduced to a range of new assessment tools, such as individualised testing (RE-3). Although such assessment formats have not been identified in Laura's practice as yet, she explained that she found it inappropriate to suddenly introduce something brand new towards the end of the school term. Nevertheless, she had already formulated plans to use it in the next academic year (I-3).

### **Laura's reported change in her students' vocabulary learning**

When asked to comment on her students' vocabulary learning in relation to her change in beliefs and practices, Laura reported several positive changes she had observed in her students' attitudes and use of vocabulary. She indicated that her students "*found the lessons more enjoyable*". They are now "*more interested in vocabulary learning*" and "*active when answering the questions*" relating to different expressions (I-3). She also commented on how her students seemed to have taken more control of, and become more responsible for, their vocabulary learning. Seeing the students' initiatives to learn the words on their own instead of just relying on the teacher, Laura described the teaching and learning of vocabulary in class as "*more interactive*" as she was no longer the only one who told students how to pronounce the words and gave all the definitions (I-3). Concerning vocabulary use, Laura seemed to feel content that her students could apply what they had checked in their work. She gave the effectiveness of promoting autonomous vocabulary learning the credit for her students' better vocabulary use and thus their improved written output. With Laura's perception of her students' positive changes in learning, one can speculate that her beliefs about advocating autonomous vocabulary learning will be reinforced.

### **6.2.2 Factors contributing to change and characteristics of reflection**

Laura regarded her dialogic reflection with other teachers as "*a valuable professional development experience*" (I-3) and attributed her belief change to the analysis of students' views, the exchange of ideas among colleagues and the exploration of scholarly perspectives. The remarks she wrote in one of the reflective entries gave further evidence of this:

*All the discussion sessions enable me to know more about our students' views so that I can devise better activities to teach and assess their vocab knowledge.*

*I am also inspired by my colleagues' experience sharing and... new insights from the useful theories prepared by the researcher. (RE-7)*

It is noteworthy, however, that Laura's critical reflection upon the ideas discussed and her conscious effort to implement change in her practice appeared to have played the most substantial role in facilitating her transformation. In terms of the dialogic reflection with her colleagues, Laura seemed rather passive when it came to expressing her views about vocabulary teaching and participated as a listener most of the time.

### **Critical reflection upon different beliefs discussed in the professional dialogues for self-improvement**

Despite being rather passive in articulating her beliefs about vocabulary teaching in the interaction with her colleagues, Laura seemed to engage in the professional dialogues through active listening and note-taking. She also pondered her own and others' beliefs, underwent a range of belief development processes and made deliberate efforts to translate her belief change into practice.

### ***Engaging in the professional dialogues through active listening and note-taking***

While the professional dialogues seemed to have exerted considerable impact on Laura's change in beliefs about vocabulary teaching, it is important to note that Laura often put forward her ideas only when she was invited to do so, especially in the first few sessions. As can be seen in the following illustration of Laura's contribution to the interaction, her responses were relatively short when compared to those of other teachers:

Researcher: *Another suggestion is about helping students to distinguish a target word from other similar expressions like **order**, **command**, **advise**, and **demand**...*

Michelle: *Right. Students may say, "The teachers **tell** us to do homework" instead of "**ask** us to do homework" without knowing that the word **tell** is more direct - like giving orders.*

Louise: *Oh! I can think of two confusing words students usually misuse - **lend** and **borrow**.*

Laura: ***Determine** and **decide**.*

(Excerpt from PD-3 conducted on 9 January 2017)

When asked to explain why she seemed to be somewhat reluctant to articulate her beliefs when it came to interacting with her colleagues, Laura said she had problems recalling examples of her teaching due to her “*very poor memory*” and commented on the need to spend considerable time on recalling her teaching experience before she could share her ideas in the dialogic reflection (I-2). Nonetheless, she emphasised that she was “*actively listening to others*” even when she was not sharing her views (I-2). To illustrate, Laura acknowledged in one of her interviews that she evaluated her students’ vocabulary based on an assessment method adapted from an idea Louise had shared, as described in the previous section. An excerpt of the professional dialogue relevant to this is shown below:

Researcher: *What do you think are some effective ways to test vocabulary...?*

Louise: *Coming to the end of each unit, I’ll have a mini pair game with my class. I give them a game sheet... There’re only two questions on the paper such as “List as many types of pests as possible...” and “List as many ways of getting rid of insects as possible...” I’ll then just give students five minutes and ask them to work in pairs.*

(Excerpt from PD-6 conducted on 23 March 2017)

Remarkably, Laura neither asked questions nor commented on Louise’s shared strategy, but her comments in the interview proved that she found Louise’s practice useful. In addition, Laura’s engagement with professional dialogues about vocabulary teaching was evidenced by the fact that she often jotted down notes during the process (see Figure 6.3 for two sample pages selected from the discussion materials Laura used).

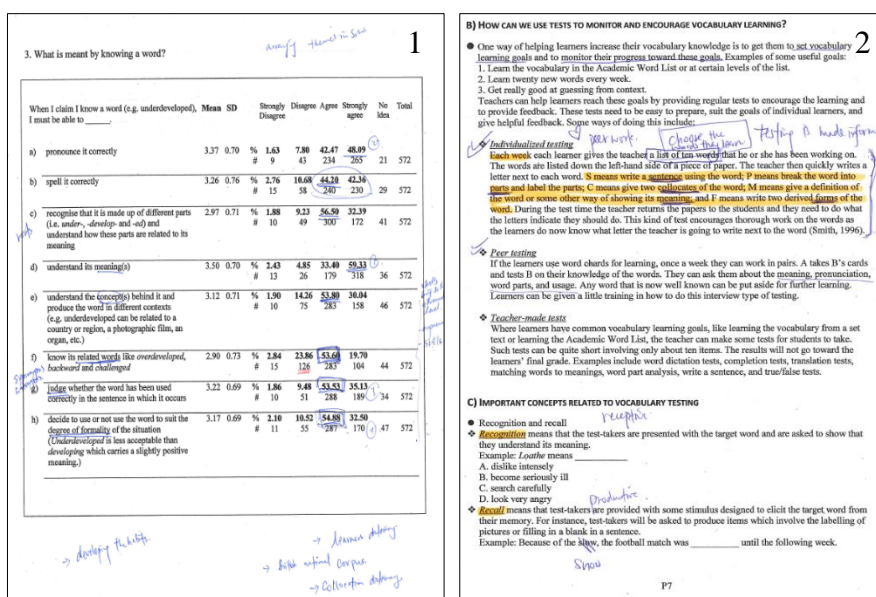


Figure 6.3 Examples of Laura’s note-taking during the professional dialogues

***(Re)formulating beliefs about vocabulary teaching based on critical reflection on different perspectives and multiple belief development processes***

Different belief development processes in which Laura established connections between autonomous vocabulary learning and various issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching seemed to have contributed to her change. As already noted, Laura seemed to have become more aware of the need to promote autonomous learning based on the learners' expectations of vocabulary development. This later prompted her to abandon the old belief about teachers' obligation to provide direct teaching of vocabulary in class and about the criteria for selecting lexical items for explicit treatment. This also led her to reconstruct her beliefs about lexical instruction, the implementation of vocabulary activities, and vocabulary assessment by linking these issues to the development of learner ownership.

Laura's meaning construction seemed to have been made through critical reflection upon her own and others' beliefs. For instance, she took learners' beliefs into consideration but commented that such opinions can be subjective: "*Sometimes even they don't like dictations and tests, it doesn't mean they are not useful*" (I-3). Whereas Laura attributed her belief change mainly to her colleagues' sharing and the scholarly work (I-3), which equipped her with "*some good approaches and strategies*" and informed her vocabulary teaching (I-2) in the interviews, she commented that teachers have to be reflective (I-2). This possibly suggests why Laura adapted Louise's practice to assess her students' vocabulary knowledge and found it important to devise concrete plans to examine the beliefs she had newly developed through action.

**Deliberate and continuous efforts to translate belief change into practice for experimentation**

While the analysis of data collected from various sources clearly provides strong support for the shifts in Laura's beliefs and practices, a content analysis of Laura's data and a thorough examination of her word choice seems to reveal how her behavioural change was triggered by thoughtful planning and deliberate effort. In her reflective entries, Laura frequently discussed the insights she gained from the professional dialogues with her plans for further action. The extracts from her reflective entries, including "*I'll design more tasks / activities for students to use / apply the vocab they have learnt*" (RE-1); "*I'll... give students thinking time and*

*encourage them to guess the meaning of new words*” (RE-3); *“I’ll try some strategies in my classrooms”* (RE-5); and *“I’ll...vary the format of my vocab quizzes / tests”* (RE-6), illustrate this clearly.

It is particularly interesting to note how Laura reiterated that she had benefited from the professional dialogues, for they had enabled her to be aware of the weaknesses of her current teaching approaches, for example, the *“absence of introducing self-regulated learning techniques”*, thereby becoming *“more conscious”* of how to plan the vocabulary lessons to maximise students’ learning outcomes (RE-7). A reflective teacher who was *“always willing to initiate changes”* when she became *“aware of any inadequacies”* in her teaching, Laura *“deliberately included more strategies”* to encourage her students to learn vocabulary by themselves (RE-7). Various other comments made by Laura in the interviews illustrate her growing consciousness regarding the planning of vocabulary teaching. These include: *“I’m more **conscious** when preparing for the lessons, ... **conscious** in a way that I will try to make sure that my students are more involved in vocabulary learning”* (I-2); *“I **consciously** added lesson preparation for the students”* (I-2); and *“Now, I would **consciously** think of more interactive games or activities for students not just to generally understand but also to consolidate what they have learned”* (I-3). Based on Laura’s comments on her deliberate intention to change her practice and her suggestion that the reflective entries could have been written after undertaking some form of action research to promote the implementation of strategies teachers would like to try (I-3), we can reasonably conclude that Laura’s behavioural change stemmed from her deliberate and continuous efforts to translate her belief change into practice on an experimental basis. This was possibly because of her concern that the approaches she found useful might not be applicable to her students (RE-R).

### **6.3 Case two: Lydia**

Lydia had seven years of teaching the English language at the target school when the research project commenced. In appreciation of her leadership skills, professional knowledge and outstanding contribution to the school, she was promoted to become one of the two panel heads of the English Department in September 2014. Upon completion of her Bachelor of Arts in English with First Class Honours and her Postgraduate Diploma in English Language Education (PGDE), Lydia embarked on her career as a full-time English language teacher but continued to equip herself with knowledge. The fact that Lydia pursued two Master’s degrees,

including the Master of Education and the Master of Arts in Literary Studies, on a part-time basis despite her heavy workload seemed to show her determination and willingness to learn. Regardless of her educational attainment, Lydia felt that she was “*not very confident*” about either her knowledge of vocabulary or her capability to teach vocabulary. This was because she did not consider herself to be “*somebody having a wide range of vocabulary and a lot of techniques to teach words*” (I-1). Also, she often found that students had problems retaining the words she taught, which troubled her for years (I-2). According to Lydia, there seemed to be little in her language learning experience and formal teacher training that provided her with useful insights into vocabulary teaching. Specifically, her secondary school teachers placed little emphasis on vocabulary teaching, and the teacher training she received was not specifically related to vocabulary development but was more concerned with general educational issues (I-1). These explain why she had not attached much importance to teaching vocabulary in the past and relied on her experience to formulate ideas for it (I-1).

In common with Laura, Lydia did not give the impression of being loquacious and outspoken as she did not appear to be particularly keen on expressing her views during the first few professional dialogues. It is, however, interesting to note that she found herself “*definitely more active*” in the “*small-group discussion*” of vocabulary teaching when compared to other teacher professional development workshops in which she would only speak when prompted by the instructor (I-2). In addition, Lydia clearly had more interaction with her colleagues as the conversations developed, possibly because she felt a stronger urge to contribute to the professional dialogues out of her growing concern regarding how the effectiveness of her vocabulary teaching could be improved. In the final interview, Lydia stated: “*I don’t mind being judged... It’s fine as long as we are really spending time on the discussion of vocabulary instruction*” (I-3). This comment shows Lydia’s high motivation to explore vocabulary teaching and reflect on it through interaction.

### **6.3.1 Developing beliefs about vocabulary teaching and embracing change in practice**

Lydia’s case is a demonstration of someone who underwent belief development through the exploration of new perspectives and self-reflection. While Lydia felt that her beliefs about the need for direct vocabulary teaching, the design principles of in-class activities to promote vocabulary enhancement and the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment in class

remained static, she reported marked changes in several areas of her beliefs about vocabulary teaching, examples of which included the reconstruction of beliefs about the notion of a word, the use of instructional strategies to teach vocabulary, independent vocabulary learning and vocabulary assessment. Such changes mainly concerned her realisation of students' needs and the expansion of her knowledge. Talking about students' problems with vocabulary learning in the initial interview, Lydia only referred to learner factors which might hamper students' lexical development. Nonetheless, the learning of new ideas and the consolidation of knowledge seemed to have prompted her self-reflection and allowed her to identify possible areas for improvement. For instance, her deepened understanding of word knowledge aspects seemed to have changed her beliefs, and she commented toward the end of the school year that students' partial mastery of vocabulary knowledge could be the teachers' responsibility (I-3). Also noteworthy is how Lydia reconstructed her beliefs about the use of L1 translation in fostering vocabulary teaching. The gradual change in her deep-rooted beliefs indicated how a dialogic approach focusing on self-reflection and the exploration of alternative beliefs might contribute to teacher change.

### **Reconstruction of beliefs about the notion of a word, the aims of vocabulary development and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge**

One area in which Lydia experienced notable change was her conception of aspects of word knowledge. This was reflected in the reconstruction of her epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word as well as her pedagogical beliefs about the aims of vocabulary teaching and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge.

#### ***Reconstruction of epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word by inclusion of additional dimensions***

Prior to her participation in the professional dialogues, Lydia associated knowing a word with five aspects of lexical knowledge, namely, its pronunciation, spelling, meaning, association and constraints on use. Nonetheless, she seemed to have broadened and deepened her epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word, as in the final interview she cited four other aspects of lexical knowledge, namely word parts, concept and referents, word form and collocation, on top of those she had mentioned at the beginning of the school year when asked to talk about the notion of a word. Regarding this, she explained that she had been aware of

only limited aspects of word knowledge before the discussion with other teachers (I-2). It was beyond her expectation that there would be “*so many aspects*” of word knowledge, and she felt shocked to see how she had been neglecting them for a long time (I-3).

### ***Elaboration of pedagogical beliefs about the aims of vocabulary development and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge***

In terms of the change in her pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary teaching, Lydia indicated it was only after the professional dialogues that she had perceived the development of language awareness as an aim of vocabulary teaching. Specifically, she described how she consolidated students’ knowledge of the word ‘résumé’ by contrasting it with the verb ‘resume’, telling students that it should be pronounced as /'rez.ə.meɪ/ when it serves as a noun because of its French origin but /rɪ'zju:m/ when it functions as a verb. While Lydia acknowledged that her learners might not find the thorough explanation of a word meaningful because the details are hardly ever tested in public examinations, she highlighted that vocabulary teaching involves making vocabulary learning interesting with the use of lexical instruction which helps raise language awareness. In the final interview, Lydia stated explicitly that her views had changed: “*In the past, I thought about how vocabulary learning can be made interesting through games only... I did learn more about different aspects of word knowledge. That changed my beliefs and helped to improve my teaching*” (I-3).

In addition to the aims of vocabulary teaching, Lydia also seemed to have undergone change in her beliefs about the teaching of aspects of word knowledge. Despite suggesting in Phase One that English language teachers should focus on the teaching of certain aspects of word knowledge, such as pronunciation, meaning and spelling, Lydia had “*learned that there could be many aspects to be covered when teaching vocabulary*” after engaging in the discussion of vocabulary teaching (RE-1). At the end of the academic year, she clearly emphasised the need to “*cover all the aspects [of word knowledge] in a school year so that students’ vocabulary learning can be consolidated*”, although she acknowledged that it would not be possible to “*cover all of them for all the words due to the limited class time*” (I-3).

### ***Evidence of belief change in the English language classroom***

Whereas the analysis of lessons suggested that pronunciation and meaning remained Lydia’s



primary concerns, several other aspects of word knowledge seemed to have received increasing attention in the second and third phases of the study. To put it more precisely, pronunciation and meaning were focused on frequently, accounting for over 70 per cent of the 487 words Lydia explicitly taught across all three phases of the project. In stark contrast, the teaching of word parts constituted just 5 per cent (N=5/102) of the vocabulary items dealt with by Lydia in the lessons recorded in Phase One, but the percentage rose slightly to 6 per cent (N=11/195) in Phase Two and subsequently to 15 per cent (N=28/190) in Phase Three. Lydia explained: *“I did try to draw students’ attention to the different word parts more often in the second term... One of the keywords I taught recently was **manage**. I asked them for words related to it, like **management** and **manager**”* (I-3). In addition to word parts, Lydia also seemed to have emphasised the associations of words in her lessons. This aspect of lexical knowledge was focused on in 13 per cent (N=13/102) of all the lexical items explicitly taught in the recorded lessons in Phase One, but the percentage went up by 6 per cent in Phase Two (N=37/195) and a further 4 per cent in Phase Three (N=44/190). Although it is important to exercise caution when interpreting the numbers as they had limited statistical significance due to the qualitative nature of my research design, the steady increase in the percentages seems to provide rather compelling evidence indicating Lydia’s heightened awareness of the need to teach various aspects of word knowledge to avoid the overemphasis on meaning and pronunciation.

Also remarkable was Lydia’s endeavour to address concept and referents, as well as collocations, in class in the later stages of the research project, though the teaching of these aspects of word knowledge had not been observed at the beginning of the school year. To illustrate, Lydia indicated that she tried to *“put more emphasis on collocations”* after participating in the professional dialogues (I-2). This matches with my data analysis revealing the gradual increase in the proportion of lexical items which covered the teaching of collocations in Lydia’s recorded lessons, from none (N=0/102) in Phase One to 2 per cent (N=3/195) in Phase Two and 4 per cent (N=8/190) in Phase Three. The following excerpt illustrates how Lydia tried to draw students’ attention to the collocations of the word ‘system’ in a lesson recorded in the second phase of the study:

- Lydia:        *We’ll have to think of a suitable verb that goes with **system**. **Introducing** is a good one. What other verbs can we use to talk about a system?*
- Student:     *Installing?*

- Lydia: *If you talk about computer system, yes... It's not about computer systems in our case here, unfortunately. Can you think of a word that starts with 'i'? ...*
- Student: *I-m-p-l-e...*
- Lydia: **Implementing.** *Good! ... When we talk about policies and the actions officials need to do, we often use **introducing** and implementing. If it is something new, we can use the word that starts with L. Does anyone know?... It's **launching**.*  
(Excerpt from Lydia's lesson on 13 February 2017)

The teaching of concept and referents, which received attention in 1 per cent (N=1/195) of all the expressions taught in Phase Two and 2 per cent (N=4/190) of the lexical items explicitly dealt with in Phase Three, served as another example showing Lydia's change in beliefs about, and practices relating to, aspects of word knowledge. Apart from discussing 'horse' as an animal and a piece of sports equipment in Phase Two, Lydia talked about 'résumé' as a synonym for 'curriculum vitae' and 'resume' as an action; 'remote' in terms of distance and electrical appliances; as well as 'back' in relation to return and support in Phase Three. An interesting example of how Lydia taught the word 'Turkey' by drawing students' attention to its multiple meaning is shown below:

- Lydia: *So, **Turkey** can be a country name. It can also refer to...?*
- Student: *Fire chicken* (Chinglish for turkey, created based on the word's Chinese translation 火雞 huǒ jī).
- Lydia: *Fire chicken. Yes... That's festive food at Christmas. Now, make sure you have capital letter for **Turkey** when you're talking about the country, okay? Once it's small letter, it's about the animal.*  
(Excerpt from Lydia's lesson on 24 April 2017)

On top of the examples identified in the recorded lessons, Lydia recalled in the final interview her recent experience of teaching her students how 'current' can be used to describe a bank account which allows people to use cheques and the present time. As she put it:

*I am trying to give interesting facts about words more often... Probably in the beginning [of the second term], I was trying to cover more aspects in my vocabulary lessons, but now I'm thinking if word knowledge aspects can make*

*learning interesting, I should probably do more on that.* (I-3)

Although Lydia's change regarding the teaching of collocations and multiple meanings seemed to be subtle in terms of number, it should be noted that such change seemed to be significant, for Lydia had "*paid no attention to collocation before the discussion sessions*" (I-2) and "*never covered*" the teaching of concept and referents in the previous years, despite thinking that word usage is important and knowing that some words carry multiple meanings (I-3).

### **Rejection of prior beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching**

Lydia's change in her beliefs about the use of first language to teach vocabulary seemed to be particularly noticeable. As Lydia recalled in her second and final interviews, she used to be "*very much against*" the use of L1 translation to teach English vocabulary, commenting that she had "*zero tolerance*" of it in her lessons. This was because she believed the use of Chinese should not be encouraged in an English language classroom and that students may "*misunderstand the English words*" if they rely too much on Chinese translation. Nonetheless, Lydia had clearly become "*more tolerant*" of its use in vocabulary learning as the year progressed (I-3). She reported in the interviews that she no longer saw the need to delete all the Chinese translations provided in the passages she found for students to read outside class (I-2) and tended to react more positively when students tried to explain a sophisticated vocabulary item using Cantonese (I-3). In explaining her change in beliefs and behaviour, she commented that teachers might consider incorporating the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching as it serves as "*a straightforward way for students to really learn the words*" and helps to ensure the understanding of word meaning (I-3).

Lydia's classroom practice also presented some evidence of her belief change. Whilst it was found that less than 1 per cent of the 487 words Lydia explicitly covered in all the recorded lessons were taught using L1 translation, possibly because Lydia was constrained by the school policy which promotes English as a medium of instruction, a closer examination of the classroom data revealed the difference in Lydia's usage of L1 translation in class and her reaction to her students' explanation of the meaning of a word in their first language. To illustrate, Lydia introduced the Chinese expressions of 'extra' and 'laugh your head off' in Phase One to show that "*some students made mistakes because they used Chinglish*" (I-2). In

contrast, she took the initiative to provide her students with the L1 translations of ‘veggie’, ‘guts’ and ‘Cinderella team’ in Phase Two to draw their attention to these expressions and facilitate their understanding. In terms of her interaction with students, in Phase One Lydia often prohibited the use of L1 translation in class because she did not consider it a good habit (I-1), as shown in the following example:

- Lydia: *What’s the meaning of **distraction**?*  
 Student: 分心 (fēnxīn).  
 Lydia: *In English. What’s **distraction**? **Distraction** is very similar to another word which starts with ‘A’.*  
 (Excerpt from Lydia’s lesson on 5 October 2016)

Nonetheless, in Phase Two Lydia no longer discouraged her students from using Cantonese to explain the meaning of different lexical items, such as ‘darts’, ‘snooker’, ‘amateur’, ‘sanitation’, and so forth. Interestingly, she demonstrated further change in her behaviour in Phase Three, making attempts to ask her students for L1 translations to assist her teaching. The excerpts below show how Lydia responded positively to a student who explained the meaning of ‘stroke’ in his mother tongue in Phase Two and her initiative to ask for the L1 translation of ‘hurricane’ in Phase Three:

- Lydia: *Do you know what a **stroke** is? If the blood pressure in your brain is too high, the blood vessels may break, so there won't be oxygen in your brain and you can't move... That's **stroke**.*  
 Student: *Medium wind (Chinglish for stroke).*  
 Lydia: 中風 (zhòngfēng).  
 Student: *That's the Chinese translation. You're right!*  
 (Excerpt from Lydia’s lesson on 15 February 2017)
- Lydia: ***Hurricane**. It's a storm... What’s the Chinese meaning?*  
 Student: 颶風 (jùfēng).  
 Lydia: *This is a noun. Okay!*  
 (Excerpt from Lydia’s lesson on 19 April 2017)

In the stimulated recall, Lydia stated: “*If they [students] give the correct Chinese translation, I’d say, ‘Yes’, and wouldn’t ask for English paraphrasing any more... That actually helps save some time*” (I-2). She further commented that she no longer saw the need to eliminate all L1 translations in her lessons as she felt that they helped to facilitate vocabulary learning (I-3).

### **Expansion of beliefs about autonomous learning of vocabulary**

In addition to her change regarding aspects of word knowledge and the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching, Lydia seemed to have developed new beliefs concerning autonomous learning of vocabulary. Initially Lydia admitted that she “*had never thought of equipping students with the skills they need for becoming independent learners*” (I-3), but she considered it important to do so after her participation in the professional dialogues and started to ponder how she could help students become independent learners (RE-5). Her comments in the final interview made this clear:

*I hope the students... could be less dependent on teachers when it comes to vocabulary learning... Teachers should try to show the students different online dictionaries and the skills to promote their independent learning. It's also important to show the students that teachers sometimes do not know some of the words - They also need to search the meaning online. (I-3)*

When Lydia was told that the lesson analysis seemed not to have reflected her change in beliefs about independent learning of vocabulary, she admitted to having made no attempt to check word meaning with her students in class using an online dictionary and explained: “*It's not only about using a dictionary. It could be Googling the picture of what a 'PE shed' is*” (I-3). While Lydia stressed that she would like to promote independent learning of vocabulary by helping students to become aware of its importance, she only reported the exploration of word meaning by Googling images of it with her students. One likely explanation for this is that the notion of independent vocabulary learning was rather new to Lydia. As far as she was concerned, sharing more strategies for developing students' abilities and motivating them to acquire vocabulary through their own efforts prior to her implementation of new initiatives in class would be helpful (RE-5).

### **Elaboration of beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge**

One final aspect of Lydia's belief change was associated with the use of dictation to assess students' vocabulary. To begin with, Lydia “*used to think students were not that enthusiastic about dictation simply because they did not find it useful*” (RE-5), but the professional dialogues made her aware that students appeared to be “*more concerned about failure in*

*dictation and the copying that followed*” (I-3). Such understanding of students’ perspectives facilitated her reflection on her own practice, which in turn enabled her to realise the importance of taking the difficulty level of dictation into consideration and finding interesting passages to make dictation for students more fun (I-3). Accordingly, Lydia reported having conducted the last four dictations of the academic year with her students based on a new format. Whereas previously she used to read aloud the words of a passage slowly and require students to write down each word one by one, she then made changes to reduce the difficulty level of her dictation tasks by reading a passage at normal pace and asking her students to fill in the missing words of the passage she provided (see Figure 6.4 for a sample).

Name: _____	(    )	Class: _____	Date: <u>29<sup>th</sup> May, 17</u>
<b>Unit 7 Vocabulary</b>			
<i>Complete the passage while listening to a reading of it.</i>			
John was always a _____ bad boy. He was used to _____			
_____. When he was ten years old, he always stole things from a _____			
store in the _____. Although the _____ knew John was a			
_____, he never had any _____.			
John started _____ more _____ as he got			
older. When he was 18, he met some _____ and they _____ a bank			
together.			
Soon after that, the police caught John. John had to go to _____, but he did not have			
any money, so the Legal Aid Department gave him a _____ for free.			
It did not _____ though. The _____ found John			
_____, and he was _____ to ten years in _____.			

Figure 6.4 A sample of dictation conducted by Lydia with revised format

Talking about her change, Lydia explained: “*Dictation tasks are set to help students revise vocabulary. If they impose too much pressure on students and are not very effective, I am open-minded to any changes of the format*” (I-3).

### **Lydia’s perception of her students’ change**

As can be seen in the discussion above there was a clear shift in Lydia’s beliefs about vocabulary development and her practices. Having observed how her change exerted a positive impact on her students’ attitude toward vocabulary learning, Lydia reported that her confidence in teaching vocabulary had been bolstered after her participation in the professional dialogues. Although Lydia was not certain whether her students were learning better because of her change, she indicated that they were “*obviously showing more interest in learning*” by trying not only to ask, but to also answer questions pertaining to words (I-3).

According to Lydia, one of her students asked her whether the word ‘tsunami’ originates from Japan as he found its pronunciation akin to Japanese. She also recalled how her students answered “*time*” when she asked them about the collocation of ‘manage’ and described how one of her students had started a vocabulary notebook because he recognised the need to widen his vocabulary bank (I-3). To Lydia, these were “*surprising*” because she used to think that her students often played a passive role in their own learning and were reluctant to devote much time to expanding their vocabulary. It is encouraging to find that Lydia considered her teaching of vocabulary “*more meaningful*” as she no longer only associated it with students’ preparation for examination (I-3).

### **6.3.2 Factors contributing to change and characteristics of reflection**

In response to the question about the major factors contributing to her change, Lydia indicated that she had benefited from the professional dialogues but considered her self-reflection the most important. Whilst Lydia commented that she had “*learned a lot more about the students’ perspectives*”, she found the exchange of ideas with colleagues and the exploration of theoretical perspectives more useful because “*students can change all the time*” (I-3). In Lydia’s opinion, the collegial exchange had enabled her to learn how other teachers were teaching vocabulary and borrow their teaching ideas, whereas the scholarly insights provided her with useful resources to enhance vocabulary teaching, thereby promoting her “*professional growth*” and boosting her confidence about planning her vocabulary lessons (I-3). Nonetheless, she attributed her change largely to her self-reflection, suggesting that it exerted the greatest impact (I-3). As she put it:

*Writing self-reflection is painful. You really have to think about what you have learned, and ... organise your feelings and thoughts about the new ideas... It can help me understand something new better. To initiate changes, self-reflection is the most effective. Without really thinking about the methods in detail, I won’t feel very comfortable using them in my lessons. (I-3)*

Consistent with Lydia’s remark, the data analysis seemed to show the important role of self-reflection in facilitating her change. It appeared that the development of her beliefs was mainly prompted by the stimulation of new ideas discussed in the professional dialogues, and the self-reflection that followed.

## **Self-reflection based on the juxtaposition of existing beliefs and/or practices with new perspectives**

Through the professional dialogues, Lydia seemed to have recognised new ideas which she found useful in her teaching vocabulary. This can be shown in the interviews and her reflective entries, which illustrated how she learned more about aspects of word knowledge, independent vocabulary learning, and vocabulary assessment from the perspectives of learners, colleagues and scholars. For instance, the first reflective entry Lydia wrote highlighted her learning of aspects of word knowledge:

*I have learned that there could be many aspects to be covered when teaching vocabulary [from the theoretical literature]. According to the student surveys, they have pretty high awareness of the ability to recognise different parts of words. Reflecting on my own lessons, I tend to spend very little time introducing prefixes and suffixes to students. Students' responses have given me a glimpse into another approach to introduce new words in lessons... I will try to explain the meaning of the different parts to students to see if the knowledge helps students retain the vocabulary. (RE-1)*

In another reflective entry, Lydia revealed how “surprising” the analysis of students’ perspectives concerning dictations was. She wrote:

*I have never imagined students could be that afraid of dictation. I used to think students were not that enthusiastic about dictation simply because they did not find it useful... Now that I have heard their voices, I will try to adjust the level of difficulty of dictation and see if I can make it fun by choosing witty passages. (RE-5)*

From the two extracts above, Lydia’s change in beliefs concerning aspects of word knowledge and vocabulary assessment, as mentioned in the earlier section, appeared to stem from the juxtaposition of the new perspectives and her own beliefs and/or practices. Like Laura, Lydia often put forth concrete plans to adjust her classroom practices in her self-reflection. This may suggest her determination to implement change for more effective teaching and learning of vocabulary.



Apart from the theoretical literature and students' views, Lydia also appeared to be inspired by the collegial exchanges in the professional dialogues. For instance, she recalled in the final interview that she had learned a new approach to promote independent learning of vocabulary because of the discussion she had participated in: “*We talked about teaching students dictionary skills, and I found Michelle’s idea...interesting. This is something I haven’t thought of, but I think it could be useful*” (I-3). The following excerpt provides an example of how teachers identified through interaction the need to promote independent learning of vocabulary with the use of online resources:

- Lydia: *I found that there are two comments about pronunciation. I guess students need to know how to read the IPA symbols. [...]*
- Researcher: *I believe some students who use online dictionaries may not see the need to learn IPA as they can simply click the loudspeaker to learn the pronunciation of a word...*
- Lydia: *Does it mean that the students who are concerned about their learning of pronunciation have no idea that there are resources available to help them? ...*
- Laura: *I find it surprising that a form four student mentioned, “Google translation gives the wrong meaning for simple vocabulary”. Maybe we really have to explicitly tell them how we can use the reliable resources on the Internet.*
- Michelle: *Yes. We can try to show students there are different dictionaries... Of course, ... we can just tell them [the word meaning] verbally, but we can show them the webpage. I think we should let them know there are ways.*
- Lydia: *Does that mean that we should show them how we can check the meaning?*
- Michelle: *Yes, I think so. [...]*
- Laura: *Perhaps we should also show them some of the educational websites and... resources we can look for...*
- (Excerpt from PD-5 conducted on 10 March 2017)

By sharing her thoughts on students' voices regarding the learning of pronunciation and asking questions, Lydia opened the conversation regarding the use of proper resources to develop students' vocabulary, which consequently enabled her to reflect on the need to promote independent learning of vocabulary. Although the lesson analysis shows that Lydia had not incorporated the use of online dictionaries in her lessons despite her declared intention to do so, she pointed out how she was “*inspired*” by the exchange of ideas with her colleagues and started to Google pictures in class to encourage the discovery of word meaning through technology (I-3).

## Gradual change in long-held beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching

When considering Lydia's change in beliefs and practices, it is particularly instructive to look at how she reconstructed her belief about the avoidance of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching, which she had long espoused (I-2), through gradual progression. In the third professional dialogue relating to lexical instruction, a considerable amount of time was devoted to the discussion of whether L1 translation should be used to facilitate vocabulary teaching in the English language classroom. As can be seen in the extract below, Lydia did not interact with other teachers until the focus of discussion shifted from the pros of L1 translation to the cons:

- Researcher: *What do you think about using Chinese translation in class?*
- Michelle: *I sometimes compare English expressions to some Chinese expressions. Like 人山人海(rénshānrénhǎi)... you can tell the students that there are expressions in English that relate to our culture. I think it can help them understand better... [...]*
- Louise: *The use of L1 translation can be a shortcut. Sometimes you may find it hard to explain abstract ideas in English. You may prefer telling the Chinese meaning directly.*
- Michelle: *Yes, for abstract ideas...*
- Laura: *I do agree with Michelle. Sometimes when we teach idiomatic expressions or proverbs like 'an eye for an eye', we can ask our students for the Chinese expressions ... They find it exciting that they can apply their Chinese knowledge in English lessons.*
- Michelle: *True. They like to know these.*
- Researcher: *Yet it seems to me that most teachers do not use Chinese translation in class. Why is that the case?*
- Lydia: *When students are about to become advanced learners, being too dependent on Chinese translation probably does not help. Words like 'apart from' and 'besides' ... have the same definitions in Chinese but different usages in English... [...]*
- Lydia: *I guess we don't only teach vocabulary in class. Our goal is not to make sure students know the Chinese translation. When we are paraphrasing, we are asking students to guess the meaning from our input. It can be a kind of interaction.*
- Louise: *Yeah, learning by context.*
- (Excerpt from PD-3 conducted on 19 January 2017)

Following the exchange of personal views among teachers, the professional dialogues covered both the students and scholars' favourable views on the use of L1 translation in class, and Lydia expressed scepticism about the students' attitudes in her reflective entry:

*The most disturbing finding was the students' attitude towards the use of L1 translations. Quite a number of them found it effective, but as a teacher, I am rather against it. I think for intermediate learners to advance to a more proficient level, they should enhance their ability to learn new words using the same language.* (RE-3)

It is, however, interesting to see that Lydia gradually became more tolerant of the use of L1 translation in class. In the second interview, she indicated that students' feedback on Chinese translations had changed her belief over time and made her accept their use of mother tongue to explain vocabulary about sports:

*Students' feedback on Chinese translations changed my views... I wrote the entry immediately after the discussion session. At the time, I was still against using Chinese translation. After all, it's kind of like a belief with me for seven or eight years, so I can't really change it within a week. We had the discussion sessions in January, but then when I taught sports, it's already February...* (I-2)

As already noted, in Phase Three Lydia not only respected students' use of L1 translations to explain word meaning but also attempted to invite students' responses by asking them to explain some lexical items using their mother tongue. Although she did not mention how the discussion of scholarly views had changed her beliefs about the use of L1 translations in the first two interviews, she said: *"I get even more tolerant of L1 translation now... I remember some scholars commented that it's kind of a straightforward way for students to really learn the words"* (I-3).

In terms of the process of her change in beliefs, Lydia's case suggested that teachers might reject new perspectives which seemed contradictory to their existing beliefs, especially when such beliefs were deeply rooted. Nonetheless, the dialogic interaction which focused on the exploration of multiple perspectives seemed to have provided Lydia with an opportunity to compare her beliefs with those of others, which enabled her to reconstruct her beliefs

gradually based on her reflection upon the new perspectives and teaching experience over time.

#### 6.4 Case three: Louise

Upon completion of her undergraduate double degree in Arts (English) and Education, Louise joined the target school as a full-time teacher and completed her Master's degree in English language teaching on a part-time basis. Being one of the youngest teachers in the Department of English, with five years of teaching experience when the research project started, she gave the impression of being an approachable and energetic teacher who had established a good relationship with her students. One thing that I noted in my researcher log was that Louise seemed to have devoted much effort to engaging students in learning. For instance, she often prepared PowerPoint slides with colourful pictures to attract students' attention and gave students positive reinforcement by awarding those who performed well in quizzes or class-activities with small gifts.

Louise described in the initial interview that she was "*quite confident*" in her ability to teach vocabulary as her students seemed to be fascinated by the lexical items she introduced in class (I-1). The way in which Louise expanded her vocabulary by attending tutorial classes when she was a secondary school student appeared to have shaped her beliefs about vocabulary teaching. Being impressed by her tutors who were clear in their explanations of how some expressions might help her gain high marks by impressing the examiners, Louise believed she should help her students learn vocabulary efficiently by introducing to them "*some shortcuts and suggestions*" (I-1). When discussing her vocabulary teaching, Louise stated that she often made decisions "*by intuition*" but stressed that "*variety is important*" (I-1). She said: "*I'd feel good when my teachers tried to use new methods to teach... I like trying out things for my teaching and I don't mind doing so if it doesn't really take too much time*" (I-1). While Louise was "*not fond of research*" and read scholarly work infrequently (I-1), she claimed that she tended to implement the new ideas she learned from academic publications without necessarily thinking highly of the research findings. She explained: "*I don't really care about the results suggested... Even when some shortcomings [of a new teaching method] are suggested, I'll still try to carry it out to see whether it works on my students*" (I-1).

In terms of her participation in the professional dialogues, Louise seemed to be particularly keen on sharing her views insofar as she actively contributed to the discussion of almost all issues, possibly because she enjoyed “*impromptu*” and “*verbal self-reflection*” (I-3). Nonetheless, she pointed out that she engaged in self-reflection “*usually after exploring students’ beliefs and listening to other colleagues’ sharing*” (I-3). She said: “*Without these two, I can’t have good self-reflection*” (I-3). Talking about her experience of taking part in the professional dialogues, Louise acknowledged that she enjoyed the dialogic interaction with colleagues and making improvements, although some teachers might be reluctant to share their ideas due to their personalities (I-2). In addition, Louise appeared to be mindful of how she interacted with the other teachers, influenced by the Chinese culture which promotes harmony and modesty. As her comment suggested: “*We tend to be humble... We don’t think we can teach others how to teach... For those of us who are more open-minded, we still just share our own teaching instead of criticising or commenting on others’ teaching*” (I-2).

#### **6.4.1 Focusing on practical considerations in the implementation of change**

Louise’s case presented a portrait of someone who engaged in meaning making when provided with intellectual stimulation and laid great emphasis on practical concerns when it came to incorporating belief change into behaviour. In the interviews, Louise reported no change in different aspects of her beliefs about vocabulary teaching such as those associated with the need for direct vocabulary instruction, the selection of vocabulary items for explicit treatment in class and the difficulties in learning vocabulary experienced by language learners. Nonetheless, she seemed to have undergone belief development in certain areas, including the elaboration of beliefs relating to aspects of word knowledge, the reconstruction of beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching, the addition of beliefs regarding lexical instruction, the consolidation of beliefs about autonomous learning of vocabulary, etc. Also, she commented that her awareness of the strategies she used was heightened and she tended to “*think more*” about her vocabulary teaching after taking part in the professional dialogues (I-3). While Louise’s evidence of change at the cognitive level can clearly be identified in her reflective entries and interviews, it seemed that only some reported changes in beliefs were translated into her classroom practice.

## Reconstruction of epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word and the role of vocabulary in second and/or foreign language acquisition

In relation to her heightened awareness of aspects of word knowledge, Louise seemed to have reconstructed her epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word and the role of vocabulary in second and/or foreign language acquisition. When asked to explain the notion of a word, Louise cited five aspects of knowledge, including pronunciation, word parts, meaning, word form and constraints on use in the initial interview, but three additional aspects – concept and referents, collocation, and spelling – were mentioned in the final interview. Such reconstruction of beliefs through the addition of extra dimensions was confirmed by Louise's remarks that she had "*mainly focused on word meanings and pronunciations previously*" (I-2) but recently had paid more attention to other aspects of lexical knowledge, like synonyms, antonyms and multiple meanings recently (I-3). Comments by Louise also indicated that her heightened awareness of aspects of word knowledge might have resulted in her development of new beliefs about the role of vocabulary in cultivating language awareness and arousing curiosity. She said:

*Vocabulary with multiple meanings may interest students... Previously, I thought words were only some aids for understanding and I didn't think students would be interested in words themselves; but now I think words themselves can be the motivation for students to understand the world. Vocabulary learning can also be about helping students to cultivate their language awareness and develop their curiosity. (I-3)*

Whereas Louise had not addressed concept and referents in the first two phases of the study, she focused on multiple meanings of several lexical items in the final phase, an example of which is shown below:

- Louise: *Talking about child **abuse**, another term may come to your mind... Drug **abuse**. Do you think **abuse** here has the same meaning?*
- Student: *No.*
- Louise: *What does it mean by **abuse** as in child **abuse**? If the parents are violent to their children, they may beat them. That's about the cruel behaviour... But what about drug **abuse** here? ... That means you take drugs in a bad way... So, you know **abuse** has two meanings...*  
(Excerpt from Louise's lesson conducted on 26 April 2017)

As can be seen in the example, Louise not only asked her students to reflect on the concept and referents of the word ‘abuse’, but also explicitly mentioned that it has two meanings in order to raise their language awareness. Other similar examples that can be identified included expressions such as ‘make-up’ and ‘make up’, as well as ‘throw’ (as in ‘throw’ a ball) and ‘throw’ a party. Meanwhile, the percentage of lexical items whose collocation was dealt with rose from a negligible 3 per cent (N=5/153) in Phase One to approximately 4 per cent (N=9/255) in Phase Two and 7 per cent (N=9/137) in the final phase.

One interesting observation was that although the data seemed to reveal increasing attention paid by Louise to the teaching of spelling in the second phase, when compared to the first, as spelling received attention in 16 per cent (N=24/153) of the lexical items explicitly taught in Phase One and rose to 21 per cent (N=53/255) in Phase Two, but declined to 13 per cent (N=18/137) in Phase Three, which was even lower than that in the first phase. While Louise felt that she had attached more importance to spelling and claimed that the fluctuating numbers could be “*related to the themes*” of the different modules (I-3), the finding might suggest Louise’s deliberate intention to devote more attention to spelling shortly after taking part in the professional dialogues relating to aspects of word knowledge but that she resumed to her usual practice as her change had not been fully internalised.

### **Construction and reconstruction of beliefs about lexical instruction**

In addition to the change in epistemological beliefs, Louise seemed to have reconstructed her beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching and vocabulary instruction strategies.

#### ***Rejection of prior beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching***

Subsequent to her participation in the professional dialogues, Louise wrote in one of her reflective entries that she found it “*surprising to know the effectiveness of L1 translation*” with respect to vocabulary teaching in the English language classroom (RE-3). Although she used to avoid the use of L1 translation in class, she started to think that Cantonese could be useful with respect to vocabulary teaching as the use of some Chinese expressions can be “*catchy and attractive*” to students, thereby strengthening motivation for word building (I-2). Similar to the observation regarding the teaching of some aspects of word knowledge, such as

spelling, the lesson analysis found an increase in the use of L1 translation in Louise's lessons conducted in Phase Two, but a remarkable decline of such usage toward the end of the school year. Whereas Louise seemed not to have used Chinese to explain word meaning initially, in the second phase she took the initiative to incorporate Chinese expressions in her lexical instruction and encouraged students to explain the meaning of words in their mother tongue. Remarkably, around one-tenth (N=26/255) of the lexical items explicitly taught in Phase Two were explained in L1 translation, either by Louise or her students. The excerpt below shows an example of how Louise invited her students to explain 'perseverance' in their mother tongue and offered its Chinese expressions soon after the students' responses:

Louise: *Can you guess the meaning of **perseverance**?*

Student: *Never give up.*

Louise: *Exactly! What is it in Chinese?*

Student: *永不放棄(yǒngbù fàngqì).*

Louise: *Is there a better term in Chinese?*

Student: *堅持永不放棄的精神(jiānchí yǒngbù fàngqì de jīngshén)!*

Louise: *That means 堅忍(jiānrěn); 堅持(jiānchí).*

(Excerpt from Louise's lesson conducted on 14 February 2017)

Interestingly, in Phase Three Louise did not seem to have used L1 translation to foster vocabulary teaching despite her rather active attempt to do so in Phase Two and her claim that she had "used L1 more" in the final interview (I-3). Specifically, L1 translation can only be found in 4 per cent (N=6/137) of the expressions addressed in Phase Three, with all Chinese explanations offered by the students without prompting. One explanation offered was school policies. Louise said: "*We're not supposed to use Chinese expressions, but I feel that using them to explain a few words is okay*" (I-2); "*Due to school policies, it's still no good for me to use too much Chinese. I'd only use it in some situations if I find it useful*" (I-3).

### ***Construction of beliefs about the use of creative methods to enhance lexical instruction***

Louise's cognitive change regarding lexical instruction can further be seen in her construction of beliefs about the use of creative methods to enhance lexical instruction. Reflecting on her experience of dialogic reflection, Louise wrote:



*It is insightful to know the taxonomy of vocabulary strategies... I find the consolidation ones inspiring to me such as mnemonics, peg method, loci method... Teachers should...be flexible and open-minded enough to adapt various teaching strategies to cater for students' learning needs. (RE-5)*

While Louise had broadened her beliefs about the use of lexical instruction and found the new vocabulary instruction strategies she was introduced to useful, she did not seem to have adjusted her classroom practice to include such strategies in the course of the school year despite her expressed wish to try out the strategies she “*didn't know how to use*” previously (I-3). In the second interview, she explained:

*Time is a concern. It takes time for me to find a good context that allows me to use the devices. I don't want to show the use of the techniques in a hurry and then just move on to another part of teaching immediately. (I-2)*

While Louise put forward time constraints in the final interview as the justification for not using the strategies again, she shifted the focus to lack of time for lesson preparation: “*It takes time to plan. We have to plan very carefully before using these strategies. I didn't really have a lot of time to prepare for that*” (I-3). Although Louise cited time as a factor which prohibited her from incorporating creative methods in her vocabulary teaching, we should not rule out the possibility that her unfamiliarity with the strategies might have led to her hesitation to adopt them. Her case seemed to show that cognitive change might take place when teachers are given the opportunity for intellectual exchanges with colleagues, which then enable them to adopt new perspectives or learn new ideas; but for teachers to translate their cognitive change into behavioural change, additional support may be required.

### **Elaboration of beliefs about vocabulary assessment**

With respect to her beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge, Louise stated before taking part in the professional dialogues that lexical knowledge should be assessed based on speaking and writing tasks, dictation and quizzes. In the later stage of the study, however, she seemed to be “*impressed by the idea of individualised testing in which students can develop learner autonomy*” (RE-6) and “*attached more importance to peer evaluation to promote students' independent learning when compared to the past*” (I-3). As Louise

suggested, one of the insights she gained from the professional dialogues was the value of peer testing, in which “*assessments are no longer confined to teacher-student interaction*” (RE-6). With the establishment of the connection between vocabulary assessment and learner ownership, Louise gradually recognised the importance of implementing more peer learning in lessons (I-3). This, according to Louise, can be done by asking individual students to share their output with the whole class after completing a task for vocabulary learning and then to evaluate each other’s work.

As reported by Louise, more peer evaluation opportunities had been given to students after games and group work (I-3). One of these included providing students with the opportunity to check their own and others’ learning progress after receiving teacher input:

*In one activity, I distributed a coloured paper to each student and asked them to write down any verb or adjective they could think of. The students then shared the words they had written... and the whole class tried to change a verb or adjective into a noun together. After that, I asked the students to check if they could change the words on their own and assessed their word knowledge. (I-3)*

Despite Louise’s comments on the promotion of peer evaluation, similar examples of group work and peer evaluation were rarely observed in the recorded lessons. In the final interview Louise explained that this was related to examination pressure: “*These days, we have to limit the number of interactive activities as we have to be more exam-oriented and target-oriented... Time schedule is a consideration*” (I-3). As for individualised testing, no example can be identified from the vocabulary assessment conducted.

Also noteworthy was the change that was found in the design of vocabulary quizzes conducted by Louise. Whilst previously Louise used to assess students’ word knowledge through gap-filling questions, toward the end of the school year she designed some vocabulary assessment tasks with an emphasis on part of speech (see Figure 6.5). Although Louise did not describe the change in her interviews, such findings may be interpreted as evidence that shows her heightened awareness of consolidating students’ knowledge of word form.

