2018

Applying Cooperative Development in Exploring College English Teaching in a Large Class Format in China

Fan Yang

University of the Pacific, 641434168@qq.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

APPLYING COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN EXPLORING COLLEGE ENGLISH
TEACHING IN A LARGE CLASS FORMAT IN CHINA

by

Fan Yang

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate School
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Benerd School of Education
Curriculum and Instruction

University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

2018
APPLYING COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN EXPLORING COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN A LARGE CLASS FORMAT IN CHINA

By

Fan Yang

APPROVED BY:

Dissertation Advisor: Robert Oprandy, Ed.D.

Committee Member: Marilyn Draheim, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Delores McNair, Ed.D.

Department Chair: Marilyn Draheim, Ph.D.

Dean of Graduate School: Thomas Naehr, Ph.D.
APPLYING COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN EXPLORING COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING IN A LARGE CLASS FORMAT IN CHINA

Copyright 2018

By

Fan Yang
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thousands of times I conceived of this page and thought of many people I must appreciate who supported me along this dissertation journey. My first and deepest gratitude goes to my dissertation chair Dr. Robert Oprandy, for without your encouragement I could not even imagine getting the chance of pursuing my doctoral degree, let alone finishing this dissertation. Your constant support and encouragement are invaluable to me. You have all I could ask for as a great mentor and a dissertation chair: your patient, timely, and encouraging feedback for each draft of my chapters; your strategic guidance for my research and career; and your noble character as an educator and a whole person.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee members Dr. Marilyn Draheim and Dr. Delores McNair. Dr. Draheim, you are like my grandma who always stands there and gives me support whenever I need it. Your kindness and love give me incredible energy in racing to the finish line of the doctoral program. Dr. McNair, your humor and positive attitude towards life, and your meticulous guidance for my study have taught me how to be a good researcher. I will always remember the guidance from both of you and setting you as my career models.

Also, I would like to thank my academic advisor Dr. Thomas Nelson, for your rigorous scholarship led me into the world of curriculum theories and qualitative research. I would like to thank Dr. Jaci Griffen; the knowledge and work experience I learned from your Pluralism and
Action Research courses class inspired me in every step of constructing this dissertation. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Besty Keithcart for holding the “tea group”; you provided me a second classroom with incredible experience and support in writing a qualified dissertation. Also I would like to thank my cohort classmates Cassie and Xiaotian. Thank you so much for your help and support along the journey, and it is so nice to have you as my friends.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my participant teacher Mei. Although I cannot tell your real name, I want you to know that this dissertation also belongs to you. It is your story, your support, and your cooperation which made this dissertation possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family members who have always stood by my side over the past twenty-six years. To my mother, you are always my role model and tell me to tackle the tough problems in an easy manner and keep going anyway. To my father, thanks for all the walks we took during the summer and your listening with understanding to all my concerns. I learned how to be a good listener from you. Also I would like to show my appreciation to all family members who supported me along through this doctoral program, i.e. my aunt, my uncle, and my grandma. I will always love you all.
Applying Cooperative Development in Exploring College English Teaching in a Large Class Format in China

Abstract

By Fan Yang

University of the Pacific
2018

Large class size as a growing phenomenon in developing countries is closely related to two reasons: initiatives to achieve universal education and rapid population growth (Bendow, Mizrachi, Oliver, & Said-Moshiro, 2007; Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Given the fact that the large class phenomenon cannot be eliminated within a reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies to teach English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. The research site for this study was a four-year college in northern China. Data were collected from document analysis, observations, and discussions to answer the research questions. The post-observation discussions were structured by using the theoretical frameworks of the Cooperative Development model and a “collaborative conversation” approach. From a series of data analysis, four themes were generated from the data which included student participation, affective factors, classroom management, and
instructional strategies. This study also provided implications of the findings and recommendations for further research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES...........................................................................................................13

LIST OF FIGURES........................................................................................................14

CHAPTER

1. Introduction.............................................................................................................15

   College English Education in China.................................................................15
   Large Class Format of English Instruction..................................................17
   Theoretical Framework......................................................................................19
   Purpose of the Study.........................................................................................21
   Research Questions.........................................................................................21
   Description of the Study..................................................................................22
   Definitions of Terms.........................................................................................28
   Significance of the Study..................................................................................29
   Preview of Dissertation Chapters.................................................................30

2. Literature Review.................................................................................................32

   Teaching in a Large Class................................................................................32

   Definitions of a large class..............................................................................33
   Reasons for large classes.................................................................................34
   Large classes and student achievement.......................................................35

   Teaching English in a Large Class.................................................................37

   Teacher knowledge about teaching English in a large class format.........37
Attitudes toward teaching English in a large class.............38
Strategies for teaching English in a large class...............41
Teaching College English in China................................44
Teaching English in China.........................................45
College English in China...........................................46
The College English Test in China.................................48
Challenges in College English teaching..........................49
Cooperative Development Framework.............................51
Overview of Cooperative Development framework.............52
Cooperative Development..........................................53
Continuing Cooperative Development.............................54
Computer Mediated Cooperative Development..................57
Other professional development models..........................58
Chapter Summary....................................................61
3. Methods.....................................................................64
Research Questions....................................................65
Methodology................................................................65
Methods.....................................................................66
Research site..............................................................67
Description of the design..............................................68
Description of the Participant and the Classrooms...............69
Participant selection...................................................70
Description of the classes and classrooms.......................72
4. Research Site, the Participant and Her Classes.................................................94

Research Site.................................................................................................94

CERW classrooms.................................................................95

CEVAO language labs............................................................97

Case Profile.......................................................................................101

Participant teacher Mei...........................................................101

Mei’s College English students..................................................102

College English Courses............................................................104

CERW course.................................................................105

CEVAO course.................................................................107

Vignettes of Typical Classes....................................................109

CERW class.................................................................109
Student-centered classrooms.................................................174

Chapter Summary.................................................................180

6. Answering of Research Questions, Implications, and Recommendations.........182

Answering of Research Questions...........................................182

Increased self-awareness in pedagogy.................................183

Influence of a large class format on College English teaching....188

Strategies for teaching large classes.................................192

Findings for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors…

.........................................................................................196

Implications of the Findings.....................................................200

EFL teachers who teach large classes.................................201

Teachers in teacher education programs.............................204

Instructional supervisors......................................................206

Recommendations for Further Research..............................208

Summary..................................................................................210

REFERENCES.............................................................................213

APPENDICES

A. TIMELINE FOR THE STUDY.......................................................228

B. RECRUITMENT LETTER..........................................................229

C. INFORMED CONSENT............................................................233

D. OBSERVATION PROTOCOL.....................................................237

E. POST-OBSERVATION DISCUSSION PROTOCOL......................238
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Data Collection Procedures ................................................................. 27
2. Data Collection Methods and Corresponding Research Questions ............. 80
3. Class Schedule for Mei’s College English Class ...................................... 104
4. Oral English Expressions .................................................................. 125
5. Mediums used to Communicate Content in Mei’s CEVAO Class .............. 162
6. Six Types of Questions: Form One ...................................................... 168
7. Six Types of Questions: Form Two ...................................................... 169
8. Roles of the Participant Teacher and the Researcher .............................. 199
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1. Cooperative Development Model...............................................................56
2. Data Collection Process........................................................................83
3. Visual Map of Typical CERW Classrooms.............................................96
4. Visual Map of CEVAO Language Lab 1................................................99
5. Visual Map of CEVAO Language Lab 2...............................................100
6. Slide 1 in the CERW Course.................................................................115
7. Slide 2 in the CERW Course.................................................................115
8. Visual Map of Mei’s Circulating in the CERW Classroom...................154
9. Visual Map of Mei’s Circulating in the CEVAO Classroom................155
10. Chart of the Learning Pyramid...............................................................176
Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. This chapter provides an overview of this study from several aspects. First, a background of this study is provided through introducing College English education in China and the large class format of English instruction. A brief introduction of Cooperative Development as the theoretical framework of the study is mentioned in this chapter. The purpose of the study, research questions, description of the study, definitions of terms, and significance of the study are also explained. The last part of the chapter provides a summary of the structure of the dissertation.

College English Education in China

After the failure of the Opium War in 1842, the Qing feudal government in China realized the distance of military capability and technology between China and other western countries. The catastrophic military defeat urged the government to learn from western countries such as Britain; therefore in 1862, the Chinese government established the first modern school named Peking Tong Wen College (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Instead of learning traditional Chinese classics, English was a required course in this school (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). This historical event started the history of teaching English as a foreign language in China (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). After that, English education in China has fluctuated but flourished during the reform and opening-up policy from 1978 until present (Lamie, 2006; Ruan & Jacob, 2009). China is now working on cultivating more fluent English speakers to actively participate in globalization.
In order to meet the growing demands for English proficient talents, College English has been a required course in Chinese universities and colleges for non-English major undergraduate students since the early 1980s (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Xu, 2001; Yan & Ding, 2013). Almost all non-English major college students are required to take College English classes during freshman and sophomore years (Chen & Goh, 2011; Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Xu, 2001). These non-English majors must then pass the College English Test (CET) Band Four to get their bachelor’s degrees (Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Xu, 2001). The College English course is designed to develop students’ English ability in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Li, 2009; Zheng & Cheng, 2008).

However, challenges exist in College English instruction from contextual constraints, teacher factors, and student factors (Chen & Goh, 2011). Studies have identified contextual constraints as limitations in influencing teaching College English in China, such as large class sizes, teachers’ lack of enough instruction time, inadequate teaching resources, as well as lack of effective and efficient assessment tools (Chen & Goh, 2011; Lamie, 2006). The large class sizes make it difficult for English teachers to implement communicative language learning activities in the limited classroom space (Lu & Ares, 2015; Yu, 2001). Yu (2001) analyzes communicative language teaching in China and finds that classrooms with 60 students are too crowded for the learner-centered teaching. Some researchers also claim the College English Test (CET) causes a “washback” effect on CE instruction which refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Gu, 2005; Li, 2009). The CET influences College English education through increased motivation for teachers’ teaching and students’ learning of CE; however, it also leads to teachers’ teaching to the test and a more rapid teaching pace (Gu, 2005). Both Gu (2005) and Li (2009) find that the teacher factor may outweigh the influence of CET on CE teaching and
learning; therefore, teacher training should be provided to improve the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

Also, teachers are frustrated by their low self-efficacy in oral English proficiency and lack of pedagogical knowledge (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). Most College English teachers in China are English major graduates and receive little or no pre-service training on pedagogy, which makes them feel unprepared for dealing with practical problems in teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). This lack of pedagogy makes teachers frequently teach by recalling the traditional way they were taught: that is teaching College English as the sole transmission of knowledge related to literacy rather than cultivating communicative competence (Gao, 2013). Research findings reveal that College English teachers report to be in need of effective teacher training to improve teacher quality in order to meet the current needs for qualified teachers in the new era (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Lamie, 2006).

**Large Class Format of English Instruction**

Large class size as a growing phenomenon in developing countries is closely related to two reasons: initiatives to achieve universal education and rapid population growth (Bendow, Mizrachi, Oliver, & Said-Moshiro, 2007; Shehu & Tafida, 2016). The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand set up the goal of achieving education for every person in the world and emphasized education as an essential approach in fighting disease and poverty (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal and the more recent United Nations Millennium Development Goals aimed to achieve universal primary education by the year of 2015 (Bendow et al., 2007; Shehu & Tafida, 2016). While the goal to achieve universal primary education still needs more effort and a longer timeline, the initiatives from governments in developing countries to achieve those goals have led to substantial student
enrollment growth for primary education, which has caused subsequent growth for higher education student enrollment in developing countries (Shehu & Tafida, 2016).

Rapid population growth in the world, especially in developing countries, influences a country’s demographics which leads to young people becoming the largest percentages of the population. They are also school-age children or teenagers (Bendow et al., 2007). In order to meet the demands of school age student growth, governments have made educational access the priority and initiated measures to reduce or eliminate school costs to increase the number of students enrolled (Bendow et al., 2007). However, those measures also affected the funding for public education in that resources became limited with reduced school costs, and teachers became overwhelmed by the increased number of students in their classes (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Meanwhile, there are also infrastructure issues such as lack of qualified teachers, limited classroom spaces, and inadequate teaching materials, all of which impact the quality of student learning (Shehu & Tafida, 2016).

Some researchers argue that smaller class size has a more positive impact on student achievement than a large class (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011; Glass & Smith, 1979; Mosteller, 1995), while others conclude that class size does not have much impact on student performance (Allwright, 1989; Bendow et al., 2007; Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, & Willms, 2001). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that a relationship exists between class size and student achievement. However, most studies examine teachers’ perceptions on teaching English in a large class and conclude that teachers in general have negative attitudes toward large class teaching (Bendow et al., 2007; Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960). Given the fact that the large class phenomenon cannot be eliminated within a
reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies to teach English in large classes (Hayes, 1997).

According to Hayes (1997), the issue of teaching in large classes is rarely addressed or mentioned in pre-service training courses. Therefore, teachers who must teach in a large class often find it difficult to deal with the situation. Hayes (1997) explored an in-service training program in Thailand and found that a crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes. Similarly, Xu (2001) examined strategies for teaching College English in large classes in China and stressed the importance of sharing classroom management strategies with other teachers who have similar experiences of teaching English in large class formats. However, gaps exist about how to structure the training or professional development to cater to the teachers’ needs and solve the practical problem of teaching College English in a large class format.

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. By conducting a case study through observing an instructor who teaches College English in a large class format, and having post-observation discussions with the instructor, this study will contribute to the field of teacher professional development for College English instructors in Chinese universities and colleges to help them deal with the practical issue of teaching College English in a large class format.

**Theoretical Framework**

The Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development drew on the non-judgmental philosophy of Carl Rogers (1995; 2004; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) in
psychotherapy, on interpretations of this theory by Curran (1972; 1976; 1978), brought into the TESOL field by Stevick (1976; 1980; 1990), and developed by teacher educators and researchers such as Oprandy (1999). The CD model developed through several stages: the seminal work by Julian Edge (1992) in his book Cooperative Development, which first brought up the theory of CD; the second stage involved Edge’s ideas in Continuing Cooperative Development (2002), which was an extension of one-to-one CD to Group Development (GD) and approaches to conducting CD at a distance such as by email or cassette (Bartrick, 2002; Cowie, 2002); the third stage of CD was developed into Edge’s (2006b) Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (CMCD), which included Instant Messenger Cooperative Development (IMCD) by Boon (2003; 2005; 2007; 2009; 2011; 2013) and CD through emails (EMCD) (Cowie, 2002; Edge, 2006b).

The Cooperative Development model encourages the work with one or more colleagues over a period of time and investment in collegial relationships to enhance teachers’ capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). This process involves the collaboration of the Understander(s) and the Speaker to work together and follow specific rules for communication (Edge, 2006b; Edge & Attia, 2014). The role of the Understander is someone who sets aside his or her own set of knowledge, experience, and opinions to better understand the Speaker (Edge, 2006b). The Speaker is the person who brings up an issue he or she would like to work on and tries to push his or her thinking to a higher level of clarity, thanks to the empathetic listening of the Understander (Boon, 2011; Edge & Attia, 2014).

Both the Understander and the Speaker follow the principles of respect, empathy, and sincerity style of communication (Edge, 2002). First, the Understander accepts the Speaker’s decision on what to talk about and work on and respects the Speaker’s opinions and ideas without judging them based on the Understander’s values (Edge, 2002; Edge, 2006b). Second,
the Understander tries to empathize with the Speaker through acceptance and imagination of seeing things through the Speaker’s perspective (Edge, 2002). To achieve a deeper level of understanding, the Understander asks for clarification and for sensitivity to the attitudinal and emotional tone during the conversation (Edge, 2002). Third, the Understander needs to offer genuine respect and empathy to the Speaker without pretending to understand or influence the Speaker (Edge, 2002; Edge, 2009). Based on the three principles, a series of moves are contained in the CD process which include attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 2002).

In this study, the Cooperative Development model was applied to guide the post-observation discussions between the participant teacher, Mei (a pseudonym), and myself. Mei took the role as the Speaker and I took the role as the Understander initially during the conversation and switched roles at times in order to answer the research questions. The post-observation discussions were characterized by some (if not all) of the seven moves listed above that are based on the CD model (Edge, 2002). A more detailed introduction of the CD model will be included in Chapter 2.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. Also, supervisors working with teachers and colleagues working with one another may gain insights from the analyses of post-observation discussions that is central to this study.

**Research Questions**
This study explored the following overarching research questions: In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes?

The sub-research questions for this study were: 1) In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses? 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes? 3) What findings from the post-observation discussions could be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors?

Description of the Study

A crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences of teaching English in large classes (Hayes, 1997), and this includes the importance of sharing classroom management strategies with other teachers who have similar experiences of teaching English in a large class format (Xu, 2001). This qualitative study employed a single instrumental case study to obtain an in-depth understanding of in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher who teaches large classes of her pedagogy, especially as it related to teaching large classes. In a single instrumental case study, the researcher selects only one bounded case to focus on an issue or concern and then to illustrate the issue (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I have selected one Chinese College English instructor who teaches large classes in a four-year college in northern China as the case for the study.
The research site of the study was a public four-year college in northern China. The participant was selected through convenience sampling. I have a family member who knows an instructor who teaches English in the English Department at the research site. The instructor suggested Mei (pseudonym) as the participant for this study because of Mei’s rich experiences in teaching College English and the fact that she taught College English in a large class format in the spring and fall semesters of 2018. Mei has been teaching English in colleges for 12 years and taught the College English Reading and Writing course (CERW) and the College English Visual-Audio-Oral course (CEVAO) in the spring and fall semesters of 2018. She holds a bachelor’s degree in English Literature and a master’s degree in linguistics which provided her with content knowledge in teaching English at the college level. Since the purpose of the CD model is to empower teachers through professional development based on their own understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003), Mei’s well-trained knowledge and rich classroom experiences were a good fit for this study for they could serve as foundations for the metacognition of reflection during the post-observation discussions.

Data were collected through document analysis, classroom observations, and discussions in order to triangulate the findings. The data were collected with the participant teacher from the end of May 2018 until the beginning of July 2018. One more post-observation discussion of member checking was conducted after finishing the first draft of the dissertation to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Also, a backup plan was to ask for Mei’s permission to do more observations and post-observation discussions if there were not enough data to answer the research questions after the data collection. The backup plan did not apply in this study since the data collected from the original plan were sufficient. A timeline for the study is included in Appendix A.
Document analysis were used to collect data about the research site Heishui College (pseudonym). On the one hand, public and electronic documents were reviewed through looking at the introduction from the official website of the research college to provide information related to the research site. I searched the official website of Heishui College to get basic information related to the context for this study. I reviewed the introduction in Chinese, then translated pertinent parts of the introduction into English and included them in the dissertation. The detailed description of the research site provided helpful information for understanding the case of the study. On the other hand, under the participant teacher’s permission, other documents were also collected from the participant teacher which included course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, and slides used during her classes.