5E Quiz (Handy Guide P.208-211)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ( )

Total score: /

go through	hand in	hang up	go on
help out	give in	improve on/ upon	hold on
give up	hear/know of	hurry up	go back
hear from	go after	join in	hang out
go over	insist on	go ahead	keep off
hand out	keep away from	hang around/about/round	jot down
keep on	keep out of	go into	keep...up

1. My parents finally \_\_\_\_\_ and allowed me to go on a trip alone.
2. Cathy \_\_\_\_\_ her job after she married Mike. She became a housewife.
3. The woman \_\_\_\_\_ her dream to be a professional pianist 10 years ago.
4. \_\_\_\_\_! You can do it!
5. When will you \_\_\_\_\_ to London?
6. During the press conference, the inspector \_\_\_\_\_ details about the case to let the public know more.
7. Tiffany will \_\_\_\_\_ with her studies after dinner because she will have a test tomorrow.
8. Have you \_\_\_\_\_ the script and marked the changes?
9. My grandparents \_\_\_\_\_ a difficult time during the period when Japanese occupied HK.
10. Please \_\_\_\_\_ your homework to the subject leaders.
11. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ the test papers to the students.

5E English Quiz (Handy Guide P.317-319)

Part of speech

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: / 37

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
1) _____	Compare	2) _____	3) _____
Competition	4) _____	5) _____	6) _____
7) _____	complain	x	x
8) _____	concentrate	9) _____	x
10) _____	11) _____	concerned	x
12) _____	conclude	13) _____	14) _____
15) _____	confirm	x	x
16) _____	consider	17) _____	18) _____
courage	x	19) _____	20) _____
21) _____	22) _____	critical	23) _____
decision	23) _____	24) _____	25) _____
26) _____	depend	27) _____	x
depression	28) _____	29) _____	x
30) _____	describe	31) _____	x
32) _____	digest	33) _____	x
34) _____	disappear	x	x
35) _____	doubt	36) _____	37) _____

Figure 6.5 Vocabulary assessment tasks indicative of Louise’s belief change

## Louise’s perception of student changes

Overall, Louise found her experience of vocabulary teaching positive. When asked to comment on the extent to which her transformation might have exerted an impact on her students’ vocabulary learning, she indicated that they paid more attention to the words they had learned, became more interested in comprehending different aspects of word knowledge, and found the lessons more fun because of her initiative to promote peer evaluation in class as they seemed to like challenging each other (I-3). In addition, Louise felt that her students’ vocabulary learning was enhanced. She was content that her students’ work showed “*improved output*” in terms of accuracy (I-3).

### 6.4.2 Factors contributing to change and characteristics of reflection

According to Louise, her intention to “*maximise students’ learning*” was the major factor that contributed to her change. She believed it was this “*ultimate purpose*” in mind that motivated her to adopt new practices that may promote effective vocabulary development (I-3). When

asked to discuss how the professional dialogues might have helped to facilitate her change, she commented: *“The exploration of students’ beliefs and collegial exchange matter. As for self-reflection, it is based on the two components mentioned. Of course, it’s also influential. Without it, I won’t be able to... make changes accordingly”* (I-3). While Louise felt that the discussion of theoretical literature was less enjoyable and useful when compared to the other three components as she had *“already known most of the ideas”* suggested by the literature, it was interesting to note that some of her belief change seemed to stem from the discussion of scholarly work, as revealed by the reflective entries and interviews. Unlike Laura and Lydia, Louise actively contributed to the professional dialogues from the very beginning. Nonetheless, her classroom practice seemed to show that some of her changes in beliefs were not reflected in her practice, and that her behavioural changes appeared to be inconsistent. One likely explanation for this was that her cognitive change had not been fully internalised. For example, she was active in sharing her own experiences and opinions but only gave responses to some of the new ideas that she found useful in the professional dialogues. She also tended not to use the first-person voice in the discussion of her future actions when writing her reflective entries and emphasised practical concerns, such as time for lesson preparation and tight lesson schedules, with respect to her implementation of change.

### **Active participation in the professional dialogues with a preference for the exploration of student beliefs and colleagues’ successful practices**

Louise can be considered one of the teachers who participated most actively in the professional dialogues, for she contributed to collegial exchange, analysis of students’ beliefs and discussion of theoretical literature in all sessions regarding vocabulary teaching. It is, however, noteworthy that she seemed to be more involved in the discussion of ideas proposed by her colleagues and the students’ perspectives, as judged by the frequency and the length of her utterance. As Louise explained, *“I emphasise students’ beliefs and sharing of successful practice more when I plan my activities”* (I-3). Since she tended not to consider the theoretical literature when she planned her lessons and simply wanted to develop basic understanding of different theories, Louise found the discussion of scholarly work less important than the exploration of her colleagues’ and students’ beliefs (I-3). Although Louise commented on the usefulness of applying a theoretical lens and explained how it led her to attach more importance to peer evaluation in class (I-3), it was found that she gave only brief responses to some of the new ideas she found useful and/or impressive in the scholarly discussion. The

excerpt relating to the discussion of individualised testing below illustrates this:

Michelle: *What is SPCMF?*

Lydia: *S means sentence.*

Louise: *P means parts.*

Michelle: *C, collocation.*

Louise: *C means collocation.*

Researcher: *Right. When it comes to individualised testing, each learner can give the teacher a list of ten words that he or she has been working on. The teacher then quickly writes a letter next to each word to assess word knowledge. I'm not sure how feasible it is due to our class size, but I suppose this can be done in a form of peer testing...*

Louise: *It's a good suggestion.*

(Excerpt from PD-6 conducted on 23 March 2017)

While Louise wrote in her reflective writing that she was “*most impressed by the idea of individualised testing in which students can develop learner autonomy on what their learning should focus on*” (RE-6), she only commented that “*It's a good suggestion*” in the discussion of the idea. Likewise, she responded to the sharing of a new technique called 4/3/2, which can be used to promote the use of vocabulary with a brief comment, “*This can be a good speaking training as well*” (PD-4), and only suggested that my drawing of a rabbit was “*like a rooster*” when I used it to introduce how ‘tuxedo’ can be taught with the use of mnemonic strategies (PD-3). Here, it is important to note that my data analysis found no example of individualised testing, the 4/3/2 technique or mnemonic strategies in Louise’s vocabulary teaching. It seems reasonable to speculate that her rather limited engagement with the ideas while taking part in the professional dialogues might not have prompted her to implement them in class, despite her fondness for trying new teaching methods.

## Self-reflection with a focus on the description of ideas discussed

Louise's reflective writing mainly focused on the description of ideas discussed in the professional dialogues and the insights she gained *per se*. Planning for future actions can also be found, but it seems that reflection on existing beliefs and practices was not often included. In terms of the reflective contents in relation to different perspectives, student voices seemed to be Louise's overriding concern, despite her indication in an interview that she particularly enjoyed exploring issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching through the lens of colleagues, which "*can inspire some new strategies*" (I-3). The phrases relating to students' perspectives as shown in Table 6.1 can thus be easily identified in her reflective writing.

Table 6.1 Phrases highlighting students' perspectives in Louise's reflective entries

Source	Phrases
RE-1	- <i>It is inspiring to know students' interpretation of ...</i>
RE-1	- <i>By acknowledging most students...</i>
RE-2	- <i>It is interesting to know that students...</i>
RE-3	- <i>From the students' perspective, ...</i>
RE-4	- <i>I have learnt that students' views on...</i>
RE-5	- <i>It is pleasing to know that many students feel...</i>
RE-6	- <i>It is insightful to know students prefer...</i>

As with Laura and Lydia, while writing her reflective entries Louise planned future actions she would like to take to improve her teaching. What was interesting was that she was the only teacher who tended not to use the first-person pronoun to describe how vocabulary teaching should be conducted. Specifically, the description of what teachers should do to promote lexical development in three reflective entries (See RE-3, RE-5 and RE-6 of Louise's reflective writing in Appendix J) seemed rather impersonal, avoiding the first-person pronoun throughout. Table 6.2 provides an overview of the excerpts from Louise's reflective entries, detailing the use and avoidance of the first-person pronoun, 'I', in relation to the description of plans for future action and classroom practices which may benefit students' vocabulary learning.

Table 6.2 The use and avoidance of first-person pronoun in Louise's description of practice

Sample extracts with the use of first-person voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>As a teacher, <b>I should</b> highlight the values of vocabulary, grammar and language skills on students' daily communication and different learning areas. <b>I should</b> also be aware of students' daily needs in grammar, vocabulary and language skills in order to enrich my teaching.</i> (RE-1)</li> <li>- <i><b>I should</b> identify what words to teach by their frequency, usefulness and students' preferences.</i> (RE-2)</li> <li>- <i>After the discussion and knowing the benefits brought by collaborative learning, <b>I will try</b> to integrate elements like a wide variety of games (such as Snake), purposeful song appreciation and movie appreciation with my classes.</i> (RE-4)</li> </ul>
Sample extracts without the use of first-person voice	<p><b>The use of passive voice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>More resources about knowing words <b>can be recommended to students</b>, such as a collocation dictionary and the British Corpus.</i> (RE-1)</li> <li>- <i>Repetitions and retrieving <b>should be enforced</b> to consolidate students' vocabulary learning.</i> (RE-2)</li> <li>- <i>Different teaching strategies <b>should be implemented</b> to teach vocabulary. There is no best way of it.</i> (RE-2)</li> <li>- <i>Students <b>should be encouraged</b> to pronounce, spell and write about words.</i> (RE-3)</li> <li>- <i>Understanding common roots is commonly neglected but should be highlighted in lessons.</i> (RE-3)</li> <li>- <i>Surely, <b>teachers should</b> also be flexible and open-minded enough to adapt various teaching strategies to cater for students' learning needs.</i> (RE-5)</li> <li>- <i>The suggested question types of assessments are useful and practical. Instead of contextualized passages, <b>we are encouraged to</b> use matching, completion, sentence-writing items and interpretation too.</i> (RE-6)</li> </ul> <p><b>The use of phrases and 'it' as subject placeholder</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Visual aids <b>are necessary for</b> teaching concrete ideas.</i> (RE-3)</li> <li>- <i>Apart from teaching pronunciations, word meanings, synonyms and parts of speech, <b>it is also essential</b> to introduce collocations, multiple meanings, idioms and word contexts, which can strengthen students' understanding of vocabulary.</i> (RE-5)</li> </ul>

It is apparent from the table that Louise commonly used the passive voice to describe how vocabulary development can be fostered. Phrases like '... are necessary for...' and 'it' as subject placeholder (e.g. 'It is essential to'...) were also adopted. While such usage might reflect Louise's intention to maintain some degree of formality in her writing, it may also suggest her tendency to make general comments on what teachers and students should do regarding vocabulary development. Given that Louise's reflection appeared to focus more on the discussion of ideas rather than how these ideas could be related to her own practices,

it seems reasonable to speculate that she did not feel a strong need to implement change in her vocabulary teaching. This could plausibly explain why Louise seemed to have experienced several changes in beliefs, with only a few of them reflected in her behaviour.

### **Strong emphasis on practical concerns**

Aside from her participation in the professional dialogues and the way she characteristically engaged in self-reflection, as mentioned above, the comments in Louise's reflective entries and her contributions to interviews seemed to indicate that she took practical concerns, namely time factors, examination pressure, teachers' generic skills and workload, into careful consideration in her reflection and planning of lessons. Amongst these concerns, time was the most commonly cited. To illustrate, Louise wrote in one of her reflective entries that she would like to include purposeful song appreciation and film appreciation in class "*despite the time constraints in lessons*" (RE-4). In addition, she claimed that she did not address concept and referents in the early stage of the study because of "*time constraint*" (I-2) and gave the same justification for not having included certain strategies in her vocabulary teaching (I-3).

Other than time factors, Louise seemed to be rather concerned about teachers' workload, the generic skills required to implement a new teaching method and examination pressure. The following captures a part of what Louise wrote in her reflective writing, suggesting how she was concerned about the teachers' workload and the preparation needed to implement change in class:

- *It is meaningful to draw the conclusion that workload, pressure, nature of assessments and students' sense of satisfaction should be put into consideration when we design teaching activities for vocabulary assessments* (RE-6);
- *I am most impressed by the idea of individualised testing in which students can develop learner autonomy on what their learning should focus on. The preparation of teachers is simple, but the learning outcome can be enormous.* (RE-6)



For Louise the generic skills teachers possessed also seemed to play a role in vocabulary teaching. In the following excerpt from a professional dialogue conducted in January, we can tell that she seemed to be impressed by Michelle's sharing of a particular strategy:

- Michelle: *Oh yes. I can think of a way... For example, students always get 'quiet' and 'quite' wrong. They spell them wrongly and they don't know which is which. So, I try to ask them to remember, "E.T. doesn't speak human language. They don't speak, and they are quiet." ... I think this is effective... As a student, I always mixed them up and I thought of this.*
- Louise: *Oh, you thought of this on your own?*
- Michelle: *Yes. And I remember this forever.*
- Researcher: *Right. 'Quiet' ends with 'et'. This is interesting.*
- Louise: *Yes, it works.*
- Michelle: *Sometimes, we may have to make good use of our creativity to teach vocabulary effectively.*
- Researcher: *I will try. I think they are very confused with these two words. Very creative!*
- Michelle: *We have to be very creative.*
- (Excerpt from PD-3 conducted on 9 January 2017)

After the professional dialogue, Louise wrote: "*Mnemonic devices seem to be useful in lesson, but they require teachers' creativity*" (RE-3). The fact that Louise had not adopted such strategies in class might suggest she was not used to teaching vocabulary creatively, and thus lacked strong motivation to use them.

Finally, examination pressure seemed to have exerted a considerable impact on Louise's classroom practice regarding vocabulary activities in class. In the final interview, for example, she reported that not many games had been used to promote vocabulary development. This was because her lessons were mainly about "*the recap of everything students learned throughout the year*" as the examination was approaching (I-3).

## 6.5 Case four: Michelle

Michelle, an English major who had completed her PGDE after her undergraduate studies in Hong Kong, and was a holder of a Master's degree in English language teaching, had taught at the target school for 14 years when the project began. She was the most experienced amongst the teachers who participated in the professional dialogues. Having served as a panel head of the English Department for more than eight years, Michelle seemed to be occupied with work as she was responsible for planning the school's English language curriculum and managing the English panel on top of her teaching duties. Because of her role as an English panel chair, Michelle often had to observe other English language teachers' lessons and take part in the inspection of homework assignments for performance appraisal. Her heavy workload might be one of the reasons why she did not like writing too many self-reflective entries, despite finding it useful. From her viewpoint, teachers "*should do self-reflection all the time*" but it was time-consuming to do so in a written form (I-3).

In terms of promoting word building, Michelle seemed to be fairly confident about her knowledge and ability to teach vocabulary, as she considered herself to be "*better than an average teacher*" (I-1). Nonetheless, she commented that she was "*not good enough*" (I-1). In particular, she considered her teaching of vocabulary to be at the level of "*just a pass*" because she often had to "*focus on what's written in the textbooks*" due to the limited time for teaching and lesson planning (I-2). Having said that, my dataset seemed to suggest her tendency was to conduct class activities which aimed to arouse students' interest in vocabulary learning whenever possible. For instance, Michelle reported using *Plickers*, an online assessment tool to engage students and assess their vocabulary knowledge in class because she felt that they like to be informed of their learning progress (I-3). Also, she played love songs in her lessons around the Valentine's Day to teach expressions related to the theme because she guessed "*students like learning vocabulary through songs*" (I-2). While Michelle's beliefs about vocabulary teaching can be mainly attributed to her language learning experience as well as contextual factors, such as school and departmental policies, textbooks and student factors (I-1), it seemed that different forms of teacher professional development had a relatively minor role in the construction of her beliefs. Specifically, she had no opportunity to attend any course specifically related to vocabulary teaching in her formal education because the classes she had were all skills-based. Also, she seldom read scholarly work regarding vocabulary development as she felt that they were of little practical

value (I-1).

One reason that Michelle volunteered to join the professional dialogues was, as a leader, she would like to set a good example to other panel members and show them the importance of devoting time and effort to improving teaching effectiveness (PD-7). Whereas Michelle indicated that not all teachers may be genuinely willing to exchange their ideas because of the mores of Chinese culture, she participated actively in the professional dialogues as she enjoyed sharing her ideas with others (RE-R). She said, “*We are taught to be humble and hardworking... In the Chinese society, we also have this idea: If I teach you all I know, you will beat me in the future*” (I-2). For her, however, a dialogic approach to teacher professional development was preferred because it served as an interactive means for her to hear about “*brilliant ideas*” from other teachers and identify solutions to problems they commonly face (I-2). She found her experience of dialogic interaction stimulating insofar as it enabled teachers to reflect on their own teaching (RE-R) and learn from each other (I-2).

### **6.5.1 Reconstructing and strengthening existing beliefs about vocabulary teaching**

Michelle’s case represented an experienced teacher who had gone through some form of belief development, which was stimulated by the dialogic reflection with other teachers. Nevertheless, there seemed to be little indication of change in her practice regarding vocabulary teaching over the ten-month period of research study. It remained questionable whether her changes in beliefs could be considered fundamental. In the final phase of the study, Michelle perceived no change in relation to various aspects of her beliefs about vocabulary teaching. These included her beliefs about the role of vocabulary in second or foreign language acquisition, the aims of vocabulary teaching, the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment, the design of class activities, learners’ expectations of vocabulary development in class, and different types of vocabulary learning difficulties (I-3). Also, she felt that her vocabulary teaching was still “*mostly similar*” to what she had been doing in the past (I-3) despite having become “*more reflective*” about vocabulary teaching (I-2) and having developed her beliefs relating to aspects of word knowledge, independent vocabulary learning and evaluation of lexical knowledge.

## Heightened awareness of beliefs about aspects of word knowledge

After taking part in the professional dialogues, Michelle seemed to have undergone some change in her prior conception of aspects of word knowledge. In the second interview she reported having become more aware of various aspects of word knowledge and argued that lexical instruction should not be confined to the teaching of meaning and pronunciation (I-2). Specifically, she commented on the importance of devoting more attention to the teaching of collocations because students often translated some Chinese expressions into English directly and always used different phrases inappropriately (I-2). She also suggested putting more emphasis on word form in her class because it could facilitate students' reading and writing (I-2).

Michelle's heightened awareness of aspects of word knowledge seemed to have brought about changes in both her epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word and her pedagogical beliefs about the content of vocabulary teaching. Prior to her participation in the professional dialogues, Michelle only mentioned three aspects of lexical knowledge, namely pronunciation, spelling and meaning, when asked to comment on the notion of a word. In the final interview, however, she cited five additional aspects of word knowledge, that is, word parts, association, word form, collocation and constraints on use, when she responded to the same question. Also, she emphasised in the final interview that "*every single aspect*" of word knowledge should be addressed if possible (I-3), which was different from her claim in the initial interview when she asserted that English language teachers should focus on teaching certain aspects of lexical knowledge in class.

With the change in beliefs, Michelle reported having adjusted her teaching such that students could learn vocabulary more thoroughly in class by paying attention to a wider range of aspects of word knowledge (I-3). Specifically, word form, collocation and formality were the three major aspects of lexical knowledge Michelle claimed to have addressed more often during her lessons (I-3). The analysis of recorded lessons, however, seemed to present some degree of inconsistency in what Michelle said and did. To start with, Michelle taught 104 words explicitly in the lessons recorded in Phase One, 133 words in Phase Two, and 96 words in Phase Three. Word form was taught with regard to approximately 33 per cent (N=34/104) of the words treated by Michelle in Phase One, but this dropped to about 20 per cent (N=27/133) in Phase Two and only increased slightly to 26 per cent (N=25/96) in the final

phase. While there was a sharp increase in the number of words whose collocation was taught between the first two phases, from 1 per cent in Phase One (N=1/104) to almost 15 per cent (N=19/133) in Phase Two, an unexpected decrease in the teaching of collocation was found in Phase Three, in which a negligible 1 per cent (N=1/96) of the words explicitly covered were associated with the teaching of collocation. As for the constraints on use, the percentage remained below 7 per cent across all three stages, accounting for 6 per cent in both the first and final phases, but only 3 per cent in the second phase. Despite the fluctuations in the percentages described, it was found that pronunciation and meaning were dealt with consistently across all phases.

To make better sense of the lesson data, Michelle's explanation seemed essential. Michelle commented in the interviews that she deliberately tried to "*pay attention to certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge first*" while teaching her students (I-3). Such aspects included meaning and pronunciation, for they were considered "*the basics of word knowledge*" and "*the most easily handled*" (I-2). She explained, "*We don't have time to address too many aspects of word knowledge. For meaning and pronunciation, ... you can give them the definition and the IPA symbols... These are very easy to deal with*" (I-3). Additionally, Michelle admitted that her teaching very much depended on the teaching materials (I-3). When she was asked to explain why collocation was addressed quite often in Phase Two but not in Phase Three, she said she was not aware of that until she was shown the percentages. She then explained that she just followed the textbook and that the change did not represent her deliberate intention to teach or to avoid teaching collocation (I-3). As for the teaching of word forms, Michelle emphasised its importance and pointed out that she might have addressed it less frequently in those of her lessons recorded in Phases Two and Three due to the nature of the words or time constraints (I-3).

### **Realisation of the need for independent vocabulary learning and formation of beliefs about the ways to promote it**

Whereas Michelle honestly commented that she "*didn't pay much attention*" to the promotion of independent learning of vocabulary prior to the study, she seemed to have attached more importance to it and reconstructed her beliefs about the preferred instructional materials for vocabulary teaching and the approaches to vocabulary teaching accordingly. Specifically, her change in beliefs about the approaches to vocabulary teaching can be further divided into

three types of beliefs, including those related to the need for direct vocabulary teaching, the use of vocabulary instruction strategies and the ways to promote students' own learning.

### ***Beliefs about the preferred instructional materials for vocabulary teaching***

One area of change involved the consolidation of Michelle's beliefs that authentic materials should be used to promote vocabulary teaching and learning. Whilst Michelle commented in the initial interview that newspaper articles served as the best instructional materials for vocabulary teaching, she reiterated in the final interview that teachers should use "*something real*" to promote vocabulary development. She added that this could be done by drawing students' attention to different brand names and encouraging them to guess why particular names are used and how different companies may make use of the brand names to attract consumers by the hidden meanings. Specifically, she described how the word 'triumph' can be taught by relating it to Triumph International, a well-known brand of underwear and lingerie. Because of her belief that "*language is everywhere*", Michelle felt that teachers should relate vocabulary learning to students' lives by encouraging them to ask questions such as "*Why do people use the word 'Undercover' for an underwear shop when it is used to refer to spies?*" and "*Why do people call bottles of water 'Bonaqua'?*" (I-3). Her elaborated responses regarding how authentic materials should be used to draw students' attention to their surroundings seemed to show how she had established a connection between the use of instructional materials and raising students' language awareness so that they can "*learn to learn vocabulary on their own*" (I-3).

### ***Reconstruction of beliefs about approaches to vocabulary teaching***

In terms of her beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching, Michelle seemed to have experienced a subtle change in her conception of direct vocabulary teaching. Although her focus was on the difficulties involved in not conducting direct vocabulary teaching, she commented on the value of implicit teaching in Phase Three:

*If you tell your students everything explicitly, they are in a passive role... If you deliberately try not to teach a word explicitly but keep using it many times, the students will probably know the phrases or the words eventually. For example, you don't really need to teach 'you deserve it' ... They can probably see from your*

*angry face that you are scolding them when you ask them to go to detention class because they deserve it. (I-3)*

Interestingly, Michelle believed teachers may have to teach vocabulary in an implicit way by “controlling” themselves. This seemed to indicate that teachers’ tendency to provide explicit vocabulary instruction.

Another major change in Michelle’s beliefs about the approaches to vocabulary teaching concerned the reinforcement of her belief that students should be asked to discover a new word’s meaning on their own sometimes. In Phase Three, she said: “*I have become more convinced that teachers should ask students to guess the word meaning from context*” (I-3). While Michelle explained that students should be encouraged to guess the meaning of words because of examination requirements, she highlighted in the final interview the fact that the strategy may promote independent learning and help students memorise lexical items better due to their increased engagement in vocabulary learning (I-3).

Finally, Michelle underwent a change in her beliefs about the specific ways to promote autonomous vocabulary learning. Alongside the different means of promoting autonomous vocabulary learning that she mentioned in the initial interview, she also pointed to the importance of helping students to cultivate a habit of checking the dictionary because they were often too lazy to do so (I-3). Feeling that she could serve as a role model in class, she saw no need to force the students to use the dictionary or to teach them how to use it. Instead, she preferred to demonstrate how she consulted different online dictionaries in class when introducing new lexical items from time to time.

### ***Michelle’s behavioural change regarding the approaches to vocabulary teaching***

While the discussion above clearly showed that Michelle’s beliefs about vocabulary teaching had developed in relation to the importance she attached to independent vocabulary learning, her practice seemed not to be strongly indicative of any cognitive change. The only noticeable behavioural change related to the use of online dictionaries. In one of the lessons I observed in late April, I found that Michelle made use of the Oxford Learner's Dictionary to teach words like ‘determination’, ‘inquisitive’, ‘decisive’ and ‘persist’. During the final interview, Michelle highlighted the fact that such practice was not what she had done before and that her

experience of using it made her become more convinced of its usefulness. As far as she was concerned, students should be encouraged to use proper online dictionaries to learn vocabulary rather than simply to Google a word as *“they may get a wrong definition”* (I-3). Nevertheless, there was in many respects little change in Michelle’s practices which reflected her shifts in the other categories of beliefs she reported. For example, the use of brand names to teach vocabulary was not identifiable in all her recorded lessons. Also, the lesson analysis revealed that Michelle rarely encouraged her students to discover the meaning of an unfamiliar lexical item but tended to offer them the explanation by paraphrasing and/or using associations like synonyms and antonyms. She explained: *“If students have to make guesses, we have to spend lots of time. They may say they don’t know the answer or they can’t think. It’s more challenging than listening to the teacher and writing down the definition”* (I-3). To summarise, Michelle often cited time constraints as an important determinant of her behaviour. Due to her overriding concerns about time, it seems reasonable that she should prefer the use of a dictionary in class over the use of questioning to help students discover word meaning using contextual cues. This is because the former can be considered a ‘quick-fix’ solution to the problem of students’ reliance on teachers to learn vocabulary.

### **Construction and reconstruction of beliefs about vocabulary assessment**

As with the three other teachers who joined the professional dialogues, Michelle shifted her beliefs regarding how vocabulary knowledge can be evaluated, and her change focused mainly on the format of assessment. For instance, she used to think that *“vocabulary must be tested in context”* (I-3) but changed her mind and but no longer saw the need to have contextualised test items all the time because she now focused more on the purpose of a test (I-3). Also, she learned that individualised testing can be used to *“promote self-regulated learning and lifelong learning”* though she *“wasn’t aware that vocabulary assessment can be done by students themselves”* (RE-6). To Michelle, these were *“new things”* which exerted *“lots of impacts”* on her understanding of vocabulary assessment (I-3).

While Michelle confirmed in the final interview that she had not conducted individualised testing in class, the analysis of the vocabulary assessment she had designed and/or conducted revealed some change in her behaviour. For instance, she used to write one coherent passage based on a theme to test students’ vocabulary knowledge when she produced the examination papers for general English. Nonetheless, she *“tried to write smaller paragraphs”* for the



school's recent annual examination (I-3) and divided the vocabulary assessment into four sections. Also, a note with 25 target vocabulary items was given to students for revision. Picture one of Figure 6.6 below reveals that the different questions were still grouped together according to similar themes, which provided evidence to show that Michelle seemed to have focused less on creating a specific context when designing a vocabulary assessment task but placed more emphasis on its purpose, which in this case was to provide summative assessment for the evaluation of student learning at the end of the academic year.

**Section 1 (15 marks)**  
Complete the following using the target vocabulary items in the Notes for Revision.  
Write one suitable word in each blank. Make sure that you write the correct form of the word.

I. **Local News**  
Hong Kong Arts Festival will be held from 11 July to 28 July. The exhibitions will give local artists an opportunity to (1) \_\_\_\_\_ their work.

**News in China**  
In order to appeal to Chinese tastes, Disney played down elements of Americana when designing and building the Shanghai Disneyland. "We didn't just build Disneyland in China, we built China's Disneyland," said Walt Disney Co. CEO Bob Iger, calling it a "one-of-a-kind... destination that is authentically Disney and (2) \_\_\_\_\_ Chinese."

**News in the UK**  
TV (3) \_\_\_\_\_, like Cow & Gate baby milk, have been banned for exaggerating the product's health benefits. The advertisements suggest that baby milk powder provides health benefits. The (4) \_\_\_\_\_ of the ban is to let the public know that they are unnecessary products and they are using false claims to make mothers think their babies need these milks. According to child health (5) \_\_\_\_\_, Dr. Frances Day-Stirk, breast-feeding has clear, proven health benefits to both the baby and mother.

II. **2016-17 ABC Secondary School Annual Assessment Report**  
Student name: Chan Tai Man Class: 5A Class Number: 1

Results: Chinese Language	A	English Language	A
Mathematics	A	Science	A
Computer Studies	A	Humanities	A
Music	A	Visual Art	A

**Class Teacher's comments:**  
Tai Man is an (6) \_\_\_\_\_ boy. He is always curious and asks a lot of sensible questions in class. He is also a very (7) \_\_\_\_\_ learner, who does not give up easily even if there are difficulties.  
Apart from outstanding academic results, Tai Man has also performed well in extra-curricular activities. In the Drama Show, he was (8) \_\_\_\_\_ on stage. He did not show any fear when speaking in front of a large audience. Also, he is a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ leader in the Prefect Team. He always makes clever decisions quickly, without hesitation.

III. Buying a home with a (10) \_\_\_\_\_ is probably the largest financial transaction you will enter into. Typically a bank will finance 80% of the price of the home, and you agree to pay it back – with (11) \_\_\_\_\_ – over a specific period. Stretching out payments over more years (up to 30) will generally result in lower monthly payments. The longer you take to pay off, the higher the overall purchase cost for your home will be.

IV. If you really want to reduce your (12) \_\_\_\_\_, the first thing you will need to do is create a spending plan, or (13) \_\_\_\_\_, then stick to it. This means cutting up expenses. Set your primary financial goal and stick to this plan until you have achieved it.

Try to identify and prioritise expenses. Limit your spending to the bare (14) \_\_\_\_\_: food, shelter, utilities, etc. It may be difficult to define what is a (15) \_\_\_\_\_ and what is not. But try to make a list of things you need to spend your money on and how much they cost on average each month. Once you make your list, do not buy anything that is not on it.

**English Quiz (Handy Guide P317-319)**  
Part of speech  
Score: 22 / 37 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
1) <u>Competition</u>	Compare	2) <u>Comparative</u>	3) <u>Comparatively</u>
Competition	4) <u>Compute</u>	5) <u>Competitive</u>	6) <u>Competitively</u>
7) <u>Complaint</u>	complain	x	x
8) <u>Concentration</u>	concentrate	9) <u>Concentrated</u>	x
10) <u>Concern</u>	11) <u>Concern</u>	concerned	x
12) <u>Conclusion</u>	conclude	13) <u>Conclusive</u>	14) <u>Conclusively</u>
15) <u>Confirmation</u>	confirm	x	x
16) <u>Consideration</u>	consider	17) <u>Considerate</u>	18) <u>Considerately</u>
courage	x	19) <u>Courageous</u>	20) <u>Courageously</u>
21) <u>Criticism</u>	22) <u>Criticise</u>	critical	23) <u>Critically</u>
decision	24) <u>Decide</u>	25) <u>Decisive</u>	26) <u>Decisively</u>
27) <u>Dependency</u>	depend	28) <u>Dependent</u>	29) <u>Dependently</u>
depression	30) <u>Depress</u>	31) <u>Depressed</u>	x
32) <u>Description</u>	describe	33) <u>Descriptive</u>	x
34) <u>Digestion</u>	digest	35) <u>Digestive</u>	x
36) <u>Disappearance</u>	disappear	x	x
37) <u>Doubt</u>	doubt	38) <u>Doubtful</u>	39) <u>Doubtfully</u>

Figure 6.6 Evidence of change in Michelle's practice regarding vocabulary assessment

Another observation was that Michelle conducted vocabulary quizzes which assessed students' knowledge of word form and word part in Phase Three, though she had not done so in the past (see picture two in Figure 6.6). Interestingly, those quizzes were designed by Louise, who agreed to share her work with Michelle after being invited to do so. While the use of such quizzes seemed to reflect Michelle's realisation that it is important to enhance students' vocabulary learning by drawing their attention to different aspects of word knowledge, it might also show that the dialogic reflection among teachers might have promoted the culture of sharing amongst the participating teachers.

## **Michelle's perception of changes in students' learning**

Finally, Michelle commented somewhat vaguely that some of her students learned vocabulary more effectively and some did not when she was asked to discuss their vocabulary learning in relation to her own change. In her opinion, students' changes are "*all related to the examination*", and it was likely that students' learning of lexical items could be improved if they were told that the expressions would be tested. More importantly, she added: "*I haven't changed a lot. I think changes take time*" (I-3). It is remarkable to note that Michelle's perception of changes in students' learning seemed to be in stark contrast with that of the three teachers who had also taken part in the professional dialogues. She confirmed that she had not changed her practice much despite having formulated different views regarding vocabulary teaching and learning.

### **6.5.2 Factors contributing to change and characteristics of reflection**

For Michelle, her intention to help the students was the major factor which prompted her change in beliefs and practices (I-3). She explained:

*I want to help the students. We have done some analysis before and found that our students are weakest in vocabulary when they go for the examination. We want to help them build more vocabulary, but then we don't really know how.* (I-3)

As already noted, Michelle felt that she had not changed many of her practices despite her shifts in belief. This may be related to three major characteristics of her reflection, namely, 1) the tendency to contribute to the professional dialogues by sharing her own ideas and practices; 2) the inclination to consolidate her beliefs in support of existing practices and school policies; and 3) the development of beliefs as a result of viewing them through the student and theoretical lenses.

### **Contribution of ideas and sharing of practices through dialogic reflection**

As with Louise, Michelle played an active role in the professional dialogues and shared her thoughts in all sections, including the intellectual exchanges with colleagues, the analysis of

student beliefs and the exploration of theoretical perspectives. It was found that Michelle raised questions from time to time while taking part in the professional dialogues. For instance, she used questions to elicit her colleagues' opinions in the discussion of students' views, an example of which included "*It seems that that they know a lot more about assessment than teaching. Is that the case?*" (PD-6). She also inquired about concepts and teaching ideas during the exploration of theoretical perspectives by asking questions such as "*Are motivated and unmotivated vocabulary different from active and passive vocabulary?*" (PD-1) and "*What is meant by the 4/3/2 technique?*" (PD-4). As observed, some of the questions she raised seemed to provoke deep discussion of vocabulary teaching and learning. This is illustrated in the following excerpt which presents the theoretical discussion of the size of receptive and productive vocabulary:

- Lydia: *I'm interested in the differences in receptive and productive vocabulary size. Is one particularly larger? Receptive larger? [...]*
- Michelle: *That's what I want to bring up. Do you think most teachers focus more on receptive knowledge of vocabulary? Is it true in this school?*
- Researcher: *Teachers have limited class time. They usually teach based on the textbooks and tend not to spend much time interacting with their students...*
- Michelle: *Is it just because we are not native speakers?  
Do native speakers teach productive knowledge in their classroom?*
- Researcher: *I guess it could be about our lesson objectives. In a speaking lesson, for example, teachers may create more opportunities for students to use the lexical items relevant to a certain topic.*
- Michelle: *[...] We were all L2 English learners, right? We were brought up in this learning context. When we teach, we are affected by our background. Also, English is not our mother tongue. When we teach the language, it seems possible that for some teachers, we also do not have the productive knowledge.*  
(Excerpt from PD-3 conducted on 9 January 2017)

Having said that, most of the time Michelle focused on sharing her own beliefs and practices in the dialogic interaction. Specifically, she often responded to other colleagues positively by highlighting the similar practices they had, as shown in the excerpt below:

- Louise: *Talking about the writing task, usually I will list some words and phrases we have learned on the blackboard and tell them, "You need to use at least five of them and highlight them after writing" ...*

- Michelle: *Oh yes, I also did this with my peer evaluation. I asked them to exchange their writings and then I asked them to highlight some vocabulary items in their peers' writing. If they have used a good expression, I will add a bonus. I think it's a good practice...*
- Researcher: *Are there any other activities you can think of?*
- Lydia: *For form 4, we taught sports communication. At the beginning, they learned a list of sports and I told them to prepare a presentation to recommend a new sport for our PE lessons. That somehow encouraged them to compare different sports and used the vocabulary.*
- Michelle: *Oh yes. I also asked them to write about our annual Sports Day. I think they have used some of the words they learned.*  
(Excerpt from PD-4 conducted on 10 March 2017)

In the excerpt, Michelle responded to both Louise and Lydia by indicating that she had adopted similar approaches to promote vocabulary teaching in her class. It is just one example to illustrate Michelle's tendency to show the similarity between her practices and those of the other teachers. Although it was uncertain as to why Michelle often made a responsive contribution by highlighting the practices she shared with other teachers, we may interpret it as her wish to give recognition to her colleagues' work because of her role as a leader in the English Department. Her contributions to the professional dialogues seem to provide evidence that she had a tendency to justify her existing beliefs and practices, which will be discussed further in the following section.

### **Reflection upon Michelle's own beliefs as viewed through the student and theoretical lenses**

When asked to comment on the professional dialogues, Michelle acknowledged the usefulness of exploring vocabulary teaching from multiple perspectives but found the exploration of student beliefs most useful. This was followed by the scholarly discussion, self-reflection and collegial exchanges. Thinking highly of the exploration of student voices, Michelle commented: *"Our students know what works for them... We have to understand them better. Something that you find interesting or useful may not work for your students"* (I-3). Possibly because Michelle found it important to improve her own teaching through developing an understanding of her students' beliefs (RE-R), she had devised some plans for vocabulary teaching based on the discussion of student voices. For example, she wrote about her intention to *"design some dictionary-checking pre-reading activities"* for her students

after learning about their belief regarding how vocabulary knowledge can be retained with the use of dictionary (RE-5). Also, she demonstrated how vocabulary learning can be supported with the use of online dictionaries in class after being informed of the students' need to learn vocabulary independently.

While Michelle stressed that change would not take place without self-reflection (I-3), she believed the discussion of scholarly work was more influential than the exchange of ideas among colleagues. She explained: *"I trust the literature more when compared to collegial exchanges. I'm not saying that my colleagues are wrong. Just because the scholars have spent so much effort and time on the research, I think their findings can be useful"* (I-3). In both the interviews and reflective entries, Michelle revealed how she had developed her beliefs by looking at them through a scholarly lens. For instance, she had formulated her beliefs about the use of individualised testing to encourage vocabulary learning (RE-6) and reported having become more aware of different aspects of word knowledge, suggesting that *"the part related to the theoretical literature helps"* (I-2).

Somewhat surprisingly, limited behavioural change was observed in Michelle's practice. There are at least three possible explanations for this finding. Firstly, Michelle's interpretation of scholarly work when the research project commenced was that it had little practical value (I-1). Such a perception of scholarly books and journal articles might have prevented her from implementing the suggestions made, for she considered it important to *"think of something practical"* when it came to teaching vocabulary (I-1). Secondly, enormous amount of administrative work and heavy teaching load, as indicated in Michelle's interviews, seemed to be one of the most influential factors which shaped her practice (I-3). Limited time for teaching and lesson preparation made it difficult for her to implement some changes in practice. This probably explains why the use of an online dictionary, a practice which could be incorporated in class rather easily, was one of the very few changes we can identify in Michelle's practice. Finally, Michelle might have been adhering to certain beliefs over a period of many years with her extensive teaching experience. More scaffolded discussion or time may be required to allow for reflection on, and internalisation of, new ideas. This explanation seemed to be consistent with Michelle's remark that *"it takes time to change"* (I-3).

## **The consolidation of beliefs in support of existing practices and school policies**

One final salient feature of Michelle's reflection seemed to be her tendency to justify existing practices and school policies. In the discussion regarding how many and which words to teach in the English language classroom, for example, Michelle acknowledged the importance of keeping to the school's Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS), as shown in the following excerpt:

Researcher: *I believe what the scholar would like to suggest is that a large vocabulary is required, but it doesn't mean that teachers are responsible for introducing all words students need in the English language classroom...*

Michelle: *Oh yes. That's why we have to keep to the ERS.*

Louise: *But the ERS cards do not really serve the function of learning vocabulary. We are just asking the students to write sentences to express their own ideas about what the book is about and what they have learnt from the books on their cards. It doesn't really help students learn vocabulary.*

Michelle: *But extensive reading means you have to see the word many times.*  
(Excerpt from PD-2 conducted on 9 January 2017)

Having noted that Louise seemed not to find the school's reading scheme beneficial in terms of students' vocabulary development, Michelle attempted to convince her of its value. The teachers agreed after some discussion that students could be encouraged to write the expressions they learned on their reading cards so that their vocabulary learning could be strengthened. Similarly, Michelle showed satisfaction with her own and other teachers' practices with respect to vocabulary teaching. In response to the students' beliefs about the class activities designed to foster vocabulary development, for example, she said:

*The most popular vocabulary activities are games, movies and songs. I think these match our perception of our students. It shows that we understand our students well and it's true that we are on the correct track. We are doing something good and I think our students appreciate what we are doing. (PD-4)*

Michelle's tendency to support her existing practices and school policies was also evident in her writing. To illustrate, she reflected on the importance of multiple contacts to consolidate vocabulary learning and related it to the choice of English language textbooks at the target

school. Table 6.3 provides extracts of Michelle's reflective writing which show how she reflected on the content of professional dialogues and made positive comments on either her own or the school's existing practices.

Table 6.3 Extracts from Michelle's reflective writing

Source	Discussion content of the dialogues	Michelle's comments
RE-2	<i>I think that teaching ten new words is enough for a lesson because it could be overwhelming for our students to remember too many new things at one time. In order to help students retain the new vocabulary, multiple contacts with the target words are vital.</i>	<i>Actually, one of the textbooks we are using (Reading Explorer - Theme-based Anthology) encourages this. There are three sub-units in each unit. Ten target vocabulary are taught in the first sub-unit, then they are recycled in the following two sub-units as consolidation. Students are asked to complete cloze passages using the target words.</i>
RE-3	<i>In both junior and senior forms, students have expressed that they find teachers' letting them guess the meaning and parts of the new words enhances their memory.</i>	<i>Feeling encouraged, I find that our teaching may have brought positive washback effects in students' learning. I always ask my students to guess unfamiliar target words in the reading passages.</i>
RE-4	<i>After the discussion, I've found that I have been using some vocabulary activities suggested on pp. 10-14.</i>	<i>I think I will keep on using these activities to boost students' vocabulary.</i>
RE-5	<i>It is quite encouraging to know that although our students think learning vocabulary is difficult, they still think that it is fun to learn.</i>	<i>It seems that our teachers are teaching well, and our students are making good efforts in learning.</i>

A possible reason for Michelle's tendency to justify the existing beliefs and practices in the dialogic reflection may be related to her role as one of the panel heads of the school. As one of the most important decision-makers in the English Department, Michelle might have wished to show other colleagues that the decisions made by her and the school were well-planned and sensible. Her perception of self-identity as an experienced teacher and expectations concerning the professional dialogues might also have led her to the confirmation of own beliefs. She said: "Teachers who have got many years of teaching experience, like me, may sometimes forget about what we've learned before. That's why this

*kind of professional development is important - we have to refresh our memory of what we've learned"* (I-2). Despite having experienced some form of belief development, Michelle might not have embraced the new beliefs fully due to her expectations about refreshing her memories of learning through the professional dialogues.

## **6.6 Concluding remarks**

Drawing on various sources of data collected from the three phases of the study, this chapter has provided an in-depth analysis of the four teachers who engaged in dialogic reflection, examining the individual trajectories of their cognitive and behavioural development regarding vocabulary teaching. The findings, as summarised in Table 6.4 below, have clearly demonstrated that the four teachers experienced varying degrees of shift in their thinking, although not all of such changes can be observed in the teachers' behaviour. While the findings from the four cases seem to have provided solid empirical evidence that dialogic reflection helps to facilitate professional development, a closer examination of the possible factors shaping the varying extents of change identified in the teachers' beliefs and practices offers valuable insights into the complex nature of belief change, its relationship with action, and issues concerning a dialogic approach to teacher development. These will be further discussed in the chapter that follows.



Table 6.4 Summary of the four cases

Teacher	Change in beliefs?	Change in behaviour?	Factors contributing to change and characteristics of reflection
Laura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marked change: Shifted from adopting a teacher-centred approach to teaching vocabulary to promoting autonomous vocabulary learning</li> <li>- Development of beliefs regarding various aspects of vocabulary teaching, including:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learners' expectations of vocabulary development;</li> <li>2. The need for direct vocabulary teaching and the selection of lexical items for direct teaching;</li> <li>3. The use of vocabulary instruction strategies;</li> <li>4. The design of activities for vocabulary development;</li> <li>5. The evaluation of vocabulary knowledge</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly congruent with the reported change in beliefs, except for the discovery of word meaning on the part of students and the teaching of culturally inappropriate expressions</li> <li>- Evidence of change in practice included:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adoption of different strategies to teach vocabulary in a creative manner;</li> <li>2. Incorporation of new activities for independent vocabulary learning;</li> <li>3. Implementation of new practice of vocabulary assessment focusing on students' retrieval of lexical items.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relatively limited contribution of ideas in the professional dialogues but demonstrated intellectual engagement through active listening and note-taking.</li> <li>- (Re)construction of beliefs based on:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critical reflection on different perspectives;</li> <li>2. Multiple processes of belief development;</li> <li>3. The establishment of connection between the promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning and different aspects of vocabulary teaching.</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Behavioural change triggered by thoughtful planning and deliberate efforts.</li> </ul>
Lydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marked change in multiple aspects of vocabulary teaching.</li> <li>- Salient features of belief development included:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reconstruction of beliefs about the notion of a word, the aims of vocabulary development and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge;</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly consistent with her reported change in beliefs.</li> <li>- Evidence of change in practice included:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growing emphasis on the teaching of word parts and associations across three phases;</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considered self-reflection most influential in her belief development, followed by collegial exchange, theoretical discussion and exploration of student voices.</li> <li>- Self-reflection based on the juxtaposition of existing beliefs and/or practices with new perspectives.</li> </ul>

(continued on next page)

Table 6.4 (Continued)

	<p>2. Reconstruction of beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching;  3. Construction of beliefs; about independent vocabulary learning;  4. Development of beliefs about vocabulary assessment.</p>	<p>2. Teaching aspects of word knowledge which had not been addressed prior to the study;  3. More tolerance of the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching;  4. Some evidence of promoting independent vocabulary learning  5. Change in the format of dictation</p>	<p>- Gradual progression of change in her deep-rooted beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching based on self-reflection upon the new perspectives and teaching experience.</p>
Louise	<p>- Considerable change in various beliefs</p> <p>- Major forms of belief development included:  1. Reconstruction of epistemological beliefs about the notion of a word and the role of vocabulary in second and/or foreign language acquisition;  2. Rejection of prior beliefs about the use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching;  3. Construction of beliefs about the use of creative methods to enhance lexical instruction;  4. Formation of beliefs about individualised testing and consolidation of beliefs about peer evaluation of lexical knowledge.</p>	<p>- In alignment with belief change to some degree.</p> <p>- Evidence of change in practice included:  1. Growing emphasis on the teaching of spelling in Phase Two;  2. More teaching of collocation and word associations in Phases Two and Three;  3. Teaching of concept and referents in Phase Three;  4. More use of L1 translation in Phase Two, but a remarkable decline of such use in Phase Three;  5. Design of vocabulary quizzes focusing on the evaluation of word form.</p> <p>- Examples of belief change not reflected in practice:  1. The lack of use of 'creative' strategies to teach vocabulary and individualised testing;  2. The limited use of peer evaluation of lexical knowledge.</p>	<p>- Active participation in the professional dialogues with a preference for the exploration of student beliefs and colleagues' successful practices, giving relatively brief responses to some ideas she found useful or impressive in the scholarly discussion.</p> <p>- Self-reflection with a focus on the description of ideas discussed but relatively limited reflection on existing beliefs and practices.</p> <p>- Frequent use of passive voice, phrases like '...are necessary for...' and 'it' as subject placeholder in the description of plans for future action and classroom practices in her reflective writing.</p> <p>- Strong emphasis on practical concerns (e.g. time and examination pressure) in her reflection and lesson planning.</p>

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Table 6.4 (Continued)

Michelle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some degree of belief development.</li> <li>- Evidence of belief change included:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Heightened awareness of beliefs about word knowledge aspects, resulting in her belief change regarding the notion of a word and the content of vocabulary teaching;</li> <li>2. Realisation of the need for independent vocabulary learning and the formation of beliefs about the ways to promote it;</li> <li>3. Construction and reconstruction of beliefs about vocabulary assessment.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relatively limited change in practice.</li> <li>- Claimed to have addressed word form, collocation and formality more often but the lesson analysis presented some degree of discrepancy between what was said and done.</li> <li>- Demonstrated the use of online dictionaries to promote independent vocabulary learning in Phase Three but showed little change in other practices.</li> <li>- Changed the format of vocabulary assessment tasks in the school's final examination and borrowed quizzes designed from Louise to test students' knowledge of word form and word part.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active participation in the professional dialogues –               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Raised questions from time to time;</li> <li>2. Tended to focus on the sharing of her own ideas and practices;</li> <li>3. Made responsive contribution by discussing the practices she shared with her colleagues.</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Reflection upon own beliefs as a result of the student voices and theoretical lenses.</li> <li>- Tendency to consolidate beliefs in support of existing practices and school policies.</li> </ul>
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## CHAPTER 7 MAKING SENSE OF THE FINDINGS

*Without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret;  
without the hermeneutics the phenomenon would not be seen.*  
(Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 37)

### 7.1 Introduction

Following the previous two chapters, which presented the major findings and analysis relating to the research questions, this chapter seeks to contribute to second language education by providing insights into English language teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their practices, and more importantly, advance understanding of a dialogic approach to teacher professional development. This is achieved by discussing the key findings reported and analysing their significance in connection with the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 4. Smith et al.'s remark, at the beginning of the chapter, highlights the interpretive nature of the present study. The reader should bear in mind that the discussion presented here is not entirely unbiased and that it reflects my personal beliefs, for researchers conducting qualitative studies "cannot in the final analysis avoid their own research lenses" (Yin, 2016, p. 41). Although I have made attempts to maintain the trustworthiness of the study by taking multiple sources of data and perspectives into account, I acknowledge that interpretation is not a straightforward task with a clear end-point (Tomkins, 2017). Interpretations other than those presented in this chapter should thus not be ruled out.