Before the first observation, I conducted one pre-observation discussion with Mei for 30 minutes to have knowledge about information related to the classes and the research site college, such as descriptions of Heishui College, objectives of the lessons, instructional strategies, and backgrounds of the students. Each week I observed the participant teacher for all College English classes she taught which included the CERW and CEVAO. At the beginning of the study, I conducted the observations as a nonparticipant observer, i.e. as one who only observes the class without direct interaction with the group (Creswell, 2013). My role as a nonparticipant observer continued throughout the observations of classes. However, during the post-observation discussions my role as an observer changed from a nonparticipant observer into participant as observer. My participant role became more salient than the researcher role, and this helped me to get insider views of the issue related to teaching College English in a large class format.
During the observations, I took detailed field notes through the observation protocol (see Appendix D) to write down important points that were worth discussing about the teacher’s pedagogy, especially as they related to large class teaching. The field notes were taken in English and Chinese were used whenever needed. I first looked over the field notes of the classes prior to the discussions to let Mei focus on representative samples of the classes to help with answering the research questions. The purpose of analyzing before the discussions and selecting representative samples was to effectively and efficiently use the 45-minute post-observation discussion time. A total of 35 observations, each lasting 100 minutes for a total of 60 hours of observations of Mei’s College English teaching were planned to be conducted within four weeks. However, during the second week of data collection, the participant teacher’s college had an inspection from leaders outside the college and my participant teacher wanted me to stop the observation for that specific week. When I was thinking of adding one more week’s observation at the end of the third week, the courses had already ended due to the administering of final exams. Therefore, I was able to collect three weeks of observations and conduct three post-observation discussions instead of the original plan. Therefore, a total of 21 observations, each lasting 100 minutes for a total of 35 hours of observations of Mei’s College English teaching were conducted from the end of May until the end of June 2018. The other missing hours were due to one classes students’ field work when they stopped every class and went out of school for field work during that specific week.

After each week’s observations, I conducted one post-observation discussion with Mei for at least 45 minutes which mainly incorporated characteristics of the Cooperative Development model and a collaborative conversation approach. The post-observation discussions were scheduled for 45 minutes and extended beyond that time limit under the
participant’s agreement. Four discussions for a total of four hours, including one pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions, were conducted from the end of May until the beginning of July 2018. The member checking, which lasted for 30 minutes was conducted at the end of the study to avoid any misinterpretation of the information. The discussions were conducted mainly in Chinese, and English was used if needed.

By applying the CD model, the researcher and the participant teacher were of equal status during the post-observation discussions since the CD model requires respect, empathy, and sincerity between the Speaker and the Understander (Edge, 2002). It was also important to notice that the process of the discussions did not have to strictly follow the CD model since the Understander could also come up with topics or issues she would like to discuss about to have “collaborative conversations” (Oprandy, Golden, & Shimoi, 1999). During this process Mei and I switched roles when I would like to bring up an issue to discuss based on the field notes and the observations. Sometimes the discussions were semi-structured with some prompts that I felt the need to address with the participant teacher. For example, sample discussion questions were “Tell me about or describe this week’s lessons,” “What strategies have you applied before which you find effective when teaching College English in large classes?” A more detailed post-observation discussion protocol includes a list of questions which might be worth discussing is included in Appendix E. Also, the process of the discussion did not have to include all the roles the Understander could carry out in the CD model. The reasons for those adjustments of the original CD model were to better help the participant teacher assist the researcher in answering the research questions instead of strictly following all steps of the model.

A total of one pre-observation discussion, observations for three weeks, and three post-observation discussions were conducted over six weeks. A table is included below to show the
data collection procedures (see Table 1). As planned earlier, the timeline could have been extended if a) there were not enough data to sufficiently answer the research questions after three post-observation discussions and b) Mei agreed to participate beyond the one-month period. However, since the data were sufficient for generating the findings and results, the data collection did not extend beyond the intended timeline. Both pre-observation discussions and post-observation discussions were recorded by means of two Samsung phone recorders (both secured and could only be opened with my fingerprint). The discussions were transcribed verbatim in Chinese. I analyzed the transcripts in Chinese, and then translated pertinent parts of the quotes which were included in the dissertation in English. A large number of quotes from the discussions were included in Chapter 4, along with data from the observations, to support the analysis. A more detailed discussion of the methodology for this study will be described in Chapter 3.

Table 1. Data Collection Procedures.
Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, several key terms are defined and listed as follows:

*Collaborative Conversations*: A collaborative conversation approach is to work with classroom teachers in an exploratory, non-judgmental way to describe their pedagogy and teaching lives (R. Oprandy, personal communication, October 17, 2018). The results of collaboration are suggestive of new ways of looking at the practitioner’s context and provide possibilities for changes in practice (Richardson, 1994).

*College English*: College English is a required course for colleges’ and universities’ non-English major undergraduate students in China (Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Yan & Ding, 2013). The course of College English is divided into a College English Listening and Speaking class (also called College English Visual-Audio-Oral course), and a College English Reading and Writing class (Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Yan & Ding, 2013).

*College English Test*: The national curriculum of College English was established in the early 1980s and divided College English into six levels from Band One to Band Six (Gao, 2013; Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Band One to Band Four are required for non-English major students, while Band Five to Band Six are optional for students’ choices (Li, 2009). In order to evaluate college students’ fulfillment of the national curriculum, the College English Test (CET) was launched in 1987 and includes CET Band Four (CET-4) and CET Band Six (CET-6) (Li, 2009). The CET in China is a high-stakes standardized test to assess college students’ English ability (Li, 2009).

*Cooperative Development*: An alternative way for two or more colleagues to work together for a certain period following specific rules for their communication to reflect on one’s individual professional practice (Boon, 2011; Edge, 2006b).
**Large class:** The definitions of a large class format can be categorized both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative definitions of a large class differ based on various researchers and contexts (LoCastro, 2001; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Xu, 2001). For the purpose of this study, the following qualitative definition is used: a large class is one where the available resources cannot support the number of students in the classroom, or the number of students is out of the teacher’s preference or ability to manage (LoCastro, 2001; Ur, 1996).

**Significance of the Study**

The study explored in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially as it related to teaching large classes. Given the fact that the large class phenomenon cannot be eliminated within a reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies to teach English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). The development of English education at Chinese institutions of higher education is influenced by pedagogy from English speaking countries (Hu & Lei, 2014; Liu, 2012; Lu & Ares, 2015; Sit & Chen, 2010); however, problems exist during the adaptation and assimilation of pedagogy from English speaking countries to the specific cultural, social, and historical context of English education in China (Hu & Lei, 2014; Lu & Ares, 2015; Sit & Chen, 2010). This study may better prepare teachers to teach in a large class format through exploring suitable strategies and the adaptation of those strategies to teach College English in a large class format in China.

The issue of teaching in large classes is rarely addressed or mentioned in pre-service training courses, so it would seem that a crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). Xu (2001) examines strategies for teaching College English in large
classes in China and stresses the importance of sharing classroom management strategies with other teachers who have similar experiences of teaching English in large class formats. This study will fill the gap of how to structure the training or professional development to cater to the teachers’ needs and empower teachers through professional development based on their own understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003). Through exploring in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a college English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it related to her teaching of large classes, this study might provide a possible model of professional development which helps teachers with teaching College English in large classes in China and around the world. This study may also provide useful suggestions of the post-observation discussions for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors to incorporate in their professional work together.

Research shows that College English teachers in China report their need for effective teacher training to improve teacher quality in order to meet the current needs for qualified teachers in the new era (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Lamie, 2006). This study may better prepare the College English instructors with pedagogical knowledge of teaching English in a Chinese university (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013) and provide references to the cultivation and training of College English instructors in Chinese higher education. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the field of teacher professional development for College English instructors in Chinese universities and colleges to help with providing strategies to deal with the practical issue of teaching College English in a large class format.

**Preview of Dissertation Chapters**

This study is organized into five chapters, references, and appendices in the following manner. Chapter 1 introduces the background and purpose of the study, theoretical framework,
purpose of the study, research questions, description of the study, definition of terms, the significance of the study, and preview of dissertation chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to teaching in a large class, teaching English in a large class, teaching College English in China, and Cooperative Development as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 explains the methodology, methods, description of the design, data collection, data analysis, confidentiality, role of the researcher, researcher positionality, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the research site, the participant teacher, and her College English classes. Chapter 5 illustrates the thematic findings of the study following four themes which are student participation, affective factors, classroom management, and instructional strategies. Chapter 6 addresses the research questions for this study as well as brings up implications and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. The overarching research question for this study was “In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by the teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes?”

This literature review consists of four parts. First, the literature on teaching in a large class provides an overview of the definitions of a large class, reasons for large classes, as well as the relationship between large classes and student achievement. The second part of the review discusses teaching English in a large class from teacher knowledge about that challenge, attitudes about teaching English in a large class, as well as strategies on teaching English in a large class. The third part of the review addresses teaching College English (CE) in China, including the following topics: teaching English in China, College English in China, College English Test in China, and challenges in College English teaching. The last part of this chapter introduces Cooperative Development (CD) as the theoretical framework of the study.