The discussion is in three main sections, each of which relates to a research question. Together they explore how explicit reflection on beliefs through dialogic interaction contributes to teachers' development in thinking about their vocabulary teaching and shaping their practice. Drawing upon the literature on teacher cognition as well as L2 vocabulary teaching and learning, Section 7.2 addresses the first research question by discussing the salient features of teachers' beliefs, analyses the relationship between what teachers think and do, and explores the factors shaping the teachers' beliefs and practices. Through the discussion of these I argue for the need to promote teacher professional development regarding vocabulary building and raise teachers' awareness of their beliefs and practices,

thereby enhancing teaching and learning. With reference to the second research question, which explores the evidence of teachers' cognitive and behavioural development triggered by dialogic reflection, Section 7.3 discusses the complexities of change based on the four teacher cases. It explores teacher change with reference to different types of belief, highlights the complex relationship between the development of beliefs and knowledge, and examines the impact of teachers' belief change on their practices. Finally, section 7.4 addresses the third research question and seeks to advance understanding of teacher development in terms of their beliefs and practices by exploring the factors contributing to teacher change. Such factors are discussed in relation to a model developed on the basis of the research findings (Figure 7.1), which explains the stages of belief development involved in dialogic reflection.

## **7.2 Revisiting second language vocabulary teaching and learning**

In relation to the first research question based on the data collected in the initial stage of the study and the existing literature, this section discusses the significant findings concerning teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to vocabulary teaching. It highlights the need to create opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development which promotes their reflection on the area of language teaching.

### **7.2.1 The importance of developing teachers' beliefs and practice**

The evidence gathered from Phase One of the study seems to show that the teachers value lexical development and devote much time to teaching vocabulary, which differs from Harmon et al.'s (2008) claim that highlights the limited attention it receives in class. While the teachers' beliefs about the role of vocabulary appear to resonate with the view that lexis plays a pivotal role in L2 comprehension and communication (Nation, 2013), some of their beliefs seem to differ from the scholarly views regarding how vocabulary development should be promoted. This merits attention as it is unclear whether teachers are equipped with the ability to make informed decisions regarding vocabulary teaching.

## **Aspects of word knowledge**

The teachers' stated beliefs about different aspects of word knowledge and their classroom practice appear to represent only a partial picture of what constitutes lexical knowledge in the literature. Holding the conception that vocabulary acquisition focuses on the mastery of pronunciation and meaning, the teachers appeared to have overlooked certain aspects of word knowledge, including concept and referents, association and collocation, and rarely addressed them in the English language classroom. Such findings possibly reflect their lack of a comprehensive understanding of word knowledge, explaining why language teaching fails to address vocabulary knowledge adequately (Brown, 2010), with meaning and pronunciation often serving as the principal ways of dealing with new expressions (Tang & Nesi, 2003).

In the interviews, the teachers revealed their discontent with the students' vocabulary learning in general. Some were dissatisfied with their students' use of "*basic words*" such as "*happy and worried*" to express their ideas and reluctance to use more complex vocabulary, whereas others complained about their students' inability to use words properly. The ways in which the teachers interpreted vocabulary development, that is, without addressing certain aspects of lexical knowledge, may explain their students' problems with vocabulary. Tang et al. (2016) observed that L2 learners are inclined to neglect various aspects of word knowledge in their vocabulary learning. This, together with the study findings, seems to provide support for the interactive effects of teachers' beliefs and practice on student learning. Whilst research suggests that teachers should not provide learners with a lot of information about a new word as so doing may cause confusion (Nation, 2008), language teachers should make students aware that knowing a word well involves learning multiple aspects of lexical knowledge, including its meaning, form and use. Given that vocabulary learning can be strengthened by deeper levels of mental processing (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001), teachers are recommended to help students understand the different aspects of word knowledge involved in knowing a word and focus on those that require attention to develop their language awareness in order to ensure effective mastery of vocabulary.

## **Strategies for vocabulary teaching and learning**

The teachers' undue reliance on memory and guessing strategies to facilitate vocabulary learning was also clearly evidenced in the interview data collected during the initial phase of

the study. One striking feature of the professed beliefs about the use of vocabulary instruction strategies was the lack of any mention of social, cognitive and/or metacognitive strategies to promote lexical development. The teachers' focus on certain strategies to teach vocabulary might have been hampering their students' language learning, as the use of a combination of strategies has been found to contribute to the effectiveness of such learning (Macaro, 2001). Taking into account the issue of the depth of processing, it may also be important for teachers to consider the use of strategies which involve significant active manipulation of information, such as the adoption of the Keyword Method and the use of word association, to enhance vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2000).

Another remarkable finding about the strategies used to teach vocabulary concerned the teachers' beliefs and practices relating to the adoption of L1 translation to convey word meaning. The analysis of lessons clearly demonstrates the teachers' infrequent use of L1 in vocabulary teaching. Some teachers even deliberately prohibited students from such usage in class. While this was explained in part by the school and departmental policies<sup>22</sup>, the teachers' beliefs about the importance of using the target language to teach and learn vocabulary also account for this. The teachers believed that L1 translation was undesirable because it might hinder vocabulary acquisition and limit students' opportunities to practise their English, and this seems to confirm Nation's (2013) observation that first language use is often discouraged as it is "seen as taking away opportunities for second language practice" (p. 544). Nevertheless, the academic literature on L2 vocabulary acquisition has revealed considerable merit in providing learners with first-language translation of new L2 vocabulary. Whilst L1 translation is no better or worse than other strategies, like using pictures, realia, definitions or L2 synonyms (see, e.g. Nation & Webb, 2011, pp. 271–2), its use has been recommended since it serves as a clear, simple and brief method to communicate and assess word meanings (Nation, 2008, 2013). Also, translation, according to Hummel (2010), can be viewed as an elaborative process that strengthens the learners' ability to connect their existing knowledge with the newly translated L2 word. It has been found that exposure to L1 translation is beneficial to L2 learners, at least for short-term recall of newly learned expressions. Although

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<sup>22</sup> As suggested in Section 3.4.1, the target school adopted EMI for all academic subjects, except Chinese language, Chinese history, and biblical knowledge. Although both Patrick and Victor, the senior members of the school, suggested in their interviews that the use of L1 translation can be used in the English language classroom occasionally to support vocabulary teaching, some teacher participants commented that they were only allowed to use the target language to teach vocabulary because of school and departmental policies.

the use of first language to teach vocabulary in the English language classroom may promote the idea that there is a direct equivalence between words in the two languages (Nation, 2013), and this view is not without its critics, it seems reasonable to suggest that teachers should take advantage of using L1, and most importantly, take learners' need into consideration in their vocabulary teaching, rather than banning its use in class purely on the basis of their assumptions.

### **Autonomous vocabulary learning**

One particularly notable finding from the interview data was that all teachers found it necessary to conduct direct vocabulary teaching, with none taking the initiative to address the need to promote autonomous vocabulary learning when asked to discuss issues important to lexical development. This might be related to the teachers' beliefs about students' expectations and poor attitude regarding the learning of English vocabulary. Whereas the teachers suggested ways to promote autonomous vocabulary learning when prompted to do so, they mainly highlighted the need to draw students' attention to the significance of vocabulary development, focusing on how learners can gain more exposure to the target language using English-language media, and making suggestions about the development of learning habits conducive to vocabulary learning. The proposed methods can be classified into four distinct strategy groups – determination, memory, cognitive and metacognitive – using Schmitt's (1997) framework, but the use of social strategies was not mentioned at all. This appears to conflict with their epistemological beliefs about the learning of vocabulary for communication. In addition, the use of student-centred assessments was mentioned by the native-speaking English teacher alone. Its use to promote autonomous vocabulary learning seemed not to have been considered by the local teachers at all.

As discussed in the literature review, a large amount of vocabulary is required to function in a language (Nation, 2006, 2013), and there is much to learn about a word (Nagy, 1997). Autonomous vocabulary learning, which encourages the active involvement of learners and empowers them to be more independent in what they think, learn and how they behave (Littlewood, 1996), should be promoted as direct teaching can cover only a small proportion of vocabulary and may not deal with all aspects of word knowledge. If we are to strengthen vocabulary learning, it seems crucial for teachers firstly to explore how students can be given



support to develop both the skills to learn the meanings of specific words and the strategies for learning words independently (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000).

### **7.2.2 The need to examine discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and practices**

Whereas the analysis of teachers' professed beliefs and actual practices regarding vocabulary teaching in Phase One indicated that in general these were aligned, confirming the notion that teachers' beliefs guide their behaviour (Borg, 2001; Xu, 2012; Zheng, 2009), four major areas of mismatch between the teachers' beliefs and practices were identified. As was clear in Chapter 5, the teachers' selection of lexical items for explicit treatment, use of strategies to promote the discovery of word meaning, promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning, and deployment of authentic materials to support lexical development were found to be incongruent with their reported beliefs. The discrepancy, which appeared to stem from the constraints imposed by contextual factors, such as time limitations, student-related factors and institutional policies, supports the findings of other studies (e.g. Farrell & Lim, 2005; Lee, 2009; Underwood, 2012) that suggest how contextual factors can exert a profound impact on what teachers practise, thereby giving rise to tension between what they think and what they do.

Although it is unclear whether the inconsistency has resulted in, as Williams and Burden (1997) suggest, the teachers sending confusing messages to their learners, the data seem to show that the dissonance has adversely affected the teachers' perceived self-efficacy, which is defined as a form of belief shaping how people think about their abilities to produce designated levels of performance and ultimately determining their success (Bandura, 2012). Specifically, one teacher seemed not to have high self-efficacy with respect to teaching vocabulary well because she often had to follow the textbooks closely despite her belief that the use of authentic materials is more favourable when it comes to vocabulary learning. As such, it would seem useful for teachers to reflect on the areas of misalignment between their beliefs and practices collectively, challenge the assumptions about teaching, and identify possible ways to reduce the dissonance so that their frustration regarding work and themselves may be reduced.

### **7.2.3 A call for teacher professional development regarding vocabulary building**

The research findings clearly support Borg's (2006) schematic conceptualisation, which illustrates the relationship between teachers' beliefs, learning experience and contextual factors, although they imply that, for the participating teachers in general, schooling experience and contextual factors were the most influential in shaping their beliefs.

Professional development in the form of formal teacher training, the reading of scholarly work and collegial exchanges, by contrast, appeared to have played an insignificant role in developing their belief systems concerning vocabulary building prior to their participation in the study. However, as the teachers reported limited opportunities to undertake professional development activities with a specific focus on vocabulary building, it is understandable that they would teach vocabulary based on their own learning experience, as well as allowing themselves to be influenced by such contextual factors as teaching resources, learner factors and school policies. We can also reasonably conclude that the local teachers' uncertainty about their ability to teach vocabulary may be a result of their inadequate training in the related area, though we should not take it for granted that there is a direct causality between teacher training and the development of beliefs and practice.

In summary, given the powerful impact of teaching on learning (Vescio et al., 2008), the teachers' concerns about students' vocabulary learning, and the foregoing discussion highlighting the need for teachers to re-examine their beliefs and practices, the study provides support for the view that vocabulary teaching should not be downplayed in the professional development provided for ESL teachers. Whilst it is impossible to prescribe a regimen of vocabulary teaching optimal for all teaching situations as the best practice in any situation will depend on multiple factors, such as the type of students and the lexical items targeted (Schmitt, 2000), it seems vital for the participating teachers and other practitioners alike to be equipped with the pedagogical content knowledge necessary for vocabulary development. They should also be provided with the opportunity to learn about their students' beliefs, colleagues' opinions and diverse theoretical perspectives (Brookfield, 1995) regarding vocabulary teaching and learning such that they can be engaged in critical reflection which will enable them to identify areas for improvement.

### **7.3 The complicated nature of teachers' belief development**

The purpose of the second research question was to examine how teachers' beliefs about, and practices in, vocabulary teaching developed, if at all, through explicit discussion and self-reflection. My endeavour to study the effects of a dialogic approach to professional development over time made it clear that all four teachers who participated in critical reflection, regardless of their years of teaching experience, underwent cognitive and behavioural change to varying extents. While it has been suggested that experienced teachers may not embrace change as readily as novice teachers (Mok, 1994; Tang et al., 2012), the current study found a traceable impact on the development of practising teachers who had teaching experience ranging from 4 to 14 years. Its findings provide strong support for previous observations (e.g. Alexander, 2008; Haneda et al., 2017; Harrison, 2005) that dialogue promotes cognitive development. The following parts of this section focus on the complicated nature of teacher change based on three major areas that emerged from the findings.

#### **7.3.1 The nature of change in teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs**

Consistent with earlier findings (e.g. Li, 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2014) on the belief development of prospective teachers, the study found a range of change processes in both epistemological and pedagogical beliefs of the four teachers, based on Cabaroglu and Roberts' (2000) framework. A closer examination of the data, however, seems to show some difference between the processes of development associated with the two belief categories. Another important observation was the relationship between some of the changes in epistemological and pedagogical beliefs reported by the teachers.

#### **Diverse development processes of teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs**

The teachers' changing epistemological beliefs, which are broadly associated with the *realisation*, *consolidation* and *expansion* of their existing beliefs, seem to be distinctly different from the development of their pedagogical beliefs, which involve other processes, such as *addition*, *linking up* and *disagreement*. In terms of the change in epistemological beliefs, all four teachers who were engaged in dialogic reflection reported having *consolidated* their beliefs about the importance of vocabulary development and developed their beliefs about the

notion of a word following their *realisation* of the importance of different aspects of word knowledge. Most of them also appeared to have deepened their beliefs about the role of vocabulary through their recognition of additional dimensions. Laura and Lydia, for example, acknowledged their *elaboration* of beliefs by providing details about how vocabulary learning may help create a sense of accomplishment and enhance creativity, respectively. As for Louise, her comments in the final interview made it clear that she had refined her beliefs about the role of vocabulary, adding ‘cultivating language awareness’ to comprehension and communication.

Whereas the teachers’ changes in epistemological and pedagogical beliefs seem to be similar in the sense that both types of beliefs involved *realisation*, *consolidation* and *expansion*, their development of pedagogical beliefs appears to have been more sophisticated, with a wider range of processes involved. This is exemplified by such change as the *linking up* of beliefs about autonomous vocabulary learning and other pedagogical beliefs (e.g. those related to the need for direct vocabulary teaching, the selection of lexical items for explicit treatment in class, the implementation of class activities for vocabulary enhancement, etc.), as well as the *disagreement* concerning existing beliefs about the need for direct vocabulary teaching and the use of L1 translation in teaching vocabulary. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) explains, language pedagogy needs to be “sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (p. 538). Given the particularity of language pedagogy, teachers’ pedagogical beliefs may be shaped by different factors that may change over time, including students’ perspectives, institutional policies, social expectations. It may be argued that such beliefs are more susceptible to change due to an improved understanding of the teaching context. By contrast, teachers’ development of epistemological beliefs, which are concerned with the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition, seem to be more related to learning as an “active, personal construction of knowledge” (Schommer, 1994, p. 311). Although the study provides evidence that teachers’ epistemological beliefs can be developed through dialogic reflection, such development seems to be largely based on already-established beliefs.

### **The interconnectedness of changes in teachers’ epistemological and pedagogical beliefs**

In analysing teachers’ evidence of change, the interconnectedness of cognitive development with respect to epistemological and pedagogical beliefs can be observed. The teachers’ shifts in

their beliefs about the notion of a word and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge, as well as their beliefs about the role of vocabulary and the promotion of autonomous vocabulary learning, illustrate this point clearly. Having taken part in the professional dialogue, the teachers stated explicitly in the second, final, or both interviews that they had developed heightened awareness of various aspects of lexical knowledge. When asked to explain what constitutes a word during the final interview, they all cited aspects of lexical knowledge not mentioned in the initial stage of the study. It is particularly interesting to note that they each highlighted the need to cover all the aspects of word knowledge, as proposed by Nation's (2013) model, explaining what is involved in knowing a word after their discussion on it, although most of them initially only referred to the teaching of a few aspects. The teachers' change regarding certain pedagogical beliefs and their development of epistemological beliefs about the role of vocabulary also seem to be interrelated. For example, it is evident in Laura's remark that her reconstruction of epistemological beliefs about the role of vocabulary development in creating a sense of accomplishment in language learning stems from her change in pedagogical beliefs about the need for direct vocabulary teaching and the implementation of vocabulary activities. It was after Laura had translated her change in these pedagogical beliefs into practice that she observed how students could take the role of teacher and be responsible for their own vocabulary learning. Her positive experience seems to have contributed to her belief that vocabulary development can help to foster student satisfaction.

In general, the research results here support the proposition put forward by other researchers (e.g. Brownlee, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Wong, Chan, & Lai, 2009) that epistemological beliefs, which relate to how knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge are characterised, may guide teachers' thinking about teaching. For example, Hofer and Pintrich (1997), in their extensive review of epistemological beliefs, conclude that pedagogical beliefs are associated with how knowledge is acquired. With respect to the psychological reality of the network of individuals' beliefs, they argue, "beliefs about learning, teaching and knowledge are probably intertwined" (p. 116). While it has been suggested that epistemological beliefs can be conceptualised as "the philosophical basis for teaching and learning" (Kukari, 2004, p. 107) that guide beliefs about teaching and learning, the study seems to demonstrate how they can be shaped by the teachers' pedagogical beliefs. This provides further evidence that teachers' belief development is highly complex.

### 7.3.2 The relationship between teachers' enhanced knowledge and belief change

Another area that highlights the complexity of teachers' development concerns the relationship between belief change and knowledge acquisition. It seems evident from the analysis of interviews and reflective writing that some of the teachers' beliefs were formed as a result of the acquisition of new knowledge. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lydia reported being aware of only certain aspects of word knowledge prior to engaging in the professional dialogue. Her comment that she did not expect to learn about "*so many*" aspects of lexical knowledge seems to demonstrate her rudimentary knowledge regarding the notion of a word. With the dialogic reflection on 'what constitutes a word', however, Lydia appeared

to have reconstructed her beliefs about the notion of a word and the teaching of aspects of word knowledge due to her extended understanding of lexical knowledge. Also noteworthy was Louise's and Michelle's reconstruction of their beliefs about assessing vocabulary after being introduced to Nation's (2008) idea of individualised testing, an assessment method that can be used to monitor individual learners' progress in vocabulary learning. Both teachers suggested that they were impressed by the method they had newly learned and began to see how autonomous vocabulary learning could be promoted through the design of assessment tasks.

Whilst it may not be particularly surprising to find that the learning of new ideas and knowledge contributes to teachers' belief development, the study raises intriguing questions regarding the process of teachers' cognitive development as it was found that the introduction of fresh teaching ideas did not necessarily result in the reconstruction of beliefs. To illustrate, during a professional dialogue the teachers expressed interest in learning about different memory strategies like the Peg method and the Loci Method presented in Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. Nevertheless, none of them tried to use the strategies to consolidate their vocabulary teaching in class. They seemed not to have deepened their beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching despite having learned about these strategies, as typified by the following comments: "*I can't remember what these are*" (Laura) and "*I don't really know how to use them*" (Michelle and Lydia). The reason for this is not clear but it may be related to Wilson and Berne's (1999) argument that teachers' professional development activities may teach teachers little and be of little worth when there is no follow-up support to ensure progressive gains in knowledge. Another reason may be that teacher

beliefs involve personal knowledge, which can be extremely subjective (Kagan, 1990), where context is important. Given that the education in Hong Kong is examination-oriented (Fok et al., 2006) and that it focuses on academic attainment rather than creative teaching, the teachers might have intuitively considered these strategies inappropriate to the learning culture in their educational context and attached limited importance to the consideration of their use. An implication of this is that teachers' belief change may stem from their improved understanding, but their perception of the usefulness of the new information plays an important role in the developmental process.

### **7.3.3 The incremental and dynamic nature of teachers' belief change**

Finally, the complexity of belief development is demonstrated by the incremental and dynamic nature of change reflected in the teachers' behaviour. Whilst it may be difficult to link teachers' cognitive development directly to their practice, as individuals do not always act consistently with respect to their professed beliefs (Fisher, 2014), studying teachers' belief development based on the analysis of their practices and the use of stimulated recall to seek explanation for their action may help to capture the belief changes which might otherwise not be reported.

#### **The incremental nature of change**

The cumulative nature of teachers' belief development can be explained by reference to Lydia's change in her long-held beliefs about the use of the target language to teach vocabulary and Michelle's remark. As described, Lydia was strongly against the use of L1 translation to teach vocabulary in the early stage of the study, insofar as she prohibited such use in class and found it "*disturbing*" to note that most students considered it effective. Whereas she acknowledged having held this belief firmly for years and found it impossible to change her thoughts within a short period of time, she showed greater tolerance towards her students' use of L1 to explain word meaning in Phase Two and even occasionally encouraged them to do so in Phase Three. The fact that she attributed her cognitive and behavioural change to her exploration of student voices and theoretical perspectives through dialogic reflection over time clearly suggests the incremental nature of the development of teachers' beliefs. Michelle's remark in the final interview that she had not experienced much

transformation because “*changes take time*” also seems to suggest the gradual nature of change, though we cannot be certain whether such an explanation provides the underlying reason or is merely an excuse to justify her relatively limited change in action. Overall, the findings seem to reinforce the view that teachers’ change is cumulative (Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000) and that developmental shifts in teachers’ thinking take considerable time (Ammon & Levin, 1993; Levin, 2003). We can infer from the data that for teachers’ change in beliefs, especially the deeply rooted ones, to take place, a gradual process of cognitive development that entails self-reflection and critical reflection on alternative perspectives is necessary.

### **The dynamic nature of change**

The research findings not only identify change as an incremental process, but also seem to highlight its dynamic nature. While the teachers had transformed certain changes in their beliefs into practice and acknowledged those changes in the interviews, not all the changes were always reflected in their behaviour. For instance, Laura’s beliefs about the use of creativity to enhance lexical instruction developed and she used physical action to teach vocabulary in Phase Two. Nonetheless, the strategy was only found to be used once in the lessons analysed in Phase Three, though it might have been used other times. Similarly, Louise seemed to have devoted much more effort to addressing spelling in her lessons in Phase Two after the development of her awareness that different aspects of word knowledge should be dealt with. The percentage of lexical items she explicitly taught in the lessons audiotaped in Phase Three, which involved spelling, however, was even lower than that in Phase One. Although it is possible to relate the fluctuating changes to the nature of target words (intralexical factors) or methodological constraints, they can also serve as evidence which shows that change in teacher beliefs may be temporary (Schraw & Sinatra, 2004) and situational (Chant, 2002, 2009; Levin, He, & Allen, 2013). These highlight the importance of observing teachers’ change over a fairly long period of time so that a thorough understanding of ‘actual’ developmental changes can be created (Levin, 2015).



#### **7.4 Development of teacher beliefs and practices: factors contributing to change**

This section addresses the third research question, which sought to explore the determining factors contributing to teachers' change as facilitated by dialogic reflection. Based on the synthesis and interpretation of the data presented thus far, a conceptual model is created to explain how teachers' beliefs and practices can be developed through a dialogic approach to professional development. As shown in Figure 7.1, such development can be progressed through four major stages, namely, awareness, reflexivity, cognitive change and behavioural change. The first two stages focus on the teachers' identification and examination of their own and/or alternative beliefs and/or practices through reflection. Subsequent to these is the third stage at which teachers' belief change takes place. It focuses on the internalisation of ideas, which may result in the formation of new beliefs or reconstruction of existing beliefs through different processes such as *consolidation*, *elaboration* and *rejection*. The fourth stage marked by behavioural change may follow the teachers' change in beliefs, but it should not be perceived as the endpoint of teacher professional development. This is because a newly developed practice, I argue, implies that another reflective cycle should then begin, for teachers are recommended to reflect continuously on their beliefs and practices. Besides the four stages of change, the model also highlights how teachers' professional development is shaped by personal and contextual factors. In the following sections of the chapter, such factors are considered with reference to each of the four stages.



Figure 7.1 A conceptual model of a dialogic approach to teacher development

#### **7.4.1 Stage one: Development of awareness of beliefs and/or practices**

The first developmental stage concerns teachers' awareness of their own and/or alternative beliefs and/or practices. While Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) consider teachers' awareness of a discrepancy, conflict or coherence to be one of the belief development processes, the present study seems to suggest that such realisation is the prerequisite for teacher change. Following a structured approach to promoting critical reflection, each professional dialogue provided teachers with an opportunity to engage in self-reflection upon their own beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching prompted by some guiding questions. Although it is reasonable to speculate that teachers became more aware of their own beliefs in the process as the guiding questions drew the teachers' attention to certain areas of vocabulary teaching and that not all teachers could afford the time to do reflection often, it seems that the use of multiple lenses for critical reflection is what effectively promoted change.

#### **The impact of alternative beliefs on teachers' development**

The study found that teachers' cognitive change was closely related to their growing awareness of alternative beliefs. This provides empirical evidence for Brookfield's (1995) claim that teachers' attention to distorted or incomplete aspects of their assumptions can be drawn with the help of different lenses to aid critical reflection. Whereas some teachers' changes seemed to be triggered by viewing their beliefs through a specific lens, in most cases their belief development could be attributed to the exploration of beliefs from multiple perspectives. For instance, Michelle revealed in her interview that her beliefs about the evaluation of vocabulary knowledge shifted after exploring the scholarly perspectives which highlight the importance of considering the assessment purposes of individual tasks and the benefits of promoting self-regulated learning through individualised testing in a professional dialogue. Likewise, Lydia reconstructed her beliefs about vocabulary assessment and such change seemed to be associated with the viewing of alternative beliefs through a specific lens. According to Lydia, it was the identification of students' concerns regarding the failures in dictation that shifted her beliefs and prompted her to attach more importance to considering the difficulty level of dictation exercises carefully and using interesting passages to make students' dictation more interesting.

Remarkably, the reflection on beliefs using a single lens may not always be powerful enough to prompt change in teachers' beliefs, and it appears that most of the changing beliefs identified in the study relate to the consideration of various perspectives. Laura, for example, shifted from employing a teacher-centred approach to teaching vocabulary in class to promoting autonomous vocabulary learning. She reflected on how she emphasised the need for direct vocabulary teaching, having viewed it through her autobiographical lens, and noted from the analysis of student voices that some learners expected to take an active role in vocabulary development. The exploration of theoretical literature which promotes autonomous vocabulary learning through the use of different strategies and the collegial exchange focusing on the use of peer learning to foster learner autonomy further encouraged Laura to reconstruct her beliefs and make changes to different areas. Lydia's case also demonstrated how multiple perspectives enabled her to reconstruct her beliefs about the adoption of L1 translation to teach vocabulary. As already noted in Section 7.3.3, the exploration of student voices and theoretical perspectives were the reasons Lydia cited for the change in her belief to which she had clung for years.

### **Teachers' perceived change in relation to their reflection using different lenses**

It is notable, however, that the four teachers engaged in dialogic reflection reported in their interviews rather different perceptions regarding how individual lenses had contributed to their belief development, despite acknowledging the usefulness of the four lenses proposed by Brookfield (1995). As described in the previous chapter, Laura seemed to find the exploration of theoretical literature most important in terms of her belief development as she considered scholarly work to be professional (I-3). She also found collegial exchange helpful, thinking that she might learn from other teachers some effective approaches and strategies to inform her teaching. Although students' voices stimulated Laura's change in her beliefs about autonomous vocabulary learning, she felt that such views can be highly subjective and might not necessarily be sensible. In a similar vein, Lydia valued collegial exchange and the exploration of theoretical perspectives more than the analysis of student voices, though she justified this by suggesting that students' thoughts can change constantly. Nonetheless, Lydia found self-reflection most influential in shaping her beliefs as she felt that it was crucial for her to think about the new ideas in detail before she could implement change in class with confidence. Interestingly, both Louise and Michelle cited the analysis of student voices as the most significant contributor to their belief development. While the former commented that her

self-reflection was mostly based on the exploration of students' beliefs, without which she would not have been able to make changes, the latter found it the most meaningful in terms of developing her beliefs because it led her to consider the learners' views as she had come to understand that the students know what work best for them.

In short, different lenses appeared to have contributed to the development of teachers' beliefs, albeit with varying degrees of importance being reported. One principal conclusion is that for professional development to take place, teachers should be provided with support to become well aware of not only their own beliefs but also other alternatives such that their repertoires for learning can be enriched (Liu, 2018) and their thinking can be advanced (Li, 2013). Through the identification of diverse beliefs, teachers can better access their own assumptions, which can be difficult to identify (Johns, 2002), and challenge them through critical reflection.

#### **7.4.2 Stage two: Examination of beliefs and/or practices through critical reflection**

The second stage of teacher development concerns the critical examination of beliefs and/or practices identified through dialogic interaction and self-reflection. While all four frontline teachers involved in the professional development programme demonstrated both cognitive and behavioural change, they differed in the degree to which they developed their beliefs and practices. Several factors contributing to the difference have been identified, and they can be categorised predominantly into two types, namely, the characteristics of dialogic reflection and the features of self-reflection favourable to teacher development.

##### **Features of dialogic reflection favourable to cognitive development**

Dialogic reflection, as was clear from Chapter 4, has great relevance to sociocultural theory. Drawing on the empirical data gathered and the related literature, this section discusses teachers' change with reference to their learning as a social process in the zone of proximal development, the construction of meaning through intermental and intramental functioning, and the use of language in the reflective process.

### ***Teachers' learning as a social process in the zone of proximal development***

Closely related to the teachers' cognitive development as a social process is the transactional nature of learning (Bruner, 1983, 1985) which focuses on how the zone of proximal development is created to develop mental abilities through scaffolded expert-novice interaction (Markee, 2015). Although it has often been assumed that the assistance of experts is required for the cognitive development of the novices (Wells, 1999), the findings seem to suggest the possibility of constructing meaning jointly through dialogue amongst peers without the presence of experts. Observably, the teachers who participated in the professional dialogue discussed issues related to vocabulary teaching and interacted with each other to develop new understandings. The first excerpt of professional dialogue presented in section 6.3.2 (page 184), for example, clearly illustrates how teachers identified the need to enhance students' independent vocabulary learning by helping them to develop their dictionary skills and introducing to them useful educational resources. The second excerpt presented in section 6.4.2 (page 199) further suggests how the teachers arrived at the conclusion through dialogic reflection that creativity is important when it comes to vocabulary teaching. From the examples, we can see that teachers' questioning and sharing of ideas seem to be two major elements contributing to the development of ideas. None of the teachers seems to have acted as an 'expert' and played a dominant role in the discussion. Whilst I should acknowledge that the teachers did turn to me for the explanation of students' voices and theoretical ideas at times, possibly because of my role as a researcher, I mostly probed the discussion by using questions to guide it and shared my understanding as part of the group rather than trying to impart knowledge in an authoritative manner. In general, therefore, it seems that dialogic reflection has the potential to enhance teachers' cognitive development even without the assistance of an expert teacher.

### ***The construction of meaning through intermental and intramental functioning***

From the sociocultural perspective, cognitive development is achieved by a two-step approach to learning, which involves the social (intermental) and the intrapsychological (intramental) functioning (Spouse, 2001). It suggests that learning occurs in the first instance through interaction with others, followed by the internalisation of new ideas or knowledge (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Whilst a number of researchers (e.g. Haneda et al., 2017; Harrison, 2005) found that dialogic interaction facilitates teachers' change, the study advances the

understanding of teacher development by suggesting that the active participation in dialogic reflection does not guarantee a greater degree of change, rather how individuals internalise the ideas explored seems to play a more important role in teacher change. As illustrated in the previous chapter, both Laura and Lydia seemed to be relatively reluctant to express their ideas in the professional dialogue, but they clearly demonstrated a greater degree of change in their beliefs and practice. In section 7.1.2, for example, we can see that Laura experienced change in both her beliefs and practice regarding vocabulary assessment as a result of Louise's sharing of teaching strategies although she neither asked questions nor commented on the idea introduced but merely served as an attentive listener during the discussion. Interestingly, Louise commented on several ideas she found impressive (e.g. individualised testing and mnemonic strategies), albeit briefly, in the professional dialogue but demonstrated no evidence of change in her lessons that were analysed.

Overall, these findings support Alexander's (2008) claim that dialogue has the power to engage individuals, stimulate and extend their thinking, and facilitate their learning. The articulation of beliefs in dialogic reflection does not necessarily result in change in beliefs and practice if individuals fail to internalise the ideas discussed. Instead, the participation in dialogic reflection as observers may be powerful enough to support development of their beliefs and practice as long as they are critically conscious of their own thinking (Johns, 2002) and are engaged in reflection on the new knowledge or ideas explored.

### **Characteristics of self-reflection contributing to teacher development**

Given the significant role of individual and private internalisation of new ideas in teacher development, it is important to explore the characteristics of teachers' self-reflection which may effect change. In the study, the teachers' reflective writing served as an effective tool to examine how teachers turned the ideas discussed into their own through individual activities. The ways in which they reflected on an idea, in terms of content and language, were found to bear a close relationship with their belief change (stage three) and behavioural change (stage four).

Through interpretive analysis of the teachers' reflective content, different categories of the process of reflection have been identified in their writing and summarised in Table 7.1. While I limit myself to the identification of the components of teacher reflection based on the

participants' reflective entries and make no attempt to demonstrate the dynamic relationship between the categories, three important remarks should be made.



Table 7.1 Summary of teachers' self-reflection processes

Categories	Definitions	Examples
Recall / Description	The teacher recalls and/or describes an idea that draws his/her attention.	<i>More than one-fifth of the students agreed that teachers could introduce new vocabulary without explaining its meaning and usage. (Lydia-RE-2)</i> <i>Some students think that dictation can help them remember new words better. (Michelle-RE-3)</i>
Expression of feelings	The teacher focuses on his/her emotions and describes how he/she feels about an idea.	<i>I'm surprised to see around half of our students do want to have autonomy to choose the vocab items they want to learn. (Laura-RE-4)</i> <i>It is pleasing to know that many students feel [find] vocabulary learning fun. (Louise-RE-5)</i> <i>The most disturbing finding was the students' attitude towards the use of L1 translations. (Lydia-RE-3)</i>
Interpretation/ inference	The teacher seeks to make sense of an idea based on his/her interpretation or by making inference.	<i>Perhaps the vocab in our textbooks might have bored them or they don't find the vocab they have learnt useful in their daily communication. (Laura-RE-2)</i> <i>I think this is possibly because students find it easier to remember things by dividing them into smaller units. (Michelle-RE-3)</i>
Connection	The teacher reflects on an idea by relating it to his/her teaching and/or learning experience.	<i>I did try to include extra learning materials, but time constraints and the exam-oriented system often let students down. (Laura-RE-2)</i> <i>Reflecting on my own lessons, I tend to spend very little time introducing prefixes and suffixes to students. (Lydia-RE-1)</i>
Evaluation	The teacher expresses his/her judgment on an idea by analysing its pros and/or cons, feasibility, or suggesting what should/should not be done.	<i>I do see students' wish to learn something beyond their textbooks and readers... But it's easier said than done when it comes to getting rid of commercial textbooks. (Laura-RE-2)</i> <i>Mnemonic devices seem to be useful in lesson, but they require teachers' creativity. (Louise-RE-3)</i>
Plan for action	The teacher plans for future actions and/or proposes what he/she will do next.	<i>I think I'll propose scrapping some target but infrequently used vocab items (e.g. attractions in Macau/ New Zealand) from our Scheme of Work in our form meeting next year. (Laura-RE-2)</i> <i>I will try to explain the meaning of the different parts to students to see if the knowledge helps students retain the vocabulary. (Lydia-RE-1)</i>

Firstly, the data suggest that together the components contribute to quality reflection, which may result in behavioural change. Laura's reflective writing on the approaches to vocabulary teaching, for example, captures how the internalisation of her ideas provided the basis for her behavioural change. In her reflective entries, she *recalled* learning from the analysis of students' beliefs that a considerable proportion of learners would like to be given autonomy to choose the lexical items teachers explicitly teach in class. She wrote about *feeling* surprised because of the students' desire and *interpreted* it as a result of their negative attitude towards learning vocabulary based on the commercial textbooks. This was followed by her *evaluation* that the students' views are reasonable, though not using textbooks to teach is difficult. By *connecting* the students' voices with her previous teaching experience, she was able to identify the factors that led to the learners' disappointment and *formulate plans* to improve the situation. While Schön (1983) highlights the role of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action in teaching, the study seems to show that reflection-for-action is also highly relevant to teacher development.

Secondly, it appears that teachers are more likely to translate their cognitive change into practice if they explicitly describe their action plan in their reflective writing rather than merely evaluating an idea. Clearly, Laura and Lydia often wrote about their plan of action. Some examples extracted from their reflective entries include: "*I'll try some strategies in my classrooms*" (Laura-RE-5); "*I will also vary the format of my vocab quizzes/ tests*" (Laura-RE-6); "*I will try to break down some of the target vocabulary when introducing them*" (Lydia-RE-1); and "*I will try to adjust the level of difficulty of dictations and see if I can make it fun by choosing witty passages*" (Lydia-RE-5). In contrast, Louise and Michelle's reflection seemed to focus on the evaluation of ideas rather than the formulation of concrete plans for improvement. This can be seen in the two teachers' comments, for example, "*Mnemonic devices seem to be useful in lesson*" (Louise-RE-3) and "*I have learnt from the discussion session that individualised testing could be used to encourage vocabulary learning. I think it can also promote self-regulated learning and lifelong learning in our learners*" (Michelle-RE-6). The fact that Laura and Lydia experienced a greater degree of change in practice seems to suggest the relationship between planning for action through writing and teachers' behavioural change.

Finally, difference in language use, which may plausibly reveal the teachers' varying degrees of engagement with self-reflection that shaped their belief development, can be observed.

Possibly because Louise's focus was on the description and evaluation of ideas, her use of the first-person voice in reflective writing was relatively uncommon when compared to that of other teachers. As analysed in section 6.4.2, she frequently used the passive voice, phrases, and 'it' as subject placeholder to describe how vocabulary development can be fostered. This may suggest that she did not see a strong need to implement change in her own practice and could explain why only limited changes in the beliefs she reported were turned into practice. Although the infrequent use of first person voice may serve as evidence of a teacher's limited engagement in self-reflection, it also seems reasonable for us to conclude that it may indicate a teacher's weak personal involvement with the exploration of ideas, for language is perceived as a psychological tool that mediates thinking (Mann & Walsh, 2017).

### **7.4.3 Stage three: Belief change – a process of construction and reconstruction**

Belief change, which can be categorised into the formation of new beliefs and the reconstruction of existing beliefs, takes place after the teachers' identification and examination of their own and/or alternative beliefs and/or practices. As already noted in section 7.3.3, belief development is a complicated process. Given the incremental nature of belief change shown in the analysis, it seems reasonable to suggest that time is one of the important factors which determine teachers' readiness for change. Whilst the study confirms the notion that 'teacher change takes time', which has been commonly highlighted by different researchers (e.g., Abadiano & Turner, 2002; Liu, 2018; Smith, 2016), it also reveals how teachers may resume their previous practice, possibly because their desire to translate their belief change into action may diminish over time, when such change has not been fully internalised. The finding has thus raised the question of how 'actual' belief change should be defined and by what means it can be achieved.

As shown in data analysis, some belief changes were consistently reflected in the teachers' behaviour, which we may take to mean that they were relatively developed as certain changes appeared to be provisional or were not observed at all in the teachers' practice. An example of belief changes that seem to be rather fully developed concerned Laura's perception of autonomous vocabulary learning. From initially thinking highly of the need for direct vocabulary teaching to satisfy learners' desire to take more control of their vocabulary learning, Laura developed her beliefs about the importance of autonomous vocabulary learning

and established its connection with various other beliefs about vocabulary teaching, including those related to the selection of lexical items to be explicitly taught, the strategies for vocabulary instruction, activities for vocabulary development in class and evaluation of vocabulary knowledge. It is particularly remarkable that evidence of change can be observed in all of the beliefs mentioned. Although we note in the previous chapter Laura's yearning for improvement and determination to implement change in her practice in order to foster students' better learning, an implication of this is the possibility that the establishment of a link between different beliefs and a clear goal (i.e. to promote autonomous vocabulary learning in Laura's case), may facilitate the internalisation of ideas and make a stronger impact on the development of beliefs and even practice.

Also revealed in the analysis of data was the incremental nature of cognitive change (Ambrose, 2004), which may suggest a more thorough process of internalisation and thus belief change at a more fundamental level. In the initial stage of the study, most teachers were sceptical about the use of L1 translation in teaching vocabulary. Both Louise and Lydia reported having reconstructed their beliefs after their dialogic reflection and demonstrated corresponding behavioural change in Phase Two, but they acted rather differently in the final phase. Specifically, Louise seemed to have resumed her original practice and avoided the use of L1 in class, whereas Lydia made further change and even invited her students to explain word meaning using their mother tongue at times. A possible explanation is that the process of internalisation Lydia underwent seemed to be more thorough, as reflected in her reflective writing. Not only did she *express her feeling* that it was “*disturbing*” to learn about students' positive attitude towards the use of L1 translations in vocabulary learning and *evaluate* the students' views, but she also *planned* for action. It was clear that Lydia was concerned about the idea of using L1 to explain word meaning, as she mentioned in both her second and final interviews that she had become more tolerant of it. Due to her constant reflection, her belief and practice regarding the use of first language in the English language classroom gradually changed. In contrast, Louise only wrote about finding it “*surprising to know the effective of L1 translation*” and implemented change in Phase Two. Although she attributed this short-term change to school policies, we may interpret it as an outcome of her rather superficial reflection upon the idea. As Liu and Fisher (2006) conclude from their study, teachers' conceptual development is largely dependent on effective reflection. My findings seem to suggest two characteristics of self-reflection: the establishment of a link between different beliefs and a clear goal, as well as deep thinking, which involves multiple processes of reflection, such as

expression of feelings, evaluation and planning for action. With effective reflection that follows dialogic interaction, teachers are more likely to fully internalise the ideas discussed and be more prepared to embrace change in action.

#### **7.4.4 Stage four: Behavioural change – evidence of internalisation**

The final stage of a dialogic approach to teacher development relates to change in behaviour, which can be regarded as evidence of teachers' internalisation. If we accept that teachers' judgments and actions are guided by their beliefs (e.g., Borg, 2001; Chant, 2002, 2009; Xu, 2012), then we may conclude from the analysis of our participants' belief change that the evidence of change identified in their practice was predictable. Nevertheless, it was found that not all changes in beliefs were translated into practice. Whereas this result, as discussed in the previous section, may be explained by the fact that some of newly-developed beliefs have not been fully internalised, it may also be related to other personal and contextual factors.

The teachers' perception of their need to change seemed to be a major personal factor in bringing about their behavioural change. As noted in the previous chapter, Laura repeatedly reported planning for action and implementing change in class after participating in the professional dialogues, and the analysis of data collected provides solid support for the shifts in her beliefs and practices. Her determination to improve teaching by initiating change can be clearly seen in the comments which highlighted her consciousness of the need to plan her vocabulary teaching (e.g. "*I consciously added lesson preparation for the students*") and deliberate intention to implement change in class (e.g. "*I did deliberately include more strategies to encourage my students to learn vocabulary by themselves*"). In comparison, Louise and Michelle seemed not to have demonstrated a strong urge to make changes. Whereas in her interviews and reflective entries Louise frequently addressed the need to take practical concerns into consideration when implementing change, Michelle displayed a tendency to support the existing school policies and her usual practice. Given that both teachers highlighted the usefulness of certain ideas they had recently learned in the professional dialogues and demonstrated belief changes, but they were not found to have translated such changes into practice, and it is possible to speculate that the teachers' lack of strong motivation to implement certain practices indicated their resistance to behavioural change.

Contextual factors were also found to be closely related to the teachers' behavioural change. On the one hand, factors such as time constraints and examination pressure were cited to explain why certain belief changes were not reflected in practice, corroborating the idea that such factors may create a tension between what teachers think and do (Farrell & Lim, 2005; Lee, 2009; Underwood, 2012). Louise, for example, explained how such factors as institutional policies, insufficient time for lesson preparation and examination pressure had prevented her from implementing change in practice, resulting in her limited use of L1 translation, the lack of deployment of mnemonic strategies and infrequent use of group work in class despite her belief change. On the other hand, learner factors were found to be positive when it came to shaping teachers' change in some cases. An illustration was the consolidation of Lydia's changing beliefs concerning how word learning can be made interesting by addressing various aspects of word knowledge, based on the students' better engagement that she observed in class. With her change in lexical instruction, Lydia found that her students became more active in answering vocabulary-related questions. Judging from Lydia's comment that she considered vocabulary teaching more meaningful because of her transformation and the consistent change reflected in her practice, we can reasonably conclude that students' feedback is a determining factor in shaping teachers' behavioural change.

## **7.5 Concluding remarks**

The chapter has revealed the need to promote teacher professional development regarding vocabulary teaching and raise teachers' awareness of their beliefs and practices. It has also highlighted the complicated nature of cognitive and behavioural change, and the factors contributing to teacher development. Based on the discussion of the three research questions, it has addressed the overarching question of the study, which set out to explore how explicit reflection on beliefs through dialogic interaction contributes to teachers' development in thinking about their vocabulary teaching and shaping their practice.

While the study provides strong support for the idea that a dialogic approach to teacher professional development helps facilitate change, it is important to address the complexity involved in the process. For teachers to initiate change in practice, which may improve teaching and learning, the identification of their own and alternative beliefs and/or practices through dialogic interaction, followed by the thorough internalisation of new ideas prompting

individuals to engage in critical reflection that results in belief change, is critical. Specifically, the significant role of both personal and contextual factors in shaping teachers' thinking and behaviour during the four stages of teacher development, as highlighted in the model presented in Figure 7.1 above, deserves special attention. Based on the foregoing discussion, we note that factors such as teachers' participation in dialogic interaction, characteristics of reflection, perceived need to change, institutional policies and time constraints seem to have an impact on teacher change. Given that individuals' development is built on intermental and intramental functioning (Spouse, 2001), it is understandable that personal factors, examples of which include personality and determination to change, together with contextual factors, govern teachers' development of beliefs and practice. Remarkably, all human actions, from a sociocultural perspective, are social in essence (Scribner, 1990). This reveals the importance of taking the social and cultural context into consideration when thinking about how teacher professional development can be better supported.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUDING THE THESIS**

*Through searching for my own questions and listening to my own responses,  
I had struggled, not for the approval of an external voice of authority,  
but for that of the inner voice, the one to which I could listen  
not just for a few months, but for a lifetime.  
(Oberg & Underwood, 1992, p. 169)*

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The beliefs that teachers hold, including the epistemological, pedagogical, and self-efficacy beliefs, contribute to a system of beliefs and serve as filters for interpreting their experiences, frames for tackling problems they encounter, and guides for their behaviour (Fives & Buehl, 2012). To better understand teacher change and respond to the call for more investigation into the beliefs about specific curricular aspects of language teaching (Borg, 2003), I conducted the present three-phase study, adopting a predominately qualitative methodology and a case study approach. Its focus was on exploring English language teachers' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, as well as how these can be developed through a dialogic approach that emphasises interaction and self-reflection. This chapter concludes the current study by presenting a summary of the findings and discusses its contribution in terms of theory and methodology. It ends with an epilogue, after discussing the study's implications for practice, its limitations and recommendations for further research.

#### **8.2 Theoretical contribution**

The present research has been the first study to investigate the development of beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching through a dialogic approach that emphasises interaction and self-reflection. Its findings enable us to arrive at a better understanding of teacher cognition with respect to the nature of language teacher beliefs, the complexity of belief development, as well as the process of such development within sociocultural theory.

##### **8.2.1 Extended conceptualisation of epistemological and pedagogical beliefs**

A key theoretical contribution of the study is that it adds to the existing literature on language



teacher cognition by focusing on vocabulary teaching, a curricular aspect which has received relatively limited attention. Despite the proliferation of research into language teacher cognition, most prior studies concern the general processes such as knowledge growth during teacher education or planning and decision-making, and those addressing specific curricular areas mostly pertain to grammar and literacy instruction (Borg, 2013). The present study, with an emphasis on vocabulary teaching, extends the conceptualisation of epistemological beliefs put forth by Schommer (1994) by relating it to a specific curricular focus. I argue that such beliefs, commonly associated with the nature of knowledge and its acquisition, can be applied to the study of vocabulary teaching and be broadly categorised as beliefs about the importance of vocabulary development, the role of vocabulary in language acquisition and the notion of a word. This classification, together with the analysis of teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the content, approaches, aims and resources regarding vocabulary teaching, helps us to re-examine the association between the two principal types of beliefs.

### **8.2.2 Insights into the nature of beliefs and belief development**

Another key theoretical contribution of the study concerns the nature of beliefs and belief development. In examining the teacher participants' beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching, as well as how they have developed, the study has confirmed that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing a central role in mediating the extent to which teachers implement practices consistent with their beliefs. It has also provided further evidence that change in teachers' beliefs and practices is highly complex. As the findings show, such change can be temporary, situational, cumulative and dynamic. Given that teacher development is not unidirectional, it seems reasonable to suggest that a considerable amount of time is required for 'actual' developmental shifts in teachers' thinking and behaviour to take place.

Perhaps more importantly, the present study extends our understanding of teachers' belief development in several ways. Firstly, the findings seem to demonstrate a difference in the developmental processes associated with the change in teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs triggered by dialogic reflection. Specifically, it was found that the teachers' change in epistemological beliefs, which can be generally related to three processes, namely, *realisation*, *consolidation* and *expansion*, were largely built on their existing beliefs. Interestingly, other change processes, such as *addition* and *disagreement*, were identified in

the teachers' development of pedagogical beliefs. This possibly suggests that teachers' beliefs about the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition are comparatively stable when compared to those about pedagogies. Secondly, the study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the interconnectedness of teachers' development in terms of epistemological and pedagogical beliefs. While the influence of epistemological beliefs in teaching is often acknowledged, the study found that teachers' pedagogical belief development may also exert an impact on their epistemological beliefs. If teachers can be supported to develop their metacognitive awareness of their beliefs and practices, they may become reflective practitioners who are better able to develop their beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition through thinking critically about their pedagogical beliefs enacted in practice. Thirdly, an interesting finding was that although the teachers' enhanced knowledge seemed to have contributed to their belief development, the introduction of fresh teaching idea does not necessarily guarantee change in beliefs. Based on these findings, we can infer that teachers' belief development is highly complex, for different kinds of beliefs may develop or change differently.

### **8.2.3 Construction of a model for teacher professional growth and development of SCT**

Finally, one of the most significant theoretical contributions of the study relates to its originality in the use of a dialogic approach which focuses explicitly on reflection upon beliefs with the purpose of developing in-service language teachers' thinking and practice. Based on the findings of the study, a model (page 232) conceptualising a dialogic approach to teacher professional growth has been developed. In revealing the four distinct stages involved in teacher development, it acknowledges the key roles that teachers' identification and examination of their own and alternative beliefs or practices play in the process of belief construction and reconstruction, recognising their potential to enhance teachers' ability to make informed pedagogical decisions and fostering the development of readiness for behavioural change. It also highlights the complexity of teacher development, taking its relationship with personal and contextual factors into account.

Besides the construction of a conceptual model of teacher professional growth, the value of the study lies in its thorough exploration of teachers' developmental processes, making it possible to elucidate how characteristics of reflection may be associated with teacher change and shed new light on sociocultural theory. One important finding to emerge from this study

is that the teachers seemed to be able to construct knowledge in a collaborative manner through questioning and exchange of ideas, though some of them attempted to seek my advice, probably because they perceived me as a more knowledgeable other. This suggests that it is possible for teachers' cognitive development to take place without scaffolded expert-novice interaction. Also important to note is the fact that while the sociocultural theory explains how learning occurs through interaction with others and the internalisation of new ideas or knowledge, the present study has shown that active participation in dialogic interaction does not necessarily lead to a greater degree of cognitive change. As reported earlier, individuals' participation in professional dialogue as observers may be powerful enough to support their development of beliefs and practices if they are critically conscious of their own thinking and are involved in reflection upon the knowledge or ideas explored. This seems to suggest that intramental functioning plays an indispensable role in shaping teacher change. In terms of teachers' development, the study examined several characteristics of self-reflection that may effect change. The various reflective processes identified in the participants' written reflection (page 239) provide a springboard for investigating teachers' cognitive development. While it has been shown that together the processes contribute to quality reflection which may facilitate behavioural change, the findings also seem to suggest the greater likelihood of having cognitive change transformed into action when teachers engage in reflection-for-action, formulating concrete plans rather than merely evaluating an idea and demonstrate strong personal involvement in their reflective process. In my view the present research is significant, for its findings substantially widen our knowledge of teacher cognition and professional development.

### **8.3 Methodological contribution**

Adopting a case study research strategy to examine teacher beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their development, the present study has drawn on multiple sources of data such that rich and thick descriptions of the under-explored area can be obtained. Unlike some other researchers (e.g. Busch, 2010; Peacock, 2001; Urmston, 2003; Wong, 2010) who have employed a cognitivist approach to study teacher cognition by means of quantitative analysis, this research investigated beliefs based on in-depth interviews, teachers' practices and reflective writing. Furthermore, Levin's (2015) review regarding the development of teacher beliefs emphasises the need for more research that follows teachers for extended periods of

time to study the connections between the development of metacognition in teachers and their beliefs, determining whether certain beliefs are more susceptible to change than others. This present study with its longitudinal design constitutes an important response to this call as it contributes to the understanding of teacher change and captures its complexity by drawing on the data collected from three different phases.

A unique aspect of the present study is its investigation into the development of teachers' beliefs and practice through a dialogic approach with a specific focus on vocabulary teaching. This has generated original insights into how dialogic interaction can be used as a tool to facilitate and understand teacher change in beliefs and practice. The questionnaire (Appendix N) I designed to collect students' views to facilitate teachers' discussion as well as the analytical framework I devised to analyse teachers' practice (Appendix G) with reference to Nation's (2013) work and Schmitt's (1997) taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies has laid the groundwork for future research into the teaching and learning of vocabulary. Further, while I have limited myself to examining the components of teacher reflection based on the participants' reflective entries for the purposes of the study, the different processes of self-reflection identified (Table 7.1) could be used to cast further light on teachers' reflection by constructing a dynamic model of the relationships between the categories.

## **8.4 Implications for practice**

The study reported herein offers valuable insights into L2 education and teacher professional development. Its findings have far-reaching implications for practice and may be particularly useful to English language teachers, teacher educators, educational institutions, policy-makers and textbook writers.

### **8.4.1 Implications for second language education**

By focusing on English language teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, and the ways in which those beliefs are formed, as well as on the relationship between such beliefs and practice, the study has drawn several important implications for L2 education. As already noted, the findings reveal the participating teachers' focus on certain aspects of word knowledge and strategies to teach vocabulary, as well as their dissatisfaction with the students' vocabulary learning. This seems to show the interactive

effects of teachers' beliefs and practice on student learning, as well as providing support for the view that the importance of vocabulary development should not be downplayed in a headlong rush to adopt skills-based approaches to language teaching. Teachers and learners alike should be made aware of various aspects of word knowledge (Nation, 2013) and a variety of learning strategies (see, e.g. Cohen, Oxford & Chi, 2002; Schmitt, 1997) conducive to vocabulary enhancement.

In addition, the study's results reveal that most teachers relied on their textbooks to teach vocabulary because of their heavy workload and thus the limited time for lesson preparation, but such teaching materials are not without their disadvantages. Given the profound impacts of commercial textbooks on teachers' beliefs and practice, it is recommended that materials writers consider the inclusion of more activities to promote the development of strategies for autonomous vocabulary learning and adopt a broader view of vocabulary knowledge. While it appears inevitable that certain aspects of word knowledge receive more attention, as form and meaning play a fundamental role in word learning, all aspects of lexical knowledge should be addressed in the materials. It may also be important for policy-makers to explain clearly in the English language education curriculum documents the role and function of vocabulary learning, as well as drawing up practical guidelines for vocabulary development to assist teachers in formulating plans for teaching and promoting the learning of words.

Finally, the study found areas of dissonance between teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their actual classroom practice, which had reportedly lowered the teaching practitioners' self-efficacy concerning their ability to teach vocabulary effectively. Conflicts between students' beliefs and teachers' practices regarding vocabulary teaching were also identified in the course of dialogic interaction that focused on the exploration of students' voices<sup>23</sup>. As such, the results of the study can be used to stimulate teacher reflection and negotiation between different parties, resulting, it is hoped, in their enhanced confidence in work, more student-centred approaches to education as well as improvements in teaching and learning.

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<sup>23</sup> One prominent example was that over half of the students (N=313/572) who completed the questionnaire believed that there was no need for English language teachers to avoid the use of L1 translation in the explanation of word meaning in class, although most teachers found it important to do so. Also, almost 85 per cent of the respondents considered it important for their teachers to always encourage the guessing of meaning of an unknown word prior to giving explicitly explanation, although the analysis of lessons found that the teachers rarely did so in class.

#### **8.4.2 Implications for teacher development**

With its focus being the use of a dialogic approach to developing teachers' beliefs and practices, the study also has considerable implications for professional growth. The first implication refers to the importance of providing teachers with the opportunity to participate in professional development relevant to their needs. In the interviews, the teachers reported limited chances and time to explore vocabulary teaching through professional development in the form of formal teacher training, the reading of scholarly books and journal articles, and academic exchanges with colleagues. Nevertheless, they were able to recognise their inadequacies in terms of teaching vocabulary, develop their beliefs and modify their practice through the engagement in dialogic reflection. Regardless of their number of years of teaching experience, teachers need to be afforded continuing support to identify areas for further improvement and to learn to teach in a way that enables them to make informed decisions in order to benefit student learning. The acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge in both their initial teacher education and ongoing teacher training plays an indispensable role in promoting professional growth. It also seems essential for teachers to engage actively in critical reflection to ensure effective teaching and learning.

The second implication pertains to the ways in which professional development can be fostered. The use of dialogic reflection, in this study, seemed to work well when it came to empowering teachers to develop both their beliefs and practices. As has been suggested, teachers' awareness of their own and alternative beliefs and/or practices, followed by their critical examination of new ideas, are the principal contributors to cognitive and behavioural change. Noticeably, traditional formats of professional development, such as seminars, one-off workshops and event-based training courses, are often criticised for their heavy emphasis on content, which results in decontextualized and contrived learning that fails to enhance teaching effectiveness (see, e.g. Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Weiss & Pasley, 2006; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Educational institutions and teacher trainers are encouraged to design professional development programmes which afford opportunities for personalised and active learning through collaborative discussion. It is clearly shown in the present study that teachers benefitted from the professional development programme which incorporated self-reflection, analysis of students' beliefs, exploration of colleagues' opinions and examination of theoretical perspectives, albeit with varying degrees of importance being attached to these components. Professional development activities should engage teachers in dialogic

reflection that looks at educational issues through multiple lenses, thereby helping teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and practices. Follow-up activities, such as reflective writing or evaluation of teaching outcomes, are also needed to promote effective learning.

### **8.5 Limitations of the study**

The study presented herein proves the value of qualitative methods when it comes to studying the complex nature of teachers' beliefs and contributes to scholarly understanding of English language teachers' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary development, the ways in which they are constructed and reconstructed based on explicit reflection, as well as their relationship with practice. Having said that, the possibility should be considered that several limitations might have influenced the results obtained and the implications of the study:

1. **Sampling issues.** Given that the data of the study were collected from a small number of English teachers at a secondary school in Hong Kong, the findings may not be directly relevant to the teaching of vocabulary in primary and tertiary education or in other contexts. Also, all of the teacher participants were invited to join the research project on a voluntary basis. This constitutes a potential limitation in sampling as those who were interested in the teacher professional development programme were likely to be more motivated to improve their practice with respect to vocabulary teaching and be more prepared to embrace change than those who did not volunteer to participate. Finally, the teachers who joined the professional dialogues were all female, and it is thus possible that gender differences might have skewed the findings.
2. **Scope of the study and focus of the thesis.** The study focused mainly on how teachers' beliefs and practices developed through a dialogic approach. Whilst attempts were made to explore the change in teachers' perceptions of students' learning, it remains unclear whether the teachers' change had any impact on the students' actual vocabulary learning, as this was beyond the scope of the investigation. In addition, lack of space does not permit me to examine all the

possible factors shaping the teachers' dialogic reflection and change. I chose to report the teachers' contributions to the professional dialogues and the characteristics of their reflection in detail, as these provided the most interesting indications of professional development. This, however, by no means implies that other factors which emerged from the data, such as cultural impacts and years of teaching experience, are unimportant.

3. **Methods of data collection.** I decided that the teachers' lessons, interviews and professional dialogues should be audiotaped because it would be less obtrusive. The use of videotaping could have allowed me to capture non-verbal data, such as the participants' facial expressions and body gestures, for more in-depth analysis. In addition, the examination of beliefs about vocabulary teaching and their development was largely dependent on the teachers' verbal and written accounts, though multiple sources of data were used for data triangulation. The analysis of audiotaped lessons, for example, allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the teachers' beliefs, but the audio-recording only took place over the course of a school cycle in each phase of the study as transcribing the lessons was labour-intensive and time-consuming. The report, therefore, does not present a 'complete' picture of the teachers' beliefs and practices, and its findings should be interpreted with caution.
4. **Operationalisation of beliefs and analysis of data.** While efforts have been made to operationalise beliefs and differentiate them from knowledge, there were situations in which I was not sure whether the teachers had experienced change in beliefs, knowledge, or both due to the complicated relationship between the two constructs. In addition, the analysis of qualitative data, especially the interviews and lessons, was rather complicated and time-consuming. Even though I tried to analyse the data as rigorously as possible, conduct inter-rater reliability checks and seek participant validation to ensure accuracy of my work, I cannot be certain that I coded all the data correctly.
5. **Duration of the study.** The investigation into teacher change lasted for approximately ten months. Although this is not a short period of time, observing the development of teachers' beliefs and practices for a more prolonged period



might yield different results and create a more thorough understanding of how different kinds of beliefs may change or develop over time.

6. **Possibility of inconsistent beliefs and Hawthorne effects.** Despite my tactics to ensure honest responses from the informants and attempts to reduce the Hawthorne effect (e.g. by avoiding informing the teachers that my study focused on the exploration of change and reminding them that they could adopt their usual practice during the audiotaping of lessons and my class observation), issues of validity remain. It is possible that the participants might have uttered belief statements they felt were expected of them (or even believed) and changed their natural behaviour because of their perceived need to do so.

## **8.6 Recommendations for further research**

Based on the findings and inadequacies of the study design, suggestions are made for further research. Whereas the four teacher cases involved in the teacher professional development programme provided interesting insights into how interaction and reflection may bring about change, the recruitment of a homogenous group of participants who were all teaching in the same school context and had similar educational backgrounds, despite their differences in years of teaching experience and duties in the target school, means the exclusion of other types of teachers, such as those who were less motivated to take part in teacher professional development or not interested in vocabulary teaching. Given that school-based staff development activities are now perceived as a valuable complement to the conventional event-based professional training in Hong Kong and other educational contexts, it might be interesting to examine how teachers of different subjects engage in explicit reflection on beliefs about complex educational issues and benefit from dialogic interaction as dissimilar results might be produced if the nature of discussion were to be changed or a group of participants with more diverse backgrounds were to be selected.

While the study has contributed to the understanding of a dialogic approach to teacher professional development, it mainly focused on the individual trajectories of change of different teacher participants by taking the characteristics of their interaction and reflection into consideration. During the interviews, the teacher participants of the professional

development programme revealed various factors that they considered crucial to the adoption of a dialogic approach to learning. Some examples include the duration of professional dialogues, the presence of an effective facilitator, the need for institutional support, and the attributes of participants, such as respect for diverse opinions and willingness to communicate. A natural progression of this study, therefore, is to explore how these factors, amongst many others cited, may contribute to the effectiveness of dialogic reflection. It would also be meaningful to conduct more longitudinal work of this kind to examine whether there are longer term effects of programmes that adopt a dialogic approach to teacher professional development, making it possible to further elucidate the complicated nature of teacher change and evaluate the impact of such change on students' actual learning outcomes.

Finally, the study has thrown up several important questions regarding dialogic reflection as a sociocultural approach to teacher professional development. While it seemed evident in the study that all teachers engaged in dialogic reflection were not particularly confident in their ability to teach vocabulary but were able to co-construct meaning and knowledge through scaffolded discussion, some of them turned to me for advice when they were uncertain about how some student responses and theoretical concepts could be interpreted or tended to rely on me to facilitate the discussion. Though I emphasised at the commencement of the teacher development programme that my role was only that of a discussant in the professional dialogues rather than an authoritative figure, my identity as a researcher might have affected the dynamics due to the teachers' perception that I represented the more knowledgeable other. It would be interesting to look at the teachers' interaction without the presence of a researcher or facilitator, with only prompts for discussion. Further research could also be conducted to determine how gender, culture and social relationships may influence the discussion, as it has been claimed that females often play a more supportive role in social situations (Hanrahan, 2006) and that Confucius-heritage culture may influence how Chinese teachers in a hierarchical relationship interact with each other (Tang & Chung, 2016).

## 8.7 Epilogue

Teaching is a challenging profession and always will be, and it is vital for educators to learn to teach, learn to learn, and teach to learn. The research reported herein, as stated in the introductory chapter of the thesis, has been driven by my own experience of learning, teaching and researching vocabulary, which prompted me to explore teachers' professional development with respect to beliefs and practices regarding vocabulary teaching. It has provided empirical evidence for how dialogic interaction may help teachers become aware of their own and alternative beliefs through the application of multiple lenses, create opportunities for critical reflection, engage in construction and reconstruction of beliefs, and subsequently transform their existing practices. Evidently, teacher change entails a highly complicated process that involves social construction and individuals' meaning making. Ample time and effort may thus be required for transformation to take place.

The study is significant not only because of its theoretical and methodological contributions and the implications for practice, but also because of its profound impact on my personal development. The process of conducting this research has reinforced my beliefs about vocabulary teaching, for example, my epistemological beliefs about the importance of vocabulary development and pedagogical beliefs about the need to cultivate autonomous vocabulary learners. By interacting with the teacher participants and analysing their lessons, I have also gained insights into lexical instruction and have had the chance to reflect critically on my own practices. As the quotation which starts this chapter puts it, searching for my own questions and listening to the responses may imply struggle arising from different or new perspectives that may challenge existing beliefs and knowledge. The process of getting to know our inner voice, thereby improving our ability to make informed decisions about improvement, certainly does not last just for a few months, but for a lifetime. Critical reflection is indeed necessary for both professional development and personal growth.

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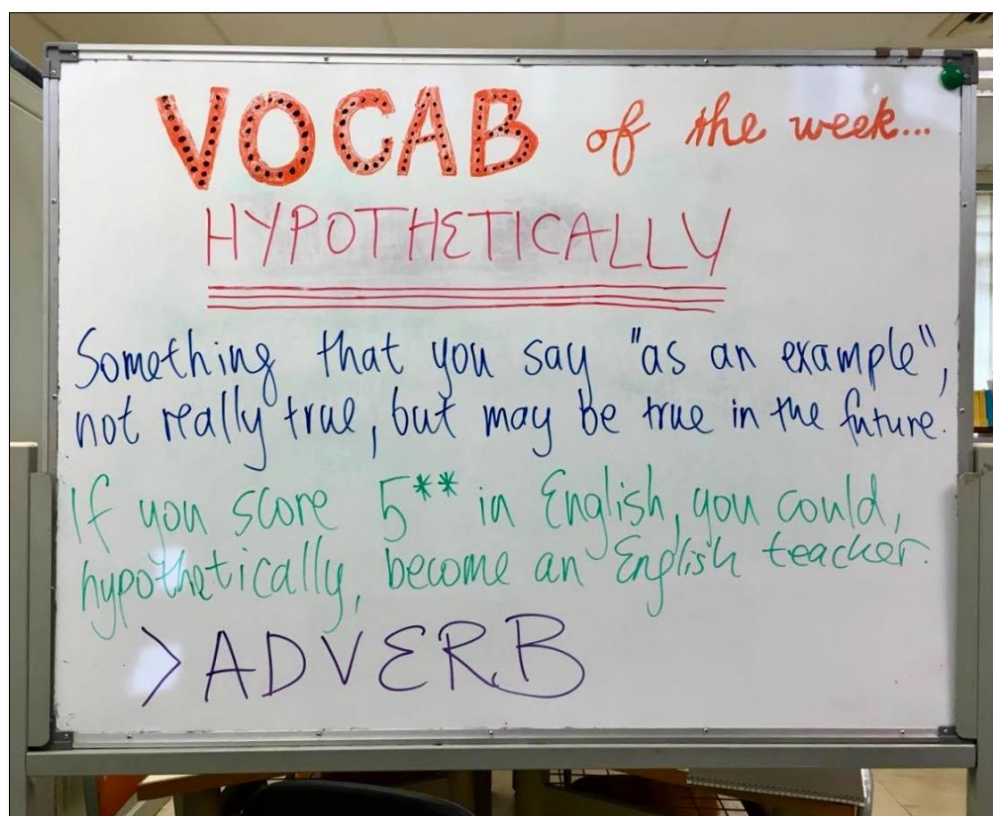
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## Appendix A Photos of the target school's English language and vocabulary learning



Noticeboard outside the school's English language corner



Whiteboard in the English language corner, introducing the vocabulary of the week



Appendix A (Continued)

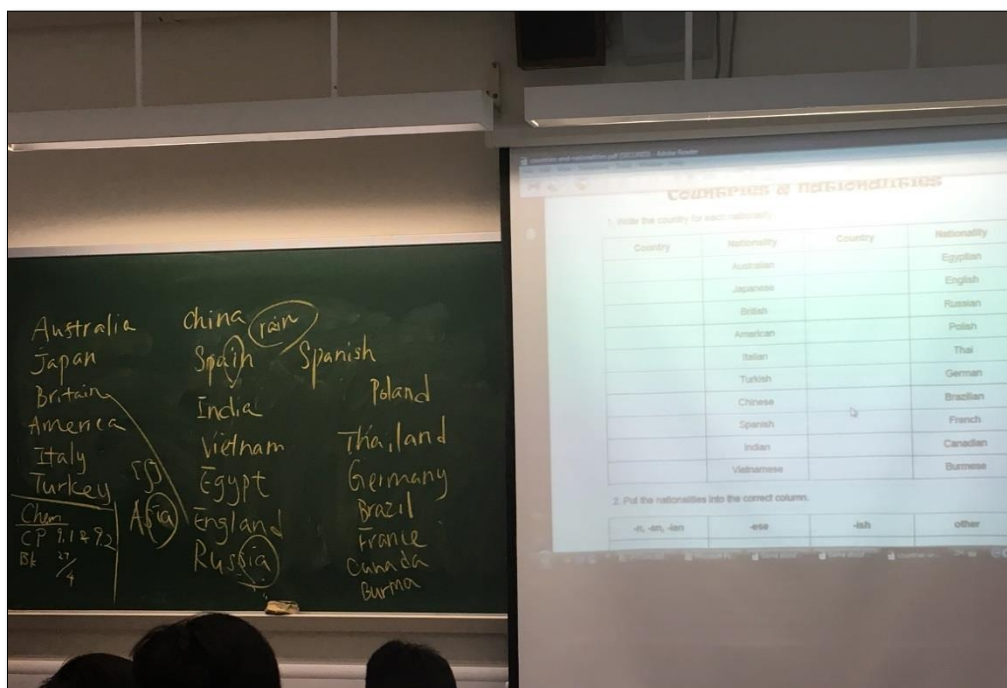


English week

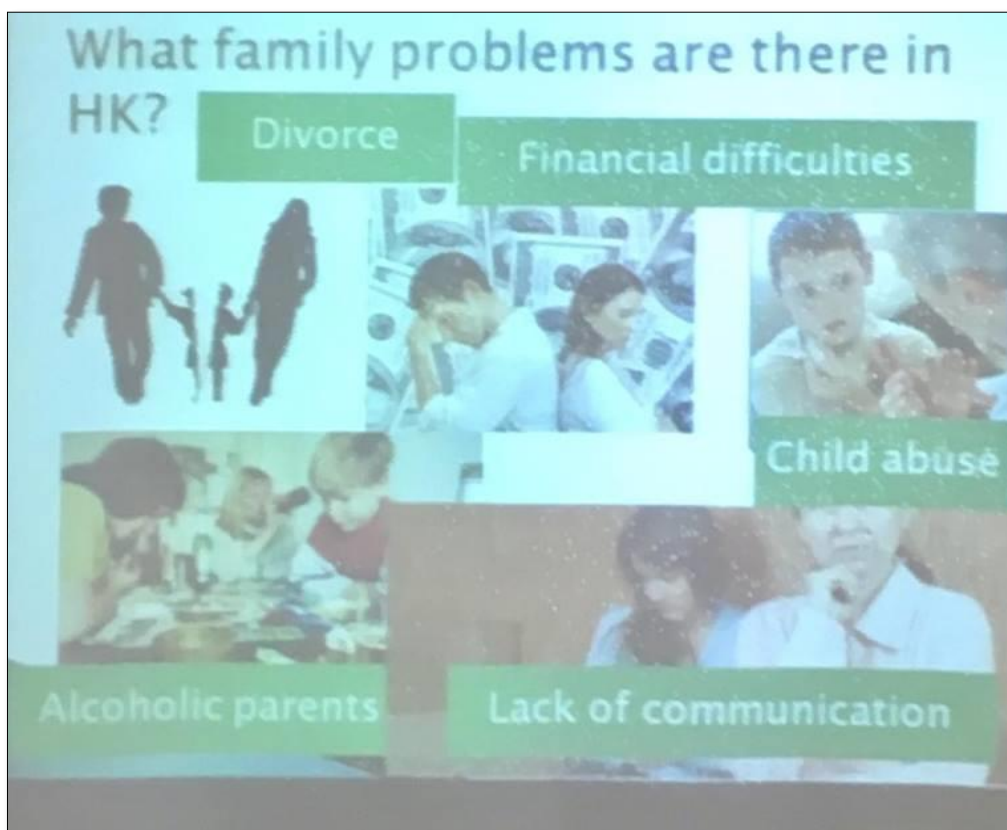


Message board for students and international guests

## Appendix A (Continued)



Completing a vocabulary exercise



Explaining vocabulary with pictures



## Appendix B Sample initial interview protocol with teachers<sup>24</sup>

I	Beliefs about vocabulary knowledge
1.	What do you think is the value of vocabulary knowledge for the learning of English as a second or foreign language?
2.	To you, what is meant by ‘knowing a word’?
3.*	When compared to the development of the four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking), do you think vocabulary building is more important, less important, or equally important?
4.*	What about grammar knowledge and vocabulary knowledge?
II	Beliefs about vocabulary teaching content, approach, materials and assessment
1.	What are your views on vocabulary teaching?
2.*	What do you think vocabulary teaching involves? / How should vocabulary be taught?
3.	What are the most important things to consider when it comes to vocabulary teaching?
4.	What do you think are the most important issues concerning vocabulary instruction?
5.	Do you think it is a good idea to teach vocabulary without giving explicit instruction? If so, what does it look like? / If not, why?
6.	What kind(s) of vocabulary knowledge do you think English teachers should or should not teach in the secondary classroom?
7.	What should teachers consider when choosing vocabulary items to be taught in class?
8.*	What type(s) of vocabulary should English teachers teach or not teach in the secondary classroom?
9.	What should teachers consider when designing class activities for vocabulary enhancement?
10.	What materials should teachers use to foster vocabulary teaching and learning?
11.	How should teachers assess their students’ vocabulary knowledge and use?
III	Beliefs about vocabulary learning
1.	What do you think are some effective strategies for students to learn vocabulary?
2.	Why do you think some students struggle with vocabulary learning?
3.	What do you think are your students’ expectations about their vocabulary learning in the English language classroom?
4.	What do you think teachers should do to promote students’ autonomous or independent vocabulary learning?
IV	Factors accounting for vocabulary teaching
1.	What do you think are the possible factors influencing your vocabulary teaching?
2.	How confident do you feel in your knowledge and ability to teach vocabulary?

(continued on next page)

<sup>24</sup> The questions with an asterisk, some of which had also been used to devise the second and final interview protocols (see Appendices C and D), were either adopted or adapted from the work by Gao and Ma (2011) or Zhang (2008).

## Appendix B (Continued)

### IV Factors accounting for vocabulary teaching (Continued)

3. Do you think the English Language Curriculum Guide prepared by the Education Bureau has provided you with insights into vocabulary teaching?
4. To what extent do you think your school and departmental policies have influenced your vocabulary teaching?
5. To what extent do you think there is consensus on the role and teaching of vocabulary among English teachers at your school?
6. To what extent do you think your formal teacher training experiences have informed or shaped your vocabulary teaching?
7. How would you see research and/or academic books helping you teach vocabulary?
8. Do you feel that your own education as a student has had any influence on the way you teach vocabulary today?
9. Do you think you have changed the way you teach vocabulary over the years? Why?

### V Recent practice of vocabulary teaching

1. Could you describe to me your recent experience of vocabulary teaching?
2. How would you comment on your experience of vocabulary teaching in your classes?
3. When you are planning your lessons, do you think about what words to teach and how? How do you usually go about making such decisions?
4. \* Can you recall any situations in which you departed from what you had planned to do during your classes? If so, when and why?
5. When do you usually teach vocabulary?
6. Are there any vocabulary enhancement activities you commonly conduct in class?
7. How do you usually assess your students' vocabulary knowledge and use?
8. Do you usually use textbooks to teach vocabulary? Why?
9. Do you usually prepare supplementary materials for students to learn vocabulary? Why?
10. \* These are the words you explicitly taught in the recorded lessons. Why did you focus on them in class? (see Appendix B, part II)
11. It seems to me that you pay attention to pronunciation as I can see that you often repeated different vocabulary items verbally in class and drew your students' attention to the sound of the lexical items. For instance, you asked students to look at the IPA symbol for the word 'intrigue' and told them that the stress is on the second syllable. You also asked several students to read aloud the words after you. Is there any particular reason why you would do so?
12. Apart from pronunciation, the meaning of a word seems to be something you care a lot about. For instance, you often paraphrase the word's meaning (e.g. 'incoherent' means not well-organized and difficult to understand or if an actor is 'inept', that means the person doesn't have any acting skills.) Why is that the case?
13. In contrast to meaning and pronunciation, it seems to me that you also pay much attention to the parts of speech of a word but spend relatively little time on other aspects of vocabulary knowledge such as collocation and constraints of use (e.g. formality). Why?

(continued on next page)

14. Do you think you teach your junior and senior secondary students vocabulary differently? Why (not)?
15. One thing that you usually do is to ask students to take notes in class. For instance, you will say things like “*please write it down*” and “*please write down some examples*”. Is it because you think taking notes in class is very important? Why?
16. I notice that in your lessons, you try to teach vocabulary items by relating to their synonyms. For instance, you asked your students if they could think of any other words which mean ‘afraid’ and prompted the students to give you words like ‘terrified’, ‘petrified’, and ‘horrified’. Why would you do so?
17. An interesting observation I had is about one of your lessons with your senior secondary students. I notice that you spent quite a lot of time teaching different vocabulary items related to popular culture, such as ‘viral videos’, ‘graffiti’ and ‘horoscope’, and tried to relate the words to students’ personal experience. For instance, you might ask questions like “*Do you believe in horoscopes?*” and “*Do you make your own ringtones?*” Why is that so?
18. It seems to me that you do not use L1 translation to teach vocabulary items at all. For example, you asked your students not to speak in Cantonese by saying “*No Chinese*”. Also, you mentioned to students the idiom ‘raining cats and dogs’, explained to them the meaning and asked, “*In Cantonese we have similar thing, but who wants to say it?*” Why is that the case? How do you see teachers using L1 translation in class when teaching vocabulary?
19. \* How do you think you came up with different techniques to teach vocabulary?
20. \* Do you think you were successful in using these techniques to teach vocabulary?
21. Do you see any way(s) for you to teach vocabulary more effectively in class?
22. \* If you could conduct some lessons again, what would you do the same with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
23. \* Is there anything you would do differently with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
24. Do you think your students have learned the words you taught well?
25. Are there any other comments you would like to add regarding your vocabulary teaching or students’ vocabulary learning?

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#### VI Other comments

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1. Are there any other questions you’d like to raise or comments you would like to add regarding vocabulary teaching and learning?

Appendix B (Continued) Lexical items explicitly taught in Phase One for the teacher's reference

3A			5A		
1	Diverse	25	Dedicated	1	Blogs
2	Impressive	26	Leopards	2	Comic strips
3	Monument	27	Preservation	3	Graffiti
4	Sculpture	28	Focal	4	Horoscopes
5	Sensory	29	Surround	5	MP3 downloads
6	Overload	30	Modernisation	6	Ringtones
7	Vibrant	31	Surrounding	7	Role-playing games
8	Established	32	Article	8	Tabloids
9	Derived	33	Unwell	9	Viral videos
10	Supposedly	34	Valuables	10	Vox pops
11	Surrounded	35	Raining cats and dogs	11	Inept
12	Appeal to	36	Gloomy	12	Shoddy
13	Connection	37	Success	13	Wooden
14	Cultural	38	Alternative	14	Stereotypical
15	Cave			15	Thriller
16	Permitted			16	Actor
17	Preservation			17	Portrayal
18	Policies			18	Fact
19	Paraphrase			19	Censored
20	Visitors			20	Spectacular
21	Remarkable			21	Intrigue
22	Tourists			22	Mediocre
23	Advised			23	Incoherent
24	Photography			24	Thrilling
				25	Charming
				26	Powerful
				27	Character
				28	Keep me on the edge of my seat
				29	Unimpressive
				30	Amusing
				31	Recommendable
				32	Entertaining
				33	Proposal
				34	Put forward
				35	Increase awareness of
				36	Be an excellent opportunity to
				37	If approval is granted
				38	According to
				39	Advanced
				40	Afford
				41	Afraid
				42	Terrified
				43	Horried
				44	Petrified
				45	Scared
				46	At last
				47	Aware
				48	Born
				49	Blind
				50	Broadcast
				51	Cheap
				52	Complain
				53	Concerned
				54	Cook
				55	Cooker
				56	Die
				57	Difficult
				58	Act
				59	Discuss
				60	Effort
				61	Snare
				62	Yapping
				63	Grip
				64	Realistic
				65	Wit
				66	Flesh and blood

## Appendix C Sample second interview protocol with teachers

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### I Recent practice of vocabulary teaching

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1. Could you describe to me your recent experience of vocabulary teaching?
2. How would you comment on your experience of vocabulary teaching in your classes?
3. Did you think about what items to teach and how while planning your lessons?
4. Can you recall any situations in which you departed from what you had planned to do during your classes related to vocabulary teaching and learning? If so, when and why?
5. Why did you teach these words in your lessons?
6. I am aware that you taught quite a lot of vocabulary items explicitly in class, especially when you were teaching a reading passage. Is there any reason for that?
7. As we mentioned, there are different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. What do you think are the relatively important aspects? Do you think you pay more attention to certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge in class?
8. It seems to me that pronunciation and meaning of a new word are two aspects that you addressed most often while teaching vocabulary. Is there any reason for that?
9. It appears to me that you have paid more attention to collocation of words when explaining different lexical items in class. For instance, you have designed a worksheet that asked students to think of different verbs which collocate with words like *appointment*, *date* and *meeting*, and explained to them that they can use ‘*make an appointment*, *make a date*, *go on a date*, *attend a meeting*’. Is there a particular reason why you’d do so?
10. Constraints on use and spelling are two aspects of vocabulary knowledge that receive little attention in your lessons. Why is that so?
11. Having analysed your lessons, I notice that you haven’t addressed connotation in any of your classes. What could be some possible reasons to account for this?
12. When I analysed your lessons, I reckon that you often group words together to teach the students. For instance, you focused on sports in some of the lessons with the junior class, and introduced words related to stage production in some other lessons. Can you explain to me why?
13. Another thing that I observe is that you tried to encourage multiple encounters with words in your lessons. Why is that so?
14. What other techniques do you commonly use in your class when it comes to vocabulary teaching?
15. Do you think you were successful in using different techniques to teach vocabulary?
16. I am aware that you have used different supplementary materials to teach vocabulary. For instance, you asked students to listen to ‘I love you’ by Martina McBride and ‘Close to you’ by Carpenters, and held a competition related to different sports in class. Can you explain to me why?
17. Do you see any way(s) for you to teach vocabulary more effectively in class?
18. If you could conduct the lessons again, what would you do the same with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
19. If you could conduct the lessons again, what would you do differently with regard to vocabulary teaching? Why?
20. Do you think your students have learned the words you taught well? / What do you think are your students’ opinions about your vocabulary teaching?

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## Appendix C (Continued)

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### II Change in beliefs and/or practice and comments on the teacher development programme

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1. Do you think you have changed your views on vocabulary teaching and learning since we began? If so, can you describe to me the changes? What about your practice?
2. You mentioned in one of your reflective entries that you think teaching ten new words is enough for a lesson as it could be overwhelming for the students to remember too many new things at one time. Yet, I notice that you taught quite a lot of lexical items in some of your lessons. Why is that so?
3. You commented that the discussion sessions we had “*opened up your mind and stimulated you to reflect on your teaching*”. Could you elaborate on that?
4. You mentioned that a dialogic approach might be conducive to teacher professional development if other teachers are equally enthusiastic and active. In what ways do you think teachers’ participation can be encouraged?
5. Are there any other suggestions on the discussion sessions regarding further improvement?

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### III Other comments

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1. Are there any other questions you’d like to raise or comments you would like to add regarding your vocabulary teaching, the students’ vocabulary learning or our discussion sessions?

## Appendix D Sample final interview protocol with teachers

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### I Recent practice of vocabulary teaching

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1. Could you describe to me your recent experience of vocabulary teaching?
2. How would you comment on your experience of vocabulary teaching in your classes?
3. Can you recall any situations in which you departed from what you had planned to do during your lessons related to vocabulary teaching and learning? If so, when and why?
4. Do you think you teach your junior and senior forms differently? Why (not)?
5. Why did you teach these words in your lessons?
6. It appears to me that you spend more time on teaching certain words in class. Why is that the case?
7. Do you think you have changed your views on vocabulary teaching and learning since we began? If so, can you describe to me the changes?

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### II Change in beliefs about vocabulary knowledge

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1. What do you think is the value of vocabulary knowledge for the learning of English as a second or foreign language?  
– Previous response: Communication, comprehension and survival.
2. To you, what is meant by ‘knowing a word’?  
– Previous response: Knowing its pronunciation, spelling and meaning.
3. When compared to the development of the four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking), do you think vocabulary building is more important, less important, or equally important?  
– Previous response: Equally important.
4. What about grammar knowledge and vocabulary knowledge?  
– Previous response: Vocabulary is more important.

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### II Change in beliefs about vocabulary teaching content, approach, materials and assessment

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1. What do you think vocabulary teaching involves?  
– Previous response: Teaching different aspects of word knowledge.
2. How should vocabulary be taught?  
– Previous response: Analysing affixes and roots; connecting word to its synonyms and / antonyms; encouraging students to guess the meaning; drawing students’ attention to the part of speech; studying the sound / pronunciation.
3. What are the most important things to consider when it comes to vocabulary teaching?  
– Previous response: Usefulness of the words (e.g. whether the words are relevant to the students’ life).
4. What do you think are the most important issues concerning vocabulary instruction?  
– Previous response: Student factors.
5. Do you think it's actually a good idea to teach vocabulary without really giving explicit instruction?  
– Previous response: It depends; It’s difficult to always teach vocabulary implicitly as students will ask for word meaning.

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6. What kind(s) of vocabulary knowledge do you think English teachers should teach or avoid teaching in secondary English language classroom?  
– Previous response: Teachers should teach pronunciation, meaning, word form, collocation, and connotation if time allows.
7. What should teachers consider when choosing vocabulary items to be taught in class?  
– Previous response: Students' proficiency.
8. What type(s) of words should English teachers teach or avoid teaching in the secondary classroom?  
– Previous response: Vulgar words; Taboos.
9. What should teachers consider when designing class activities for vocabulary enhancement?  
– Previous response: Task design (e.g. whether it is fun).
10. What materials should teachers use to foster vocabulary teaching and learning?  
– Previous response: Authentic materials, such as newspaper articles.
11. How should teachers assess their students' vocabulary knowledge and use?  
– Previous response: Vocabulary quizzes / tests; writing / speaking tasks and dictation.

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## II Change in beliefs about vocabulary learning

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1. Why do you think some students struggle with vocabulary learning?  
– Previous response: Lack of exposure / practice; lack of time; learning attitude / lack of motivation; L1 interference; culture (school, Chinese culture, Hong Kong context).
2. What do you think are students' expectations about their vocabulary learning in their English lessons?  
– Previous response: Spoon-feeding; Teaching vocabulary based on examinations.
3. What do you think teachers should do to promote students' independent vocabulary learning?  
– Previous response: Asking students to watch movies / videos with English subtitles; encouraging students to gain exposure to English; asking students to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar vocabulary item; encouraging students to use the words newly learned; relating vocabulary learning to students' daily life; creating a need for vocabulary learning / asking students to address their needs; introducing interesting materials; keeping a vocabulary notebook.

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## III Change in practice regarding vocabulary teaching

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1. Just now, we have discussed some of your beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning. What about your practice? Do you think you have changed the way you teach vocabulary?
2. It seems to me that you have undergone some changes in your beliefs and practice regarding your vocabulary teaching. How would you comment on your students' recent vocabulary learning in general? Do you think they have learned different vocabulary items better due to the changes you have made lately?
3. These are the practices of your vocabulary teaching that I summarised based on the analysis of your recorded lessons. Could you take a brief look at the summary and comment on it?

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## Appendix D (Continued)

4. Having analysed all your lessons, I am aware that you are consistent in paying special attention to certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge when teaching vocabulary in class. What do you think about this?
5. It appears to me that there are aspects of vocabulary knowledge that receive growing attention in your lessons. How would you comment on this?
6. What about the use of strategies in your lessons? It seems to me that there are strategies that you often adopt, strategies that you use more, and strategies that you use less. What do you think about this?
7. Here is a list of strategies that have not been identified in your recorded lessons. What do you think about this?

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### IV Comments on the teacher development programme

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1. You've mentioned in your reflective entries that you like the discussion sessions. Is there anything you don't like?
2. From January to March, we have had seven discussion sessions on vocabulary teaching and learning in total. Specifically, we explored different issues related to vocabulary teaching and learning in the first six sessions, followed by a reflection in the last session. Could you share with me briefly what you have learned from the different sessions?
3. To what extent do you think the ideas discussed might have informed your vocabulary teaching?
4. For each of the first six discussion sessions, we did self-reflection, discussed our views, explored students' beliefs and read different ideas highlighted by the literature. Which part do you like the most / the least?
5. Which part of a discussion session do you find the most / least useful?
6. Imagine we had the chance to run similar discussion sessions related to vocabulary teaching and learning again. How would you like them to be?
7. Do you think similar discussion related to vocabulary teaching and learning should be promoted among English language teachers in Hong Kong? Why or why not?
8. What do you think are some important factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a dialogic approach to teacher professional development?

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### V Other comments

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1. Are there any other questions you'd like to raise or comments you would like to add regarding vocabulary teaching and learning or your experience taking part in the research project?

## Appendix E Sample codes for analysis of the teachers' interviews

Categories	Emerging themes, categories and codes
Epistemological beliefs about vocabulary development	<p>[I]A The role of vocabulary in second language acquisition</p> <p>[I]A1 Communication - Expressing ideas</p> <p>[I]A2 Preparation for examinations</p> <p>[I]A3 Comprehension / understanding</p> <p>[I]A4 Survival (e.g. reading road signs)</p> <p>[I]A5 Confidence / motivation in the language</p> <p>[I]A6 Cultural understanding</p> <p>[I]A7 Development of language abilities</p> <p>[I]A8 Development of creativity</p> <p>[I]A9 Language awareness</p> <p>[I]A10 Development of curiosity</p> <p>[I]B The notion of knowing a word</p> <p>[I]B1F1 Pronunciation</p> <p>[I]B1F2 Spelling</p> <p>[I]B1F3 Word parts</p> <p>[I]B1M1 Meaning</p> <p>[I]B1M2 Concept and referent</p> <p>[I]B1M3 Association</p> <p>[I]B1U1 Word form</p> <p>[I]B1U2 Collocation</p> <p>[I]B1U3 Constraints on use</p> <p>[I]C The importance of vocabulary in relation to the four language skills</p> <p>[I]C1 Equally important.</p> <p>[I]C2 Vocabulary is more important.</p> <p>[I]C3 Vocabulary is less important.</p> <p>[I]D The importance of vocabulary in relation to grammar</p> <p>[I]D1 Equally important.</p> <p>[I]D2 Vocabulary is more important.</p> <p>[I]D3 Vocabulary is less important.</p>
Pedagogical beliefs about the aims of vocabulary teaching	<p>[II]A Aims of vocabulary teaching</p> <p>[II]A1 Teaching different aspects of word knowledge</p> <p>[II]A2 Enhancing learner motivation (e.g. Making word learning interesting)</p>

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Pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary instruction and other general issues about vocabulary teaching	<p>[II]B How should vocabulary be taught?</p> <p>[II]B1 Analysing affixes and roots</p> <p>[II]B2 Connecting word to its synonyms and / antonyms</p> <p>[II]B3 Creating a context / grouping words together</p> <p>[II]B4 Encouraging students to guess word meaning</p> <p>[II]B5 Giving sample sentences</p> <p>[II]B6 Encouraging students to continue to study word over time</p> <p>[II]B7 Drawing attention to the word form</p> <p>[II]B8 Studying the sound / pronunciation</p> <p>[II]B9 Study word with a pictorial representation of its meaning</p> <p>[II]B10 Using the target language instead of L1 translations</p> <p>[II]B11 Verbal repetition</p> <p>[II]C Things to consider when teaching vocabulary</p> <p>[II]C1 Student factors (e.g. student levels, interests, feelings, etc.)</p> <p>[II]C2 Usefulness of the words (e.g. relevance to daily life)</p> <p>[II]C3 Efficiency (e.g. fun versus planning involved)</p> <p>[II]C4 Teaching materials (e.g. level of difficulty, authenticity, etc.)</p> <p>[II]C5 Recycling of target items</p> <p>[II]C6 Different aspects of word knowledge</p> <p>[II]D Major issues concerning vocabulary instruction</p> <p>[II]D1 Themes of the teaching materials</p> <p>[II]D2 Student factors</p> <p>[II]D3 Medium of instruction</p> <p>[II]D4 Nature of words (e.g. words that look or sound alike, word level, etc.)</p> <p>[II]D5 Class time</p> <p>[II]D6 Scheme of work (syllabus) or lesson focus</p> <p>[II]DN No idea</p> <p>[II]E The need for direct vocabulary teaching</p> <p>[II]E1 It depends.</p> <p>[II]E2 It is difficult not to teach vocabulary directly.</p> <p>[II]E3 Direct vocabulary teaching is recommended.</p> <p>[II]E4 It should be supported with students' independent word learning.</p>
Pedagogical beliefs about the content of vocabulary teaching	<p>Word knowledge aspects that should be addressed in class</p> <p>[II]F1F1 Pronunciation</p> <p>[II]F1F2 Spelling</p> <p>[II]F1F3 Word parts</p> <p>[II]F1M1 Meaning</p> <p>[II]F1M2 Concept and referent</p> <p>[II]F1M3 Association</p> <p>[II]F1U1 Word form</p> <p>[II]F1U2 Collocation</p> <p>[II]F1U3 Constraints on use</p>

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## Appendix E (Continued)

Pedagogical beliefs about the content of vocabulary teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[II]G Selection criteria for lexical items to be explicitly taught in class</li> <li>[II]G1 Relevance to daily life</li> <li>[II]G2 Frequency of use</li> <li>[II]G3 Students' proficiency</li> <li>[II]G4 Word difficulty</li> <li>[II]G5 School syllabus</li> <li>[II]G6 Relevance to examination</li> <li>[II]G7 Words that help raise students' awareness</li> <li>[II]H Types of lexical items that should not be taught in class</li> <li>[II]H1 Technical / specific terms</li> <li>[II]H2 Vulgar words</li> <li>[II]H3 Taboos</li> <li>[II]H4 Proverbs</li> <li>[II]H5 Formulaic expressions</li> <li>[II]H6 Archaic expressions / stock expressions</li> <li>[II]H7 None</li> </ul>
Pedagogical beliefs about the approach to vocabulary teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[I]I Things to consider when designing class activities for vocabulary learning</li> <li>[II]I1 Learners (e.g. learners' preferences, classroom discipline, etc.)</li> <li>[II]I2 Variety of activities</li> <li>[II]I3 Task design</li> <li>[II]I4 Relevance to the scheme of work / examination</li> <li>[II]I5 Time constraints</li> </ul>
Pedagogical beliefs about the resources for vocabulary teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[II]J Preferred instructional materials for vocabulary teaching and learning</li> <li>[II]J1 Authentic materials</li> <li>[II]J1(1) Newspaper articles</li> <li>[II]J1(2) Magazine articles</li> <li>[II]J1(3) Songs</li> <li>[II]J1(4) Web-based texts</li> <li>[II]J1(5) Everyday examples (e.g. brand names, medicine boxes, etc.)</li> <li>[II]J1(6) Videos (e.g. YouTube videos, TED talks, etc.)</li> <li>[II]J2 Handouts</li> <li>[II]J3 PPT slides</li> </ul>
Pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[II]K How assessment should be conducted</li> <li>[II]K1 Vocabulary quizzes and/or tests</li> <li>[II]K2 Tasks (e.g. speaking tasks, writing tasks, etc.)</li> <li>[II]K3 Dictation</li> <li>[II]K4 Student-centred assessments</li> <li>[II]K5 Peer evaluation</li> <li>[II]K6 Worksheet</li> <li>[II]K7 Class activities (e.g. group work)</li> </ul>

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Pedagogical beliefs about vocabulary learning	<p>[III]A Vocabulary learning difficulties</p> <p>[III]A1 Lack of exposure to the target language</p> <p>[III]A2 Unwillingness to devote time to vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]A3 Poor attitude toward English language learning</p> <p>[III]A4 Preference for using simple vocabulary</p> <p>[III]A5 Short-term memory</p> <p>[III]A6 L1 interference</p> <p>[III]A7 Negative influence from family and/or culture</p> <p>[III]A8 Partial mastery of word knowledge</p> <p>[III]A9 Heavy workload related to different academic subjects</p> <p>[III]A10 Low proficiency in English</p> <p>[III]A11 Teachers' inadequate explanation or treatment of vocabulary</p> <p>[III]B Learners' expectations of vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]B1 Teachers' explanation of different aspects of word knowledge</p> <p>[III]B2 Teachers' spoon-feeding / being introduced to different words</p> <p>[III]B3 Potential relevance to examinations</p> <p>[III]B4 Avoidance of challenging vocabulary assessments</p> <p>[III]B5 Discussion of challenging questions relating to vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]B6 Learner-centred approach to vocabulary development</p> <p>[III]B7 Implementation of peer learning</p>
Pedagogical beliefs about the approach to promoting autonomous vocabulary learning	<p>[III]C Ways to promote independent vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]C1 Encouraging students to gain exposure to the target language</p> <p>[III]C1(1) Encouraging students to watch films and videos</p> <p>[III]C1(2) Introducing interesting materials</p> <p>[III]C1(3) Encouraging students to read English texts</p> <p>[III]C2 Fostering the development of positive learning habits</p> <p>[III]C2(1) Encouraging the use of newly learned vocabulary</p> <p>[III]C2(2) Asking students to continue to study word over time</p> <p>[III]C2(3) Promoting the use of dictionaries</p> <p>[III]C2(4) Asking students to keep a vocabulary notebook</p> <p>[III]C2(5) Promoting note-taking</p> <p>[III]C2(6) Encouraging students to guess word meaning</p> <p>[III]C2(7) Asking students to make word associations</p> <p>[III]C3 Drawing student attention to the importance of vocabulary</p> <p>[III]C3(1) Relating vocabulary learning to students' daily life</p> <p>[III]C3(2) Creating a need for vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]C4 Monitoring students' progress in independent vocabulary learning</p> <p>[III]C5 Designing class activities for independent vocabulary building</p> <p>[III]C6 Promoting peer learning</p>

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Appendix E (Continued)

Factors shaping beliefs about vocabulary teaching	[IV]1 School and/or departmental policies and/or culture [IV]2 Textbooks and/or materials [IV]3 Time [IV]4 English language curriculum in Hong Kong [IV]5 Examination pressure [IV]6 Teacher training [IV]7 Confidence in teaching vocabulary [IV]8 Schooling and/or language learning experience [IV]9 Scholarly work [IV]10 Student factors [IV]11 Collegial exchange [IV]12 Teaching experience
Reported change in beliefs and/or practice	[V]1 No reported change [V]2 More importance attached to vocabulary teaching and learning [V]3 More time allocated to vocabulary building in class [V]4 Changing beliefs and/or practices regarding a vocabulary teaching strategy [V]5 Developing awareness and/or reflectivity of teaching vocabulary [V]6 Focusing more on students' output [V]7 Trying to help students continue to study the target vocabulary over time [V]8 Paying more attention to certain aspects of word knowledge [V]9 Trying to promote autonomous vocabulary learning [V]10 Changing the class activities to foster vocabulary development [V]11 Becoming more student-centred [V]12 Changing the formats of vocabulary assessment tasks [V]13 Focusing on lexical instruction to make vocabulary learning more fun [V]14 Enhanced confidence in teaching vocabulary [V]15 Changing beliefs about the need for direct vocabulary teaching
Factors shaping the change in beliefs and/or practice	[V2]1 Dialogic reflection of the current study [V2]1(1) Self-reflection [V2]1(2) Collegial exchange [V2]1(3) Analysis of students' beliefs [V2]1(4) Discussion sessions – theoretical literature [V2]2 Teacher training (e.g. insights from lectures) [V2]3 Deeper understanding of students' proficiency level / needs [V2]4 Collegial exchange (not during the teacher development programme) [V2]5 Professional development workshops organised by the Education Bureau [V2]6 Enthusiasm for teaching [V2]7 Teaching experience [V2]N No idea

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Practice in  
vocabulary  
teaching

[VI]A Choice of words explicitly taught in class

[VI]A1 Newspaper articles

[VI]A2 Textbook

[VI]A3 Target words selected by the teacher

[VI]A4 Short stories / readers

[VI]A5 Handouts

[VI]A6 Scheme of work

[VI]A7 Songs

[VI]A8 Responses to students

[VI]A9 Poems

[VI]AN No idea

[VI]B Reasons why certain aspects of word knowledge are (not) addressed

[VI]B1(1) It is deemed useful and/or important.