Teaching in a Large Class

This part of the review addresses the definitions of large class, backgrounds and reasons for large classes, as well as the relationship between class size and student achievement. Quantitative definitions of a large class vary based on different studies, times, and countries (LoCastro, 2001; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Xu, 2001). A qualitative definition of a large class is when the class size is out of the teacher’s capability to manage it or there are not enough
resources to support instruction (LoCastro, 2000; Ur, 1996). Two reasons for large class size in the world were initiatives to achieve universal education and rapid population growth (Bendow et al., 2007; Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Research and opinions vary on the relationship between large class size and student achievement (Allwright, 1989; Bendow et al., 2007; Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, & Willms, 2001); therefore, it is difficult to conclude that a relationship exists between class size and student achievement.

**Definitions of a large class.** The definitions of a large class format can be categorized both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative definitions of a large class vary based on different researchers and contexts (LoCastro, 2001; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Xu, 2001). In many western countries, a class size of 30 students would be considered large and need to be adjusted or reduced (Bendow et al., 2007). Bendow et al. (2007) mention that overcrowded or large classrooms are defined as situations where the proportion of students to teacher is over 40:1. However, in developing countries, such as China or Nigeria, a class with 50 to 100 students would seem common and typical (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). In Xu’s (2001) article about teaching College English in China, a large class refers to the number of students ranging from 60 to 150. However, sometimes language classrooms in developing countries can have 150 to 300 learners and beyond (LoCastro, 2001).

According to Hayes (1997), no single quantitative definition exists for a large class, as the standards of a large class vary in different contexts. Ur (1996) concludes that a large class is one where the available resources cannot support the number of students in the classroom, or the number of students is out of the teacher’s preference or ability to manage (LoCastro, 2001). LoCastro (2001) concludes that the criteria for a large class greatly depends on the classroom teacher’s experience and perspectives. Devi (2016) supports this claim by arguing that a large
class is a relative term and what determines a large class is not the number of students in the class, but the teacher’s view of class size in his or her own context.

**Reasons for large classes.** The phenomenon of large class size as a common problem in developing countries across the globe is closely related to two causes: initiatives to achieve universal education and rapid population growth (Bendow et al., 2007; Shehu & Tafida, 2016). The 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand aimed to achieve education for every citizen in every country, and emphasized the importance of primary education to fight poverty and disease (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals provided a clear timeline for the achievement of Universal Primary Education by 2015 (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). As a result of those efforts and initiatives, substantial growth in student enrollment happened during the past thirty to forty years in many developing countries (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Although the increases of student enrollment were focused on primary education, higher education in universities or colleges has become the next step for substantial increases in school enrollment and class size (Shehu & Tafida, 2016).

Rapid population growth also impacted the increase of class size: from 1959 to 1999 the world population doubled from 3 billion to 6 billion, with the expectation of reaching 9 billion by the end of 2044 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Most rapid population growth happened in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Bendow et al., 2007). The rapid population growth has influenced a country’s demographics in that young people who are also school age children or teenagers have become a large percentage of the population (Bendow et al., 2007).
In order to meet the needs of increasing numbers of school age students and achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, governments in developing countries have set up educational access as the priority for national development plans (Bendow et al., 2007). Initiating measures to reduce or eliminate school tuitions increased the number of student enrollment (Bendow et al., 2007). Unfortunately, those measures also affected the funding for public education (Bendow et al., 2007). Resources became limited with reduced funding for education and teachers became overwhelmed by the large number of students in their classes (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Meanwhile, there are also infrastructure issues such as lack of qualified teachers, limited classroom spaces, and inadequate teaching materials, all of which impact the quality of student learning (Shehu & Tafida, 2016).

**Large classes and student achievement.** Some researchers argue that a smaller class size has a more positive impact on student achievement than a large class (Blatchford et al., 2011; Glass & Smith, 1979; Mosteller, 1995), while others believe that class size does not have much impact on student performance (Allwright, 1989; Bendow et al., 2007; Ehrenberg et al., 2001). The Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project conducted from 1985 to 1989 in Tennessee was a statewide, large-scale longitudinal experiment of class size and student achievement (Mosteller, 1995). The study was conducted with students in 79 schools from K-3, and found smaller classes had better student achievement, with students from disadvantaged and minority groups experiencing higher student performance increases than majority students (Mosteller, 1995). Similarly, a meta-analysis conducted by Glass and Smith (1979) through analyzing a group of quantitative research studies concludes that a strong relationship exists between class size and student achievement. The researchers support that when other variables are controlled, students perform better in small classes than in large classes (Glass & Smith,
A more recent quantitative research study conducted by Blatchford et al. (2011) compared the effect of class size on pupil classroom engagement and teacher-pupil interaction to see if the effects vary between primary and secondary schools. Results of the study indicate that at both primary and secondary level schools, students in smaller classes receive more individual attention and more active interactions from the teachers (Blatchford et al., 2011). Low-achieving students can especially benefit from smaller classes at secondary levels by receiving more individual attention from the teachers and by exhibiting more engagement in learning (Blatchford et al., 2011).

In contrast, Ehrenberg et al. (2001) have an article about the meta-analysis of class size and its relationship to student achievement. They conclude that there was no significant impact of class size on student achievement (Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Although there was a minor correlation between class size and student achievement, the impact was too small compared with the high expenditure of class size renovation (Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Allwright (1989) also mentions in his report that there is no definite relationship between class size and learner achievement, although smaller classes are preferred by many teachers. In addition, reports such as those from South Korea, Japan, and Singapore have examples of very large classes with excellent student achievements based on the Statistics from Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Although most studies support that a large class negatively influences student achievement in learning (Blatchford et al., 2011; Glass & Smith, 1979; Mosteller, 1995), some studies reveal that there was no significant impact of class size on student achievement (Allwright, 1989; Bendow et al., 2007; Ehrenberg et al., 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude the effect of class size on student performance.
The next part of this review focuses on teaching English in a large class in China with information on teacher knowledge about teaching English in a large class format, attitudes towards teaching English in a large class, and strategies for teaching English in a large class.

**Teaching English in a Large Class**

This part of the review addresses teaching English in a large class from the aspect of teacher knowledge about teaching English in such classes, attitudes toward teaching English in a large class, and strategies for teaching English in large classes. Teaching English in a large class is rarely mentioned in pre-service teacher training programs (Hayes, 1997); however, some in-service teacher programs in developing countries are designed to address this issue (Bendow et al., 2007). Most studies examine the effects of teachers’ perceptions on teaching English in large class and conclude that teachers in general have negative attitudes toward large class teaching (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960). However, Shehu and Tafida (2016) found that compared with other countries, researchers from China have more positive attitudes towards large classes (Xu, 2001). Many researchers from all over the world provide strategies and advice for teaching English in large class settings (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; Nikam, 2016; Pasigna, 1997; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Wang, 2000; West, 1960). Some researchers also examine strategies of teaching College English in large classes in China (Xu, 2001; Zhang & Hung, 2013).

**Teacher knowledge about teaching English in a large class format.** According to Hayes (1997), the issue of teaching in large classes is rarely mentioned or addressed in pre-service teacher training programs. Therefore, teachers who must teach in a large class often find it difficult to deal with the situation. Primary school English teachers from an in-service teacher training program in Turkey report having problems with effective teaching in classes that have
large numbers of learners (Uztosun, 2016). Another pre-service and in-service teacher training program in Turkey studied teacher efficacy about teaching English and found that the size of classes is one factor which provokes student-teachers’ anxiety (Dikdere, 2009). Shehu and Tafida (2016) also found that in Nigeria the recruitment and training systems for teachers are unsystematic, and professional training of teachers has little impact on student learning in large classes.

In contrast to Nigeria, studies show that in developing countries, many education projects are designed to reduce the problem through in-service teacher training programs (Bendow et al., 2007). Hayes (1997) explores an in-service training program in Thailand which aims to help teachers deal with problems in a large class. The training course is designed to raise the awareness of teachers to counter problems in a large class from the aspects of physical discomfort, lack of class control, neglect of individual students’ needs, not enough opportunity for checking students’ work, and worries about learning effectiveness (Hayes, 1997). The in-service teacher training programs in Thailand which aim to deal with problems found in large classes find that an important aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes (Hayes, 1997).

Xu (2001) examined problems and strategies of teaching College English in large classes in China and stressed the importance of sharing classroom management strategies with other teachers who have similar experiences of teaching English in large classroom settings. Lamie (2006) investigated teacher education and training in China and found the need for more effective teacher training to meet the needs in the field of College English education.

Attitudes toward teaching English in a large class. Most studies examine the effects of teachers’ perceptions on teaching English in a large class and conclude that teachers in general
have negative attitudes toward large class teaching (Bendow et al., 2007; Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960). A group of researchers at the 1986 and 1992 TESOL conferences and other related conferences discussed issues about teaching English in large classes (LoCastro, 2001). The group was named the Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project, and one research study from this project examined a group of teachers at universities in Japan (LoCastro, 1989). The research showed that teachers’ perceptions of having a large class hindered them from making progress in developing students’ language proficiency (LoCastro, 1989).

The teachers reported that problems of teaching English in a large class can be divided into three aspects, including pedagogical problems, management problems, and affective problems (LoCastro, 1989). Pedagogical problems for teaching and learning in large classes included such difficulties as monitoring work and giving feedback (Devi, 2016; LoCastro, 1989); worries about evaluation and learning effectiveness (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997); difficulties in implementing communicative tasks (LoCastro, 1989); problems with individualizing work (LoCastro, 1989); lack of student practice time (West, 1960); and less instruction time (Bendow et al., 2007). Management problems included high noise level affecting other classes (LoCastro, 1989); difficulties in giving all students some attention (Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989); and difficulties in monitoring discipline problems (Bendow et al., 2007; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; West, 1960). Affective problems included learning students’ names (LoCastro, 1989); establishing good relationships with students (LoCastro, 1989); lack of individual support to students who need help (LoCastro, 1989); students having trouble listening or seeing the teacher and other students (LoCastro, 1989); discomfort because of physical constraints (Hayes, 1997); teacher-fatigue (West, 1960); as well as teaching to various students’ needs and interests (Devi,
The large class size also caused difficulties with both instruction and assessment needs for teachers (Devi, 2016).