[VI]B1(2) It can be tested through dictation, quizzes and/or writing tasks

[VI]B1(3) It is related to assessment and/or examinations

[VI]B1(4) It may be too complicated and/or confusing to students

[VI]B1(5) There are time constraints

[VI]B1(6) It is related to students' needs and/or interests

[VI]B1(7) It is (not) the fundamental aspect of vocabulary learning

[VI]B1(8) It helps create confidence and/or sense of satisfaction

[VI]B1(9) It is the focus of the lesson

[VI]B1(10) It is out of context to teach the aspect

[VI]B1(11) Teacher's knowledge / awareness

[VI]B1(12) It is relatively easy or difficult to handle or teach

[VI]B1(13) It is included in the textbook or teaching materials

[VI]B2(14) It is related to a specific topic

[VI]B2(L) It may be related to the limitations of the research project

[VI]B2N No idea or not sure

[VI]C Reasons why certain strategies are (not) used

[VI]C1 No idea

[VI]C2 Difficulty of using these / other methods.

[VI]C3 Students' sense of accomplishment

[VI]C4 Conducive to learning (e.g. they help enhance memory, etc.)

[VI]C5 Classroom discipline.

[VI]C6 Examination-related

[VI]C7 School culture / school policies

[VI]C8 Experience as a language learner

[VI]C9 No direct translation

[VI]C10 Time constraints

[VI]C11 Textbooks / materials / task design

[VI]C12 Development of positive habits for English learning

[VI]C13 Students' preference

[VI]C14 Difficulty level of the vocabulary item, related concepts, etc.

[VI]C15 Teachers' responsibility

[VI]C16 Suitability for young learners

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Practice in vocabulary teaching (Continued)	[VI]C18 The students can use the strategies after class
	[VI]C19 Teachers' knowledge
	[VI]C(L) Possible limitations of the study
	[VI]D. Differences between teaching junior and senior secondary students
	[VI]D1 Frequency of conducting vocabulary activities
	[VI]D2 Not sure / no difference
	[VI]D3 Focus on certain aspects of word knowledge
	[VI]D4 Number of vocabulary items introduced in class
	[VI]D5 Different uses of strategies
	[VI]D6 Different levels of word difficulty
	[VI]D7 More / less examination-driven
	[VI]E. How the teacher came up with the techniques to teach vocabulary
	[VI]E1 No idea
	[VI]E2 Tendency to adopt a variety of teaching strategies
	[VI]E3 By intuition or professional judgment
	[VI]E4 Teaching experience
	[VI]E5 Formal teacher training
	[VI]E6 (Interactive) Decision-making in class
	[VI]E7 Students' responses
	[VI]E8 The Internet
	[VI]E9 Textbooks or guidelines provided by the textbook publishers
	[VI]F. Perceived effectiveness of using the strategies to teach vocabulary
	[VI]F1 Yes
	[VI]F2 No
	[VI]F3 Not sure
	[VI]F4 Only to a certain extent
	[VI]G. Reasons why some vocabulary items received more attention
	[VI]G1 Target items
	[VI]G2 Difficulty level of the items
	[VI]GN No idea
	[VI]H. How vocabulary can be taught more effectively
	[VI]H1 Promoting autonomous learning
	[VI]H2 Watching films with students
	[VI]H3 Having parties with students
	[VI]H4 Organising outings for students
	[VI]H5 Using more authentic materials
	[VI]H6 Creating more opportunities for students to use the target words
	[VI]H7 Encouraging revision
	[VI]H8 Spending time on a range of aspects of word knowledge
	[VI]H9 Adopting new teaching strategies (e.g. mnemonic strategies)
	[VI]H10 Doing proofreading exercises focusing on the usage of words
	[VI]H11 Designing different kinds of activities
	[VI]H12 Promoting implicit vocabulary teaching

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Practice in vocabulary teaching (Continued)	<p>[VI]H13 Highlighting the importance of vocabulary learning in class</p> <p>[VI]H14 Allocating more time to planning how to teach vocabulary</p> <p>[VI]H15 Communicating with students and promoting sharing</p> <p>[VI]H16 Making better use of technology</p> <p>[VI]HN No idea</p> <p>[VI]I Recent experience of teaching vocabulary</p> <p>[VI]I1 Positive</p> <p>[VI]I2 Negative</p> <p>[VI]I(S) Perceived change in students' vocabulary learning</p> <p>[VI]I(S1) Students' change – finding the lessons more enjoyable</p> <p>[VI]I(S2) Being more active in class (e.g. asking questions about vocabulary)</p> <p>[VI]I(S3) Becoming more motivated to learn vocabulary</p> <p>[VI]I(S4) Becoming more independent; taking the initiative to learn vocabulary</p> <p>[VI]I(S5) Having improved output</p> <p>[VI]I(S6) Not sure</p> <p>[VI]I(S7) No change observed</p> <p>[VI]J Planning the lessons – Description</p> <p>[VI]K Lesson planning and actual practice</p> <p>[VI]K1 None</p> <p>[VI]K2 Situations in which the teacher departed from what he/she planned to do</p> <p>[VI]L Vocabulary enhancement activities conducted in class</p> <p>[VI]L1 Watching short video clips / films / listening to songs</p> <p>[VI]L2 Dictation / vocabulary quizzes</p> <p>[VI]L3 Group work (e.g. group discussion, giving a presentation in group)</p> <p>[VI]L4 Using technology (e.g. placard)</p> <p>[VI]L5 Tasks (creating sentences, writing a passage, etc.)</p> <p>[VI]L6 Competitions</p> <p>[VI]L7 None / only limited activities</p> <p>[VI]L8 Games (e.g. bingo, crossword puzzles, etc.)</p>
Comments on a dialogic approach to teacher professional development	<p>[VII] Factors contributing to its effectiveness</p> <p>[VII]1 An opportunity for self-reflection</p> <p>[VII]2 Exploration of students' beliefs</p> <p>[VII]3 Insights from the theoretical literature</p> <p>[VII]4 Professional exchange with colleagues (e.g. sharing of 'good' practice)</p> <p>[VII]5 Teachers' enthusiasm (e.g. active participation)</p> <p>[VII]6 Teachers' respect for each other (i.e. being non-judgmental)</p> <p>[VII]7 Teachers' willingness to share (genuine discussion)</p> <p>[VII]8 Teachers' personalities</p> <p>[VII]9 Pair sharing / small-group sharing</p> <p>[VII]10 An effective facilitator</p>

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## Appendix E (Continued)

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Comments on the teacher professional development programme (Continued)	[VII]11 Time for preparation / reflection prior to the discussion
	[VII]12 Duration of the discussion
	[VII]13 Time for the discussion sessions
	[VII]14 A relaxing environment – seating arrangement, light refreshment, etc.
	[VII]15 Well-organised materials
	[VII]16 Tasks (e.g. collaborative lesson planning)
	[VII]17 Follow-up activities for consolidation
	[VII]18 Institutional support

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## Appendix F Sample pages of a coded interview



I	Thank you for taking part in the interview. As you may know, my study seeks to explore teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning, investigate how they are related to practice, and examine the factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practices. We will focus on the three areas I have just mentioned in the interview today, and I'd like to remind you that you can be completely honest with your responses as there are no right or wrong answers. As explained to you earlier, our interview will be audiotaped, but your identity will be kept anonymous and will be concealed in any written report of the study so so to preserve your confidentiality. Is that okay for you?	
T	Sure.	
I	Now, perhaps we can start with some general questions regarding your beliefs about vocabulary knowledge. What do you think is the value of vocabulary knowledge for the learning of English as a second or foreign language?	
T	The value? The value... Well, I think if you don't know the meaning of a word, you can't really communicate your ideas to others and may have difficulties in comprehension.	[I]A1 [I]A3
I	I see. That's about comprehension and communication?	
T	Yes.	
I	Any other thoughts?	
T	Um, vocabulary. I think... Well, one can't survive without vocabulary. If you walk on the street and see some signs that you don't know the meaning, it can cost your life sometimes. Some notices convey warnings.	[I]A4
I	Right. Using vocabulary in our daily life.	
T	Yes.	
I	To you, what is meant by 'knowing a word'?	
T	Knowing a word. I think you need to know what it means and how you use it.	[I]B1M [I]B1U
I	If I have to claim that I know a word, what are the different aspects of word knowledge that I should be able to master?	
T	Pronunciation, meaning, spelling? And probably...I don't know.	[I]B1F1 [I]B1M1 [I]B1F2
I	Okay. That's no problem at all. Now, let's move on to discuss the importance of vocabulary knowledge in relation to the four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking. When compared to the development of the four language skills, do you think vocabulary building is more important, less important or equally important?	

T	I think <b>equally important</b> . Well, if you are good at... I think there are... well, if you... if you... okay, let's say, a person's listening skills is high and that... that means this person's... I mean, in terms of understanding vocabulary, this person's ability should be also high. So, <b>for reading skills, if you say, this person's reading skills are at advanced level and this person's vocabulary knowledge should also be at an advanced level</b> . I think they are in relative relationship... you know... you can't say somebody's vocabulary knowledge is high and then that person's reading ability is low. Would that happen?	[I]C1  [I]A3
I	That might happen.	
T	Really?	
I	For example, I may be able to comprehend a speech which does not contain a lot of sophisticated vocabulary items rather easily if I am extremely attentive. I think that could happen.	
T	Right. So, that means your vocabulary bank should be at a level that is ... that is... well... there is an optimum level. <b>You have to attain a certain level of vocabulary knowledge to understand something.</b>	[I]A3
I	I get what you mean. Now, am I correct in suggesting that you think the development of the four language skills and vocabulary building are equally important because you believe that a person may not be able to comprehend a passage easily if he or she has limited vocabulary, for example?	
T	Yes.	
I	What about <b>grammar knowledge and vocabulary knowledge</b> ? Do you think they are equally important?	
T	I think <b>grammar is not important</b> .	[I]D2
I	Not important?	
T	No.	
I	Why is that so?	
T	You know, when we learn a language, we are not that aware of the grammar rules. If you know that language, you know you are acquiring the language in your mind and you are not really aware of that. <b>Even if you make mistakes sometimes, you can still communicate with others. I believe you can often express your ideas with ungrammatical sentences.</b> I think grammar is not that important.	[I]A1
I	In other words, you believe vocabulary knowledge is more important because communication is still possible even when there are problems with grammar?	
T	Yes. True.	
I	Great. Okay, now let's move on to questions pertaining to vocabulary teaching. What are your <b>views on vocabulary teaching</b> ?	
T	Vocabulary teaching... <b>Teaching spelling and pronunciation is important.</b>	[II]A1
I	Any other comments?	

T	Perhaps teachers should consider asking students to guess from context, drawing students' attention to the part of speech and using synonyms. I think as a teacher, we have to teach the family of a word and the related words. We should teach them the root, the prefix, the suffix and the different forms of it. These help students to understand the meanings of different words so that they can recognise the words in comprehension and use them in their writing. I think we also need to teach the pronunciation well. We have to make students aware that they need to divide a word into different parts when it comes to accurate pronunciation of English words.	[II]B4 [II]B7 [II]B2 [II]B1  [II]B8
I	Right. What do you think are the most important issues for teachers to consider when it comes to vocabulary teaching?	
T	Most important. Vocabulary teaching. Most important. Whether the words are useful.	[II]C2
I	Right. Talking about the usefulness of vocabulary, I guess we'd both agree that there are a lot of words in the English language, and that it may be difficult, or even impossible, for teachers to explain to students all the words in class. Do you think it's a good idea not to teach vocabulary directly (i.e. not giving explicit instruction)?	
T	But then the students will ask. Students will ask "What do you mean by this and that?" Then, you still have to explain the words.	[II]E2
I	I see what you mean. When I asked you to explain what is meant by knowing a word in the earlier part of the interview, you mentioned meaning and spelling but also focused on other aspects of word knowledge like the part of speech and word parts while answering other questions. Indeed, there are also other aspects of word knowledge that you haven't addressed. Some examples include collocation, connotation, and constraints of use. Which of the aspects of word knowledge do you think English teachers should focus on or avoid teaching in class?	
T	That's a difficult question. Teachers should teach... They should teach meaning, pronunciation, part of speech, I think.	[II]F1M1 [II]F1F1 [II]F1U1
I	Are there any aspects that teachers should not focus on?	
T	I think of part of speech is important. Probably connotations as well? I don't think I spent time on that.	[II]F1U3
I	But do you think teachers should teach connotation?	
T	Teachers should teach connotation only if they have time... Right! Collocation. We must teach collocation. Collocation - It's important - Students need to know how to use the words correctly.	[IV]3 [II]F1U2
I	Moving on, what do you think teachers should consider when choosing vocabulary items to be taught in class?	
T	You mean... say that once again?	
I	As mentioned earlier, there are lots of words in a language, and teachers probably have time to focus on only some vocabulary items in class. In this case, what do you think are the issues teachers should consider when choosing vocabulary items to be taught in class?	

T	Oh! Of course, you have to know your students. You need to know their proficiency level. You can't teach big words, you know, to Form 1 kids.	[II]G3 [II]G4
I	What do you mean by big words?	
T	Some ideas are really sophisticated. Like the word <i>sophisticated</i> . How can you teach it to form 1? You know, we have to teach at a level which is relevant to the students' cognitive level. If they are too young, they can't really understand some sophisticated words. You know, the meaning of <i>sophistication</i> ... I think it's so hard. Mm, maybe you can think of another way.	[II]G3 [II]G4
I	<i>Difficult</i> ?	
T	Yeah. <i>Difficult</i> would be better. <i>Complicated</i> ... <i>complex</i> ... These would be easier for them.	[II]G4
I	Right. I can see why you think taking students' proficiency level into consideration is important. Do you think teachers should avoid dealing with some vocabulary items in the English language classroom?	
T	Foul language. Would you teach that?	[II]H2
I	Some teachers will explain that but tell students that such expressions should be avoided.	
T	But they would practice saying the expressions.	
I	That could happen. It's impossible to 'control' the students. They might get very excited because of those expressions.	
T	Yes. Taboos. Foul language. Formal school, no. As in an interest class, I think it's okay. We are not allowed to say those in class. You know, if I do so, I'll probably receive complaints on the other day. The students would go home and tell their parents. I suppose we also don't teach words related to sex. Well, taboos.	[II]H3
I	Could you tell me more about this?	
T	Well... in a formal school, we don't say these things. The students, of course, they need to learn. You know, people say if you want to know a language, you need to know how to curse in the first place. Of course, students actually need to learn all these. But we don't talk about these in a formal school. That's a pity.	[IV]1
I	Is that what you'd like to teach?	
T	Well, if I'm teaching an interest class at a night school, I would. These can be fun.	
I	What do you think teachers should consider when designing class activities for vocabulary enhancement?	
T	I think the tasks should be aligned with the reading texts and the writing tasks in the school syllabus. The vocabulary should appear in the reading passage and then maybe you have to teach the use of vocabulary. And then you have to have a task which allows students to use the words in their writing or speaking.	[II]I4 [II]I3
I	So, that's to ensure that teachers adopt a holistic approach to teaching vocabulary and encourage multiple encounters with words?	
T	Right.	

I	What <b>materials</b> should teachers use to foster vocabulary teaching and learning?	
T	<b>Authentic materials like newspaper articles would be the best,</b> but I can't really find the time to collect authentic reading materials. It's kind of difficult to find something good. And for vocabulary learning, maybe <b>something that is closely related to the students' life?</b>	[II]J1 [II]J1(1)
I	Right. Authenticity and students' interests. In your opinion, <b>how should teachers assess students' vocabulary knowledge and use?</b>	
T	Dictation. Tests.	[II]K3 [II]K1
I	Any other comments?	
T	Well, the students need to use the words. It's important to design quizzes to test whether students know how to change the word form. You don't provide the words and then ask the students to copy those words into the blanks. There should be some sort of understanding and transformation. The students need to transform the words and fit into the sentences. If they can do so, this means they have really mastered the words. Apart from that, we can use writing. If the students can produce a piece of writing by using the key vocabulary items correctly, then you know that they have learned the words.	[II]K1  [II]K2

	Major themes
	Representative comments

## Appendix G Codes for analysis of the teachers' practice

Categories	Focus	Codes
Teaching content	Aspects of lexical knowledge addressed	1. Pronunciation 2. Spelling 3. Word parts 4. Meaning 5. Concept and referents 6. Associations 7. Word form 8. Collocations 9. Constraints on use (Register, frequency, connotation etc.)
Teaching approach	Vocabulary instruction - strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning	Encourage students to: DET 1. Analyse part of speech DET 2. Analyse affixes and roots DET 3. Check for L1 translation DET 4. Analyse available pictures or gestures with students DET 5. Guess from textual context DET 6. Use bilingual dictionary DET 7. Use monolingual dictionary DET 8. Use word lists DET 9. Use flash cards SOC 1. Ask for an L1 translation SOC 2. Ask for paraphrase or synonym of new word SOC 3. Ask for a sentence including the new word SOC 4. Ask classmates for meaning SOC 5. Discover new meaning through group work activity
Teaching approach	Vocabulary instruction - strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered	SOC 1. Ask students to study and practise meaning in a group SOC 2. Checks students' flash cards or word lists for accuracy SOC 3. Ask students to interact with native-speakers MEM 1. Teach word with a pictorial representation of its meaning MEM 2. Help students to create an image of the word's meaning MEM 3. Connect word to a personal experience MEM 4. Associate the word with its coordinate MEM 5. Connect word to its synonyms and/or antonyms MEM 6. Use semantic maps MEM 7. Use scales for gradable adjectives MEM 8. Use peg method MEM 9. Use loci method MEM 10. Group words together to teach them MEM 11. Group words together spatially on a page MEM 12. Create sample sentences MEM 13. Group words together within a storyline

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## Appendix G (Continued)

Teaching approach	Vocabulary instruction - strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered (Continued)	<p>MEM 14. Draw students' attention to the spelling of a word</p> <p>MEM 15. Study the sound of a word with students</p> <p>MEM 16. Draw students' attention to a word</p> <p>MEM 17. Help students to image word form</p> <p>MEM 18. Ask students to underline initial letter of the word</p> <p>MEM 19. Ask students to outline the word with lines (configuration)</p> <p>MEM 20. Use keyword method</p> <p>MEM 21. Draw students' attention to affixes and roots</p> <p>MEM 22. Draw students' attention to part of speech</p> <p>MEM 23. Paraphrase the word's meaning</p> <p>MEM 24. Use L1 translation to explain word meaning</p> <p>MEM 25. Introduce the idiom(s) of the target word</p> <p>MEM 26. Use physical action when teaching a word</p> <p>MEM 27. Use semantic feature grids</p> <p>COG 1. Use / encourage verbal repetition</p> <p>COG 2. Encourage written repetition</p> <p>COG 3. Study word lists with students</p> <p>COG 4. Show flash cards to students</p> <p>COG 5. Ask students to take notes in class</p> <p>COG 6. Ask students to read the vocabulary section in the textbook</p> <p>COG 7. Ask students to listen to tape of word lists</p> <p>COG 8. Put English labels on physical objects</p> <p>COG 9. Ask students to keep a vocabulary notebook</p> <p>MET 1. Use English-language media (songs, movies, etc.)</p> <p>MET 2. Test students through questioning or assessment tasks</p> <p>MET 3. Ask students to complete word practice</p> <p>MET 4. Encourage students to skip or pass new word</p> <p>MET 5. Encourage multiple encounters with the target word</p>
Teaching approach	Vocabulary activities	<p>VA 1. Games</p> <p>VA 2. Group discussion</p> <p>VA 3. Film appreciation</p> <p>VA 4. Song appreciation</p> <p>VA 5. Vocabulary sharing</p>
Teaching resources	Materials used for vocabulary teaching	<p>TR 1. Textbook</p> <p>TR 2. Readers</p> <p>TR 3. Handouts</p> <p>TR 4. Newspaper / magazine articles</p> <p>TR 5. Songs</p> <p>TR 6. Videos / films</p> <p>TR 7. Dictation passages</p>

## Appendix H A sample of the coded lessons

Laura's lesson with 4A on 3 October 2016 (34:22)

T:	Okay, please fill in as many blanks as possible to improve your vocabulary. The first letter has been given.	TR3
T:	Okay, Jack has seven. Who can beat him? Okay, I will get the soft copy and I will be back in one minute. See whether you can bring me any good news later.	
T:	Now, boys and girls. Shall we go through the answers? If you can get 5, that's already very good. If you can put 1 or 2, not bad. Okay, so what does it imply if you can't fill in the worksheet? What does it imply?	
S:	Your English is not good.	
T:	I didn't say so. If you can't finish the vocabulary sheet, perhaps your vocabulary bank is not huge enough. That's why you have to build your vocabulary bank. That's also why we have to work on an article every time so that I can give you the feedback. You can expect a list of vocabulary every time you finish one article. Perhaps by the end of form six, you can build up a lot of social-issue related vocabulary, okay? Let's go through the answer. Okay, who can get the first one? What kind of architecture?	
S:	Defensive.	
T:	Exactly, defensive. Please put that down, <i>defensive</i> . Aiming at protecting ourselves only, not doing good to other people. How about the next one? It is the opposite of <i>encourage</i> ?	COG1 MEM16 MEM23
S:	<i>Discourage</i> .	MEM5
T:	Discourage. How do you spell discourage?	COG1
S:	D-I-S-C-O-U-R-A-G-E.	MEM14
T:	Discourages, discourages.  Next, read the definition. Read the definition again. Now, the definition for <i>hostile architecture</i> . <i>Hostile architecture</i> . We design that because we want to discourage people from touching or using. For example, you may see very huge stones under the bridge. They were constructed to discourage the street sleeper to sleep there. Okay? Now, when you work on question number 2, discussing whether this kind of architecture is for better <i>cityscape</i> . Please learn this word. What does it mean? Do you know the word <i>cityscape</i> ? What does it mean by <i>cityscape</i> ? Geography students? Annie? Monica? How about the word <i>landscape</i> ? If we say New Zealand is a country with very beautiful <i>landscape</i> , it means it has very beautiful natural scenery all around. Can you guess the meaning of <i>cityscape</i> ? <i>Cityscape</i> refers to the scenery in our city. <i>Cityscape</i> . Now, let's try to answer the other questions. How about another word for negatively?	MEM16  COG1 MEM16 MEM3  COG1 MEM16 DET5  MEM23



S:	Positively.	
T:	No. <i>Synonym</i> . That means a word of similar meaning.	MEM23
S:	<i>Adversely</i> .	
T:	<p>Exactly! How do spell <i>adversely</i>? <i>Adversely</i>, can you please write that down? In Hong Kong, you may find that homeless people seldom have bath. Actually, we do have public bathrooms, though we don't have many of this in our territory. So, perhaps they can't take shower that often. If we build this kind of architecture, we can drive them away. In that case, they won't <i>adversely</i> affect the hygiene of our city.</p> <p>Now, another word for <i>spoil</i>. Some students wrote in their work that those homeless people would affect the image of Hong Kong and the image of tourism. They thought Hong Kong is a very prosperous city, but then they see many street sleepers or beggars in the street. They would affect our image. What is another word for <i>spoil</i>? <i>Spoil</i>?</p>	<p>MEM5 COG1 MEM16 COG5 MEM14 MEM3</p> <p>MEM16 COG1 MEM5</p>
S:	<i>Ruin</i> .	MEM5
T:	<p><i>Ruin</i>. Good! Let's put down the word Gary has mentioned. You can also use the word <i>ruin</i>.</p> <p>Another word starts with letter T. T... A... <i>Tarnish</i>. <i>Tarnish</i>. How do you spell <i>Tarnish</i>? Let's learn something new.</p> <p>Another word for <i>image</i>, please?</p>	<p>COG5 COG1 MEM16 MEM14 COG1 MEM16</p>
S:	<i>Reputation</i> .	MEM16
T:	<p><i>Reputation</i>. Exactly! What does it mean by <i>reputation</i>? That means the image, the adjective would be <i>reputed</i>.</p> <p>Now, <i>reputed</i>. <i>Reputed</i>. For example, Macau is reputed as the Las Vegas of the East. Hong Kong is reputed as the pearl of the orient. Macau is reputed for Las Vegas of the East. That means famous. Another word for famous. And the word reputation comes from the word reputed. They are in the same family.</p> <p>Next, if you'd like to describe Hong Kong, you can use the word <i>prosperous</i>. <i>Prosperous</i>. It means it is successful and wealthy.</p> <p>You can also use other word which starts with F. How would you describe Hong Kong, apart from international or financial city? Any idea? F-l-, not flower, <i>flourishing</i>, okay? <i>Flourishing</i>. So, these are the adjectives for describing Hong Kong, okay?</p> <p>Now, moving on to the negative side. You should have learned this word. Some students said that building this kind of architecture can't help with the hygiene because this is just an excuse of the government,</p>	<p>COG1 MEM5 MEM21 COG1 MEM16 MEM22 MEM12 MEM5 MEM21</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM22 MEM14 COG1 MEM16 MEM22</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 DET5</p>

	<p>okay? So, let's learn this adjective, <i>splendid</i>. What does it mean by <i>splendid</i>? Can you guess the meaning? <i>Splendid</i>? It means <i>beautiful</i>. That's why splendid excuse is like the beautiful excuse of our government. They said that they want to improve the hygiene, but these are constructed to drive away the homeless people. Let's learn this expression from Nicole's work.</p> <p>Next, what does it mean by <i>bury the heads in the sand</i>? Just imagine the situation. You don't have to try, but if you put your heads in the sand, how would you feel? You can't breathe. You can't hear, you can't see anything. So, let me try to explain this. The government officials said that they would improve the problem of homelessness, but they're just <i>burying their head in the sand</i>. They can't solve the problem of homelessness at all and try to ignore the problem, okay? So, please learn this expression.</p> <p>And you can talk about the value of hostile architecture. Which one do you think is more important? Artistic value or <i>practical</i> value? <i>Practical</i> that means whether it is useful, whether it is useful. Which one should be more important? I think it should be obvious enough. Practical value. It's more important than artistic value, okay?</p> <p>Now, please learn this kind of sentence pattern, okay? This kind of architecture is neither artistic nor beautiful, not to mention... what is another phrase for not to mention? <i>Let alone</i>. <i>Let alone</i>, the meaning of <i>let alone</i> would be <i>not to mention</i>. They are not beautiful, they are not artistic, not to mention its practicality. Okay?</p> <p>Let's also learn the word <i>eyesore</i>. <i>Eyesore</i> ...that means when you see these architecture, you don't feel comfortable with your eyes, okay? So, what's that in Cantonese?</p>	<p>MEM5</p> <p>MEM3</p> <p>MEM2 COG1 MEM16</p> <p>MEM23</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM5</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM24</p>
S:	唔順眼	
T:	<p>Very similar, when you see these architecture, you don't feel them very beautiful. You think that they are ruining the cityscape, okay? <i>Eye-sore</i>. Let's try to pronounce this word. <i>Eyesore</i>. It should be simple enough. Next. The government shouldn't...</p>	MEM15
S:	<i>Neglect</i> .	COG1
T:	<p>Neglect. Yes, N-E-G-L-E-C-T. Neglect the needs of people in need.</p> <p>In your work, you always mention people in need, people we need help. But we can use this kind of word, we can call them <i>the needy</i>. <i>The needy</i>. No 's', because this is already a plural noun.</p> <p>How about some other words to refer to the poor people? Don't always say poor people. Let's get to the advanced level... Under...</p>	<p>MEM16 MEM14</p> <p>COG1 MEM23 MEM22</p>

S:	Under the rich.	
T:	<p>Very good try, but no. <i>Underprivileged</i>. <i>The underprivileged</i> that means the poor people living under poverty, okay?</p> <p>Another word starts with letter I, which can be used to describe the poor people? Alice, do you have any idea? No? I-m-p-o-... <i>impoverished</i>. That can be used to refer to people who are poor. This one you should know, people living under poverty. How about some ways for improving our environment?</p>	<p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23</p> <p>MEM23 MEM14</p>
S:	<i>Penalty</i> .	
T:	We learned that in form 3, <i>penalty</i> . That means the punishment for littering. Actually, if the government thinks that building this kind of architecture can improve the hygiene, why don't we do all these alternatives? If we can increase the penalty from littering... What is the current fine for littering now? How much do you have to pay?	<p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM3</p>
S:	\$1500.	
T:	<p>So, if we can increase the penalty or fine, perhaps it can improve our environment further. People would be deterred not to throw rubbish.</p> <p>Let's learn another word as well, <i>litter</i>. Do you know the word <i>Litter</i>? It's similar to the word <i>rubbish</i>, but they are not the same. For example, if you don't throw <i>rubbish</i> in the rubbish bin, you have to pay for \$1,500. But what if they increase the fine to \$3,000? Do you think people would be more conscious about their throwing habit? I am sure. Because mostly people are money-minded, and if we increase the penalty, it would deter people from throwing rubbish, okay? Please, learn the word. Increase the fine to threaten people not to throw rubbish. Learn the word <i>scavengers</i>, that means the people who clean the streets, okay? Scavengers. Or you can say, let's increase the frequency of cleansing the street. Like we clean the street more often, we can also have the very standardized environment, okay? \$1,500. Next, moving the street sleepers. Re... what is another word?</p>	<p>COG1 MEM16 MEM5 MEM5 COG1 MEM16</p> <p>MEM23 COG1 MEM16</p>
S:	Removal	
T:	Removal? No. Re... give you another letter, L.	
S:	Relocate	
T:	<p>Exactly, it should be <i>relocation</i>. Relocate. That means moving them. Relocation of the street sleeper. Now, when talking about the solution, we should also consider various aspects. What can different stakeholders do? What can the government do? What can the citizens do?</p> <p>We also have to think of the <i>effectiveness</i>, whether the measure is effective. You can't suggest "Oh, to solve the problem of homelessness in Hong Kong, let's build a lot of houses for them." This is not possible</p>	<p>MEM21 MEM23 COG1 MEM16</p> <p>MEM21</p>

	<p>because it is unfair to other citizens if we intentionally build houses for them. So, think about the <i>effectiveness</i>.</p> <p>We should also think about whether the measure is practical, <i>practicality</i>. For example, everyone notes that if we give money to them, the homeless problem can be solved. But do you think it is <i>practical</i>? It would get other citizens angry. Like, if we give each of the street sleeper hundred thousand dollars, of course the problem can be solved. But this is not <i>practical</i> because we have to maintain the fairness in the city as well, okay? So, this is <i>practicality</i>.</p> <p>And think about <i>feasibility</i>, whether it works or not.</p> <p><i>Feasibility</i>, whether it works or not. Now, these are some of the good suggestions from your classmates, okay?</p> <p>Now, you said that we have identify the root cause of the problem, so that we can find out the relevant solution to the problem. So, let's learn another word, which is called <i>culprit</i>, <i>Culprit</i>. That means the root cause of the problem.</p> <p>And we don't always say <i>uproot</i> the problem, you know what <i>uproot</i> is? If we <i>uproot</i> the problem, we <i>remove</i> the problem.</p> <p>The problem will no longer appear.</p> <p>So, let's learn another word, <i>eradicate</i>, <i>eradicate</i> the problem.</p> <p>That means the problem won't appear anymore.</p> <p>Next, can you give me a noun phrase?</p> <p>Some students suggest that the government should improve the social welfare system, so that we can provide... can you try? Any idea, Jack?</p> <p>If a walking dictionary can't give us any idea, let me give it to you. Let's learn the phrase <i>safety net</i>, okay? Social welfare system includes the subsidy we give to the poor people. The subsidy we give to the underprivileged. So, if we can improve the welfare system and give them more social welfare, perhaps we can give better protection to the poor people. <i>Safety net</i>, okay? The word <i>safety net</i> means that...this is a building, if somebody is going to jump from the roof top, we build something here. So, even they fall, they won't die immediately because of the cushion here – That's <i>safety net</i>. So, this can be applied in this situation, okay? And, Thomson, you just say you can fill in this one?</p>	<p>COG1 MEM16</p> <p>MEM21</p> <p>MEM16 COG1 MEM23</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM5 COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM5</p> <p>COG1 MEM16 MEM2</p>
S:	Yeah.	
T:	What is that?	
S:	<i>Temporary</i> .	

T:	Yes, <i>temporary</i> . That means the short term one. That's very good, let's jot down <i>temporary</i> , okay? Don't argue. Okay, boys and girls, can you tell me why we can't give them the long-term shelter? Why do we have to give them the temporary one, the short term one?	COG1 MEM16 MEM23 COG5
S:	Because if it's a long-term shelter, you have to find the food, water and toilet for them.	
T:	Gary is suggesting if we provide the long-term shelter for them, it is not cost effective. Like every year, we have to provide them food, money, shelter, toilet. Daily necessity. So, it is not <i>practical</i> at all. So, it may be better to just give them a temporary one. For example, we can build some shelters in the abandon schools. You know in Hong Kong, some schools are abandoned. Nobody is using the school. So perhaps, we can put them in the school, okay? And we can also offer the mentoring or training program. Perhaps we can assign some social workers to talk to them and see how we can encourage them to be more... boys and girls?	
S:	<i>Self-supporting</i> .	
T:	<i>Self-supporting</i> . What does it mean by <i>self-supporting</i> ? Yeah, they don't have to rely on others, but they can support their daily living by themselves, self-supporting. Can you please learn this expression? You can find the picture here. If it is not clear enough, look at the screen. Give a man a fish, you just feed him for a day. But if you teach them how to fish, you feed them for a life time. Can you see the difference? We can't give them the money support only, we have to teach them how to support themselves in a long term. So, that's why we provide temporary shelter, teach them how to find a job in the future, so that they can support their living. Is that all? Is that all? Let's have a quiz on all the vocabulary later.	COG1 MEM16 MEM23 MEM1

	Lexical items explicitly taught in class
	Explicit instruction of the targeted vocabulary items



## Appendix I An overview of a teacher's practices in lexical instruction for analysis

		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Aspects of vocabulary knowledge addressed		N=153	N=255	N=137
		per cent	per cent	per cent
Form	Pronunciation	88	89	91
	Spelling	16	21	13
	Word parts	25	10	19
Meaning	Meaning	64	81	79
	Concept and referent	0	0	3
	Association	22	34	29
Use	Word form	22	5	34
	Collocations	3	4	7
	Constraints on use	12	2	4

		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning		N=153	N=255	N=137
		per cent	per cent	per cent
DET	Encourage students to guess from textual context	1	1	1
DET	Encourage students to analyse affixes and roots	0	1	1
DET	Encourage students to use monolingual dictionary	0	0	0
SOC	Encourage students to ask classmates for meaning	0	0	0
/	Other strategies	0	0	0

		Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Strategies for the discovery of a new word's meaning		N=153	N=255	N=137
		per cent	per cent	per cent
SOC	Ask students to study and practise meaning in a group	0	0	0
MEM	Teach word with a pictorial representation of its meaning	0	9	14
MEM	Help students to create an image of the word's meaning	0	1	1
MEM	Connect word to a personal experience	9	32	12
MEM	Associate the word with its coordinate	1	6	1
MEM	Connect word to its synonyms and/or antonyms	22	34	29
MEM	Group words together to teach them	76	76	71
MEM	Create sample sentences	0	2	1
MEM	Draw students' attention to the spelling of a word	16	21	13
MEM	Study the sound of a word with students	9	15	9
MEM	Draw students' attention to a word	88	89	91
MEM	Draw students' attention to affixes and roots	24	11	15
MEM	Draw students' attention to part of speech	22	5	34
MEM	Paraphrase the word's meaning	46	40	57

(continued on next page)



Appendix I (Continued)

MEM	Use L1 translation to explain word meaning	0	5	0
MEM	Ask students to use L1 translation for explanation	1	5	4
MEM	Use physical action when when teaching a word	0	2	1
COG	Use / encourage verbal repetition	88	89	91
COG	Study word lists with students	0	7	0
COG	Ask students to take notes in class	35	39	21
COG	Ask students to read the vocabulary section in the textbook	0	0	0
MET	Use English-language media	0	0	0
MET	Test students through questioning or assessment tasks	0	14	0
MET	Ask students to complete word practice	16	11	7
MET	Encourage multiple encounters with the target word	11	22	24
/	Other strategies	0	0	0

## Appendix J Teachers' reflective writing

### LAURA'S REFLECTIVE ENTRIES

#### **I. Reflective Entries written in January**

The discussion sessions are very useful for me to notice any constraints in my teaching or some areas I have overlooked, e.g. asking students to prepare before lesson, explicit teaching of strategies on vocabulary building skills.

My beliefs in teaching vocabulary are basically shaped by the way how I acquired vocab knowledge in primary/ secondary schools. But the approaches I find useful might not be applicable to my students. By studying students' views towards vocabulary learning, I can vary my teaching strategies and devise more effective learning activities that help maximize their vocabulary building.

#### **Session 1 The role of vocabulary and the notion of 'knowing a word'**

It's interesting to explore students' views towards vocabulary learning. It would be great if we can know how learners' proficiency affect their views on vocab learning so that we can cater for learners' needs and use different approaches when teaching elite classes or other weaker classes (but I know it's quite a huge project!).

The idea of receptive vocab being easier than productive echoes my belief. The discussion did help notice me the importance of building students' productive vocab bank. I think I'll design more tasks/ activities for students to use/ apply the vocab they have learnt.

#### **Session 2 Vocabulary in the English language classroom**

It's good to know how students see the role of teachers in their vocabulary learning. I don't find it surprising that our students still rely heavily on English teachers when learning vocab (from p.13). It gives me new insights that we have to ask students to take a more active role and adopt a more self-directed approach in vocabulary building.

I'm surprised to see around half of our students do want to have autonomy to choose the vocab items they want to learn (p.13 Q.5). Perhaps the vocab in our textbooks might have bored them or they don't find the vocab they have learnt useful in their daily communication. I do see students' wish to learn something beyond their textbooks and readers (p.13 Q.4) and do understand that commercial textbook can't cover L2 vocab teaching. But it's easier said than done when it comes to getting rid of commercial textbooks (it's very time consuming creating extra learning materials when we have a tight teaching schedule and have to take up so many classes). I did try to include extra learning materials, but time constraints and the exam-oriented system often let students down. Perhaps our current 'memorising vocab list' approach and heavy reliance on vocab in textbooks might discourage students to learn vocab, and they might therefore regard learning vocab a boring thing. I think I'll propose scrapping some target but infrequently used vocab items (e.g. attractions in Macau/ New Zealand) from our Scheme of Work in our form meeting next year so that we can take the time to use some authentic texts to teach something beyond the textbooks.

### **Session 3 Vocabulary instruction strategies**

I do believe that students can pick up some vocabulary items or language patterns that we frequently use in our language of instruction. Sometimes, I do deliberately use the same pattern/ word choice again and again for the sake of exposing students to the target items I want them to learn.

It's interesting to see that students have very contrasting views towards using L1 translation. I'm informed when and how to use L1 in my teaching after this discussion session. After knowing their views, I'll also give students thinking time and encourage them to guess the meaning of new words.

In this discussion session, I was informed with some potential problems of some strategies that I frequently use for vocab teaching, e.g. teaching synonyms and antonyms. This would be very useful for me to clarify to students the synonyms which can't be used interchangeably, and to encourage them to use dictionary to identify the use of different words.

### **Comments on the discussion sessions**

1. Do you like the discussion sessions? Why (not)?

Yes, especially studying the survey findings and sharing of teaching practices by our colleagues. (We seldom have time and chances for professional exchange!)

2. Do you think you have participated in the discussion actively? What are the reasons behind this?

I was a bit slow in response as it takes time for me to reflect thoroughly. But yes – active thinking while listening to others!

3. Do you like this format of the discussion? Is there a part that you like/dislike in particular?

The format is good. I especially like the part when we studied the findings of the questionnaires and explored students' belief.

4. Do you consider a dialogic approach to teacher professional development (i.e. professional development through discussion) conducive?

Yes, it's good to clarify our doubts and get to know the beliefs of different English teachers.

5. Could you comment on other details related to the discussion (e.g. the use of timer, the introduction of ideas without PPT slides, etc.)?

I'm okay with the use of timer.

The notes are very well-organised, so it's okay not to use PPT.

6. Do you have any other suggestions on how the sessions can be improved?

Can the self-reflection questions be shown to us prior to the discussion sessions? I don't mind spending time to reflect on my teaching as I think giving very specific examples of my vocab teaching might make the discussion sessions more fruitful. (but I'm not sure whether other colleagues would like it! :P)

When you analyse our lessons, can you share any good practices of our colleagues which you find effective for students' vocabulary acquisition? It would be great if we can try some new and creative teaching and learning activities in class.

Thank you very much for doing research and giving me answers to the questions I raised in the interview! ☺

## **II. Reflective Entries written in March**

### **Session 4 Vocabulary Enhancement activities**

To me, vocabulary activities, like games, video-watching, are essential Vocabulary learning should not be just about memorising the spelling, knowing the meaning, doing gap-filling worksheets, and cramming a list of vocabulary from their textbook, as the intensive exercises and quizzes can only help train students to be 'machines for exam'. If students learn with pleasure and enjoyment, they tend to remember the knowledge better. However, it's quite saddening to find from the survey that some students see vocabulary activities a waste of time. Perhaps it's the packed learning schedule and high-stake assessments that discourage students to learn vocabulary with pleasure. Or perhaps they fail to relate vocabulary learning to their real-life communication and usage. Some students want to have fun while learning but they are simply too stressed. There has to be give and take in language classrooms. When dictations and quizzes are unavoidable in our current curriculum, I'll continue to strike a balance between fun vocab activities and consolidation exercises.

Establishing learning objectives is important, but I would avoid relating their learning purposes mostly to examinations. I always believe that students must see the needs and purposes of learning vocabulary. It's not about learning vocabulary for getting higher marks in assessments or examinations. They should understand the benefits of knowing more words and how their learning is made useful and meaningful in their life. As teachers, we should always communicate with students why their learning is important, and always relate their learning to real-life usage.

There are lots of useful enhancement activities that are introduced in the session. Yet, different students have different preferences and learning styles. Language teachers can therefore observe their students' needs and plan activities that suit their classes the most. Reconceptualising is a good strategy that I'll try to use more in my daily teaching. It's especially useful when teaching words of multiple meanings.

### **Session 5 Autonomous vocabulary learning**

I have always been conscious about the L1 interference on students' English learning. Therefore, when planning my vocabulary lessons, I always think of some mnemonic strategies to help strengthen students' memory on those easily-confused items. I usually show students some common mistakes on vocab choice made by Chinese learners after each writing task by creating a proofreading worksheet. I find this approach quite useful to correct their mistakes that they are not aware of. After the discussion session, I have better ideas of the major challenges and difficulties Chinese learners face, e.g. culturally loaded words. Therefore, when planning my vocab lessons, I'll pay more attention to their weaknesses or needs.

It's surprising to see that almost 50 per cent of our students think that it's good enough to focus ONLY on the words and vocabulary strategies important to tests and examinations. It perhaps explains the previous findings that some students don't like games as they believe they are not helpful for examinations.

If students are not interested or motivated to learn English vocabulary, autonomous or self-regulated learning is almost impossible. These learners tend to segregate learning English from their everyday life. I believe the first step we teachers can do is to introduce more authentic learning materials, e.g. advertisements, posts on social media, YouTube clips, songs, news articles, mobile apps, or even screenshots of popular websites/ forums/ TV programmes/ games. This is to show that they should not just acquire knowledge from their textbooks and Grammar Book. Seeing things they do at home/ something familiar are brought into their classroom, students will be noticed that English learning happens anytime, anywhere in their daily life. They will therefore be more likely to pay more attention to the surroundings. They can then 'blur the geological boundary' of learning English.

When reading the problems our students face when learning vocabulary, it's interesting to see that they regard the lack of opportunity to use English at home a problem. It reminds me of teaching our students how to solve their problems they face when learning vocabulary explicitly, e.g. creating more opportunities to expose themselves to English. Weaker learners tend to rely heavily on teachers. We should help students see the 'ownership' of their learning.

Smartphones and the Internet have been an integral part of students' life. When it's nearly impossible to ask students to get rid of their smartphones, we should think of ways to engage students to learn with their gadgets, e.g. encouraging the use of English on Whatsapp, using English interface on social media.

I'll try some strategies in my classrooms, e.g. giving explicit guidelines on finding reliable sources of learning materials, demonstrating to students how to make use of online dictionary/ how to search for information using hyperlink.

### **Comments on the discussion sessions**

It's good to have time to share our thoughts with our partner before getting into the discussion. Sometimes, we do have similar insights or experiences. We can then share what we have in common so as to save time.

Thank you for the snacks you prepared! ☺

## **III. Reflective Entries written in April**

### **Session 6 Vocabulary assessment**

From this session, I have gained insights on how I can design vocabulary assessment tools which suit the needs of my students.

The discussion with my partner about whether to design gap-filling quizzes in context or minimal context helps me to reflect on my usual practice. As vocabulary items are

usually tested in context in our term tests and examinations, I usually design gap-filling vocab quizzes in context with no choices given so that students can have more drills to better prepare for their exam. As both of the classes I'm teaching are elite classes, students have good phonological awareness, good memory and do regular revision. They usually perform quite well in those customized quizzes. But after sharing with my partner who teaches a group of weaker learners, I find that my current practice may not work in weaker classes. They may be overwhelmed when they are asked to remember the spelling, meaning as well as consider the grammar accuracy, e.g. part of speech, singular/ plural, tenses, voice. Plus, setting those quizzes are really time-consuming. If I am to design vocabulary quizzes again, I will thoroughly consider the purposes of my assessment, the language level of my students, the ease of setting the assessment.