However, Shehu and Tafida (2016) found that compared with other countries, researchers from China have more positive attitudes towards large classes. In Xu’s (2001) study, he distributed questionnaires to a group of college students in China asking about their attitudes towards learning English in a large class. Results of the study show both positive and negative responses towards teaching and learning English in large classes (Xu, 2001). The negative responses include lack of individual attention from the teacher, therefore feeling neglected and less attentive to the class; seldom having opportunities to express themselves during the class and lack of practice time; having trouble finding seats in the front rows and not clearly seeing the board; as well as being crowded and experiencing the absence of fresh air in the classroom (Xu, 2001). However, one advantage of teaching English in a large class is the savings of human and material resources (Xu, 2001). Also, students who are learning in a large class also have advantages in that such a class can be suitable to the collectivist culture and learning styles of Chinese students, such as reluctance to speak in public and respecting the teacher as the authoritative figure (Xu, 2001). Large class size contributes to students making friends with students from other majors, feelings of relaxation for some, and stimulates activeness and competition for others in the classroom (Xu, 2001). Similarly, Nikam (2016) from India also concludes that there can be some advantages of teaching English in a large class because it brings energy, excitement, and a variety of ideas from the students (Nikam, 2016). Group activities in a large class also help students to learn cooperation and share responsibilities with each other (Nikam, 2016).
Strategies for teaching English in a large class. Given the fact that a large class phenomenon cannot be eliminated within a reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies for teaching English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). Many researchers from all over the world provide strategies and advice for teaching English in large class settings (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; Nikam, 2016; Pasigna, 1997; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Wang, 2000; West, 1960). Devi (2016) found that teachers in India provide possible strategies, including group discussions, brainstorming, giving proper feedback, creating suitable design and providing supplementary materials to teach English writing skills in large classes. Devi also provides recommendations, including using pair or group work, interactive writing with the teacher, and peer review to teach large class English writing skills in colleges or universities. Nikam (2016) argues that pedagogical design, classroom management, and skillful selection of materials are important aspects in influencing the implementation of instructional strategies for teaching English in large classes in Indian universities. She provides a variety of instructional strategies in dealing with teaching English in large class, including warm greetings and warm-ups, group activities, choral drilling, vocabulary games such as spelling contests, describing pictures or places, and narrating stories (Nikam, 2016).

West (1960) introduces several strategies for teachers who teach English in the difficult circumstances of large classrooms, including the intermittent written answer, more student talk time, mass drills, mass practice, the pin-drop technique, read and look up, practice in pairs, and the trained class (when the class proceed with as little teacher-intervention as possible). Hayes (1997) presents some strategies introduced in a training session in Thailand to counter problems for teachers in teaching English in large classes, including the optimum arrangement of classroom tables and desks in a limited classroom space to counter discomfort; a combination of
choral drilling and pair work, clear attention getting signals, and giving more responsibility to students to counter lack of control; addressing students by name and designing pair or group activities to counter the lack of individual attention; peer correction, writing answers on the board, students checking work in pairs, and free writing to counter the lack of evaluation; as well as challenging a teacher’s perception towards a large class and providing creative individual action plans to counter worries about learning effectiveness (Hayes, 1997).

Although difficulties exist in large class teaching in Nigerian undergraduate education, several strategies can be used to improve creativity in teaching and learning from pedagogical strategies, affective strategies, and educational management strategies (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Pedagogical strategies include increasing the communication and cooperation among teachers and students, designing creative instructional strategies, creating learner-centered activities, giving more attention to students sitting at the back, and using multimedia instruction and technologies (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Measures relating to pedagogical strategies also include creating rules of appropriate class and group work behavior such as how to speak in a large group, the awareness of turn-taking, and rules for routine activities; also, the teacher needs to be confident and possess good knowledge of the subject (Pasigna, 1997). It is also important to have a close relationship between teacher and students to facilitate learning through getting to know student information from portfolios, students introducing themselves during the class, teacher moving around in the classroom and making eye contact with individual students (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Teachers who teach in large classes can discuss and share classroom management techniques with other teachers who encountered similar problems (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).
Affective strategies for teaching English in large classes include collaborative groups, teachers asking questions involving higher level thinking skills, scaffolding strategies, and using visual aids (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). On the other hand, students are encouraged to make their own learning goals, develop detailed study objectives, and keep weekly reflection journals to help individual learning (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Other affective strategies for classroom management include positive reinforcement such as praising good behavior in a large class while ignoring negative behavior, establishing behavior guidelines, and believing in students’ potential to set high expectations for all the students (Shehu & Tafida, 2016).

Educational management strategies for teaching English in a large class, including having well-trained teachers, clear curriculum structures and alignment, efficient instructional materials and technologies, are essential in preparing teachers to teach in large class settings (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Many efforts are also needed to solve infrastructure issues such as classroom space, classroom furniture, textbooks, and other materials (Shehu & Tafida, 2016). Shehu and Tafida also stress the importance of well-trained teachers in improving student achievement and focus on educational management strategies such as the recruitment, retention, training, and proper payment of capable teachers in meeting the needs of English education.

Some researchers also have examined strategies of teaching College English in large classes in China (Xu, 2001; Zhang & Hung, 2013). In Xu’s (2001) study, he provides suggestions for teaching English in a large class, including efficient use of faculty resources saved from a large class and teaching through careful and thorough preparation of teaching materials and instructional strategies to assist with student learning. Moreover, teachers should not only teach knowledge but also provide students with learning methods (Xu, 2001). It is also important to cooperate with students to create a positive and safe learning environment in a large
class, and take advantage of the large class size to encourage sharing of ideas, cohesiveness, interrelatedness, motivation, and competitiveness (Xu, 2001). The author also stresses the importance of sharing classroom management strategies with other teachers who have similar experiences of teaching English in large classroom settings (Xu, 2001). Zhang and Hung (2013), in their case study, explore the viability of task-based instruction on College English teaching in a large class in China. Results of the study show that the participants given task-based teaching inventions are likely to have better learning attainments, positive impacts on students’ oral English performance, and better learning motivation and attitudes (Zhang & Hung, 2013).

The next part introduces teaching College English in China from four aspects: teaching English in China, College English in China, College English Test in China, and challenges in College English teaching.

**Teaching College English in China**

This section of the review introduced teaching College English in China from four aspects: teaching English in China, College English in China, the College English Test in China, and challenges in College English teaching. The globalization of the world economy and higher education has contributed to the spread of English as the *lingua franca* (Liu, 2012). With the development of English language curricula, China has experienced the evolution of pedagogy from English speaking countries, including the direct method which became dominant in China in the early 1900s, the grammar translation method which was popular in China in the 1950s, the audio-lingual method which was adopted in China in the 1980s, the communicative language teaching approach which became well-known in China in the 1990s, as well as the task-based learning and the problem-based learning which were introduced to China in recent years (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). At the university level, College English (CE) is a compulsory course for non-
English major undergraduate students in China (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). In order to evaluate college students’ fulfilment of the national curriculum, the *College English Test* (CET), which includes CET Band Four (CET-4) and CET Band Six (CET-6), was launched in 1987 (Li, 2009).

**Teaching English in China.** The globalization of the world economy and higher education has led to a concentration of linguistic and economic power that is contributing to the spread of English as the *lingua franca* (Dodds, 2008). Issues surrounding the role of English in the process of globalization and teaching English to speakers of other languages aroused attention from teachers around the world (Wang, 2014). China, as one of the largest developing countries in the world, inevitably gets involved in the process of globalization. English learning has been given a priority in the Chinese educational agenda for the means of improving international relations and communication (Liu, 2007). According to the Survey of Language Situation in China from the Chinese government (2006), there are 390.16 million people who have English learning experiences in mainland China. China has the largest population of English language learners in the world; however, among the large number of English learners only 21% reported being able to communicate in English beyond initial greetings (Wei & Su, 2012). With the development of English language curricula, China has experienced the evolution of pedagogy from English speaking countries, including the direct method in the early 1990s, the grammar translation method in the 1950s, the audio-lingual method in the 1980s, and the communicative language teaching approach in the 1990s (Ruan & Jacob, 2009).

The development of English education at Chinese higher institutions is influenced by pedagogy from English speaking countries (Hu & Lei, 2014; Liu, 2012; Lu & Ares, 2015; Sit & Chen, 2010). However, problems exist during the adaptation and assimilation of pedagogy from English speaking countries to the specific cultural, social and historical context of English
education in China (Hu & Lei, 2014; Lu & Ares, 2015; Sit & Chen, 2010). Communicative language teaching is an approach to the teaching of language that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the purpose of learning a language (Daisy, 2012). A variety of activities for the communicative language teaching approach include role play, interviews, information gap, pair work, and so on (Daisy, 2012); however, many researchers have shown that a communicative language teaching approach has problems with adaptation in Chinese classrooms (Lu & Ares, 2015; Sun & Cheng, 2002; Yu, 2001). The large class size in Chinese academic settings has limited classroom space for conducting communicative language learning activities (Lu & Ares, 2015; Yu, 2001). The limited English proficiency and lack of understanding of the communicative language teaching approach for some English teachers in China also make it difficult for teachers to implement communicative tasks (Lu & Ares, 2015; Yu, 2001). Many scholars started to question the authenticity of communicative language teaching in an international setting, and Sullivan (2000) asked the questions of “Whose reality is ‘real’?” and “What context is ‘authentic’?” (p. 120).

**College English in China.** The rapid development of English language teaching in China began from the reform and opening-up policy in 1978 (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). English became the primary foreign language in the national curriculum and a required subject in the College Entrance Examination in the early 1980s according to the Ministry of Education (Chen & Goh, 2011). At the university level, College English (CE) became a compulsory course for non-English major undergraduate students in China (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). The national curriculum of CE was established in the early 1980s and divided CE into six levels from Band One to Band Six (Gao, 2013; Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Band One to Band Four are required for non-English majors, while Band Five to Band Six are optional for students to choose
(Li, 2009). Each band has its specific requirements which are corresponded with the goals of College English courses in each semester (Li, 2009). By the end of students’ second year in college they are expected to reach the Band Four level of the requirements (Li, 2009). English majors, on the other hand, are required to pass the Test for English Majors (TEM) Band Four to get their bachelor’s degree, and TEM Band Eight is an important criterion for English major students’ employment (Jin & Fan, 2011).

The CE course is divided into CE listening and speaking class and CE intensive reading and writing class in Chinese colleges and universities (Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Yan & Ding, 2013). The CE listening and speaking class is usually offered in an audio lab, while the CE intensive reading and writing class is held in a regular classroom (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Most college students who are non-English majors are required to take CE classes for two years and pass the College English Test Band Four with certain scores to get their degree (Ruan & Jacob, 2009).

“In 1986, the first College English Syllabus was published by the Department of Higher Education” and identified reading as the primary focus of the course (Ruan & Jacob, 2009, p. 468). The goals and basic requirements of the course cover several aspects, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, writing, and speaking (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). The syllabus was modified in 1999 with improved requirements for the development of the four basic language skills without changing fundamental aspects (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). In March 2004, the Ministry of Education held a conference for the Project of Improvement and Transformation of Curriculums of Higher Education, which listed CE reform as a major theme of the conference (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). After the conference, the updated College English Curriculum Requirements (2007) replaced the College English Syllabus and became the most
current Ministry document which greatly contributed to the College English reform in China (Gao, 2013; Yan & Ding, 2013).

The CE transformation stresses communicative competence, a learner-centered approach, learner autonomy, cultural awareness, and computer-based online learning as the foci of the reform (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). The new CE curriculum has shifted the focus from reading to listening and speaking skills and developing students’ communicative competence as the primary objective of the transformation (Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Zheng & Cheng, 2008). Learner autonomy is realized through promoting advanced technology in increasing independent learning (Ruan & Jacob, 2009).

**The College English Test in China.** In order to evaluate college students’ fulfilment of the national curriculum, the College English Test (CET) was launched in 1987 which includes CET Band Four (CET-4) and CET Band Six (CET-6) (Li, 2009). A survey from Yu (2005) reports that 81.7% Chinese universities regard getting certain grades on CET-4 as one of the criteria for getting a bachelor’s degree (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Students who have passed the CET-4 can choose to get a higher level certificate and take the CET-6 (Li, 2009).

The CET is administered by “the National College English Testing Committee on behalf of the Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education for the People’s Republic of China” as a high-stakes standardized test to measure students’ College English level (Li, 2009; Zheng & Cheng, 2008, p. 409). The CET-4 and the CET-6 are held at the same time twice a year, one at the end of the fall semester in December and another at the end of the spring semester in June (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). The testing time for both CET-4 and CET-6 are 125-minute (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). The whole test consists of four parts with a total score of 710 points: “listening comprehension (249 scores, 35%), reading comprehension (249 scores, 35%), cloze or error
correction (70 scores, 10%), and writing and translation (142 scores, 20%)” (Zheng & Cheng, 2008, p. 409). In 1999, the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET) was introduced as an optional test for students who have passed the CET-4 with a score of at least 550 or passed the CET-6 with a score of at least 520 (Chen & Goh, 2011; Zheng & Cheng, 2008).

The CET has become the most influential English test in China and also the world’s largest language test at the national level (Jin, 2005; Jin & Yang, 2006). In 2006, 13 million students took part in the CET-4, and such a large number of examinees makes the CET attract much public attention in China (Jin, 2005). The CET-4 and CET-6 certificate or score reports are also required by many employers to show students’ ability of English (Li, 2009).

**Challenges in College English teaching.** CE instructors confronted many challenges in the changing context (Yan & Ding, 2013). Chen and Goh (2011) investigated problems faced by teachers who teach College English in Chinese higher education, particularly oral English, and found that difficulties exist from the perspectives of teachers, students, and contextual constraints. Teachers are frustrated by their low self-efficacy in oral English proficiency and lack of pedagogical knowledge (Chen & Goh, 2011). Most teachers who teach English as a foreign language in universities are graduates who were English majors who received little pre-service training in pedagogies which makes teachers feel unprepared for their teaching career (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). This lack of self-efficacy influences teachers’ confidence in teaching oral skills, and teachers primarily teach according to their own learning experiences or by intuition (Chen & Goh, 2011). Teachers report their need of training in designing and implementing tasks to motivate students’ learning of College English (Chen & Goh, 2011).

In addition, it is also common for teachers to regard the purpose of teaching CE as solely the transmission of knowledge (Gao, 2013). For many Chinese, the goal of learning English is to
cultivate an educated group of scholars with a strong background in English literature rather than the competence to successfully communicate with native speakers of English (Gao, 2013).

Wang (2002) used the term “magic circle” to describe the content-driven nature of the CE curriculum in his research as “teachers teach knowledge, learners learn knowledge, the tests test knowledge; knowledge is recited before the test and is forgotten after it” (p. 30). The CET causes both positive and negative “washback” effects on English teaching and learning (Li, 2009). The CET greatly motivates teachers’ teaching and students’ learning in CE classes, however, it also leads to teachers’ teaching to the test and a more rapid teaching pace (Gu, 2005).

Chen and Goh (2011) reviewed literature of teachers’ difficulties of teaching oral English and identified contextual constraints such as teachers’ lack of enough instruction time, large class sizes, inadequate teaching resources, growing expectations from students and parents, as well as lack of effective and efficient assessment tools. The College English Curriculum Requirements (2007) also causes confusion for the interpretation and understanding from English teachers because of the ambiguous and obscure references to terms without explanations of how these elements form a coherent theoretical basis for the CE curriculum (Gao, 2013). Similarly, Lamie (2006) examined teacher education and training for College English in China, and found obstacles included large class sizes, the reliance on CET, new materials, and the need for more effective teacher training.

At last, Chen and Goh (2011) also identified students as a source of difficulty which negative influences CE teaching. A survey from 1,282 CE teachers in 289 colleges and universities in China showed that 42.8% of their students lack of enough enthusiasm in learning English (Yan & Ding, 2013). Common problems exist for CE learning, such as students’ lack of
motivation for learning oral English, students’ unwillingness to speak English, as well as difficulties in students’ various English backgrounds and needs (Chen & Goh, 2011).

Challenges faced by teachers who teach College English in Chinese higher education include difficulties for teachers and students and in terms of contextual constraints (Chen & Goh, 2011). Improved teacher education and development may be one way to meet such challenges. The next section introduces Cooperative Development as the theoretical framework of this study and as a model worth investigating as a potential means toward meeting those challenges.

**Cooperative Development Framework**

This section of the review introduces the Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development following its development process from Cooperative Development (Edge, 1992) to Continuing Cooperative Development (Edge, 2002) and to Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (2006b). The CD model of professional development drew on the non-judgmental philosophy of Rogers (1995; 2004) in psychotherapy and originated from Edge’s seminal work, *Cooperative Development* (1992), which itself was influenced to some extent by Curran’s Counseling-Learning (1972; 1976; 1978), an educational approach grounded in Curran’s teacher’s (i.e. Rogers’s) ideas. The CD discourse framework involves two or more colleagues working over a designated period through non-judgmental discourse to enhance the teachers’ capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). The CD model has developed from one-to-one and face-to-face Cooperative Development into Group Development, CD by email, CD by cassette, Instant-Messenger Cooperative Development, and Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (Boon, 2011). The process of CD involves attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 2002). It requires respect, empathy and sincerity from both participants — the Understander and the Speaker.
Some other professional development models are also briefly introduced in this section, including the Counseling-Learning approach, Collaborative Conversations, Collaborative Supervision, Professional Learning Communities, Communities of Practice, and Peer Coaching.

**Overview of Cooperative Development framework.** The *Cooperative Development* (CD) model of professional development (Edge, 1992) drew on the non-judgmental philosophy of Carl Rogers (1995; 2004; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994) in psychotherapy, on interpretations of this theory by Curran (1972; 1976; 1978), brought into the TESOL field by Stevick (1976; 1980; 1990), and developed by teacher educators and researchers such as Oprandy (1999). Rogers believes that the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is to judge and evaluate, the same with the field of education and learning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The adaptation of Rogers’ thinking into Curran’s (1972; 1976; 1978) Counseling-Learning/Community Language Learning was brought into the TESOL field by Stevick (1976; 1980; 1990) and expanded upon by Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, and Green (1988) to incorporate a non-judgmental attitude to describe the importance of deeper human values in being a teacher. The non-judgmental attitude and communication styles, including Rogerian understanding (active listening), have also been used in teacher education, such as the use of “collaborative conversations” between teachers and their supervisors (Oprandy et al., 1999). Meanwhile, this non-judgmental discourse also proved effective in teacher self-development, particularly in Edge’s (1992; 2002; 2006b) Cooperative Development (CD) model of professional development.