I also found that the way how I assess students' vocabulary knowledge tend to be quite formal (dictations, quizzes) as their performances are all counted as formative assessment. The format is also quite controlled as I am the one who choose the vocabulary items to be tested. The sharing of my colleague about asking students to work in pairs and write their learnt vocab after teaching a unit inspires me to assess students' vocab knowledge in a more relaxing way through competition or pair work. In this way, learners can have great sense of ownership of their learning, and they also have sense of achievement if they can recall a lot of vocab items. I think I'll try this in my classes in my future teaching.

From the theoretical literature, I was introduced with a wider range of assessment tools that can encourage vocabulary learning, e.g. individualized testing, and evaluate students' vocabulary learning, e.g. through games, competitions. I will definitely try them to help students cultivate an interest in vocabulary learning. I will also vary the format of my vocab quizzes/ tests, e.g. include different question types, encourage more productive use of the word. Not only can it better cater for learners' diversity, it can also help ease my workload.

### **Session 7 Reflection on vocabulary teaching and learning**

Although this research project increases my workload (printing handouts, having interviews and writing reflective entries☺), I am glad that I have participated in it as I am more conscious about how to plan my vocab lessons to maximize students' learning outcomes. From the analysis of my vocab lessons, I am noticed about the strengths, e.g. introducing extra vocab beyond the syllabus, a wide variety of vocab-learning activities, and weaknesses, e.g. absence of introducing self-regulated learning techniques, of my current teaching approaches. Being a reflective person, I am always willing to initiate changes if I am aware of any inadequacies in my teaching. So, I did deliberately include more strategies to encourage my students to learn vocab by themselves.

All the discussion sessions enable me to know more about our students' views so that I can devise better activities to teach and assess their vocab knowledge. I am also inspired by my colleagues' experience sharing and our professional exchange in the discussion sessions. I gain new insights from the useful theories prepared by the researcher. ☺ It's a valuable professional development experience.

## LOUISE'S REFLECTIVE ENTRIES

### I. Reflective entries written in January

#### Session 1

- 1 It is insightful to understand students' opinions on the importance of vocabulary building in relation to the development of the four language skills and grammar knowledge.
- 2 By acknowledging most students value the equal importance of building vocabulary, developing the four language skills and grammar knowledge, I realize students emphasize the values of vocabulary, grammar and language skills on their understanding, communication, daily life and every learning area. It reflects students' motivation and needs of learning lie on the application of the language.
- 3 On the other hand, some students may place their focus of learning vocabulary, grammar and the language skills on exam or specifically writing only.
- 4 It is inspiring to know students' interpretation of knowing a word. A lot of students underestimate the importance of knowing parts of speech, concepts behind words, levels of formality and related words.
- 5 As a teacher, I should highlight the values of vocabulary, grammar and language skills on students' daily communication and different learning areas. I should also be aware of students' daily needs in grammar, vocabulary and language skills in order to enrich my teaching.
- 6 I should let students know all the 4 skills should be related to grammar and vocabulary. Grammar and vocabulary should be improved for the purpose of effective communication.
- 7 Since a lot of students underestimate the importance of knowing parts of speech, concepts behind words, levels of formality and related words, it will be great if I can encourage students to explore these aspects more in lesson/ outside the classroom. It is worth more discussion with students.
- 8 More resources about knowing words can be recommended to students, such as a collocation dictionary and the British Corpus.

#### Session 2

- 1 It is interesting to know that students want to learn as many vocabulary items as possible from the English teachers. They tend to rely a lot on teachers' input of vocabulary teaching. Meanwhile, they want to have their own choices of learning vocabulary.
- 2 I should identify what words to teach by their frequency, usefulness and students' preferences. Textbooks should be the basis of teaching, but I should also judge the validity and usefulness of the textbook content. Students' vocabulary learning should be expanded beyond the textbook.
- 3 Repetitions and retrieving should be enforced to consolidate students' vocabulary learning.
- 4 Different teaching strategies should be implemented to teach vocabulary. There is no best way of it.

### **Session 3**

- 1 It is inspiring to know most students want to guess the word meanings before teachers explain them and learn the strategies of expanding the vocabulary.
- 2 From the students' perspective, there are different implicit and explicit ways of teaching words including visualization, guessing the meaning, putting the word into use, translation, paraphrasing and using synonyms, word origins and teacher-student routine communication.
- 3 From the students' perspective, there are different ways for teachers to help them remember vocabulary including working on instructional practice, repetition, note-taking and putting words into practice.
- 4 It is surprising to know the effectiveness of L1 translation.
- 5 In-class Q-and-A is essential for activating students' vocabulary knowledge.
- 6 Visual aids are necessary for teaching concrete ideas.
- 7 Examples and explanations are useful for teaching abstract ideas.
- 8 Students should be encouraged to pronounce, spell and write about words.
- 9 Understanding common roots is commonly neglected but should be highlighted in lessons.
- 10 Mnemonic devices seem to be useful in lesson, but they require teachers' creativity. I guess it will be quite fun using the devices, though.

#### **Comments on the discussion sessions:**

- 1 The format of small group discussion is appropriate.
- 2 The duration is appropriate.
- 3 The time is appropriate.
- 4 The setting is good.

### **II. Reflective entries written in March**

#### **Session 4**

I have developed a better understanding about students' views on vocabulary activities and the importance of interactive activities on vocabulary learning. I have learnt that students' views on vocabulary learning mainly base on the pressure imposed on them from the activities, learning outcomes and their preferences. This has given me the insight of designing my future vocabulary activities. It is also important to ask what students want to learn and what activities they prefer before planning the vocabulary lessons. For example, I can choose the reading articles, songs and movies with the class. Apart from the traditional ways of teaching such as log keeping, dictation, vocabulary sharing and reading, there are more interactive and communicative ways which are interesting to students such as games, competitions, movie appreciation and song appreciation. I have tried teacher-student dialogue, crossword puzzles, class discussion, log keeping, competitions, vocabulary sharing and dictations. However, in order to strike a balance between traditional and interactive vocabulary teaching, I will carry out more activities such as stakeholders' sharing and pair work to ensure students' understanding and facilitate their exchange of ideas. I have also learnt some good teaching ideas from my colleagues such as the introduction of apps and song



appreciation during the break time which can benefit students' vocabulary teaching and add more fun to their learning. It is actually surprising to me that a large number of students would like English teachers to conduct vocabulary activities in small groups which I am not used to conducting in vocabulary teaching. I am not used to conducting vocabulary teaching because I thought vocabulary learning is an individual process. However, after the discussion and knowing the benefits brought by collaborative learning, I will try to integrate elements like a wide variety of games (such as Snake), purposeful song appreciation and movie appreciation with my classes. Despite the time constraint in lessons, it is still worth trying.

The theories behind are insightful to me too. I should pay attention to the difference of interests between teachers and students. What I find interesting may not interest my students so the choice of context should be flexible enough to fit the students' preferences. The way of retrieving students' knowledge should be skillful too. In order to retrieve receptive knowledge, teachers should tell words while students tell meanings. On the other hand, in order to retrieve productive knowledge, teachers should tell the meanings and students tell the words. As a whole, as suggested by the theories, besides noticing and encouraging retrieval, I should also give more chances for students to generate usage such as retelling of the input. The suggested activities including Twenty Questions and Headlines are new to me so I would like to give a try in class.

## **Session 5**

As teachers, we mostly agree that L1 interference and the lack of exposure and world knowledge can be the obstacles of vocabulary learning. It also reflects why students find vocabulary learning difficult. It is pleasing to know that many students feel vocabulary learning fun, emphasize the importance of dictionary and value the importance of vocabulary usage. It can be summarized that spelling, usage and reliable sources of vocabulary learning are influential to students' learning from the students' perspective.

Regarding the insights from the discussion, in order to tackle spelling problems, I will encourage students to pay attention to phonics, chunks and stress. Concerning vocabulary usage, I will give more suggestions to students such as reliable online dictionaries and song/movie recommendations. Apart from teaching pronunciations, word meanings, synonyms and parts of speech, it is also essential to introduce collocations, multiple meanings, idioms and word contexts, which can strengthen students' understanding of vocabulary. Also, by bringing the cultural and linguistic differences, students' awareness of vocabulary usage can be highlighted.

It is insightful to know the taxonomy of vocabulary strategies including determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Of the strategies suggested, I find the consolidation ones inspiring to me such as mnemonics, peg method, loci method and grouping. Surely, teachers should also be flexible and open-minded enough to adapt various teaching strategies to cater for students' learning needs.

### **Comments on the sessions:**

- 1 The teachers are more involved this time with the scaffolding activities like pair discussion.
- 2 The length of the discussion with the coverage of 2 sessions is acceptable. 3 sessions are a bit too demanding comparatively.
- 3 The discussion session should not be longer than 3 hours.
- 4 The provision of refreshments is great.
- 5 The setting is pleasant.
- 6 Starting at 9 am is good.

### **III. Reflective entries written in April**

#### **Session 6**

- 1 After the teachers' discussion, I find that we all agree with the importance of assessments, particularly assessment for learning and assessment of learning. Through assessments, teachers and students can both understand what to teach and learn next and evaluate the teaching and learning progress. It seems that different teachers have various strategies for the assessment of learning such as in-class questioning and answering, group discussion, competitions, crossword puzzles, sudden quizzes and dictations.
- 2 It is insightful to know students prefer different types of vocabulary exercises to enhance their learning and teachers' corrections on their mistakes. However, they don't really have a strong preference on regular quizzes and dictations. It is meaningful to draw the conclusion that workload, pressure, nature of assessments and students' sense of satisfaction should be put into consideration when we design teaching activities for vocabulary assessments. The ease of students' embarrassment, frustration and stress is crucial to enhance their level of enjoyment in the learning activities.
- 3 I am most impressed by the idea of individualised testing in which students can develop learner autonomy on what their learning should focus on. The preparation of teachers is simple, but the learning outcome can be enormous. Students may feel the mastery of their learning which gives rise to their sense of satisfaction and autonomy.
- 4 Moreover, the idea of peer testing is interesting. Assessments are no longer confined to teacher-student interaction but peer interaction.
- 5 With the above innovative assessments, it sounds more likely to convert students' receptive knowledge into productive one because they are given chances to apply what they have learnt more authentically.
- 6 In addition, the suggested question types of assessments are useful and practical. Instead of contextualized passages, we are encouraged to use matching, completion, sentence-writing items and interpretation too. The types of questions are determined by the targeted aspects, meanings and usage. It greatly eases teachers' burden on assessment setting.

## **Session 7**

I like the casual dialogue session because it gives time to express and exchange our opinions about the whole project appreciatively, genuinely and constructively. To improve, I think after-discussion written entries can be changed to reflective entries after teaching try outs.

## **LYDIA'S REFLECTIVE ENTRIES**

### **I. Reflective entries written in January**

#### **Session 1**

After attending session 1, I have learned that there could be many aspects to be covered when teaching vocabulary. According to the student surveys, they have pretty high awareness of the ability to recognise different parts of words. Reflecting on my own lessons, I tend to spend very little time introducing prefixes and suffixes to students. When I was a learner, I did not find this vocabulary strategy helpful in widening my vocabulary bank. My learning experience has played a significant role when I design how to teach vocabulary. Students' responses have given me a glimpse into another approach to introduce new words in lessons. In the second term, I will try to break down some of the target vocabulary when introducing them. I will try to explain the meaning of the different parts to students to see if the knowledge helps students retain the vocabulary.

#### **Session 2**

As for session 2, what surprised me the most was students' attitude concerning teachers' explanations of new vocabulary. More than one-fifth of the students agreed that teachers could introduce new vocabulary without explaining its meaning and usage. I guess what could be made out from this finding was a greater variety of approaches should be adopted in the teaching of vocabulary. If I require students to do pre-lesson preparation by looking up the meaning of new vocabulary, I will not need to explain the meaning and usage in the lesson. Instead, I will be able to work on the other aspects of the new vocabulary, for example, synonyms and antonyms. It seems there will be a number of benefits if I change the approach for students to learn the meaning and usage.

#### **Session 3**

Last but not least, session 3 was the most useful for the day as it provided a number of useful strategies to help students remember new vocabulary. The most disturbing finding was the students' attitude towards the use of L1 translations. Quite a number of them found it effective, but as a teacher, I am rather against it. I think for intermediate learners to advance to a more proficient level, they should enhance their ability to learn new words using the same language. But then, for students' benefits, I guess I

can tell students to look up the Chinese translations of new vocabulary and jot them down in the English GE Books. In this case, I will not need to handle the Chinese translations in the lesson but can still give students a chance to use the strategy.

## **II. Reflective entries written in March**

The discussion sessions focused on how to teach vocabulary in classrooms and how to equip students for independent vocabulary learning.

### **Session 4**

I was surprised to learn that students had divided opinions about their preferences of activities for teaching vocabulary. I used to think that students always welcome activities in lessons as they tend to be tired from the packed timetable and loads of homework. I am curious about the reasons why they are not very much into activities. For the time being, my guess is students often find it difficult to know what exactly they have to learn in games. They may have to manage the game rules and learning at the same time. This could be overwhelming to them. As they are often busy with homework and revision, they will only find lessons effective if they help students memorise and learn to use the vocabulary well. It would be perfect if I can match the learning of vocabulary with fun.

The ideas for fostering vocabulary learning are useful. It would help if I were asked to design one in the discussion session to facilitate proper understanding. Otherwise, I find it difficult to diversify the activities in my lessons with the new ones.

### **Session 5**

Regarding how to equip students for independent vocabulary learning, I know it is important and it is what the authorities put much emphasis on. I just have not done much on this aspect.

One of the concerns is I do not know how I can monitor their independent learning progress. I think students need to be helped before they can truly become autonomous learners. I do hope that there could be sharing on developing students' abilities and motivation for self-directed vocabulary acquisition. Recently, I have participated in a sharing about setting up a self-directed listening programme. I was impressed by the resources the teachers had provided their students and the guidelines the teachers had set for students. I do hope I will be able to attend a similar one for vocabulary. Another surprising finding should be students' perspectives concerning vocabulary activities.

I have never imagined students could be that afraid of dictation. I used to think students were not that enthusiastic about dictation simply because they did not find it useful. Yet, based on students' comments, they were more concerned about failure in dictation and the copying that followed. Now that I have heard their voices, I will try to adjust the level of difficulty of dictation and see if I can make it fun by choosing witty passages.

Last but not least, I would like to be introduced to some ways to integrate e-learning and vocabulary. Students often spend quite a lot of time on their mobile phones. If they can be encouraged to spare some of the time on vocabulary revision, the learning of vocabulary will definitely be more effective. I have found BBC 6 Minutes English app quite useful. The problem is I am a highly-motivated learner, so I have been listening to the programme for three months. How I can motivate my students to do so would be a big problem for me.

### **III. Reflective entry written in April**

#### **Session 6**

The last session focuses on assessments on vocabulary. This has recently become the panel's major concern. We have found that some junior form students were discontented about the level of difficulty of the General English Paper in the First Term Test in October, so we tried to think of ways to increase the level of difficulty of the Half-yearly exam in January. One of the suggestions was testing students' learning of vocabulary without providing any choices.

The performance was very disappointing as students could not recall most vocabulary items taught in the lessons. In the evaluation meeting, we decided to provide a list of words for students to revise for the Second Term Test in March, hoping they would do better by filling in more blanks than in the previous assessment. Yet, students' performance was again discouraging. They seemed to have given up the vocabulary section. Honestly speaking, students need to develop the habit of learning vocabulary on a regular basis; otherwise, their language proficiency, especially that in reading and writing, will hardly advance. I think this session is useful in a way that it has provided many ideas for designing assessments. Right now, we are in the dark about the effectiveness of various modes of assessment, but we can always try and find out the differences. For sure, the session will be even more useful if it provides time for us to apply what we have learnt in our teaching by designing lesson plans, materials or test papers. I believe this enhances our learning of the new knowledge and may facilitate changes in our teaching.

### **MICHELLE'S REFLECTIVE ENTRIES**

#### **I. Reflective entries written in January**

##### **Session 1**

I believe that if a learner has good reading and listening comprehension (receptive) skills and grammar knowledge, he/ she may be able to guess unfamiliar words effectively despite having limited vocabulary knowledge. Throughout the discussion session, I have become more aware of the importance of building vocabulary for

producing the language. A learner may need more vocabulary to write and speak well in the academic aspect. Therefore, enhancing the four skills and building vocabulary should be equally important for becoming a proficient English user.

According to the responses, I find that lots of our students see English as an ordinary academic subject though I was impressed by our students' insights into learning the language. The majority of our students think that extending vocabulary and better grammar knowledge help them to write and speak better in the exams so as to attain better grades. In this relation, they may just take English as a subject, for academic use but not a tool for communication in their daily life or the need for knowing the language for personal use.

As the majority of our students believe that vocabulary is as important as the four language skills and grammar knowledge, we may need to put more emphasis on helping them to acquire more new words in order to help them gain more confidence in the exams.

## **Session 2**

I think that teaching ten new words is enough for a lesson because it could be overwhelming for our students to remember too many new things at one time. In order to help students retain the new vocabulary, multiple contacts with the target words are vital. Actually, one of the text books we are using (Reading Explorer—Theme-based Anthology) encourages this.

There are three sub-units in each unit. Ten target vocabulary are taught in the first sub-unit, then they are recycled in the following two sub-units as consolidation. Students are asked to complete cloze passages using the target words.

Obviously, teaching only 10 words in each unit is not enough. Therefore, it is important for teachers to supplement their lessons with extensive reading and listening materials in order to broaden students' vocabulary knowledge. Apart from pronunciation and spelling, we have to teach the meaning and usage of the new words. We may let students choose what words they want to learn if it is possible.

## **Session 3**

When it comes to learning, motivation is the key issue. If students want to learn or are interested in learning a certain words or phrases or expressions, we should take every chance to teach them. It is the time when they can remember the most. Also, if teachers provide opportunities for their students to use the words, they can remember better. Feeling encouraged, I find that our teaching may have brought positive washback effects in students' learning. I always ask my students to guess unfamiliar target words in the reading passages. They are usually asked to work in groups to identify the part of speech and meaning of the new words, and then share with other classmates. In both junior and senior forms, students have expressed that they find teachers' letting them guess the meaning and parts of the new words enhances their memory.

Surprisingly, some students think that dictation can help them remember new words better. I think this is possibly because students find it easier to remember things by dividing them into smaller units. They are forced to do revisions more often. If they are not asked to memorize the new words, they may forget all of them by the time when they take the exams.

### **Comments on the discussion sessions:**

1. Do you like the discussion sessions? Why (not)?

Yes. I think this kind of professional exchange opens up our mind and stimulates us to reflect on our own teaching.

2. Do you think you have participated in the discussion actively? Why (not)?

I have participated actively in the discussion because I enjoy sharing my teaching ideas with others. I can know my own weaknesses when I hear others' opinions as well.

3. For every session, we did self-reflection, discussed our views, explored students' beliefs and read different ideas highlighted by the literature. Do you like this format of the discussion? Is there a part that you like/dislike in particular?

All the above have refreshed my memory of the readings I have come across when taking my Master's degree. In understanding our students' beliefs, we can improve our teaching in our student-centred classrooms.

4. Do you consider a dialogic approach to teacher professional development (i.e. professional development through discussion) conducive? What do you think are some factors that lead to the success/failure of such an approach?

I think this approach should be effective if the other teachers are equally enthusiastic and active. With more interaction and contribution of ideas, we get to know more about our own strengths and weaknesses.

5. Could you comment on other details related to the discussion (e.g. the use of timer, the introduction of ideas without PPT slides, etc.)?

I am happy with this.

6. Do you have any other suggestions on how the sessions can be improved?

Session 1 could be improved if there are guiding discussion questions (like those on p.11 & 17) instead of statements of beliefs because I felt that there was limited room for discussion.

P.S. Actually, I have spent 2 hours on this!!!! XP

## **II. Reflective entries written in March**

### **Session 4**

Most of our students want to learn vocabulary through group activities, language games, movie appreciation and song appreciation. Meanwhile, they also noted that lesson time should be allocated to formal teaching and completion of worksheets. I think, as a teacher, I should strike a balance between games and traditional teaching of vocabulary. This could accommodate different learners in the same classroom.

From the students' comments, we can see that our students may not be very clear about the learning outcomes of the learning activities. We may have to communicate the lesson objectives very clearly to them, otherwise our effort could be wasted.

I really don't know the best way to teach vocabulary. My strategy is to try out different ones and see which one works for my students. After the discussion, I've found that I have been using some vocabulary activities suggested on pp. 10-14. I think I will keep on using these activities to boost students' vocabulary.

### **Session 5**

It is quite encouraging to know that although our students think learning vocabulary is difficult, they still think that it is fun to learn. It seems that our teachers are teaching well and our students are making good efforts in learning.

Our students are aware that using a dictionary and using the new words they have learnt can help them retain them better. I think I will design some dictionary-checking pre-reading activities for my students. And when we design the teaching plans, we have to align the writing and speaking tasks with the taught vocabulary to ensure that students are requested to use the new words in the tasks.

Students have reflected that they lack motivation in learning new vocabulary. I think teachers may need to give them more encouragement or praises on their effort in learning. This may help students to build more confidence in using the words they have learnt.

### **Other comments:**

With the pair sharing, I think we have more to say in the group sessions. However, the sessions are a bit too long and intellectually challenging. It is very tiring to think so hard for the questions. Luckily, the extrinsic motivation was well-used. I felt a bit refreshed after eating the snack.



### **III. Reflective entry written in April**

#### **Session 6**

I wasn't aware that vocabulary assessment can be done by students themselves. I have learnt from the discussion session that individualized testing could be used to encourage vocabulary learning. I think it can also promote self-regulated learning and lifelong learning in our learners.

We have been testing students on the new words they learn from textbooks in school exams. Actually, we have been struggling with what and how to test. I used to think that we need to test vocabulary in contexts. Therefore, we have been using contextualized passages to test them. However, in order to incorporate all the vocabulary in a single section, teachers found it extremely time-consuming to write the test items. To our frustration, most students gave up on this section as it is too challenging to memorize all the vocabulary and fit them in the contexts. After this discussion session, I have changed my mind. I think it can be possible to write different test items to test different vocabulary knowledge.

## Appendix K Sample pages of a transcribed professional dialogue<sup>25</sup>

Researcher	Having explored the role of vocabulary, the notion of a word and some issues regarding the teaching and learning of vocabulary in the English language classroom, we are going to focus on lexical instruction in this session. Specifically, we will examine how vocabulary can be taught and explained more effectively. Now, shall we spend around five minutes to think about the four questions on p.18 and reflect on our experiences as 'teachers' and 'learners' prior to the exchange of ideas?
Michelle	Explicit instruction means giving the definition?
Researcher	As far as I know, teachers who give explicit vocabulary instruction focus attention directly on the lexical items to be learned. They may teach students the meaning and use of a word directly to facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Providing students with the definition, as you suggested, can be an example of explicit vocabulary instruction. [Teachers' preparation]
Researcher	Now, shall we start our discussion? In your view, how can we help students learn a word more effectively in class?
Michelle	Teach the words in context.
Researcher	Could you elaborate on that?
Michelle	With the context, students can know how to use the words.
Researcher	Any other thoughts?
Laura	I assume that students have a map in their mind, so they can recall a word better by linking it to other words that share the same theme. I also think they should link the new knowledge with their prior knowledge.
Researcher	That is to say, you believe teachers should introduce new words by associating them with the words students have learned? Any other comments?
Louise	I think encouraging students' output can help them learn the words more effectively. For example, giving them some short tasks in which they have to show the vocabulary they should learn in those lessons and keep on recapping the learning of vocabulary in different lessons.
Researcher	Right. We've mentioned creating appropriate contexts for students' vocabulary learning, relating the new words to students' prior knowledge, asking students to produce some sentences and encouraging multiple encounters with words. Any other thoughts?
Michelle	How about motivation? Create - creating a need for them? Tell them, like... for example, they may need the word for an extended task so that they will be more aware of those words they need to learn? We can also tell them the words will be tested in the exam or dictations, so, I don't know, to increase their motivation.

<sup>25</sup> This appendix shows the first part of a transcribed professional dialogue held in the third session of the teacher development programme, focusing on vocabulary instruction strategies.

Researcher	I see what you mean. I think teachers sometimes like to use phrases like, “ <i>What I’m going to teach is very important</i> ” to draw students’ attention. Just now, it seems that most methods mentioned are related to how the learning of vocabulary can be consolidated. Any ideas on how teachers can help students discover the meaning of an unfamiliar vocabulary item?
Michelle	When they first come across a word, well, I think I will encourage them to guess the meaning of the words, ask them to... first of all... if they know the part of speech, the function of the word in the sentence and then the meaning of it. I may also encourage them to try to replace the word with some words they know. I think I also encourage them to talk to the other students. I think by talking and you make sure that they really think and if they share with others, I think they will understand, they will remember that better.
Researcher	I see! If I have understood you correctly, you believe it is important to draw students’ attention to different aspects of vocabulary knowledge, like asking them the part of speech or the synonyms and talking to other students. Do you think it is a good idea to teach vocabulary without really giving explicit instruction? If so, what does it look like? If not, why is it better not to just simply give implicit instruction?
Louise	If I provide visual aids to students, does it mean explicit instruction or implicit instruction? Like when I talk about jobs, I show them some pictures of different jobs. Is it explicit or implicit?
Michelle	That’s explicit, right?
Researcher	I believe the major differences between explicit and implicit instruction is about whether you have tried to draw students’ attention to the lexical items you’d like to teach. When you teach, for instance, you may include some vocabulary items without explaining their meaning. That could be an example of implicit vocabulary instruction.
Louise	For junior form students, I usually use visual aids a lot to show some concrete ideas to them. For example, the modules of junior forms are most likely about food, jobs, pets, etc. Showing them the pictures and some videos will facilitate their vocabulary learning. It’s a direct way to let them understand more easily?
Michelle	So, it’s implicit if we don’t explain it? Is it still vocabulary teaching?
Researcher	It depends on how you define vocabulary teaching. One major reason that we have implicit instruction is that we may not have enough time to address all vocabulary items we’d like our students to learn. That’s why you may say something like “ <i>The weather is ‘appalling’ today</i> ” without really explaining what it is meant by ‘appalling’.
Louise	Very likely, students do not really notice, and they can’t learn the words.

Michelle	No, I think I can kind of think of a moment. Like, for example, at the end of the lesson, I'll say, "okay, <i>let's call it a day</i> ", but I do not explain what it means. And then, you know, from time to time, I will say it. I keep saying it every lesson and then students will know "Oh, <i>let's call it a day</i> means the end of something".
Researcher	That would be an example of implicit instruction.
Michelle	But do we do it deliberately? Is it teaching? I don't know. For example, I don't aim at teaching the word <i>randomly</i> , but I use it. It's still instruction.
Researcher	I agree with you that it can be considered part of our instruction. I'd say it's not direct vocabulary teaching though. To me, it's like having incidental vocabulary learning through reading. You don't really ask the students to learn specific vocabulary items through reading, but the students may be able to guess the meaning of the words they are unfamiliar with after a few encounters with them. That, I suppose, is still part of their learning.
Michelle	Okay. So, is it a good idea?
Researcher	What do you think?
Michelle	It's good. It's natural. It's natural. Yeah. When they hear something that they don't understand for the first time, possibly they just, you know, they just stay at that level. They can, I mean, they can bear the uncertainty. And then if they hear that more than once, they will be more aware of that. The third time, maybe they start to know what it means. I think it's a kind of training. It may help to develop comprehension skills, and it's also an important skill for learning.
Researcher	In a way, this is like learning vocabulary in context - you haven't really treated that item explicitly, but students may guess its meaning through multiple encounters with it.
Michelle	Yes. That means we don't really need to teach every single word. Even if we don't - even if we know our students don't know most words, we can just let them go.
Researcher	Yet the importance of noticing has been emphasised in some journal articles. Without noticing, students may not be able to learn the word even if you repeat it again and again. For instance, you may wish to speak a bit more loudly or pause a bit prior to saying " <i>Let's call it a day</i> ". That may help to draw the students' attention.
Michelle	So, when the bell rings, " <i>Let's call it a day</i> ". Every time when they hear that, they know.
Louise	That's like conditioning for teaching a dog.
Researcher	I think so. Moving on, what do you think English teachers should do to help students remember a word better?
Michelle	Dictation. Tests. Make them use the words.
Louise	Notebooks. GE exercise books are useful.
Michelle	Yes. And assessment for learning.

Researcher	So, that's about practice and assessment?
Michelle	Yes. Repetition, right?
Louise	Sometimes I use games. I tell the meanings and ask some students to write the word that they have learned in the unit on the blackboard and treat it as a game.
Researcher	What if I'd like us to focus on vocabulary instruction for the time being? What are some effective strategies to help students remember a word better?
Michelle	So, we have to put the item from... bring the item from their short-term memory into long-term memory.
Researcher	How?
Michelle	Long-term memory. Make them think. Reasoning can activate their cortex.
Researcher	Any other suggestions? Can you recall any situations in which you were really satisfied with your vocabulary teaching?
Louise	I like making sentences with those target vocabulary items. I like using students as the subjects of the sentences and then they can have deeper memory of those vocabulary usage.
Researcher	Right. Relating the target vocabulary to students' personal experience. While analysing the lessons, I noted that a teacher taught the word <i>twins</i> and asked the students whether they know that there is a pair of twins in form 1 and the students were quite excited about it. Now, perhaps we can move on to the last issue - Chinese translation? What do you think?
Michelle	Well I sometimes compare English expressions to some Chinese expressions. I think it can help understanding. Like 人山人海... you can tell the students that there are similar expressions in English that relate to our culture. I think it can help them understand better. In some situations, of course. And for the direct translation of the words, just because of the school policies, we can't say it. But for some weaker class, I think it's easier. It's easier. You know, if you keep on saying the same thing over and over, again, and then, you know, they still can't understand it. Even if they look up in the dictionary. They can't guess the meaning from the context. Even if they look up the word in the dictionary, they still can't understand because the definition gives them three or four more new words.
Louise	A complete sentence telling the meaning of one word. They don't want to read.
Michelle	They still can't understand. So, with the Chinese translation, it could be easier to tell it to them.
Louise	And when it comes to some social issues, they will find translation easier to be understood. Especially those about Hong Kong. This is because most of them are... all of them are, in Chinese, actually. And they will be interested in knowing the English terms. In this way, you can use Chinese translations directly to tell the meanings.

Researcher	I see you wrote the word 'shortcut' on your booklet?
Louise	Yeah, the use of L1 translation can be a shortcut. Sometimes you may find it hard to explain abstract ideas in English. You may prefer telling the Chinese meaning directly.
Michelle	Yes, for abstract ideas. For concrete ones, you can just give them, show them a picture.
Laura	I do agree with Michelle. Sometimes when we teach idiomatic expressions or proverbs like 'an eye for an eye', we can ask our students for the Chinese expressions so that they can recall. They find it exciting that they can apply their Chinese knowledge in English lessons. And, you know, we have some words that we borrow from other language or some words that sound really similar to the Chinese, so I would introduce it.
Michelle	True. They like to know these.
Researcher	Yet it seems to me that most teachers do not use Chinese translation in class. Why is that the case?
Lydia	When students are about to become advanced learners, being too dependent on Chinese translation probably does not help. Words like 'apart from' and 'besides' or 'except' and 'apart from' have the same definitions in Chinese but different usages in English. You can only know the difference from English-English dictionary or with teacher's instruction.
Louise	Sometimes, L1 translation is not accurate.
Michelle	Yes. True.
Louise	It's hard to translate everything.
Michelle	Sometimes, yes. Yes, when they are doing writing, sometimes they would raise their hand and then, 'I want to know these. How should I say it in English?' and most of the time, there is no equivalent to those.
Louise	Yes, sometimes I tell a student there's no such a term in English.
Michelle	Yes, and so that means - so that is the other way round. There is no direct translation of it.
Researcher	Perhaps you can provide the students with the Chinese translation of the word 'accept', for example, and ask them to tell you the word by giving a hint, like " <i>the first letter starts with A</i> "? It could be an easy way for us to check whether students can retrieve the word without spending extra time on the English explanation?
Michelle	I won't provide the Chinese myself. I will ask another student to provide the Chinese translation. I would say a lot of things and ask, "Can anyone give me the Chinese translation?" Then, someone will shout, and I'd say "Okay! Correct! You've got it!"
Researcher	Why would you like to do so?
Michelle	That is to check their understanding. If there is no one saying it, then I think that means that they still don't understand.

Louise	Yeah, and one reason is that students have their inertia. When they know that you use Chinese to explain directly, they will just rely on it in the long-term so. I wouldn't prefer using Chinese translation all the time.
Researcher	Any other thoughts?
Lydia	I guess we don't only teach vocabulary in class. Our goal is not to make sure students know the Chinese translation. When we are paraphrasing, we are asking students to guess the meaning from our input. It can be a kind of interaction.
Louise	Yeah, learning by context.
Lydia	So, there's a lot going on in the lesson. They also learn from the speaking of the teachers and they're also encouraged to speak at the same time.
Researcher	So, am I correct in saying that when we just simply rely on Chinese translation or when we use Chinese translation, that's not recommendable because it might reduce the students' exposure, like the opportunities to expose to the target language?
Louise	Right.

Session one – Introduction to the role of vocabulary and the notion of 'knowing a word'

Self-reflection and collegial exchange

[1] The role of vocabulary in second and/or foreign language learning

Researcher: Any other thoughts or suggestions?

Lydia: When you learn a language, you also learn the culture of another country. I think through learning vocabulary, you also get to know a little bit of the culture. Especially when it comes to learning idioms or proverbs. Then somehow you may also expose yourself to another culture. So, learning vocabulary could be of different levels. Like, Michelle mentioned for young learners, probably they only need the word to express themselves in another language. But then for more advanced learners, they learn different vocabulary items to get to know the culture as well - To know how to use the language appropriately and in different contexts.

Researcher: Right. Perhaps when you read some poems and learn vocabulary from those poems, there are different concepts in different cultures. When we do direct translation, we know that some words are not in English. For instance, we can't really find the exact word for 幸福 (xìngfú) in English and perhaps that shows differences in terms of culture. Any other points to add?

Louise: I agree with Lydia that vocabulary actually reflects a place's culture, like in Hong Kong, we have milk tea, but this term is not from other countries. And like the difference of American and British expressions, so vocabulary to a certain extent really reflects a lot on a place's culture.

[2] The importance of vocabulary teaching in relation to the four language skills

Researcher: If we have nothing to add, perhaps we can move on to discuss the importance of vocabulary building in relation to the development of the four language skills and grammar. I interviewed all of you and I noticed that it's kind of interesting in our school because all teachers mentioned that vocabulary building and the development of the four language skills are equally important. What do you think about that?

Lydia: I guess when you teach the four language skills, you can't avoid teaching vocabulary because if students do not know some of the words, they may not comprehend the passage; they may not comprehend the conversation and they may not express their ideas in written or spoken language. So that's why they are of equal importance. You can't easily separate them in a lesson.

<sup>26</sup> This appendix shows how individual teachers' dialogic reflection is extracted from the professional dialogues for analysis. The sample included is the analysis of Lydia's participation in the first three sessions of the teacher professional development programme.



### [3] The notion of a word

- Researcher: Any other aspects you find important?
- Lydia: How to spell the word...
- Researcher: How to spell the word...
- Louise: Part of speech.
- Researcher: Right. That's important.
- Michelle: Collocation...
- Researcher: You've mentioned pronunciation, meaning, spelling, parts of speech and collocation.
- Lydia: The synonyms and antonyms.

### Analysis of students' beliefs

#### [1] Students' beliefs about the importance of vocabulary in relation to grammar

- Researcher: ... Anything special you observed from the students' responses?
- Lydia: It seems this group of students have the experience that, if they cannot or if they cannot use the language correctly, they have problems expressing themselves. So, like the form 1 student would say others may have difficulties understanding what was said if grammar's wrong. And then the form 2 student mentioned exam mark, writing and so because he or she couldn't express the ideas that well. It seems that they struggled in using the language because of grammar. That's why they think grammar is kind of more important than vocabulary.

#### [2] Students' beliefs about the notion of a word

- Researcher: To sum up, students probably think vocabulary is important because of examination, as well as needing it for communication and understanding. Let's move on to the aspects of vocabulary knowledge. I see that some of you spent quite a lot of time analysing this table. Any comments on this?
- Lydia: Trying to look at the rank of different aspects and then I found two very interesting ones if we only look at the strongly agree percentage. Students seem to think spelling is more important than recognizing the prefixes or suffixes. But then if you also consider the percentage of agreeing, somehow, they think prefixes and suffixes are more important than spelling.

### Exploration of theoretical literature

#### [1] The definition of unmotivated vocabulary

- Lydia: Can I ask what the unmotivated vocabulary is? The term itself is very interesting.
- Researcher: I think it simply refers to the words that students are not quite motivated to learn. It could be because of students' perception that it's not very

- Researcher: meaningful to learn the words or that they are difficult. I suppose it can  
(Continued) also be related to culture. I can't really think of a very specific example at the moment, but teachers prefer not to teach the word 'sex' because it's like a taboo in the Chinese culture. I suppose some jargon can also be unmotivated vocabulary?
- Michelle: So, it's different from active and passive vocabulary? ...

## [2] Receptive versus productive knowledge of vocabulary

- Lydia: How do you - how can you prove that the student knows the word well enough to use it productively? There must be some tests like... at least you need to test the student whether he or she can spell it; then, this is evidence, right? The student is kind of forced to use it already.
- Michelle: Or like for example, foul language.
- Lydia: But then foul language suggests different kinds of emotions. They somehow do not know the difference. Like 's' word is less offensive than 'f' word.

## [3] The size of receptive and productive vocabulary

- Lydia: I'm also interested in the differences in receptive and productive vocabulary size. Is one particularly larger? Receptive larger?
- Researcher: Right, I think that's the usual case.
- Lydia: How much larger?

## Session two – Vocabulary in the English language classroom

### Self-reflection and collegial exchange

## [1] Number of lexical items that should be explicitly taught in an English lesson

- Researcher: What do you think, Laura and Lydia?
- Lydia: If I have to develop my materials for the lesson, I may try to make it 10 because I think about assessment. So, if I convert the percentage, then it would be easier to know how much they have learnt...
- Laura: I can't tell the exact number of vocabulary items I teach, but I make it clear that I won't teach more than 20 new vocabulary items each time. I just think that students can't manage, and they can't memorise so many vocabulary items well. I will intentionally classify the vocabulary items into fundamental groups and extend it.
- Researcher: I see.
- Laura: And I'm not satisfied with the vocab list in the textbook, so I regard that as the fundamental vocab students have to know and I will teach some extra.
- Researcher: Of course, there isn't really an exact number I can give, but I am thinking that it's a good idea for us to reflect on the number of words we usually teach in a lesson.
- Michelle: Seems that we are not really aware of that.

- Michelle: Seems that we are not really aware of that.
- Researcher: ...I have the impression that this is quite different from what all of you have mentioned because quite a lot of vocabulary items seem to have been covered in just one lesson.
- Lydia: But I'll make - I kind of, I don't really remember any lesson without teaching any vocabulary. Even listening and speaking.
- Louise: Even for answer checking, you can teach some words as well.
- Lydia: Yeah, because as you said, spelling may affect the meaning and students might lose marks if they do not spell a word correctly.
- Michelle: For speaking, they still need to understand the question rubrics.
- Lydia: We expect grammatical patterns and also vocabulary for the presentation.

### Analysis of students' beliefs

#### [1] Students' expectations of vocabulary teaching and learning in class

- Lydia: I think when we say we target 10 words, we're thinking about individual lessons. I think students are thinking about throughout school year. They would like to learn as many English vocabulary as possible. But if they ask - I'm not sure about the wording, if you changed the statement to something like 'as many words as possible in a lesson', the percentage may not be that high.

### Exploration of theoretical literature [None]

## Session three – Vocabulary instruction strategies

### Self-reflection and collegial exchange

#### [1] The use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching

- Researcher: It seems to me that most teachers do not use Chinese translation in class. Why is that the case?
- Lydia: When students are about to become advanced learners then probably being too dependent on Chinese translation does not help. Like, words like 'apart from' and 'besides' or 'except' and 'apart from', you look up the English-Chinese dictionary, the definitions are the same in Chinese but the usage of is definitely different. You can only know the difference from English-English dictionary or with teacher's instruction.
- Louise: Sometimes L1 translation is not as accurate as the original meanings as mentioned by Lydia.
- Michelle: Yes. True.
- Louise: It's really hard to translate everything.

## [2] The use of L1 translation in vocabulary teaching

- Researcher: Any other thoughts?
- Lydia: I guess we don't only teach vocabulary in class. Our goal is not to make sure students know the Chinese translation. When we are paraphrasing, we are asking students to guess the meaning from our input. It can be a kind of interaction.
- Louise: Yeah, learning by context.
- Lydia: So, there's a lot going on in the lesson. They also learn from the speaking of the teachers and they're also encouraged to speak at the same time.

## Analysis of students' beliefs

## [1] Effective ways to promote vocabulary teaching and learning

- Louise: I think visualisation is very useful and direct. Drawing, actions and pictures: students actually like them a lot. They have fun. They like it when you draw; especially when you draw ugly. They would be very happy and then...examples are useful.
- Laura: Especially recently there has been an app right, a game called *Draw...*
- Louise: *Something*.
- Michelle: *Draw Something*.
- Lydia: *Draw Something?*
- Researcher: The app is called *Draw Something*.
- Lydia: Is it called *Draw Something*? The students have been very interested in it. They think it's a game, even though it's not.

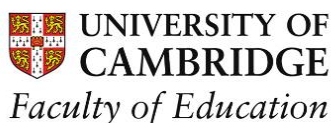
## [2] The role of allusion in teaching vocabulary

- Researcher: Can you think of any example related to allusion?
- Lydia: Does it mean old words like *thee* or *thou*? They mean *you*?
- Researcher: Let me share with you an example? This is about the meaning of *narcissist*...

## Exploration of theoretical literature [None]

	Major topic of the professional dialogue
	Name of the teacher being analysed
	Lenses used for dialogic reflection
	Major themes identified in the teacher's contributions to dialogic reflection
	Representative comments

## Appendix M Consent forms for teacher participants



15 August 2016

Dear teachers,

### **Invitation to Participate in Research on English Language Teaching and Learning**

*Understanding Vocabulary Teaching and Learning:  
Concepts, Strategies and Techniques*

You are cordially invited to take part in a research study undertaken by Edsoulla Chung, a postgraduate student currently studying for her Doctorate in Second Language Education at the University of Cambridge, under the supervision of Dr. Linda Fisher. This letter of invitation aims to introduce to you details of the study, for example, its purpose, procedures, potential benefits, as well as issues related to confidentiality.

#### **Purposes of the study and plans for dissemination**

The study mainly aims to (i) explore teachers' beliefs about vocabulary teaching and learning, (ii) investigate how they are related to practice, and (iii) examine the factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practices. Ultimately, the findings of this research will form the basis of a doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Cambridge. They may also be disseminated through conference presentations and academic publication.

#### **Procedures**

Different data collection methods will be involved in the study. If you agree to participate in the study, you can decide on your level of engagement based on your personal preference. The different procedures include (i) taking part in individual interviews, (ii) audiotaping or videotaping your lessons, (iii) administering an online questionnaire survey to collect students' views, and (iv) participating in a number of discussion sessions which focus on vocabulary teaching and learning.

#### **Potential benefits**

On a personal level, it is expected that your participation in the study will help you understand your beliefs and/or your classroom practice about vocabulary teaching and learning. While the analysis of the questionnaire results will enable you to learn about your students' needs and opinions, different discussion sessions will provide an opportunity for you to explore key issues pertinent to vocabulary teaching and learning through various lenses, including different theoretical perspectives, which may enhance your teaching and benefit your students. On the macro level, the study may facilitate understanding of language teachers' beliefs and practice, which has

implications for teacher professional development and provides insights into curriculum design.

### **Risks or discomforts of participating in this study**

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks and discomforts associated with participation in the study.

### **Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential and the information obtained in the project will be used for research purposes only. You have the right to review and erase the audio/video records, and any information which helps identify you will not be included in any written report of the study.

### **Right to refuse or withdraw from the study**

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. This means that you can refuse to take part in the study or withdraw from it at any time without any negative consequences. You also have the right not to answer questions that you do not wish to respond to, during the interview process, for example.

### **Questions and concerns**

If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact Edsoulla Chung on 98092008 or [hyec5@cam.ac.uk](mailto:hyec5@cam.ac.uk). You may also contact Dr. Linda Fisher via email ([lgf20@cam.ac.uk](mailto:lgf20@cam.ac.uk)) regarding any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that remain unanswered by the principal researcher. Your inquiries are most welcome.

### **Consent**

If you have read and fully understood the explanation provided, please complete the reply slip to indicate your willingness to volunteer as a research participant for this study. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep for your reference. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,

---

Edsoulla CHUNG  
of University of Cambridge

**REPLY SLIP**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Participant) understand the information presented above and will / will not\* take part in this research project.

Please indicate your decision by putting a tick ( ) in the appropriate box(es) below.

- ☐ I agree to be interviewed by the principal investigator (i.e. Edsoulla Chung).
- ☐ I agree to have my lessons videotaped / audiotaped\* for the researcher's analysis.
- ☐ I agree to participate in a number of discussion sessions pertinent to vocabulary teaching and learning.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

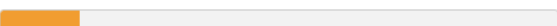
(\*Please delete as appropriate.)

## Appendix N Online questionnaire designed to explore students' beliefs



### Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

Before you start the survey...

1 / 7  14%

This questionnaire is designed to explore **English language** learners' views on vocabulary knowledge, teaching, learning and assessment. Your participation will be greatly appreciated as the responses you give will help facilitate the understanding of these issues, providing insights into teaching, curriculum design, and teacher professional development. It is thus very important that you are **as truthful as possible** in completing the questionnaire, **respond to ALL questions** and **give detailed answers** to those which require written responses. Please note that your grade will not be affected by what you write in this survey, and the data you provide will be used solely for this research, the results of which may be presented in academic papers and conferences. If you are willing to give your consent to this, please complete the information below:

此問卷調查目的為研究英語學習者對詞彙認識、教學、學習以及考核方式的看法。現誠邀你參與此問卷，你的意見將有助學者了解上述議題，並作為探討英語教學，課程規劃及教師專業發展之依據。故此，敬請**如實完成本問卷所有問題**，並於要求長答之題目**提供詳盡答案**。另外，請留意問卷上所有回應均不會影響本科成績。數據只會用於本次研究，及後或會於論文中及學術會議對外展示。若你同意以上所述，請於下方填寫個人資料。

1. Your name (姓名):

2. Your class (班別):

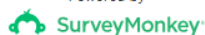
3. Today's date:

日期:

MM/DD/YYYY	
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### Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

#### A. Your views on vocabulary knowledge (你對詞彙認識的看法)

2 / 7

29%

1. Which of the following statements can best describe your view on the importance of vocabulary in relation to the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)?

下列哪句最能反映詞彙及四種語言技巧（讀、寫、聽、說）在你心中的重要性？

- ☐ Building vocabulary is more important than developing the four language skills.  
擴充詞匯比提升四種語言技巧重要。
- ☐ Building vocabulary is as important as developing the four language skills.  
擴充詞匯與提升四種語言技巧同樣重要。
- ☐ Building vocabulary is less important than developing the four language skills.  
提升四種語言技巧比擴充詞匯重要。

Reason(s):

原因:

2. Which of the following statements can best describe your view on the importance of vocabulary in relation to grammar?

下列哪句最能反映詞匯及文法在你心中的重要性？

- ☐ Vocabulary is more important than grammar.  
詞匯比文法重要。
- ☐ Vocabulary is as important as grammar.  
詞匯與文法同樣重要。
- ☐ Vocabulary is less important than grammar.  
文法比詞匯重要。

Reason(s):

原因:

3. When I claim I know a word (e.g. underdeveloped), I must be able to \_\_\_\_\_.

當我認為自己懂得一個詞語時(如：underdeveloped)，我定要能夠\_\_\_\_\_。

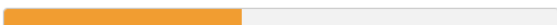
	Strongly disagree 非常不同意	Disagree 不同意	Agree 同意	Strongly agree 非常同意	No idea 不知道
pronounce it correctly 準確讀出該字	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
spell it correctly 準確串出該字	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
recognise that it is made up of different parts (i.e. under-, -develop- and -ed) and understand how these parts are related to its meaning 辨認出該字是由不同部分組合而成(即under-, -develop-及-ed)並清楚這些部分與該字之意義有何關係	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
understand its meaning(s) 知道該字的意思	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
understand the concept(s) behind it and produce the word in different contexts (e.g. underdeveloped can be related to a country or region, a photographic film, an organ, etc.) 知道該字背後的概念並於不同情景下運用該字 (如：underdeveloped大多用於形容國家或地區、相機菲林、器官等。)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
know its related words like overdeveloped, backward and challenged 知道與該字有關的字詞，如 overdeveloped, backward 及challenged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
judge whether the word has been used correctly in the sentence in which it occurs 分辨該字於句子中是否運用得宜	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
decide to use or not use the word to suit the degree of formality of the situation (Underdeveloped is less acceptable than developing which carries a slightly positive meaning.) 按照情景的正式程度決定是否使用該字 (由於Developing較underdeveloped帶有褒義，後者較少被採用。)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

### B. Your views on vocabulary learning (你對詞彙學習的看法)

3 / 7  43%

#### 1. What are your views on vocabulary learning?

你對學習詞彙有何看法？

	Strongly disagree 非常不同意	Disagree 不同意	Agree 同意	Strongly agree 非常同意	No idea 不知道
I find vocabulary learning challenging. 我認為學習詞彙是難事。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find vocabulary learning fun. 我認為學習詞彙是趣事。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is no need for me to spend time on vocabulary learning outside class. 我認為沒需要於課堂外花時間擴充詞匯。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for me to refer to a dictionary when learning a new word. 參考字典對我學習新詞彙十分重要。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One can only have a large vocabulary if one has good memory. 只有記憶力強的人方能懂得大量詞彙。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The best way to learn a word is to use it. 學習詞彙的最佳方法是對該字學以致用。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is good enough for me to focus only on the words and vocabulary learning strategies important to tests and examinations. 我集中學習對測驗或考試有用的字詞及詞彙學習技巧便已足夠。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 2. What is / are the major problem(s) you encounter when learning vocabulary?

你學習詞彙的過程中主要遇到的困難是什麼？

#### 3. What do you think is/are the most effective way(s) to learn vocabulary?

你認為以甚麼方法學習詞彙最為有效？

#### 4. Please explain your response to Q3.

請加以解釋第三題答案。

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### Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

#### C. Your views on vocabulary teaching (你對詞彙教學的看法)

4 / 7

57%

#### 1. Please choose the answers which best represent your opinions.

請選出最能反映你看法的選項。

Strongly disagree  
非常不同意

Disagree  
不同意

Agree  
同意

Strongly agree  
非常同意

No idea  
不知道

My English teacher(s)  
should teach me as many  
vocabulary items as  
possible.  
英文老師應盡可能教授我最  
多的詞彙。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

It is fine for my English  
teacher(s) to introduce a  
new word to me without  
explaining its meaning.  
我能接受英文老師向我介紹  
一個新的詞語時並不解釋其  
意思。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

It is fine for my English  
teacher(s) to introduce a  
new word to me without  
explaining its usage.  
我能接受英文老師向我介紹  
一個新的詞語時並不解釋其  
用法。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

It is good enough for my  
English teacher(s) to use  
only textbooks and/or  
storybooks to teach  
vocabulary.  
英文老師只用課本及/或故  
事書教授詞彙已經足夠。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

My English teacher(s)  
should always let me  
choose the words I want to  
learn.  
英文老師應經常讓我自行選  
擇想學的詞彙。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

It is important for my  
English teacher(s) to teach  
me the same words  
repeatedly in class to aid  
my memory.  
我認為英文老師在課堂中重  
複教授同一詞彙對我鞏固記  
憶十分重要。

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

My English teacher(s)  
should always encourage  
me to guess the  
meaning(s) of an unknown  
word before explaining its  
meaning(s).

英文老師應經常在講解詞義  
前鼓勵我推測詞義的意  
思。

☐☐☐☐☐

My English teacher(s)  
should teach me how I can  
expand my vocabulary on  
my own.

我的英文老師應教導我如何  
自行擴充詞匯。

☐☐☐☐☐

**2. What do you think is the best way for English teachers to help you understand a new word's meaning in class?**

**Please give an example to explain your answer.**

你認為英文老師怎樣最能幫助你明白一個新詞語的意思？試舉出一個例子說明你的觀點。

**3. What do you think is the best way for English teachers to help you remember a vocabulary item effectively?**

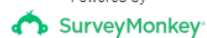
**Please give an example to explain your answer.**

你認為英文老師怎樣最能幫助你牢記一個新的詞語？試舉出一個例子說明你的觀點。

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## Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

### D. Your views on vocabulary activities (你對詞彙活動的看法)

5 / 7  71%

#### 1. Please choose the answers which best represent your opinions.

請選出最能反映你看法的選項。

	Strongly disagree 非常不同意	Disagree 不同意	Agree 同意	Strongly agree 非常同意	No idea 不知道
It is fine for my English teacher(s) to conduct the same activities for vocabulary building in class regularly. 我能接受我的英文老師經常於課堂中以同一活動教授詞彙。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is fine for my English teacher(s) <u>NOT</u> to conduct any games for vocabulary building in class. 我能接受我的英文老師並不在課堂中進行任何有關學習詞彙的遊戲。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is fine for my English teacher(s) to use only vocabulary activities such as fill in the blanks and matching in textbook to teach vocabulary. 我能接受我的英文老師只以課本中的活動(如填充及配對)教授詞彙。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My English teacher(s) should conduct vocabulary activities in small groups during English lessons. 我的英文老師應在課堂中進行有關學習詞彙的小組活動。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My English teacher(s) should always assign homework to consolidate my vocabulary learning after conducting a vocabulary activity in class. 我的英文老師應經常於進行學習詞彙的課堂活動後派發相關的功課給我，以鞏固我的學習。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2. To what extent do you want your English teacher(s) to conduct the following activities for vocabulary teaching?**

你有多希望你的英文老師以下列的課堂活動教授詞彙?

	Not at all 一點也不	A little 有一點	Moderately 相當	Very much 非常	No idea 不知道
Dictation 默書	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drama 話劇	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Games (e.g. scrabble, spelling games, crossword puzzles, etc.) 遊戲 (如: 英文拼字遊戲, 串字遊戲, 填字遊戲等)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group discussion 小組討論	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movie appreciation 電影欣賞	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading different types of texts (e.g. newspaper articles, storybook, etc.) 閱讀不同類型的文體 (如: 報紙文章, 故事書等)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Song appreciation 歌曲欣賞	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocabulary sharing 詞彙分享	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**3. Please explain why you would / would not like the activities suggested in Q2 be conducted in class.**

請加以解釋為甚麼你希望/不希望於堂上進行第三題所提及的活動。

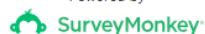
**4. Apart from the activities mentioned in Q2, is / are there any other vocabulary activity / activities you would like your English teacher(s) to conduct? Please explain your answer.**

除了第二題所提及的活動外,你還希望英文老師在課堂中進行其他學習詞彙的活動嗎?請加以說明你的答案。

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## Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

### E. Your views on vocabulary assessment (你對詞彙考核之看法)

6 / 7  86%

1. In order to assess my vocabulary knowledge, English teachers should \_\_\_\_\_.

為了評核我對詞彙的認識，英文老師應該\_\_\_\_\_。

	Strongly disagree 非常不同意	Disagree 不同意	Agree 同意	Strongly agree 非常同意	No idea 不知道
set regular vocabulary quizzes 定期進行詞彙小測	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
give me dictation on a regular basis 定期進行默書	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
always correct the vocabulary mistakes my classmates and I make in class 經常於堂上指正我與同學所犯的詞彙錯誤	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
avoid correcting all the vocabulary mistakes I make in my writing 避免更正我作文中的每一個錯誤詞彙	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ask me to complete different exercises related to vocabulary learning from time to time 定期提供不同有關詞彙學習的練習給我完成	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please explain your responses to Q1.

請加以解釋第一題答案。

3. Apart from the methods mentioned in Q1, what would you like your English teacher(s) to do to help you assess your vocabulary knowledge? Please explain your answer.

除了在第一題所提及的方法外，你還希望英文老師怎樣評核你對詞彙的認識？請加以說明你的答案。

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## 1A Questionnaire on Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

7 / 7  100%

Thank you!

Should you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact Edsoulla Chung (hyec5@cam.ac.uk).  
Your inquiries are most welcome.

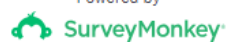
謝謝！

如有查詢，歡迎以電郵方式(hyec5@cam.ac.uk)聯絡Edsoulla Chung。

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## Appendix O Student questionnaire results and selected responses

### I. AN OVERVIEW

#### A. Students' beliefs about vocabulary knowledge

				More important than	As important as	Less important than	Total		
1.	Building vocabulary is _____ developing the four language skills.	% #	<b>12.06</b> 69	<b>75.35</b> 431	<b>12.59</b> 72	572			
2.	Vocabulary is _____ grammar.	% #	<b>13.46</b> 77	<b>66.78</b> 382	<b>19.76</b> 113	572			
				Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No Idea	Total
3.	When I claim I know a word (e.g. <i>underdeveloped</i> ), I must be able to								
a)	pronounce it correctly	3.37 0.70	% #	<b>1.63</b> 9	<b>7.80</b> 43	<b>42.47</b> 234	<b>48.09</b> 265	21	572
b)	spell it correctly	3.26 0.76	% #	<b>2.76</b> 15	<b>10.68</b> 58	<b>44.20</b> 240	<b>42.36</b> 230	29	572
c)	recognise that it is made up of different parts (i.e. <i>under-</i> , <i>-develop-</i> and <i>-ed</i> ) and understand how these parts are related to its meaning	2.97 0.71	% #	<b>1.88</b> 10	<b>9.23</b> 49	<b>56.50</b> 300	<b>32.39</b> 172	41	572
d)	understand its meaning(s)	3.50 0.70	% #	<b>2.43</b> 13	<b>4.85</b> 26	<b>33.40</b> 179	<b>59.33</b> 318	36	572
e)	understand the concept(s) behind it and produce the word in different contexts (e.g. <i>underdeveloped</i> can be related to a country or region, an organ, etc.)	3.12 0.71	% #	<b>1.90</b> 10	<b>14.26</b> 75	<b>53.80</b> 283	<b>30.04</b> 158	46	572

f)	know its related words like <i>overdeveloped</i> , <i>backward</i> and <i>challenged</i>	2.90	0.73	% #	<b>2.84</b> 15	<b>23.86</b> 126	<b>53.60</b> 283	<b>19.70</b> 104	44	572
g)	judge whether the word has been used correctly in the sentence in which it occurs	3.22	0.69	% #	<b>1.86</b> 10	<b>9.48</b> 51	<b>53.53</b> 288	<b>35.13</b> 189	34	572
h)	decide to use or not use the word to suit the degree of formality of the situation ( <i>Underdeveloped</i> is less acceptable than <i>developing</i> which carries a slightly positive meaning.)	3.17	0.69	% #	<b>2.10</b> 11	<b>10.52</b> 55	<b>54.88</b> 287	<b>32.50</b> 170	47	572

#### B. Students' beliefs about vocabulary learning

		Mean	SD		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No Idea	Total
1.	I find vocabulary learning difficult.	2.67	0.78	% #	<b>6.18</b> 34	<b>34.00</b> 187	<b>46.91</b> 258	<b>12.91</b> 71	22	572
2.	I find vocabulary learning fun.	2.81	0.76	% #	<b>4.75</b> 25	<b>25.67</b> 135	<b>53.42</b> 281	<b>16.16</b> 85	46	572
3.	There is no need for me to spend time on vocabulary building outside class.	1.99	0.76	% #	<b>18.93</b> 103	<b>58.09</b> 316	<b>17.83</b> 97	<b>5.15</b> 28	28	572
4.	It is important for me to refer to a dictionary when learning a new word.	2.90	0.79	% #	<b>5.44</b> 29	<b>20.45</b> 109	<b>52.72</b> 281	<b>21.39</b> 114	39	572
5.	One can only have a large vocabulary if one has good memory.	2.36	0.87	% #	<b>15.46</b> 83	<b>44.69</b> 240	<b>28.68</b> 154	<b>11.17</b> 60	35	572
6.	The best way to learn a word is to use it.	3.30	0.68	% #	<b>2.60</b> 14	<b>5.01</b> 27	<b>52.32</b> 282	<b>40.07</b> 216	33	572

7.	It is good enough for me to focus only on the words and vocabulary learning strategies important to tests and examinations.	2.43	0.84	% #	<b>12.62</b> 68	<b>42.12</b> 227	<b>35.25</b> 190	<b>10.02</b> 54	33	572
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### C. Students' beliefs about vocabulary teaching

		Mean	SD		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>No Idea</i>	Total
1.	My English teacher(s) should teach me as many vocabulary items as possible.	3.13	0.63	% #	<b>1.66</b> 9	<b>9.43</b> 51	<b>63.40</b> 343	<b>25.51</b> 138	31	572
2.	It is fine for my English teacher(s) to introduce a new word to me without explaining its meaning.	2.03	0.82	% #	<b>27.62</b> 153	<b>45.85</b> 254	<b>22.02</b> 122	<b>4.51</b> 25	18	572
3.	It is fine for my English teacher(s) to introduce a new word to me without explaining its usage.	2.07	0.80	% #	<b>24.73</b> 135	<b>47.99</b> 262	<b>23.26</b> 127	<b>4.03</b> 22	26	572
4.	It is good enough for my English teacher(s) to use only textbooks and/or storybooks to teach vocabulary.	2.10	0.75	% #	<b>20.86</b> 112	<b>51.58</b> 277	<b>24.58</b> 132	<b>2.98</b> 16	35	572
5.	My English teacher(s) should always let me choose the words I want to learn.	2.64	0.68	% #	<b>4.38</b> 21	<b>34.45</b> 165	<b>53.65</b> 257	<b>7.52</b> 36	93	572
6.	It is important for my English teacher(s) to teach me the same words repeatedly in class to aid my memory.	3.01	0.73	% #	<b>3.20</b> 17	<b>16.17</b> 86	<b>56.95</b> 303	<b>23.68</b> 126	40	572
7.	My English teacher(s) should avoid using the Chinese translation of a word to explain its meaning(s) in class.	2.32	0.91	% #	<b>19.58</b> 103	<b>39.92</b> 210	<b>29.66</b> 156	<b>10.84</b> 57	46	572

8.	It is important for my English teacher(s) to use visual aids to illustrate the meaning(s) of a vocabulary item.	3.03	0.62	% #	<b>1.79</b> 9	<b>12.33</b> 62	<b>67.40</b> 339	<b>18.49</b> 93	69	572
9.	My English teacher(s) should always encourage me to guess the meaning(s) of an unknown word before explaining its meaning(s).	3.14	0.60	% #	<b>0.94</b> 5	<b>8.10</b> 43	<b>64.60</b> 343	<b>26.37</b> 140	37	572
10.	My English teacher(s) should teach me how I can expand my vocabulary on my own.	3.13	0.61	% #	<b>1.57</b> 8	<b>8.22</b> 42	<b>65.75</b> 336	<b>24.46</b> 125	61	572

#### D. Students' beliefs about vocabulary activities

		Mean	SD		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>No Idea</i>	Total
1.	It is fine for my English teacher(s) to conduct the same activities for vocabulary building in class regularly.	2.83	0.67	% #	<b>3.45</b> 18	<b>22.22</b> 116	<b>62.07</b> 324	<b>12.26</b> 64	50	572
2.	It is fine for my English teacher(s) NOT to conduct any games for vocabulary building in class.	2.41	0.81	% #	<b>14.48</b> 75	<b>36.10</b> 187	<b>43.24</b> 224	<b>6.18</b> 32	54	572
3.	It is fine for my English teacher(s) to use only vocabulary activities such as fill in the blanks and matching in textbook to teach vocabulary.	2.29	0.83	% #	<b>12.00</b> 63	<b>34.29</b> 180	<b>45.71</b> 240	<b>8.00</b> 42	47	572

4.	My English teacher(s) should conduct vocabulary activities in small groups during English lessons.	3.11	0.62	% #	<b>1.91</b> 10	<b>8.21</b> 43	<b>66.41</b> 348	<b>23.47</b> 123	48	572
5.	My English teacher(s) should always assign homework to consolidate my vocabulary learning after conducting a vocabulary activity in class.	2.97	0.68	% #	<b>4.58</b> 24	<b>11.26</b> 59	<b>67.18</b> 352	<b>16.98</b> 89	48	572
6.	I'd like my English teacher(s) to conduct the following vocabulary activities in class:									
a)	Dictation	2.23	0.92	% #	<b>24.86</b> 137	<b>35.57</b> 196	<b>31.03</b> 171	<b>8.53</b> 47	21	572
b)	Drama	2.64	1.03	% #	<b>17.03</b> 94	<b>26.81</b> 148	<b>31.52</b> 174	<b>24.64</b> 136	20	572
c)	Games (e.g. scrabble, spelling games, crossword puzzles, etc.)	3.11	0.83	% #	<b>4.17</b> 23	<b>12.50</b> 69	<b>40.40</b> 223	<b>42.93</b> 237	20	572
d)	Group discussion	2.78	0.93	% #	<b>9.98</b> 55	<b>26.68</b> 147	<b>39.02</b> 215	<b>24.32</b> 134	21	572
e)	Movie appreciation	3.54	0.72	% #	<b>1.64</b> 9	<b>8.38</b> 46	<b>23.86</b> 131	<b>66.12</b> 363	23	572
f)	Reading different types of texts (e.g. newspaper articles, storybook, etc.)	2.75	0.89	% #	<b>9.21</b> 51	<b>27.62</b> 153	<b>42.60</b> 236	<b>20.58</b> 114	18	572
g)	Song appreciation	3.40	0.82	% #	<b>3.68</b> 20	<b>10.48</b> 57	<b>27.76</b> 151	<b>58.09</b> 316	28	572
h)	Vocabulary sharing	2.70	0.96	% #	<b>13.03</b> 71	<b>26.42</b> 144	<b>38.35</b> 209	<b>22.20</b> 121	27	572
i)	Other:									

### E. Students' beliefs about vocabulary assessment

	Mean	SD		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>No Idea</i>	Total
1. To assess my vocabulary knowledge, my English teacher(s) should_____.									
a) set regular vocabulary quizzes	2.67	0.69	% #	<b>11.92</b> 64	<b>18.44</b> 99	<b>60.52</b> 325	<b>9.12</b> 49	35	572
b) give me dictation on a regular basis	2.68	0.70	% #	<b>11.90</b> 65	<b>17.95</b> 98	<b>60.44</b> 330	<b>9.71</b> 53	26	572
c) always correct the vocabulary mistakes my classmates and I make in class	2.96	0.80	% #	<b>3.13</b> 17	<b>7.54</b> 41	<b>64.15</b> 349	<b>25.18</b> 137	28	572
d) avoid correcting all the vocabulary mistakes I make in my writing	2.48	0.43	% #	<b>18.28</b> 98	<b>28.36</b> 152	<b>40.30</b> 216	<b>13.06</b> 70	36	572
e) ask me to complete different exercises related to vocabulary learning from time to time	2.98	0.70	% #	<b>4.68</b> 25	<b>11.80</b> 63	<b>64.61</b> 345	<b>18.91</b> 101	38	572

## II. OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES<sup>27</sup>

### 1. The importance of vocabulary building in relation to the development of the four language skills

Students' explanation	
Building vocabulary is <b>more important</b> than developing the four language skills.	Building vocabulary is important because it is important to writing. Also, it can also improve more knowledge about the world. (S1)
	It is because if you don't know the word, then you will not know the sentence meaning, can't listen well, speak well, read well or write well. (S2)
	If I have more knowledge of vocabulary, I can use them in my writing, I can use them in my speaking exams. Also, when I am listening to English articles, I can understand them. (S3)
	Because it is useless for you to acquire the four skills without knowing any good word to use. (S4)
	This is because when we learn many vocabulary, we will also develop the four language skills; therefore, I think it is more important. (S5)
Building vocabulary is <b>as important as</b> developing the four language skills.	It is because if you just know building vocabulary, you cannot communicate with other people well. If you just know four language skills but do not know more vocabulary, you cannot communicate with other people too. (S1)
	If you know more words, you can write more easily with different words. And improving the four language skills can help us to talk with people and listen to them easily. (S2)
	If you know so many vocabularies, but you don't know how to read them out and listen, that means you only know the spellings and meanings of the words. That is useless and meaningless. (S3)
	It is because we will use both in our daily life. If we only build vocabulary but not develop the four language skills, we cannot speak well. Oppositely, we will have lack of vocabulary. (S4)
	Extending vocabulary can make us write better and involving levels on four language skills can help us do better on every learning area. (S5)

<sup>27</sup> All responses are written by the students and none has been changed. Thus, some of the statements are ungrammatical.



Building vocabulary is <b>less important</b> than developing the four language skills.	<p>Even if you know a lot of words but not write or speak, you still cannot communicate with others. If you have a good command of listening and speaking skills, it is easier to communicate with others. (S1)</p> <p>It is because if you weak in four language skills, you can't build up vocabulary easily (S2).</p> <p>Building vocabulary is the basic. You use different words to present what you what to say. But learning more vocabulary is a good thing. (S3)</p> <p>It is because the four language skills are the basic English skills. If we can use the skills well, we can guess the vocabularies. (S4)</p> <p>Vocabulary enhances our writing skills whereas the four language skills enhance our English ability. (S5)</p>
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## 2. The importance of vocabulary knowledge in relation to grammar knowledge

Students' explanation	
Vocabulary is <b>more important</b> than grammar.	<p>Even the English native speakers wouldn't get every grammar correct. Yet, we have to have good vocabulary as we need to understand what people say (S1).</p> <p>It's because I think that in the communication, when we make wrong grammar, people can also know what we are talking about. (S2)</p> <p>People usually do not care about grammar. However, the vocabulary you use can reflect your English level. You can show that you are great in English. (S3)</p> <p>If we don't have a plentiful of vocabulary, we can't understand the reading well. If we are not good in grammar, we can still understand the reading if we have a plentiful of vocabulary. (S4)</p> <p>Vocabulary, instead of grammar, is the key to understanding what others say or what the reading is about. (S5)</p>
Vocabulary is <b>as important as</b> grammar.	<p>It is because you need to use different vocabulary to talk. And if you don't know grammar, maybe your meaning will be different from your original meaning. (S1)</p> <p>It is because if you have vocabulary but no grammar, it may become wrong. And if you have grammar but no vocabulary, you will find it difficult to form a sentence. (S3)</p>

Vocabulary is <b>as important</b> as grammar. (Continued)	You need to speak using different vocabulary and language in this international city. (S4)
	If you make mistakes on grammar, some people may misunderstand your meaning. I think grammar is the basic of English. And you can make use of your vocabulary to enrich your articles. (S5)
Vocabulary is <b>less important</b> than grammar.	If we use the wrong grammar, others may not understand what we are talking about. But if we use the wrong spellings, others may still understand what we are saying. (S1)
	It is because if you learn a lot of vocabulary, but your grammar is weak, then your exam mark in writing will be very low. (S2)
	Our common mistakes are usually related to grammar such as wrong tenses, though we spell words correctly. (S3)
	I think because you learn grammar since primary 1 and it can show your basic skills in English. Yet, vocabulary can be accumulated, and people would not care about whether your English is naïve. (S4)
	It's because when you have better grammar, your English will be more fluent. With a better foundation of grammar, you may use vocabulary easily (S5).

## B. Students' views on vocabulary learning

### 1. Major problem(s) students encounter when learning vocabulary

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Attitude</b>	I'm lazy to check the dictionary. (S1)	I'm too lazy. (S4)
	Sometimes, I won't check from the dictionary if I don't know the word. I would like to skip it. (S2)	It is boring to learn vocabulary. (S4)
	I think it is boring. Therefore, I will give up easily. (S3)	Lack of motivation. (S5)
	Feel bored and (have) no patience to learn. (S3)	沒有恆心. (S5)
	Not enough time (S3)	Since you used to learn(ing) the simple words, it is difficult to use the difficult ones. (S4)
		The process (of learning vocabulary) can be frustrating. (S5)

<b>Spelling</b>	<p>I find it really hard to remember how to spell the words. (S1).</p> <p>The major problem is that when I first learn the words, I don't know how to pronounce or spell them (S2).</p> <p>The spelling of the vocabulary is the major obstacle when I learn new words. It is because I usually encounter loads of new vocab when I watch English drama like House of Card, Gregory House M.D. There are only Chinese subtitles, and I cannot know what exactly the words are, such as pathetic and miserable. I have to ask my English teacher for the spelling. (S3)</p>	<p>I can't identify the differences in similar words. The vocabs are hard to spell. I don't know why the vocab come out. (S4)</p> <p>It is difficult to remember the spelling as some words are similar in spelling. (S5)</p> <p>Some complicated spellings are very difficult to remember (S5).</p>
<b>Meaning</b>	<p>I don't know where I can find the meaning of words that I don't know. (S1)</p> <p>Some vocabularies have more than one meaning. Sometimes, I just remember one of them but not all. (S2)</p> <p>Do not understand the meaning of the word. I would like to know about the Chinese meaning of that word to improve my understanding. (S3)</p>	<p>Can't remember the meaning of the vocab and can't figure it out when I need that word to express something. (S4)</p> <p>Cannot use the words correctly and cannot understand the words in a paragraph. (S4)</p>
<b>Usage</b>	<p>有時以為自己懂得一個生字，可惜在實際作句子或應用的時候才發覺自己對那個字詞一知半解。(S2)</p> <p>(My) Family members don't know English. (S2)</p> <p>None of my family members are native English speakers. (S2)</p> <p>It is difficult to decide when to use them (the words). This is because a word can have different meanings.</p>	<p>I might not know if a word is used in formal or informal occasion. (S4)</p> <p>To judge whether a word been used correctly. (S5)</p>

<b>Usage</b> (Continued)	I feel confused when I am writing. (S3)	
<b>Memory</b>	<p>On the same day to remember and write out, but on the second day can forget. (S1)</p> <p>I only remember the words for a short period of time. (S1)</p> <p>Difficult to remember the words (S2).</p> <p>Forget easily even I have done revision on a word for many times. (S3)</p>	<p>學完便忘記 (S4)</p> <p>Overcoming my short-term memory. (S4)</p> <p>I cannot remember too many words. (S4)</p> <p>I cannot always use some vocabulary in daily life, so I may forget them very soon. (S4)</p> <p>I need to check the meaning of a word more than once to remember the vocabulary. (S5)</p> <p>Many of the vocabularies learned more or less become passive. It is very hard to remember these new vocabularies if you don't use them often. (S5)</p> <p>There are limited occasions for me to use some newly learned vocabularies. (S5)</p>
<b>Other comments</b>	<p>I can't think of anything, as I encounter no problem when learning words (S1).</p> <p>Sometimes we will meet some words that we don't know how to pronounce. We need to check online dictionaries. But we can't do so everywhere. (S2)</p> <p>The major problem is the pronunciation of the new words. (S2)</p> <p>There are too many words I don't know. (S3)</p>	<p>Google Translation outputs the wrong meaning or simple vocabularies, which are not what I desired. (S4)</p> <p>Learning new words very slowly. (S5)</p>

## 2. The most effective way(s) to learn vocabulary

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Reading</b>	Reading books. Books have many good words. We can learn the vocab. (S1)	Reading books. It is easier to memorize a word if given a specific area. (S4)
	Read books. It can strengthen your reading skills and let you learn more vocabs at the same time (S1).	Reading. When you read more, you can know more about the world. (S4)
	Read more books. When reading books, if there are many words that we don't know, we can check in dictionary to learn a new word. (S2)	Reading newspapers. Some of the uncommon English words will be used in newspapers (S4)
	Read more English storybooks. It is because reading English books is convenient and easy. It is not difficult to read English books because most of them are interesting. (S2)	Read more English books. You can find new phrases in English book for sure, and you need to understand the meaning of the vocabulary in order to grasp the profound meaning of the book. Thus, reading books is an effective way to learn phrases. (S5)
	Read books. It is because we can even know the uses of the word. (S3)	We should read a book and check the meaning of vocabulary. Some words may be repeated many times. We can make use of this to enlarge our vocabulary. (S5)
		Reading helps us learn a wide range of vocabulary. (S5)
		Reading books. When you read books, you will find some interesting idioms, sentence structures, etc. (S5)
<b>Listening to English songs</b>	I think listening to English music is the most effective way. The lyrics are catchy. I can learn more vocabulary by searching the meanings of the words. (S2)	Listening to music. You can choose the songs you like, and you will be interested to know about the lyrics and learn more vocabs. (S4)
	Reading books, listening to English songs and watching English YouTube channels. It is because we will like to learn if we can find some fun when we are learning. (S2)	Listen to English songs. We can remember the lyrics of a song easily. (S4)
		Listening to music whilst seeing the lyrics can not only let me know the deeper meaning of the song, but also to gain vocabulary. (S5)

<b>Listening to English songs</b> (Continued)	<p>Listen music. I will try to know the word meaning when I listen the song. (S2)</p> <p>Listen to your favourite songs. You will have interest to search for the words you do not know in the lyrics of those songs. (S3)</p> <p>I think listening to English songs is the most effective way to learn. If we are interested at the song, we will want to know the meaning of the lyrics, then we can learn more new vocabulary from it. (S3)</p>	<p>Listening to English songs. When I heard a new vocab and did not know what is the meaning of it, I will search the vocab in dictionary. (S5)</p> <p>I think learning through listening to music is the most effective way because it is more interesting. I can remember the vocabulary while remembering the songs. (S5)</p> <p>Listening to English songs. We can learn a lot of new vocabulary from the songs and it is easier to remember the vocabulary. (S5)</p>
<b>Watching English videos, films, etc.</b>	<p>Watch more western movies or videos and try to understand what they are saying without looking at the subtitle. Then try to drop down as many things as possible. It can improve their listening skills and writing skills. (S1)</p> <p>By watching YouTube. YouTube has lots of videos, like gaming and challenges which YouTubers upload. They speak English well and I can use their vocab in my writing. (S2)</p> <p>我認為只要在平日多抽時間看英文的新聞或其他有關英語的電視節目，便能從中擴充詞匯，學會更多的生字對口頭溝通很有幫助。由於我們在課堂上學到的字詞有限，因此我們應主動在課餘的時間看英語的節目，從而提升自己對自學英語的興趣及擴充詞匯。 (S2)</p> <p>Watch more English videos and movies. It is because we can use these ways to learn a language in daily life and these ways are more fun than reading books. (S3)</p>	<p>Watching movies that are in English. I am interested in watching movies, and that helps me to know more vocab. (S4)</p> <p>Watching western movies can let me know more about complicated and seldom used vocabulary. (S5)</p> <p>Learn words and phrases through movies and try to use them in daily life or writing. As I enjoy watching movies, I am willing to search for words that I don't know which had appeared there, so I think learn vocabularies through interests is the most effective way. (S5)</p>

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**Using a dictionary**

Refer to a dictionary. Dictionaries have a lot of vocabulary, its meanings and uses. (S1)

Check the dictionary and record them down in the notebook. Because dictionary is full of interesting words for us to use. (S4)

I think refer to the dictionary is the most effective way. This is because we can find the meaning of the words, part of speech and examples. (S1)

When you heard about a new vocab and did not know what is the meaning of it I will search the vocab in dictionary. (S4)

Check dictionary. Dictionary have examples. It can let me know how to use a word easily. (S1)

Find the meaning of the word by myself. I always check the dictionary when I meet a new word. (S5)

Using dictionary to help myself. It is because I can understand the word more clearly. (S1)

Check the dictionary. We can always learn new vocabulary through dictionary. (S5)

Read dictionary. When we read dictionary, we may find some hard words that we may not read in books. (S2)

I think recite the words in the dictionary is the most effective way to learn vocabulary. It is because my Mum was an English teacher and she taught me this. (S2)

When we see a new word that we don't know its meaning, look up the dictionary. By looking up the dictionary, we can get a full explanation of that word and can learn the meaning of that word well. (S3)

Remember the meaning, spelling of the word in the dictionary. I think that the only way is to remember. If we don't remember, we will forget them easily. It is the direct and workable way. (S3)

<b>Playing games</b>	<p>Play some games which are about learning vocabulary. We will feel interested when we learning vocabulary. (S1)</p> <p>Playing games- More attractive and fun to learn vocabulary. (S2)</p> <p>I'd change language to English while I was playing some games. It would help me much. (S3)</p>	<p>Playing games. Games are fun. (S4)</p> <p>Chatting with foreigners through online games. e.g. Minecraft, League of Legends.</p> <p>Through chatting with foreigners, I could learn some new vocabs and they will correct my grammar mistakes. (S5)</p>
<b>Revising</b>	<p>Every day spell 5 to 10 vocabulary. It is because every day spell a few words is better than spell a lot of words in one day. (S1)</p> <p>Take a moment to review the new words you have learned anywhere in the notebook every day. Memorizing words every day will deepen your impression of that word. (S1)</p> <p>不停記...不停記...不停記...不停記...不停記才能記得深刻 (S1).</p> <p>每天看幾次，讀幾次。人是有短暫記憶的，即使你今天背了也不代表你明天記住了，後天可以記住，所以要每天看，每天讀。(S1)</p> <p>Write the new word on a card and the meaning at the back or explain the word with comics to remember it. Generally, people prefer pictures more than words, it can make us remember it stronger and easier to recall them. (S3)</p>	<p>Keep doing vocabulary quizzes. I have downloaded an app called Quizlet. I create my own vocabulary list and have a test regularly. (S5)</p> <p>死記. 因為死記能更易理解詞語. (S4)</p> <p>Copy the word again and again until I can remember. It is easy for me to remember the spelling and how to pronounce the word. (S5)</p> <p>把所有詞彙抄錄在筆記本，平日多反覆閱讀. 因為把所有詞彙集中起來寫成一本筆記在溫習詞彙時較為方便. (S5)</p>
<b>Jotting down notes or using a notebook</b>	<p>We can drop down some unknown word in the notebook. And write down meaning. (S1)</p>	<p>Jot notes. Convenient to revise. (S4)</p>



<b>Jotting down notes or using a notebook</b> (Continued)	<p>I will write the vocabulary on a notebook after learning and the Chinese meaning near the vocabulary. Sometimes I will read the notes so that I can remember them. (S1)</p> <p>We can keep a "word bank". We can write down some new words in a notebook. We can find out the new words easily when we need that. (S2)</p> <p>Keep a list. Put this list somewhere portable (easy to carry around) - a little notebook, my phone - so I can access it anywhere. (S2)</p> <p>Write on the notebook and every day look it. It can help me to remember the word and difficult forget. (S2)</p> <p>Write down the vocabulary on a notebook. It's because we can know the words clearly when we read the notes. (S2)</p> <p>Write down the vocabulary I don't know and its meaning on my own notebook. I can take out my notebook anytime and learn more new vocabulary anytime. (S2)</p>	<p>Use a notebook to record what vocabulary I had learnt and the meaning of it. It helps me to keep track on what I had learnt and remind myself what the meaning of it. Perhaps I can refer this notebook when I forget the word. (S4)</p> <p>Use a notebook to write down the vocabs which I don't know with the meaning next to it. It because write them down is useful whenever I need them when I am doing homework or even writing an essay or just revise them when I am free. (S4)</p> <p>Drop notes. Stick the vocab list on your desk so that you will see it every day. (S5)</p>
<b>Using the words</b>	<p>Use more in the real world, talk with foreigners more often. It is always good to practice by talking with others (S1)</p> <p>Use the words more. If you try to use the words more in life, you may use it right. (S1)</p> <p>Try to remember them and use them wisely in your daily life. It is because when some foreign tourists or friends ask or chat with you, you can use these to help you. (S1)</p>	<p>Learn vocab every day and use it in daily life because it can make us remember more remarkably (S4).</p> <p>Visit other country and talk to others with English or make friends with other people in other country. Talk to other can remember and listen others' vocabulary. (S4)</p> <p>Use more. Use more can help to spell, and how it can be used correctly (S4)</p>

<b>Using the words</b> (Continued)	Use it in our daily life. Learning vocabularies is not just for tests. You also should use it in communications in life. (S2)	Use the vocab more and learn how to pronounce the word. it is easier to memorizing the words (S5)
	Use more. Practice makes perfect. (S3)	Use more vocabulary actively. as vocabulary need to be used in order for us to truly understand the vocab itself (S5).
	The best way to learn a word is to use it. If you learn it but not use it, it is not good (S1).	Use it in a sentence or try to give a simple definition for it so you can remember it much easier. If you can use it more often, these vocabularies change from short term memories to long term memories and you'll be able to remember them even if you aren't specifically looking for the word (S5)
	To use those vocabulary more. When you use that words more, you will more remember that words and their meaning. (S3)	Use it in daily life. Chat with others in English. (S5)
	I think write a sentence with the vocabulary is the most effective way to learn vocabulary. Because it can let you know how to use the vocabulary and the meaning of the vocabulary in the correct sentence (S3)	Use the word that I just learn. When you use the word, you learn it. (S5)
<b>Other strategies</b>	Use a story top remember the words (S1)	Speak out the words loudly. Speaking out the words helps you remember the pronunciation. (S4)
	More careful to see the words and things everyday. It is because the words and things we see everyday can make deeper impression. (S1)	死記, 因為死記能更易理解詞語(S4)
	To think some picture and use them try to spell. It can make us more imaginative. And we can spell the word easily. (S1)	I am still finding the way. (S5)
	No special way. Spend more time. (S2)	
	Separate it into different parts for remembering it easily. we can learn it more easily if the word is 'smaller'. (S1)	
	抄寫。每個詞彙抄 5 次 (S1)	

## C. Students' views on vocabulary teaching

### 1. The best way for English teachers to help facilitate understanding of a new word's meaning

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Visualisation</b>	<p>Draw the meaning out because it is easier and faster to know a new word. (S1)</p> <p>I think the teacher can show some photos of the new word to help us understand its meaning. (S1)</p> <p>Use actions. For example, if she teaches us walk, she can walk to teach us the word. (S2)</p> <p>I think teacher should show us some pictures and explain them. For example, when teacher is teaching 'donkey', he/she can show us the picture of it. (S3)</p>	<p>Explain the words through pictures because it is boring for a teacher to use chalk and talk only. (S4)</p> <p>If the teacher wants to teach the word 'apple', s/he can draw it on the board. It can help me to understand the word especially when the drawing is beautiful or funny. (S4)</p> <p>Using information from the Internet such as videos and photos. Example: Sports that we don't usually play. (S5)</p>
<b>Guessing the meaning</b>	<p>Let us guess the meaning first, then tell us the right answer and tell (ask) us to write it down. (S1)</p> <p>Let us guess the meaning of a word using its different parts. For example, words that start with un have a negative meaning. (S2)</p> <p>Use examples. For example, when a teacher is teaching us 'sentry', he or she should give us a sentence like <i>'there is a sentry standing next to a castle in order to keep the castle safe.'</i> for us to guess the meaning. (S3)</p>	<p>Encourage us to guess the meaning of the vocab because it enhances our memory. (S4)</p> <p>By giving us one or a few sample sentences so that we can guess the meaning. (S5)</p> <p>My teacher can let us guess the meaning of a word by suggesting examples in our daily life. For example, she can explain the word 'advertisement' by telling us that it is related to posters on the street which promote an activity or a product. (S5)</p>
<b>Putting the word into use</b>	<p>Explain the meaning of the word in English and make a sentence with the word. For example, he / she can give me the sentence <i>I will be 'nervous' when I do a test</i> after teaching the word 'nervous'. (S1)</p>	<p>Give us opportunities to make a new sentence for the word to enhance our memory. (S4)</p> <p>Teachers can create a story with the new word. (S5)</p>

<b>Translation</b>	<p>Use Chinese to tell us the meaning, because I know Chinese. (S1)          Explain the Chinese meaning.          Sometimes, we may not understand the explanation in English. Using Chinese is the best way to make us know the meaning. (S2)</p> <p>Use the Chinese translation of that word to explain its meaning (S3).</p>	<p>Give the Chinese meaning.          Knowing the Chinese meaning enables me to use the word correctly. (S4)</p> <p>Try to explain it in English and then ask us to explain that word using Chinese. (S5)</p>
<b>Paraphrasing and using synonyms</b>	<p>I think my teacher should explain it in simple words so that I can know more and learn quickly. (S1)</p> <p>Directly tell us the meaning of the vocabulary or tell us the synonyms of that word. (S2)</p> <p>Use words with similar meanings to explain. Like 'remote' can replace (can be replaced) by 'faraway' (S3)</p> <p>I think the teacher can give us words with similar meanings and simple words. For example, she (my teacher) taught us the word 'inmate' by explaining its meaning 'a person who is in jail'. She also gave us the word 'criminal'. (S3)</p>	<p>Provide a similar word which is related to the difficult word s/he is teaching. (S4)</p> <p>Use other easier words to explain the difficult word – For example, my teacher would tell me that 'incredible' has the same meaning as 'unbelievable'. (S4)</p> <p>Explain the word by focusing on its colour and shape. (S5)</p>
<b>Other strategies</b>	<p>每一個詞語 都會有自己的典故，有些可能是原始戰爭時用的，有些或許是古代的人在勝利時所用的語言，因此我認為老師應介紹一下詞語的典故，從而令我們更了解那個字詞的意思。(S2)</p> <p>Repeat saying the words every day. (S3)</p> <p>I think English teachers can talk more with us. We can learn more words from their sharing. (S3)</p>	<p>I believe there is no best way; every way is important. (S4)</p> <p>Let us check the meaning of the words by ourselves first. (S5)</p>

2. The best way for English teachers to help consolidate the learning of a vocabulary item

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Working on instructional practice</b>	The teachers need to use interesting examples, such as ‘he is as fierce as a tiger’, ‘she is as lazy as a pig’, etc. (S1)	Using visual aids to illustrate the meaning of the vocabulary item. (S4)
	Act out the words. This can make us remember the words more easily. (S2)	Explain the word in detail. (S4)
	Introduce words with similar sounds when teaching a new word. (S2)	Explain each part of the word, like ‘underprivileged’. (S4)
	Relate the word to my classmates. E.g. “Tommy is the most spineless and pathetic student(s) in our class because he always hands in his homework late.” (S3)	I think the teacher can share the special skills to remember the meaning of word. (S4)
	Divide the word into different parts. For example: explain ‘internet’ in ‘inter’ and ‘net’. (S3)	Using Chinese. (S5)
<b>Using repetition</b>	I think she can use the word repeatedly when she is talking or she can read it again in the next lesson. (S1)	Read the word several times (S5).
	They should teach the new words repeatedly to aid our memory. For example, if they want to teach a new word, they can express the meaning of the word with different ways every time. (S2)	I think English teacher can keep mentioning the vocab again and again. (S5)
	It is important for my English teacher to teach me the same words repeatedly in class to aid my memory. (S3)	Keep repeating it and make an example to explain it. Teachers can create a story including the new words. Students may be interested in it. (S5)
		Mention the words repeatedly in class and check understanding (E.g. Do you remember what we learnt yesterday?). (S5)
		於課堂完結前，重新複習多一次新的詞語 (S5)

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**Promoting  
note-taking**

Ask us to write down the words on our textbook/ classwork /notebook. (S1)

Remind us to copy the words in our notebook or worksheet. (S4)

He/she can write down the word, ask us to copy it and make a sentence with the word. (S2)

Asking me to write notes so that I can check the vocabulary after class (S2).

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**Putting the  
word into use,  
doing revision  
and  
giving  
assessment**

They can help us do a revision on the words we learned by playing games. (S1)

Asking us to copy that vocab for a thousand times. (S4)

I think English teachers should let us do some exercises by giving us worksheet to help us remember a vocabulary item effectively. (S1)

To have a dictation every time when we learn new vocab. (S4)

Let me copy and copy again. (S2)

Giving us notes when never (whenever) it is a compo feedback or a commentary feedback and having a quiz on the words in next lesson. (S4)

To have dictation because we don't want to fail the dictation and will spell the words. (S1)

Dictation. Through this we must remember the words. (S5)

Dictation every day. (S2)

Ask us to copy more. Like in the dictation, I often fail. Then copy more I can pass next time. (S3)

Let us make our own sentences. (S4)

I think teachers should tell (ask) us to use the words in writing to help us remember the words. (S3)

Ask us to use the word more often. Perhaps teachers can ask us to write some sentences by using the words we have just learnt and share them in class, then discuss whether we have misunderstood the word or use it wrongly. (S4)

## D. Students' views on vocabulary activities

1. Reasons why students would (not) like some vocabulary activities suggested (e.g. dictation, drama, song appreciation, etc.) to be conducted in class

	PROS	CONS
<b>Dictation</b>	Dictations can help us remember the words easily. (S3)	Dictations give students pressure. (S2)
	Dictation can encourage us to memorize the words. (S5)	Dictation will affect our interest of English (S2).
		I don't want to have too much dictation because students will only remember the spelling of the words but won't know what the word exactly means. (S2)
		I wouldn't like to learn vocabulary in dictation as it is an activity which is waste of the time during lessons. (S3)
		Most activities will be fun for our class except dictation. Dictation is a way to force us to study and recite passages, phrases and vocabularies. Most of us don't like it. (S2)
		My spelling is very bad. My dictation is not good and always fail, so I do not want to have dictation. (S3)
		I don't like dictation because it is too hard for me to remember the words. (S5)
		After dictation, we don't actually learn the words. (S5)

<b>Drama</b>	I want to learn vocabulary through drama because I like drama very much and it can let us be more active in lessons. (S1)	I don't like drama as my acting skills are poor, I don't want others laugh at me. (S1)
	Drama is interesting, and it can make students concentrate in class. (S3)	Drama is boring and difficult. (S2) 我不太認同以話劇的形式來擴充詞匯，因為話劇的彩排需要很長的時間。倘若要花大量時間在這方面，便會拖延學習的進度。(S2)
		I think doing drama is wasting the time in lesson. (S2) Doing drama is quite time-consuming (S4)
<b>Games</b>	It is because I like some funny games to play and learn in the lessons. It makes make feel interesting in the lessons. (S2)	Not interested in the meaningless activities. Learning is more important than playing (S5)
	They will add a lot of fun into the learning in vocabulary and it is easier for me to remember things in a relaxing situation (S3)	
	Because some games or interesting teaching skills can encourage me to learn the vocabulary more. (S3)	
	A relaxing environment is good for learning new vocabulary. (S5)	
<b>Group discussion</b>	Through the group discussion, we can discuss with our classmates and learn more things. (S3)	For group discussions, there are always noises made by classmates but not related to learning. (S2)
	Students can easily communicate about vocabulary to give them a great impression of those vocabulary. (S4)	I hate group discussions. (S2) Group discussion is not as effective as other activities. (S4)
	Can make the lesson more interactive. (S5)	Group discussion may not use the difficult vocab to communicate. (S4)



<b>Film appreciation</b>	I love movies a lot. They can help me to memorize a word effectively. (S2)	Watching movies may be too difficult to (for) me. (S2)
	Using movies are more interesting than using drama. (S2)	I cannot hear what the characters say in a drama show or a film. (S4)
	Drama need time to practice, I rather do other things like movie appreciation which I can learn new words efficiently. (S2)	
	Movie appreciation is the best activity for us as we can learn vocabulary in movies. (S3)	
<b>Reading different types of texts, such as newspaper articles and storybooks</b>	Reading different types of texts is more interesting than just reading a book. (S5)	I think reading different types of texts (e.g. newspaper articles, storybook) is very boring. (S2)
		It's because reading the books chosen by teachers will not be interesting. (S3)
<b>Song appreciation</b>	Listen to songs can help me learn English well. (S2) Song appreciation is fun. (S2) Listen to the songs can make us feel relaxed and better to learn more vocabularies. (S2)	Words from songs nowadays usually don't contain much useful words. (S4)
	I like song appreciation because I think many students and I like listening the English songs. I always search lyrics when I love some songs for guessing word meaning. (S3)	
	Song appreciation - Music is popular in teenagers, it's help us easy to learn English. (S4)	
	Song appreciation is efficient and easy to be conducted in class. (S5)	

<b>Vocabulary sharing</b>	Vocabulary sharing can help us learn more words. (S4)	I don't like the vocabulary sharing because a lot of student think it is boring. (S1)
	Vocabulary sharing can help us remember the words better. (S5)	Sharing is so boring. (S2)
	They are simple and easy to prepare, and it can yield great benefits, as many can share their thoughts on the word and can all learn from it. (S5)	Vocabulary sharing is boring. (S5)
<b>General comments</b>	These activities are not boring, you can improve the motivation of the students to learn. (S1).	They (the activities) are wasting time in the lessons that use to teach main syllabus for exams (Because they waste time in the lessons that can be used to cover the main syllabus for examinations). (S1)
	Those activities are interesting, and they can attract students. (S4)	Some of the activities I don't like cannot help me learn efficiently. (S2)
		Teachers should let student more concentration to the lesson, and some activities are boring. (S4)

2. Vocabulary activity/ activities students would like their English teacher(s) to conduct on top of those suggested in the questionnaire

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>No other activities</b>	No, because the most important thing is to prepare (for) the examinations. (S1)	No, because our lesson time is limited. (S4)
	No. I think the vocabulary activities mentioned are good enough. (S1)	No, the above activities are sufficient. (S4)
	No. I don't have any other ideas. (S2)	I think the activities have mentioned in Q2 are enough. (S5)
	No. I think that's enough because English teachers should also spend time on textbooks. (S3)	我不知道還有甚麼學習詞彙的活動. (S5)
	No. I think we should learn vocabulary by ourselves. (S3)	
	No. We don't have enough time in English lessons and we must rush and learn all things. (S3)	
<b>Singing and watching English videos or TV programmes</b>	Sing a song. I think lots of students like music. Trying to learn different words through singing is better than remember the words by reading the textbook. (S1)	Sing some songs which can let us to remember some new words easily. (S5)
	Watching different English TV programmes. (S3)	Rewriting the lyrics of different songs. (S5)
		Watching videos about different interesting topics. (S5)
		Listening to foreigners' speeches in English may let us know more vocabularies. (S5)
		I hope the teachers can do a movie appreciation first, then give a task for students to present the messages behind the movies and their feelings using different vocabulary. (S5)

<b>Sharing / presentations</b>	<p>I would like the teachers to ask us to do English presentations because presentations help us gain knowledge. (S1)</p> <p>Introducing to us different apps. It is because we always use phone. (S2)</p> <p>I hope teachers can ask some graduated students to come back to share their learning tips. (S2)</p>	<p>Book sharing. We can learn vocabularies through reading different books. (S4)</p> <p>Ask students to share with each other the English fictions they read. It is fun. (S4)</p> <p>Chatting with native speakers. (S4)</p> <p>Talking about his / her opinions about daily life, but not something about lesson. (S4)</p> <p>Quotes sharing. (S5)</p>
<b>Games or competitions</b>	<p>問答比賽. (S1)</p> <p>'Snake' - A game using the last letter to form a new word. (S1)</p> <p>Playing board games related to vocabulary. (S2)</p> <p>English vocabulary spelling competitions. (S3)</p> <p>I would like my English to conduct some singing contests to attract the students who like singing. Through singing contests, we can learn new vocabulary items and their meaning. (S3)</p> <p>Using flash cards to play games related to vocabulary. It is because they provide the picture of the words and help me to remember the vocabulary. (S3)</p>	<p>Guessing games. (S4)</p> <p>Word puzzles. (S4)</p> <p>Games like looking for synonyms from a dictionary will be kind of fun. (S5)</p> <p>Competitions related to vocabulary can be held in class. (S4)</p>
<b>Other activities</b>	<p>Sudden quizzes. (S1)</p>	<p>Tests. They can help us to remember the words and encourage us to do revision. (S4)</p> <p>Writing stories with the new words or writing stories about the meaning of the new word. (S4)</p> <p>Field trips. (S5)</p>