The CD model is developed through several stages: the seminal work by Edge (1992) in his book *Cooperative Development*, which first brought up the theory of CD; the second stage involves Edge’s (2002) book *Continuing Cooperative Development*, which is an extension of one-to-one CD to *Group Development* (GD) and approaches to conducting CD at a distance such
as by email or cassette (Bartrick, 2002; Cowie, 2002); the third stage was inspired by Cowie and Bartrick, and developed into Edge’s (2006b) *Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development* (CMCD) which includes *Instant Messenger Cooperative Development* (IMCD) by Boon (2003; 2005; 2007; 2011; 2013) and *CD by email* (EMCD) (Cowie, 2002; Edge, 2006b). The third stage also involves CD in sociopolitical areas (Edge, 2006a; Edge, 2009) and other case studies (De Sonneville, 2005; 2007).

**Cooperative Development.** Rogers (2004) believes that self-actualization and the desire to grow are the inherent drive and urge for all human beings. It is in accordance with the idea of CD in that the center of teacher development is self-development (Edge, 1992). First, the idea of CD makes teachers feel the sense of taking ownership of their teaching and achieving self-satisfaction as an individual (Edge, 1992). Second, as a member of schools, societies or cultures, the CD model saves teachers from following the trend of the latest method, expert, or textbook, and encourages them to make decisions for themselves about their own criteria for development (Edge, 1992). Although teachers can learn from trainings, guest speakers, and publications to solve problems in their classrooms, the sense of developing their own potential and looking deeper into their own context is powerful in their professional development (Edge, 1992). The ultimate goal of CD is to empower teachers through professional development based on their own understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003).

However, it is also important to notice that self-development does not necessarily mean working alone. In the CD model, the development as a teacher is encouraged by working with one or more colleagues over a period to enhance teachers’ capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). Therefore, groups which applied the CD model also report an increase in collegiality (Edge, 2002). The one-to-one CD model usually involves the roles of the *Speaker* (or the
Explorer) and the Understander (Boon, 2013; Edge, 1992). The speaker is the person who seeks professional development (Stewart, 2003). The speaker is self-motivated for participating in the conversation and takes full responsibility for directions, topics, and outcomes that is completely free of judgment, ends, means, or standards to be evaluated by the Understaner (Edge, 2009). The role of the Understander is to help the Speaker develop the Speaker’s own ideas by clarifying and following the Speaker, wherever he or she leads. The Understander needs to put aside their own assumptions, knowledge, experience, and opinions in order to better understand the Speaker (Edge, 2006b).

The process of CD is non-judgmental and requires the attitudes of respect, empathy and sincerity (Edge, 2002; 2009). Respect requires the Understander to accept the Speaker’s decision on what topic or direction they would like to work on and accept the Speaker’s opinions and intentions without judging them according to the Understander’s values (Edge, 2002). Empathy requires the Understander to see things through the Speaker’s perspective and context by acceptance, imagination, asking for clarification, and paying attention to the attitudinal and emotional aspects of the conversation (Edge, 2002). Sincerity requires the genuineness of the Understander’s respect and empathy, without pretending but being honest (Edge, 2002). It can be seen that the role of the Understander is challenging to master and has more requirements than that of the Speaker.

Continuing Cooperative Development. Practical applications of the CD model are introduced in Edge’s Continuing Cooperative Development (2002), which provides real-life examples of the interactional moves explained in his first book, Cooperative Development (1992). Those moves include attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 1992; 2002). “Attending” is the ability to make the Speaker feel
actively and supportively listened to through a non-judgmental attitude, nonlinguistic communication such as body language, and showing sincere interest (Edge, 2002). “Reflecting” asks the Understander to reflect the Speaker’s ideas by repeating the words or paraphrasing to make the Speaker be clear about what has been understood (Edge, 1992). It is important to catch the Speaker’s attitude and emotion during the discussion for the strong feelings which might predict essential points that are worthy to explore further (Edge, 2002). “Reflecting” helps to build the empathetic relationship between the Speaker and the Understander which also avoids misunderstanding or losing track (Edge, 2002). “Thematizing” involves the Understander’s identification of potential thematic links between two items mentioned by the Speaker to help the Speaker make connections or distinctions (Edge, 2002). The Speaker can respond with not being interested in the connection, choosing to explain what it means, exploring it as a theme, or differentiating the two issues (Boon, 2011).

The next step is “challenging”, which involves the Understander bringing up statements from the Speaker that conflict with each other (Edge, 2002). The Understander may invite the Speaker to articulate further so that he or she can understand and empathize with what the Speaker is attempting to express (Edge, 2002). However, the Understander still should not express evaluation, agreement or disagreement with the statements (Edge, 2002). In order to move towards action, the Understander may let the Speaker focus on one specific idea which has developed during the discussion to achieve deeper understanding (Edge, 2002). “Focusing” requires the Understander to avoid suggesting the direction or topic to work on, but encourages the Speaker to naturally narrow the focus (Edge, 2002). The step of “goal setting” is when the Speaker formulates a specific goal or action that can be implemented or evaluated to accomplish (Boon, 2011). The last step of “trialing” requires the Speaker to talk about how to implement the
plan (Edge, 2002). The Speaker has no pressure in strictly following the plan but to articulate it in a meaningful and organized way which supports the adaptability and flexibility in pedagogical practice (Edge, 2002). A figure is included below to show the steps and processes of the Cooperative Development model (see Figure 1).

![Cooperative Development Model](image)

**Figure 1.** Cooperative Development Model.

_Note._ Adapted from J. Edge, 2002, _Continuing Cooperative Development: A discourse framework for individuals as colleagues._ Copyright 2002 by the University of Michigan.

In Edge’s (2002) work, he also introduces the Group Development (GD) model, which is an extension of the one-to-one CD approach and involves three or more colleagues to focus on the individual development of each member in turn (Boon, 2011). GD involves three stages: *speaker-articulation, understander-resonance,* and *speaker-review* (Mann, 2005). The first stage of “speaker-articulation” is when the designated Speaker talks about a topic or issue they would
like to work on, while the other colleagues work as multiple Understanders to listen carefully and reflect their understanding of the issue (Mann, 2005). The second stage of “understander-resonance” involves each Understander sharing their own experiences related to the discussed issue after listening to the Speaker’s statements (Mann, 2005). The last stage of “speaker-review” is when the Speaker responds to the Understanders’ resonances and gives last thoughts about the topic or issue after hearing the Understanders’ ideas (Mann, 2005).

The third part of Edge’s (2002) *Continuing Cooperative Development* introduces conducting CD at a distance with colleagues or teachers who work in isolated work environments or geographically remote areas through email (Cowie, 2002) and exchange of cassette recordings (Bartrick, 2002). Bartrick introduces the CD by cassette and mentions that the absence of body language, delayed response, and asynchronous discourse, provide both opportunities for reflection and reassessment, as well as challenges for feeling not well listened to by the Speaker.

**Computer Mediated Cooperative Development.** Computer-Mediated Cooperative Development (CMCD) is the extension of CD through emails (EMCD) and instant-messenger (IMCD) (Edge, 2006b). The use of emails and instant-messenger proves that the CD model can be in both spoken and written forms (Cowie, 2002). Cowie argues that compared with a spoken version of CD, the written version by email (EMCD) has many advantages in that written words can be more carefully crafted and reflected upon while writing; the colleagues can write whenever and wherever they want in a relaxed and comfortable way; the conversation can be rewritten and revisited to help with the reflection; and a variety of topics and themes can be discussed.
The CD by instant-messenger (IMCD) enables two colleagues to work online through the Skype Instant Messenger text-chat function to have non-judgmental discussions and explore possible ways for dealing with topics or issues the Speaker is interested in (Boon, 2013). The Undernder and the Speaker need to make real-time arrangements and have immediate conversational interaction through instant-messenger (Edge, 2002). The advantage of IMCD is that the Undernder and the Speaker can have more time to articulate and reflect on their statements to make them clear and to the point (Boon, 2011). Moreover, the verbatim quotes of such conversations can serve as data for later analysis or edited when necessary (Boon, 2011). The individuals may be more willing to disclose their feelings and thoughts online than through in-person communication. Boon (2007) conducted a study by using IMCD with a Japanese teacher as the Speaker. The results of the study demonstrate that IMCD can be used in different cultures and successfully applied between native and non-native English speakers (Boon, 2007).

**Other professional development models.** Curran (1969) defines the purpose of the Counseling-Learning approach (CL) as “incorporate teachers and learners together in a deep relationship of human belonging, worth and sharing” (p. 211). According to Curran (1972), counseling and learning are sort of interrelated processes. The ultimate goal of the Counseling-Learning approach is improved personal awareness and observable integration of practice for the learner, as well as the intellectual awareness of things beyond oneself (Curran, 1972). The difference between the Counseling-Learning approach and the CD model is that in CL the Speaker is always completely in control of the content of the conversation and can choose to move the discussion in whatever directions he or she wishes (Oprandy, 2002). On the other hand, the Undernder in the CD model has the function of moving the Speaker towards a direction in reaching goals and the next step in terms of action emerging from the discussion (Oprandy,
2002). Nevertheless, the relationship between the Speaker and the Understander are similar in both models, and both models stress the importance of listening actively and providing understanding responses without judging or adding on one’s own opinions and values (Oprandy, 2002).