## E. Students' views on vocabulary assessment

### 1. Comments on Q1

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
Vocabulary assessments enable students to enhance their memory.	<p>Doing dictation and tests can help students remember the words better. (S1)</p> <p>We need to be tested regularly. This is because we can remember (the words) more easily because of the stressful atmosphere. (S3)</p>	<p>This can help us to memorize the vocabulary more easily. (S4)</p> <p>Doing revision from time to time can help me to remember the words better. (S5)</p> <p>I think practice makes perfect. Doing quizzes more (often) can help me to revise or remember the vocabulary items. (S5)</p>
Vocabulary assessments help facilitate teaching and learning.	<p>Doing quizzes can help me learn from the mistakes I make and find out my weaknesses (S2).</p> <p>我非常認同老師給一些小測給我們完成，因為透過完成小測，我們能學到一些課外的知識。(S2)</p> <p>Although I don't like to do quizzes or dictation, those method(s) help us to improve. (S2)</p> <p>I think set(ing) regular vocabulary quizzes is helpful because teachers can see our vocabulary ability and make appropriate teaching methods. (S1)</p> <p>These assessments can let us know whether we have learnt the words well or not. (S3)</p>	<p>Always correcting the mistakes my classmates and I make in class can help us avoid using the words wrongly. (S4)</p> <p>定時檢測能有效了解我們的學習進度以及詞彙掌握度，有助自我加強。(S4)</p> <p>I would do as much as I can to do better in English learning (S4).</p> <p>Complete different exercises related to vocabulary learning from time to time can help me build up long- term memory. (S5)</p> <p>It's good for teachers to check what we have learned through quizzes and dictation. (S5)</p>

Students are not particularly in favour of vocabulary assessments due to heavy workload, pressure from studies, lack of confidence in their English language proficiency, and perceptions related to particular vocabulary assessments.	We already have a lot of homework, so I don't want to do more homework and spend more time to study English vocabulary. (S1)	I think dictation and quizzes will give us pressure. (S4)
	I don't want any of the assessments. Learning vocabulary should be fun. (S2)	I don't think dictation is a useful way to improve our English because it focuses on the spelling of a word but not its meaning. (S4)
	Being forced to do tests and dictations is not as effective as doing things that we are willing to do. (S2)	I don't like boring quizzes. (S5)
	I don't want to do any tests because they give us more pressure. (S2)	I do not like dictation because I am not good at remember words. (S5)
	It (Revision) needs time and it may increase my work at home. (S2)	Vocabulary quizzes will only make me remember the words for a short period of time, but I will forget them soon (S4).
	I think dictation is boring and I won't study it, so I can't learn the vocab (S3).	I don't want my teacher to always correct the vocabulary mistakes my classmates and I make in class directly. That is embarrassing. That makes me feel embarrassed. (S5)
	I hope there is no dictation so I won't fail. (S3)	

## 2. Other comments or suggestions on vocabulary assessment

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>No change / No idea</b>	Sorry, I really can't think anything else (S1).	I think having tests is enough for us. (S5)
	Not at all. Dictations are enough (S1).	我不知道還有甚麼方法. (S5)
	I don't have any other ideas. I think the ways to help me assess my vocabulary knowledge are already enough. (S2)	The methods mentioned in Q1 are enough. We always have tests and examinations. I don't really want to have extra tests. (S5)
	No more. I don't want to have too many assessments. (S2)	
	No idea. (S3)	

<b>Through activities</b>	I hope my English teachers can let me take part in e-learning more often. (S1)	Ask us to form groups for question and answer games about vocabulary in lesson. (S4)
	可以出一篇短文，當晚給我們拿回家去翻譯，隔天再去檢查看看哪位同學可以真正地明白意思。如果同學真的不同其中意思，還可以查字典，慢慢養成一種習慣。(S1)	Holding competitions about guessing the vocabulary by showing the meaning. (S4)
	Ask us to do a drama to assess our vocabulary knowledge because drama is fun. (S2)	Assigning writing that is related to the theme of the vocabulary. (S4)
	News sharing. It can also help me improve my reading and speaking. (S3)	Vocabulary competitions in class. (S5)
	I hope that my English teacher can help me assess my vocabulary knowledge by holding some speaking practices. (S3)	Games like word puzzles to test our vocabulary. (S5)
	Play card games with us. (S3)	Writing and news sharing. Teachers can check if we have learned any words from the news by asking us to do some writing to remember the words. (S5)
<b>Teacher feedback, peer-evaluation or self-assessment</b>	Always correct the vocabulary mistakes my classmates and I make in class. It can let me know whether I have learned the words. (S1)	Let us have presentations and share with our classmates the words we have learned. (S5)
	I would like teacher to teach us more vocabulary and tell us our mistakes immediately and let us make correction. (S3)	Using English to talk with us and correct our mistakes related to vocabulary. (S4)
	同學互相指正，同學間互相提問對方是否明白。(S3)	Giving more feedback on our exercise book and writing. (S5)
	Let us do peer evaluation about vocabulary. This can let us know if others also think we have learnt the vocabulary well or not. We can know more about ourselves and our classmates. (S3)	Asking us to do online quizzes. It can save the lesson time. (S5)
		To give us a report summarising our mistakes every time after we finish our writing. (S5)

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<b>Other suggestions</b>	By asking questions to check our understanding. (S1)	Sudden quizzes, it can test us without any revision. (S4)
	Let us do one test in the beginning of the year and the end of the year to check if we have improved. (S2)	突擊測驗能有效評測學生真實情況。默書學生早有準備。(S4)
		Doing more past papers and working on reading passages. (S5)

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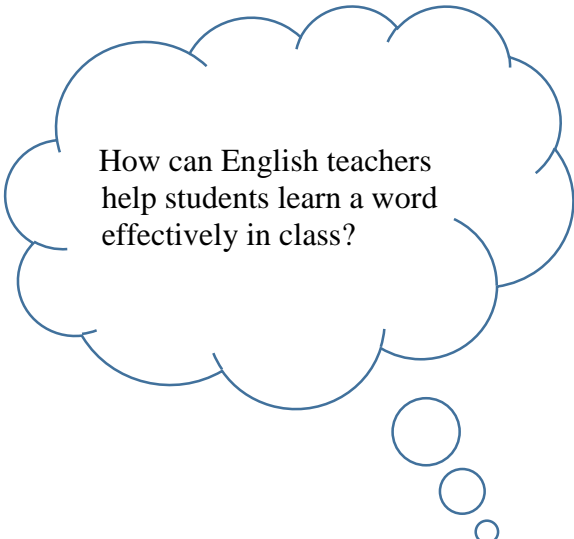


## SESSION 3 TEACHING AND EXPLAINING VOCABULARY

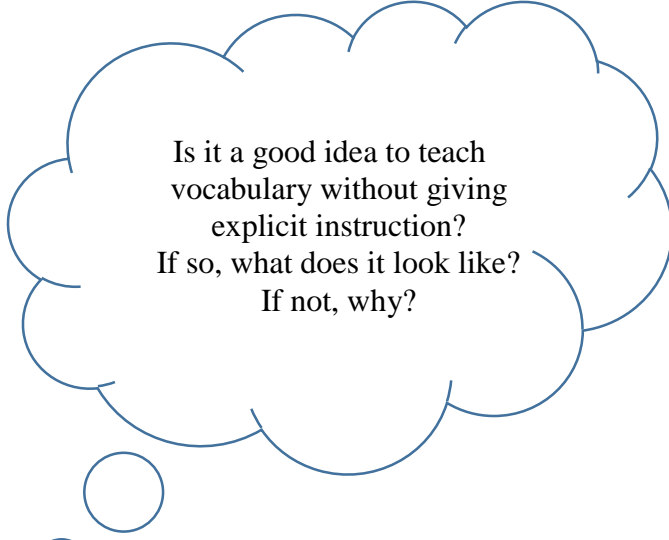
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### I. Self-reflection and collegial exchange of ideas

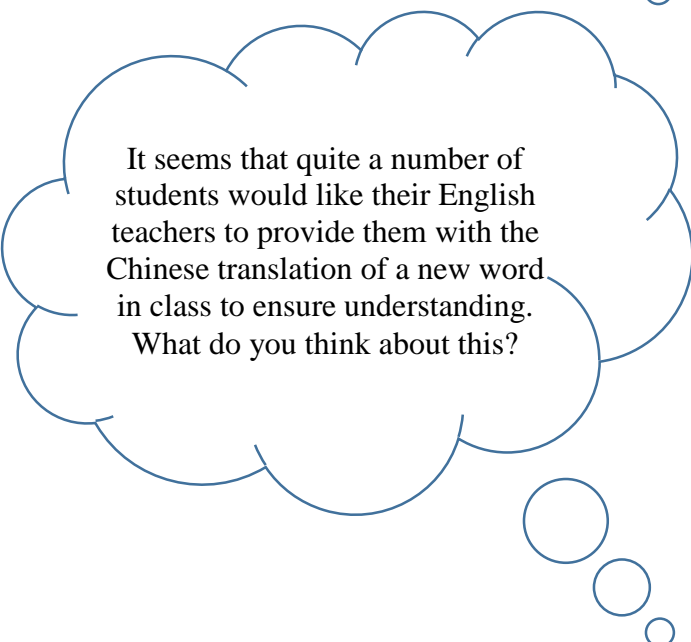
This session focuses on vocabulary instruction. Specifically, we will examine how vocabulary items can be taught and explained more effectively. Now, spend a few minutes to reflect on your experiences as ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’, and write down your answers to some important questions prior to the exchange of ideas with other teachers.



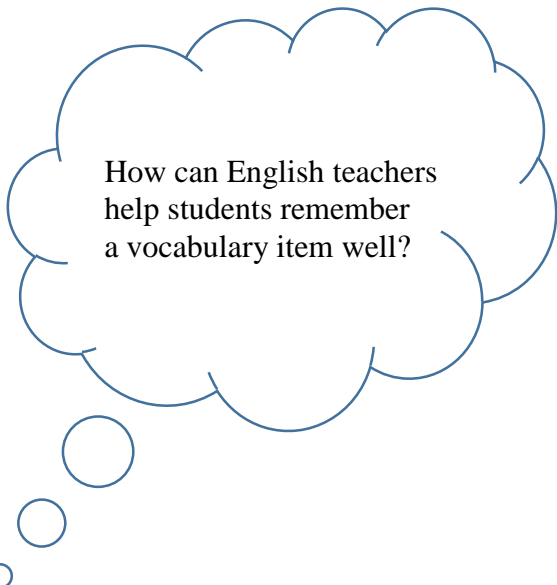
How can English teachers help students learn a word effectively in class?



Is it a good idea to teach vocabulary without giving explicit instruction?  
If so, what does it look like?  
If not, why?



It seems that quite a number of students would like their English teachers to provide them with the Chinese translation of a new word in class to ensure understanding.  
What do you think about this?



How can English teachers help students remember a vocabulary item well?

## II. Understanding student voices

The findings presented below show our students' beliefs about lexical instruction. To what extent are your thoughts different from, or similar to, those of the students? What are your reactions after reading the students' views? Spend a few minutes to explore what the students think and reflect on their ideas. Be ready to discuss your views with other teachers.

### Students' beliefs about vocabulary instruction

		Mean	SD		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No Idea	Total
1.	It is important for my English teacher(s) to use visual aids to illustrate the meaning(s) of a vocabulary item.	3.03	0.62	% #	<b>1.79</b> 9	<b>12.33</b> 62	<b>67.40</b> 339	<b>18.49</b> 93	69	572
2.	My English teacher(s) should always encourage me to guess the meaning(s) of an unknown word before explaining its meaning(s).	3.14	0.60	% #	<b>0.94</b> 5	<b>8.10</b> 43	<b>64.60</b> 343	<b>26.37</b> 140	37	572
3.	My English teacher(s) should avoid using the Chinese translation of a word to explain its meaning(s) in class.	2.32	0.91	% #	<b>19.58</b> 103	<b>39.92</b> 210	<b>29.66</b> 156	<b>10.84</b> 57	46	572
4.	My English teacher(s) should teach me how I can expand my vocabulary on my own.	3.13	0.61	% #	<b>1.57</b> 8	<b>8.22</b> 42	<b>65.75</b> 336	<b>24.46</b> 125	61	572

5. What do you think is the best way for English teachers to help you learn a word in class?

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Visualisation</b>	<p><u>Draw</u> the meaning out because it is <u>easier and faster</u> to know a new word. (S1)</p> <p>I think the teacher can <u>show some photos</u> of the new word to help us understand its meaning. (S1)</p>	<p>Explain the words through <u>pictures</u> because <u>it is boring for a teacher to use chalk and talk only</u>. (S4)</p> <p>If the teacher wants to teach the word 'apple', s/he can draw it on the board. It can help me to understand the word especially when the <u>drawing is beautiful</u> or <u>funny</u>. (S4)</p>

<b>Visualisation</b> (Continued)	<p><u>Use actions.</u> For example, if she teaches us walk, she can walk to teach us the word. (S2)</p> <p>I think teacher should <u>show us some pictures and explain them</u>... When teacher is teaching 'donkey', he/she can show us the picture of it. (S3)</p>	<p><u>Using information from the Internet</u> such as <u>videos</u> and <u>photos</u>. Example: Sports that we don't usually play. (S5)</p>
<b>Guessing the meaning</b>	<p><u>Let us guess the meaning first</u>, then <u>tell us the right answer</u> and tell (ask) us to write it down. (S1)</p> <p>Let us guess the meaning of a word using its <u>different parts</u>. For example, words that start with un have a negative meaning. (S2)</p> <p>Use <u>examples</u>... When a teacher is teaching us 'sentry', he or she should give us a sentence like '<i>there is a sentry standing next to a castle in order to keep the castle safe.</i>' for us to guess the meaning. (S3)</p>	<p>Encourage us to guess the meaning of the vocab because it <u>enhances our memory</u>. (S4)</p> <p>By giving us one or <u>a few sample sentences</u> so that we can guess the meaning. (S5)</p> <p>My teacher can let us guess the meaning of a word by suggesting <u>examples in our daily life</u>... she can explain the word 'advertisement' by telling us that it is related to posters on the street which promote an activity or a product. (S5)</p>
<b>Putting the word into use</b>	<p>Explain the meaning of the word in English, and <u>make a sentence with the word</u>... He / she can give me the sentence <i>I will be 'nervous' when I do a test</i> after teaching the word 'nervous'. (S1)</p> <p>By using the new word in a sentence <u>with the words we know</u>. (S2)</p>	<p><u>Give us opportunities to make a new sentence</u> for the word to enhance our memory. (S4)</p> <p>Teachers can <u>create a story</u> with the new word. (S5)</p> <p>Make a sentence to tell me about the meaning and <u>how to use the vocabulary</u> (S5)</p>
<b>Translation</b>	<p><u>Use Chinese to tell us the meaning</u>, because <u>I know Chinese</u>. (S1)</p> <p>Explain the Chinese meaning. Sometimes, we may <u>not understand the explanation in English</u>. Using Chinese is the best way to make us know the meaning. (S2)</p> <p>Use the Chinese translation of that word to explain its meaning (S3).</p>	<p>Give the Chinese meaning. Knowing the Chinese meaning enables me to <u>use the word correctly</u>. (S4)</p> <p>Try to explain it in English and then <u>ask us to explain that word using Chinese</u>. (S5)</p>

<p><b>Paraphrasing and using synonyms</b></p>	<p>I think my teacher should <u>explain it in simple words</u> so that I can know more and <u>learn quickly</u>. (S1)</p> <p><u>Directly tell us</u> the meaning of the vocabulary or tell us the synonyms of that word. (S2)</p> <p>Use words with similar meanings to explain. Like 'remote' can replace (can be replaced) by 'faraway' (S3)</p> <p>I think the teacher can give us <u>words with similar meanings and simple words</u>. For example, she (my teacher) taught us the word 'inmate' by explaining its meaning 'a person who is in jail'. She also gave us the word 'criminal'. (S3)</p>	<p>Provide a similar word which is related to the difficult word s/he is teaching. (S4)</p> <p><u>Use other easier words to explain</u> the difficult word – For example, my teacher would tell me that 'incredible' has the same meaning as 'unbelievable'. (S4)</p> <p>Explain the word by focusing on its <u>colour and shape</u>. (S5)</p>
<p><b>Others</b></p>	<p>每一個詞語 都會有自己的典故，有些可能是原始戰爭時用的，有些或許是古代的人在勝利時所用的語言，因此我認為老師應介紹一下詞語的典故，從而令我們更了解那個字詞的意思。(S2)</p> <p><u>Repeat</u> saying the words <u>every day</u>. (S3)</p> <p>I think English teachers can <u>talk more with us</u>. We can learn more words from their sharing. (S3)</p>	<p>I believe <u>there is no best way</u>; every way is important. (S4)</p> <p><u>Let us check the meaning</u> of the words <u>by ourselves first</u>. (S5)</p>

6. What do you think is the best way for English teachers to help you remember a vocabulary item effectively?

	JUNIOR (S1-S3)	SENIOR (S4-S5)
<b>Working on instructional practice</b>	<p>The teachers need to use <u>interesting examples</u>, such as ‘he is as fierce as a tiger’, ‘she is as lazy as a pig’, etc. (S1)</p> <p><u>Act out</u> the words. This can make us remember the words more easily. (S2)</p> <p><u>Introduce words with similar sounds</u> when teaching a new word. (S2)</p> <p><u>Relate the word to my classmates</u>. E.g. "Tommy is the most spineless and pathetic student(s) in our class because he always hands in his homework late." (S3)</p> <p><u>Divide the word into different parts</u>. For example: explain 'internet' in 'inter' and 'net'. (S3)</p>	<p>Using <u>visual aids</u> to illustrate the meaning of the vocabulary item. (S4)</p> <p><u>Explain</u> the word <u>in detail</u>. (S4)</p> <p>Explain each part of the word, like 'underprivileged'. (S4)</p> <p>I think the teacher can share the <u>special skills</u> to remember the meaning of word (S4).</p> <p><u>Using Chinese</u>. (S5)</p>
<b>Using repetition</b>	<p>I think she can <u>use the word repeatedly</u> when she is talking or she can <u>read it again in the next lesson</u>. (S1)</p> <p>They should teach the new words repeatedly to aid our memory. For example, if they want to teach a new word, they can <u>express the meaning of the word with different ways every time</u>. (S2)</p> <p>It is important for my English teacher to <u>teach me the same words repeatedly in class</u> to aid my memory. (S3)</p>	<p><u>Read the word several times</u> (S5).</p> <p>I think English teacher can <u>keep mentioning</u> the vocab again and again. (S5)</p> <p>Keep repeating it and <u>make an example</u> to explain it. Teachers can create a <u>story</u> including the new words. Students may be <u>interested</u> in it. (S5)</p> <p>Mention the words repeatedly in class and <u>check understanding</u> (E.g. Do you remember what we <u>learnt yesterday?</u>). (S5)</p> <p>於課堂完結前，<u>重新複習</u>多一次新的詞語 (S5)</p>

<b>Promoting note-taking</b>	<p><u>Ask us to write down</u> the words on our textbook/ classwork/notebook. (S1)</p> <p>He/she can write down the word, <u>ask us to copy it and make a sentence</u> with the word. (S2)</p> <p>Asking me to write notes so that I can <u>check the vocabulary after class</u> (S2).</p>	<p><u>Remind us to copy the words</u> in our notebook or worksheet. (S4)</p>
<b>Putting the word into use, doing revision and giving assessment</b>	<p>They can help us do a revision on the words we learned by <u>playing games</u> (S1).</p> <p>I think English teachers should let us do some exercises by giving us <u>worksheet</u> to help us remember a vocabulary item effectively. (S1)</p> <p>Let me <u>copy and copy again</u>. (S2)</p> <p>To have dictation because we <u>don't want to fail</u> the dictation and will spell the words. (S1)</p> <p><u>Dictation every day</u>. (S2)</p> <p>Ask us to <u>copy</u> more. Like in the dictation, I often <u>fail</u>. Then copy more I can pass next time. (S3)</p> <p>I think teachers should tell (ask) us to use the words in <u>writing</u> to help us remember the words. (S3)</p>	<p>Asking us to <u>copy that vocab for a thousand times</u>. (S4)</p> <p>To have a <u>dictation every time</u> when we learn new vocab. (S4)</p> <p>Giving us notes when never (whenever) it is a compo feedback or a commentary feedback and having a <u>quiz</u> on the words in next lesson. (S4)</p> <p>Dictation. Through this we must remember the words. (S5)</p> <p>Let us <u>make our own sentences</u>. (S4)</p> <p>Ask us to use the word more often. Perhaps teachers can ask us to write some sentences by using the words we have just learnt and <u>share</u> them in class, then <u>discuss whether we have misunderstood the word or use it wrongly</u>. (S4)</p>

✍ Notes:

### **III. Exploring theoretical literature**

#### **A) IMPLICIT, INCIDENTAL LEARNING OF VOCABULARY OR EXPLICIT TEACHING?**

- Top-down, naturalistic and communicative approaches to vocabulary teaching highlight the importance of implicit, incidental learning of vocabulary. This means that teachers are encouraged to direct learners to recognise clues in context, use monolingual dictionaries, avoid defining words or glossing texts with their bilingual equivalents, etc.
- Teachers should not focus solely on implicit instruction to facilitate second language vocabulary acquisition:
  - ❖ Acquiring vocabulary mainly through guessing words in context can be a very slow process;
  - ❖ Inferring word meaning is an error-prone process. Students seldom guess the correct meanings;
  - ❖ Even when students are trained to use flexible reading strategies to guess words in context, their comprehension may still be low due to lack of vocabulary knowledge;
  - ❖ Guessing from context does not necessarily lead to long-term retention.
- Though explicit teaching can be focused and effective, it is limited in terms of the number of words (and knowledge of types of words) it can address.
- Both approaches are necessary, as they compensate for the gaps left by the other approach.

#### **B) THE TEACHING OF INDIVIDUAL WORDS**

- Some vocabulary instruction is better than no instruction.
- Instruction which incorporates both definitional information and contextual information is probably more effective than instruction incorporating only one sort of information.
- Instruction which involves activating prior knowledge and comparing and contrasting word meanings is probably more powerful than simple combinations of contextual information and definitions.
- Lengthy and robust instruction that involves explicit teaching which includes both contextual and definitional information, multiple exposures to target words in different contexts, and experiences promoting deep processing of word meanings should be promoted.
- Different examples of rich vocabulary instruction:
  - ❖ Clear, student-friendly definitions and explanations of target words;
  - ❖ Questions and prompts that help students think critically about the word meanings;
  - ❖ Examples of how the target words can be used in different contexts;
  - ❖ Opportunities for young learners to act out the word meanings (if applicable);
  - ❖ Visual aids illustrating the word meaning(s) in authentic contexts;
  - ❖ Encouragement for students to pronounce, spell and write about words;
  - ❖ Opportunities for students to compare and contrast words;
  - ❖ Repetition and reinforcement of the target words

### C) WORD PART ANALYSIS

- Meanings of 60 per cent of multisyllabic words can be inferred by the analysis of word parts. Knowing the meaning of a root, prefix or suffix often gives clues to what a word means.
- Teachers are recommended to introduce to students the prefixes, roots and suffixes that appear most frequently in English and are constant in their meaning and pronunciation (Bromley, 2002) (see Table 1). When students know a prefix, root or suffix, they may find it easier to unlock the meanings of other words with the same prefix, root or suffix.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>The most frequently appearing and most commonly taught</b> <b>prefixes, roots, and suffixes</b>		
<b>Most common prefixes</b>		
Prefix	Definition	Example
re-	again	review, revoke
un-	not	unable, untrue
in-	into or not	insight, inert
en-	in, put into	enliven, ensnare
ex-	out	exit, extinguish
de-	away, from	deflect, denounce
com-	together, with	commune, communicate
dis-	apart	dishonest, disagree
pre-	before	prevent, predict
sub-	under	submerge, submarine
<b>Most common roots</b>		
Root	Definition	Example
tract	drag, pull	tractor, distract
spect	look	inspect, spectacle
port	carry	portable, important
dict	say	diction, dictionary, prediction
rupt	break	interrupt, rupture
scrib	write	inscribe, describe, scripture
cred	believe	credit, discredit
vid	see	video, evidence
aud	hear	audience, auditorium, audible
<b>Most common suffixes</b>		
Suffix	Definition	Example
-ly	having the quality of	lightly, sweetly, weekly
-er	more	higher, stronger, smoother
-able/-ible	able to	believable, deliverable, incredible
-tion/-sion	a thing, a noun	invention, suspension, tension, function
-cle	small	particle
-less	without	treeless, motionless
-est	most	biggest, hardest, brightest
-ment	quality or act	contentment, excitement, basement
-ness	quality or act	kindness, wildness, softness
-arium	a place for	aquarium, terrarium
-ling	small	duckling, gosling, hatchling

- Teachers can encourage learners to create word trees of often-used roots through the use of dictionaries to identify related multisyllabic words (Refer to Figure 1 for an example). In this case, print a prefix on each branch, and students can add appropriate words to each one as they find them in a dictionary or glossary, on the Web, or hear them used in the media.



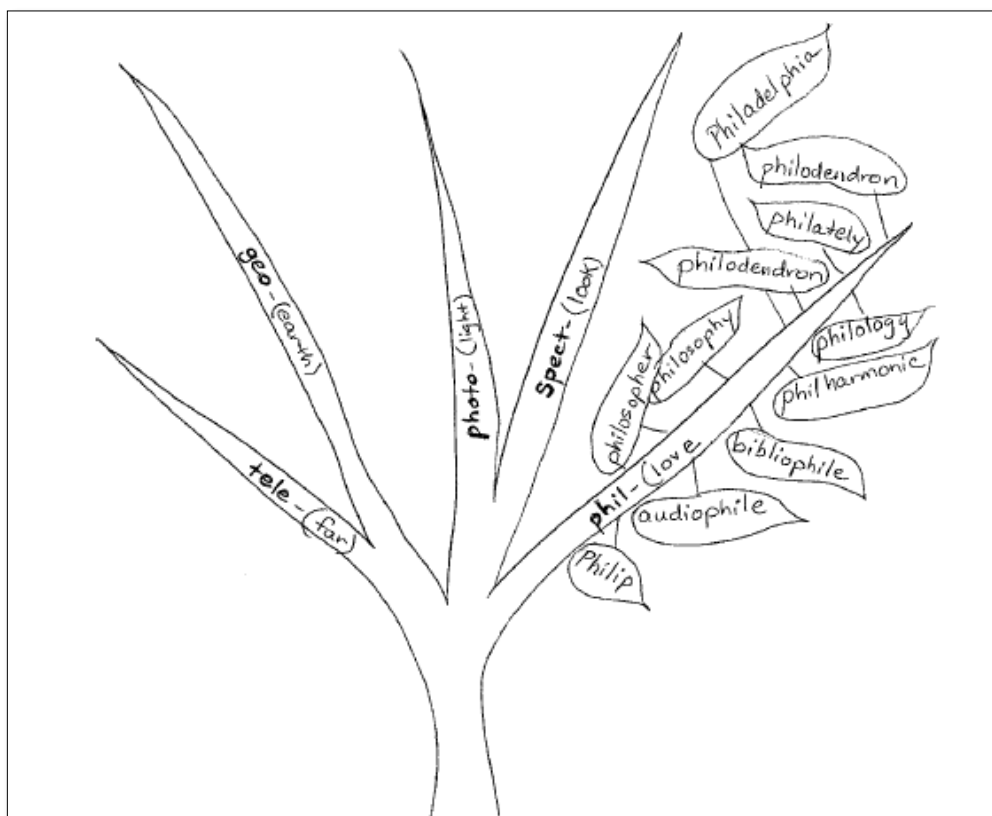


Figure 1. A word tree

#### D) DEEP LEVEL OF PROCESSING

- When the words are encoded with elaboration, a deeper level of semantic processing will result in better learning (Craik & Lockhart, 1972).
- *What is it?* technique  
 Example: A stirrup is silver. A stirrup is strong. A stirrup is made of iron.  
 A stirrup has a flat bottom. We can find a stirrup on a horse.  
 A stirrup is used to put your foot into when you ride a horse (Nation, 1990, p. 67).
- Distinguishing a target word from similar ones (Sökmen, 1997, p. 243). Example:
  - (a) order command advise demand
  - (b) order tell instruct suggest
  - (c) order ask obey
- Underlying meaning technique
  - providing students with a polysemous word in two contexts
 Example:
  - (a) If people or things saturate a place or an object, they fill it so completely that no more can be added.
  - (b) If someone or something is saturated, they are extremely wet.
  - (c) What happens when cheap imported goods saturate the market? Can you get saturated with blood?

## E) IMAGING AND CONCRETENESS

- Dual coding theory of human memory - “Learning foreign vocabulary...involves successive verbal and non-verbal representations that are activated during initial study of the word pairs and during later efforts to retrieve the translations” (Clark & Paivio, 1991, p. 157).
- 1) To build non-verbal representations, make illustrations, show pictures, draw diagrams and list details.
  - ❖ Caution: If the linked words or representations include both similar and distinct features (e.g. in the case of antonyms), students may find them difficult to learn.
  - 2) Learning is aided when material is made concrete (psychologically ‘real’) within the conceptual range of the learners. This may mean using personal examples, relating words to current events, comparing the words to real life or, better yet, asking students to create images and associate the words with their own lives.

## F) MNEMONIC DEVICES

- Mnemonic devices aid memory retention. They involve relating words to prior knowledge with the use of verbal devices, visual devices or a combination of both.
- Common mnemonic devices include using the rhyming of poetry or song to enhance memory, employing both an acoustic and a visual image, applying keyword method, etc.



Affinity (n) – A natural attraction; kinship; similarity

The Chinese have an affinity for shark fin soup and shark fin tea.

Monkeys have an affinity for climbing, birds for flying, and fish for swimming.

A natural affinity exists between monkeys and apes.



Aggrandize (v) – To increase in size; enlarge, to cause

Ladies acquire grand eyes with mascara and false eyelashes to aggrandize their eyes.

To aggrandize his achievements, Richard would make up unbelievable stories of personal accomplishments.

Max aggrandized his wealth by borrowing so much money and buying extravagant homes, cars and boats that it eventually bankrupted him.



Amenable (adj)

– agreeable, responsible to authority, pleasant, willing to give in to the wishes of another

The matador tried to be amenable to the mean bull.

Jack was such a classy guy, always amenable to any reasonable solution to a problem.

The amenable young man helped the old lady carry her groceries to her car.

**TASK:** Do you find any ideas that have been introduced new, interesting, controversial and/or surprising? Write down what you think about the theoretical perspectives discussed and be prepared to chat about your views.

✍ Notes:

### Major references consulted

Bromley, K. (2007). Nine things every teacher should know about words and vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50(7), 528–537.

Burchers, S. (2013). *Vocabulary cartoons II, SAT word power: Learn hundreds of SAT Words with easy memory techniques* (4th ed.). Punta Gorda: New Monic Books.

Graves, M. F., August, D., & Mancilla-Martinez, J. (2013). *Teaching vocabulary to English language learners*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sökmen, A. (1997). Current trends in teaching second language vocabulary. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 237–257). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## ROUND-UP ACTIVITY

Self-reflection can be conducive to our professional development. Record your experiences, thoughts and reflections related to the three sessions:

- Have you gained any insights into vocabulary teaching and learning after participating in the professional development session? If so, what have you learned? To what extent will the insights inform your future teaching or practice? If not, why do you think the session was not useful?
- What do you think about the professional development session (in terms of its format or structure, for example) and your experience of participating in it? Do you have any suggestions for improving the session?

Notes:

[illegible]

## Appendix Q Target vocabulary items related to the description of films

Oxford English 3A Unit 3

### Adjectives describing films



believable



breathtaking



captivating



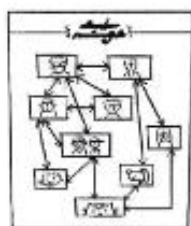
disappointing



gripping



imaginative



intelligent



original



predictable



realistic



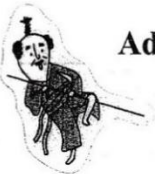
suspenseful



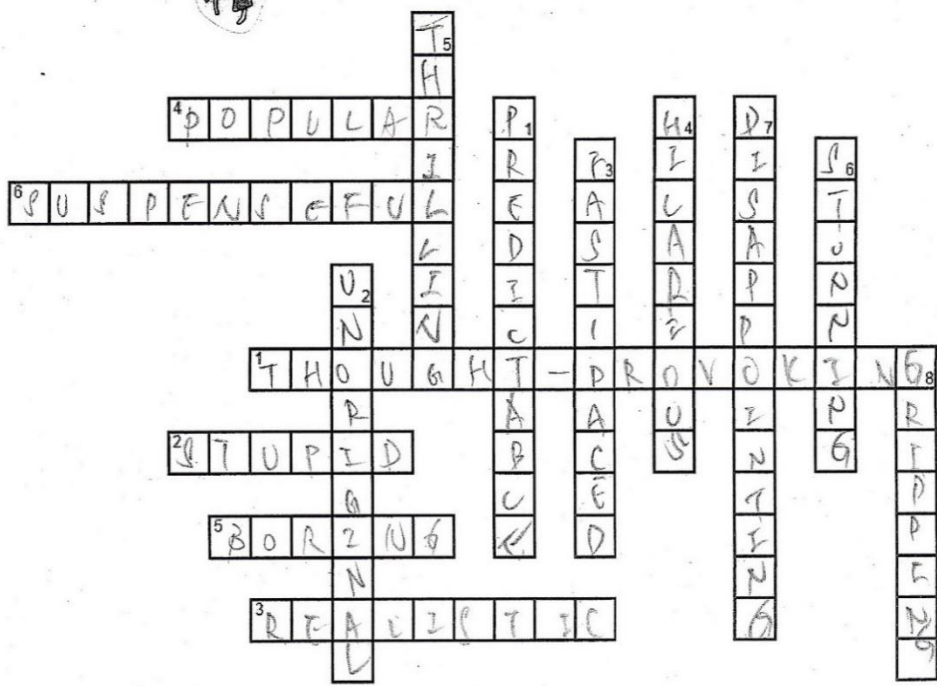
thought-provoking

*Other adjectives to describe films:*

## Appendix R Samples of vocabulary activities conducted by the teachers



### Adjectives describing films



**Across**

- making you think a lot about the film.
- very silly and unwise
- used to describe the special effects seeming to exist
- the film is liked, enjoyed by many people
- not interesting or exciting
- causing a feeling of excitement or nervousness because you are waiting for something to happen or are uncertain about what is going to happen

**Down**

- You can easily guess what would happen in the ending of the film
- The same as a lot of other films
- The film develops very quickly
- The film is extremely funny
- extremely exciting
- used to describe very beautiful and attractive characters
- the film is not as good as what you expect
- the film is so interesting/ exciting that holds your attention completely

**S.3 English Language**  
**Unit 3 Entertainment**

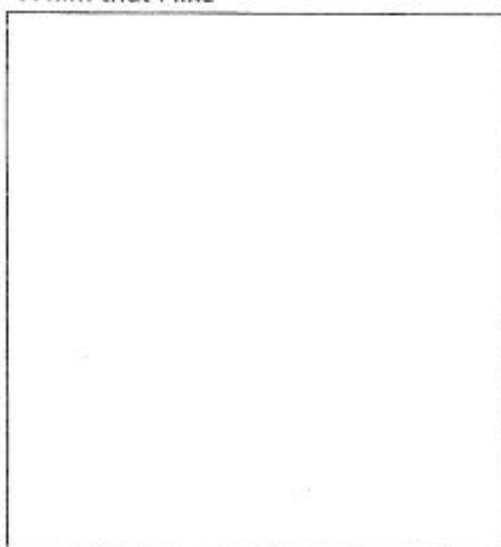
Task: Choose a film you like and a film you don't like. Find a picture of each film and stick them in the boxes provided. Write the **verdicts** of reviews of the both films with the adjectives you have learnt on OEp.52-53. Underline all adjectives. (50 words each)

(Hint: what aspects of film can you discuss in the verdicts?)

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A film that I like



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A film that I don't like



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**Do a role-play**

- C** You are at a Drama Club meeting. The chairperson asks the club members to do a role-play in pairs. Read the role cards and pick a role. Then do the role-play. Use the tips on page 22 and the dialogue in the newsletter to help you.

**Role:** Customer

**Situation:** Last week, you bought a pair of jeans with poor stitching. You are very angry and you want your money back. Talk to the sales assistant and explain the following:

- You wore your jeans once, yet the stitching is coming apart.
- You are very unhappy with the quality.
- You are disappointed because you believed the shop sold quality products.
- You want your money back, but you do not have the receipt.

**Role:** Sales assistant

**Situation:** A customer has a complaint and is very angry. Try to calm the customer down and solve the problem. Stay calm and professional and explain the following:

- Say you are sorry that the customer is unhappy.
- Ask to see the product, and agree with the customer's complaints about the quality.
- Ask to see the customer's receipt.
- Explain that you can give the customer a new pair of jeans, but you cannot give a refund without a receipt.

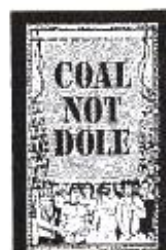




Activity 4

# Vocabulary Input

Match the key words in the book with the correct meaning.



(1) coal mines	●	● a period of time when a group of workers deliberately stop working because of a disagreement about pay, working conditions etc
(2) miners	●	● someone who is not working because they are on strike
(3) on strike	●	● <u>when</u> a group of people stand or march in front of a shop, factory, government building etc to protest about something or to stop people from going in during a strike
(4) strikers	●	● someone who works under the ground in a mine to remove coal, gold etc
(5) pickets	●	● <u>a group of people</u> who stand outside a factory and try to prevent people from going in or coming out during a strike
(6) picket line	●	● an insulting word for someone who works while the other people in the same factory, office etc are on strike
(7) scabs	●	● a place from which coal is dug out of the ground



- In 1984 230,000 miners worked in the coal mines in England and Wales. Today, there are 7,000 miners.
- In 1984 there were 170 mines open. Today, there are 9.

## Appendix S Samples of vocabulary assessment conducted by teachers

<p>Unit 2 (seen) 11-11-2016</p> <p>I came to Hong Kong <del>from</del> Pakistan to start a new life. However, I have found <del>a</del> little <del>more</del> than discrimination. I want to make <del>people</del> aware of how outsiders are treated, in the hope that some day, everyone in <del>to</del> Hong Kong <del>will</del> have equal opportunity to achieve a fulfilling life.</p> <p>My <del>first</del> <sup>first</sup> big <del>obstale</del> <sup>was</sup> finding houses. Even <del>though</del> <sup>dought</sup> I made a good living as a professor in Pakistan, <del>more</del> <sup>many</sup> <del>landlords</del> <sup>landlords</sup> <del>are</del> <u>assumed</u> that I was <u>poor</u> simply because I was not Chinese. I was <u>hold</u> many times that no flats <u>are</u> available, but it was not <del>ture</del>.</p> <p>I often feel excluded from <del>Hong</del> Hong society.</p>	<p>Sometimes, people stare at me <del>unkindly</del>. Other times, shop assistants ignore me and serve other customers.</p> <p>Many ethnic minorities face the same <del>struggles</del>.</p> <p>Unless something is <del>down</del> <sup>done</sup> quickly, the problem will get worse.</p> <p>sp. 5</p> <p>Correction</p> <table><tr><td>though</td><td>though</td><td>though</td><td>though</td><td>though</td></tr><tr><td><del>landlord</del> assumed</td><td>assumed</td><td>assumed</td><td>assumed</td><td>assumed</td></tr><tr><td>poor</td><td>poor</td><td><del>poor</del></td><td>poor</td><td>poor</td></tr><tr><td>told</td><td>told</td><td>told</td><td><del>told</del></td><td>told</td></tr><tr><td>were</td><td>were</td><td>were</td><td><del>were</del></td><td>were</td></tr></table>	though	though	though	though	though	<del>landlord</del> assumed	assumed	assumed	assumed	assumed	poor	poor	<del>poor</del>	poor	poor	told	told	told	<del>told</del>	told	were	were	were	<del>were</del>	were
though	though	though	though	though																						
<del>landlord</del> assumed	assumed	assumed	assumed	assumed																						
poor	poor	<del>poor</del>	poor	poor																						
told	told	told	<del>told</del>	told																						
were	were	were	<del>were</del>	were																						

Unit 2 Be respectful!

Vocab Quiz

Fill in the blanks with the words from the vocab list of your book.

- 15/20
- A. Most employers are concerned about hiring (1). ex-criminal as staff because of our subjective perception towards people who were put in prisons. However, they should be given a second chance to reintegrate in our society.
- B. We should construct more wheelchair access so that (2). disabled people can travel around the city at ease.
- C. Sally is an (3). elderly person who lives alone at the age of 80. It would be great if teenagers can spare time to join (4). volunteer work to offer our helping hands to them, e.g. we can (5). accompany them to the hospital for regular medical consultations.
- D. It is not uncommon to see (6). homeless people sleeping under the footbridges. We can (7). donate our old clothes or quilt to charitable organisations, so that volunteers can (8). collect the resources to people in need in our society.
- E. Jingyu is a (9). new immigrant from the Mainland. She is very shy and not talkative, so I tried to (10). sponsor her and chat with her. As she has problems learning Cantonese and English, sometimes I offer to (11). tutor her and help her with her homework and learning.
- F. If you would like to be a volunteer, there are a lot of voluntary organisations for you to choose from. (12). ORBIS is an organisation which operates the world's only Flying Eye Hospital and is dedicated to blindness prevention in developing countries. (13). Amnesty International helps to protect human rights and for the release of prisoners of conscience. When disasters, e.g. earthquake, tsunami strike, (14). Red Cross would send food, clean water and clothes to the affected regions. (15) Helping Hand is an organisation which focuses on providing healthcare services and housing for the elderly.
- G. According to the 2011 Population Census, 92.6% of the Hong Kong population is ethnic Chinese while 7.4% are (16). ethnic minorities. They have different nationalities, like (17). Nepalese (people from Nepal), (18). Pakistani (people from Pakistan) (19). Thai (people from Thailand) or (20). Philippine (people from the Philippines).



Quiz on Phrasal Verbs 7 (Handy Guide, p.228-233)

1. Rachel ~~turned~~ down Adrian's invitation to the Christmas ball.
2. When you walk across the zebra crossing, you should ~~look~~ out for the vehicles.
3. Hilary Clinton has successfully won over the support of the majority.
4. Sharon has to write up the minutes after the Class Association meeting.
5. A judge should abide to by the principle of equality and justice in court.
6. I've gained a lot of weight these few months. I have to deprive myself of en fried foods and soft drinks.
7. I really admire Mother Teresa. She devoted her whole life to helping the poor and sick.
8. Don't forget to get an express ticket for the rides in the Disneyland. They allow you to enter to go on the rides at a specified time without the need to queue.
9. The implementation of the new policy has prevented thousands of refugees from going into Germany.

Grade:

2 /9

## Oxford English 3B

### Graded vocabulary worksheet

1 of 1

Unit 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You are writing an advertisement for a new school club on the school's website. Complete the advertisement using the words in the box.

adaptable	confident	map	torch
adventurous	determined	Putonghua	tough
China	first-aid kit	sleeping bag	
compass	inquisitive	tent	

#### Join the Young Explorers' Club!

Are you feeling (1) \_\_\_\_\_? Why not join the Young Explorers' Club?

The Young Explorers' Club is a new school club for students with an (2) \_\_\_\_\_ nature. If you are curious about the world around you and want to experience it all, this is the club for you!

Our first expedition will be a hiking trip along the Lantau Trail. We will be tackling some of the harder stages of the trail, so you must be (3) \_\_\_\_\_. The terrain will vary from lowland marsh to rocky mountains, so you must be (4) \_\_\_\_\_ to different situations.

This will be a two-day hike, so we will be camping overnight. You will be provided with a (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to protect you from the rain and wind. Bring a (6) \_\_\_\_\_ if you think you might be cold during the night. Bring a (7) \_\_\_\_\_ in case you need to find your way around in the dark.

Our group leader, Julie, will have a (8) \_\_\_\_\_, so we will not get lost. She will also bring a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ to make sure we are going in the right direction.

Simon, the deputy leader, will have a (10) \_\_\_\_\_ to treat minor injuries. If serious injuries occur, we will have to call for help and cancel the rest of the hike, so please be careful and look where you are walking! We are (11) \_\_\_\_\_ to make this an exciting and enjoyable experience for everyone.

Next month, we will make a special trip to (12) \_\_\_\_\_. We will walk along sections of the Great Wall that tourists never visit. We will not have a local guide to help us, so practise your (13) \_\_\_\_\_!

Don't delay, join the Young Explorers' Club today. We are (14) \_\_\_\_\_ you will have a great time!



## Appendix T Sample pages of the teachers' textbook

**TASK 1** Fleet Unit 7

**In this task, you will:**

- listen to some film reviews.
- prepare an oral film review.
- present the film review.

**A** To help you prepare your film review for a show on your school's web radio station, Ms Fan has downloaded a recording of two film reviews she found on the Internet. Listen to the recording and complete the note cards she gives you. Put a tick (✓) in the correct boxes and make notes in the spaces provided.

**1**

**Film review: *Enchanted***

The film is ... ☒ an original. ☐ a sequel. ☐ based on a book. ☐ based on a previous film.

Director: Kevin Lima Director's previous films include: *Aladdin*

Plot summary: A beautiful princess is about to marry a handsome prince when an evil witch sends her far away to New York City

Main cast:	Character	Actor / Actress	Reviewer's opinion of his / her performance
	Giselle	Amy Adams	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive <input type="checkbox"/> negative
	Prince Edward	James Marsden	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive <input type="checkbox"/> negative
	Queen Narissa	Susan Sarandon	<input type="checkbox"/> positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> negative
	Robert	Patrick Dempsey	<input type="checkbox"/> positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> negative

Reviewer's opinion of:

the plot	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
the direction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
the special effects	<input type="checkbox"/> positive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> negative
the music	<input type="checkbox"/> positive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> negative

The reviewer thinks the film is most suitable for *young girls*

The reviewer ... ☒ recommends the film. ☐ does not recommend the film.


**2**

**Film review: *Cloverfield***

In the introduction of the review, the reviewer talks about how *Cloverfield* is *different* from all other monster films

Reviewer's opinion of:	Adjective	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
the characters	believable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
the plot	stereotypical	<input type="checkbox"/> positive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> negative
the special effects	spectacular	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
the photography	realistic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> positive	<input type="checkbox"/> negative

Reviewer's opinion of the film as a whole:  
Everyone will enjoy the film.



## TASK 1

### Overview

Students are asked to present a spoken film review for their school's web radio station. They need to listen to other film reviews, decide on a film to review and do some research before planning and recording their film review.

### Lesson objectives

- 1 Students will **listen** to and take notes on spoken film reviews.
- 2 Students will **discuss** and decide on a film to review.
- 3 Students will do research in order to complete a fact sheet on their film.
- 4 Students will apply the language and ideas they learnt in the previous sections to plan, **present** and record a film review.

### Lesson preparation

- 1 You will need a computer to use the E-book or a CD player to play the audio recording of the film reviews.
- 2 You will need to use the E-book or have Internet access to download the Speaking exercises on the LE NSS companion website.
- 3 You may want students to do the Speaking exercises before coming to class.

### Materials required

- 1 LE NSS Theme Book E-book
- 2 LE NSS Theme Book Audio CD
- 3 Speaking exercises
- 4 Audio recording and playback equipment for Part D.

### A

### Teaching ideas

- 1 Go over the situation with students and make sure they know the purpose, context and outcome of the task.
- 2 Tell students they are going to listen to reviews of two films, *Enchanted* and *Cloverfield*. You may want to ask

students if any of them have seen either of these films and, if so, whether or not they liked them.

3 You can ask students to skim the note cards before listening to the recording. Draw their attention to the different sections of each note card and ask them to anticipate what information they need. Also make sure they know where they should note down information and where they should tick boxes on the note cards.

4 **For weaker students**, you may want to remind them to complete the sentence in *Plot summary* in card 1. For card 2, you may want to revise some adjectives they learnt in the Vocabulary section on p. 181 before listening to the recording.

5 You can ask students to compare their answers on the note sheet with a partner or another pair of students before checking their answers.

6 **For stronger students**, you can ask them if they agree with the reviewer's opinions. They may want to add their own opinions.

### Audio script

**Announcer:** To help you prepare your film review for a show on your school's web radio station, Ms Fan has downloaded a recording of two film reviews she found on the Internet. Listen to the recording and complete the note cards she gives you. Put a tick in the correct boxes and make notes in the spaces provided.

Film review number one.

**Woman:** 'Oh no,' I thought. Another Disney fairy tale that only a little girl could love, with a beautiful princess and a handsome prince. Well, my eight-year-old daughter *did* love it — but what surprised me was that I enjoyed it too.

*Enchanted* is directed by Kevin Lima, who has worked on several other Disney films such as the hilarious *Aladdin*. Just like *Aladdin*, *Enchanted* starts out as an animated film. The story begins with a young princess, Giselle, voiced by Amy Adams, who's set to marry Prince Edward (played by James Marsden). Unfortunately, the evil witch Queen Narissa (played by Susan Sarandon)