A collaborative conversation approach is to work with classroom teachers in an exploratory, non-judgmental way to describe their pedagogy and teaching lives (R. Oprandy, personal communication, October 17, 2018). Arcario’s research (1994) found post-observation discussions are typically dominated by a “canonical conversation” which consists of evaluation, justification and prescription of classroom teaching. By promoting the collaborative conversation approach when teachers are actively listening, being descriptive rather than prescriptive, providing empathetic understanding responses, and assuming a believing stance rather than a doubting stance, teachers avoid the self-defensive trap and take responsibility for more cooperative endeavors (Oprandy, 1999; Oprandy, Addington, Brown, & Rutter, 2013). “Active collaboration leads to shared or mutual reconstruction that is agreed upon by both practitioner and researcher” (Richardson, 1994, p. 7). The results of collaboration are suggestive of new ways of looking at the practitioner’s context and providing possibilities for changes in practice (Richardson, 1994). The collaborative conversations could happen among teachers who teach the same subject in their school, teachers who teach in the same grade, or teachers who have the same interest in specific topics or themes (Vincente, 2017).

In the Collaborative Supervision model, the supervisor’s role is to work with teachers without overtly leading them towards any directions (Gebhard, 1990). Instead of prescribing what a teacher should or should not do, the supervisor could actively participate in the decision-making process and share ideas with the teacher (Gebhard, 1990). Cogan (1973) advocates this
model and calls it “clinical supervision.” The Collaborative Supervision model is a problem-solving process which includes posing hypotheses, experimenting, and implementing strategies to offer a reasonable solution to the problem (Gebhard, 1990). Through the supervisor asking questions such as “What did you think of the lesson?” “How did it go?” or “Did you meet your objective?”, the discussion could contribute to self-reflection by the teacher (Gebhard, 1990, p. 164).

According to Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, and Fernandez (1993), a professional community of learners is defined as when teachers and administrators of a school “continuously seek and share learning and act on that learning” (p. 2). The Professional Learning Communities model was developed by Shirley Hord (1997; 2004) and comprised of five essential dimensions: (a) supportive and shared leadership; (b) shared values and vision; (c) collective learning and its application; (d) shared personal practice; and (e) supportive conditions. Professional Learning Communities exist in a school where a group of teachers collaboratively exchange their instructional ideas in a reflective way to lead to innovation and professional development (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Hord (1997) believes that through participating in professional learning communities teachers become well informed, professionally enhanced, and inspired to improve student achievement.

The Communities of Practice model was initiated by Lave and Wenger (1991), who proposed that “learning occurs through social participation in which social participants must negotiate their identities” and learning through transforming from newcomers to old-timers (p. 149). Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that the elements of legitimacy, power relations, and social structures are important in defining learning opportunities in a Communities of Practice model. The concept of Communities of Practice was developed further by Wenger (1998), who
provided a clearer definition through including the elements of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) define Communities of Practice as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4).

Peer Coaching is a developmental model of supervision largely influenced by Goldhammer’s (1969) seminal work in clinical supervision. Joyce and Showers (1980; 1996) defined a coaching relationship as one in which two or more colleagues share aspects of teaching, plan together, and reflect on their experiences to improve teaching performance. The process of peer coaching involves three stages: the first stage of preview conference involves discussing the lesson and planning a goal for observation between the teacher and the coach; the second step of lesson observation happens when the teacher teaches the lesson while the coach observes and takes field notes, and can make audio or video recordings; the last step of having a reflective conference takes place after the teaching, when the peers discuss the field notes and the lesson together in a reflective way (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). The successful application of the peer coaching strategy requires developing a trusting relationship (Costa & Garmston, 2002; Huston & Weaver, 2008; Vidmar, 2006), remain confidential about the conversation (Hicks, 1999; Vidmar, 2006), be voluntary to participate (Bernstein, Johnson, & Smith, 2000; Huston & Weaver, 2008), and collaboration (Bowman & McCormick, 2000).

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large
classes in China and around the world. The initiatives to achieve universal education and rapid population growth have led to large classes in higher education in many developing countries (Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Bendow et al., 2007). Research and opinions vary on the relationship between large class size and student achievement (Allwright, 1989; Bendow et al., 2007; Ehrenberg et al., 2001); therefore, it is difficult to conclude the effect of class size on student performance.

Most studies examine the effects of teachers’ perceptions on teaching English in a large class and conclude that teachers in general have negative attitudes toward large class teaching (Bendow et al., 2007; Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960). However, researchers from China have more positive attitudes towards teaching in large classes (Shehu & Tafida, 2016; Xu, 2001). Given the fact that large class sizes cannot be reduced in a reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies for teaching English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). Teaching English in large classes is rarely addressed in pre-service training programs (Hayes, 1997); however, some in-service teacher programs in developing countries are designed to address this issue (Bendow et al., 2007).

With the globalization of the world economy and higher education, China’s College English course and College English Test have become requirements for most college students to obtain their degrees (Ruan & Jacob, 2009). Chen and Goh (2011) investigated problems faced by teachers who teach College English in Chinese higher education, particularly oral English, and found that difficulties exist from the perspectives of teachers, students, and contextual constraints. Teachers are frustrated by their low self-efficacy in oral English proficiency and lack of pedagogical knowledge (Chen & Goh, 2011). In addition, contextual constraints such as large class sizes also cause difficulties for College English teachers’ language teaching (Chen &
Goh, 2011). Teachers report a need for training in designing and implementing tasks to motivate students’ learning of College English (Chen & Goh, 2011).

Given the fact that College English teachers in China are faced with the challenges of large class teaching and lack of pedagogical knowledge to have effective teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011), it is important to incorporate in-service professional development programs to find possible ways of dealing with this situation. The Cooperative Development model of professional development provides one possible way for CE teachers in China to meet these challenges. In the CD model, a teacher is encouraged by working with one or more colleagues over a period of time to enhance teachers’ capacity building (Edge & Attia, 2014). The CD model allows teachers to develop their own potential and look deeper into their own context and, as such, can be powerful in their professional development (Edge, 1992). The ultimate goal of CD is to empower teachers through professional development based on their own understanding of their classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003). How this model, and the ideas behind it, were implemented in this study will be explained in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Methods

College English has been a required course in Chinese universities and colleges for non-English major undergraduate students (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Xu, 2001; Yan & Ding, 2013). However, challenges exist in College English instruction from contextual constraints, teacher factors, and student factors (Chen & Goh, 2011). The large class sizes make it difficult for English teachers to implement communicative language learning activities in their limited classroom spaces (Lu & Ares, 2015; Yu, 2001). In addition, teachers are frustrated by their low self-efficacy in English proficiency and lack of pedagogical knowledge (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). Research reveals that College English teachers report that they are in need of effective teacher training to improve the quality of their teaching in order to meet the current needs for qualified teachers in globalization (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Lamie, 2006).

The issue of teaching in a large class format is rarely addressed or mentioned in pre-service training courses. Hayes (1997) explored an in-service training program in Thailand and found that a crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes. However, gaps exist about how to structure the trainings or professional development to cater to the teachers’ needs and solve the practical problem of teaching College English in a large class format. The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. This study focused on understanding a College English instructor in a public four-year college in northern China who teaches in large classes to explore how post-
observation discussions influence the instructor’s self-awareness of her pedagogy, especially as it related to teaching such classes. This chapter provides an overview of the methods and methodology of this study from several aspects: research questions, methodology, methods, description of the participant and the classrooms, data collection, data analysis, confidentiality, role of the researcher, researcher positionality, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Research Questions

As mentioned above, the overarching research questions for this study was “In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes?”

The sub-research questions were these: 1) In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses? 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes? 3) What findings from the post-observation discussions could be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors?

Methodology

This qualitative study employed a single instrumental case study to gain an in-depth understanding of a College English teacher’s perspective of teaching English in a large class format. A qualitative study was used since qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a smaller number of people and cases to increase the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied (Patton, 2002). The characteristics of qualitative study are in accordance with the rationale for the Cooperative Development model of
professional development in that this model encourages teachers to look more closely at their own ideas and to work on what they find through reflecting on their own practices and contexts (Edge, 2002). The Cooperative Development model frees teachers from the frustration of seeing their teaching future defined by the latest method, the latest guru, or the latest coursebook, and being sensitive to the voices of the participating teacher (Edge, 2002). This allowed the researcher to get a complex and detailed understanding of the issue of teaching College English in a large class format.

Qualitative research happens in natural settings, uses the researcher as the key instrument of the study, applies multiple methods, values the voices of the participants and the reflexivity of the researcher, as well as provides a complex description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the natural settings were the participant teacher Mei’s classroom, the college where she worked and the places where the post-observation discussions took place. Multiple methods have been applied in this study, including document analysis, classroom observations, and discussions between the teacher and the researcher. The discussions, including pre-observation discussion and post-observation discussions which were designed to value the voice of the participant teacher Mei, empowered the individual to share her stories and stimulated reflection on her practices, feelings and contexts.

**Methods**

In this study, the research site was a public four-year college in northern China which is named Heishui College (pseudonym). This study employed a single-instrumental case study to explore in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the
world. The information about the research site were collected through reviewing an introduction of Heishui College from the official college website, observations, and from the participant teacher Mei’s description of the college during the pre-observation discussion. A more detailed description of the research site and the participant teacher is included in Chapter 4.

**Research site.** The setting for this study was a public four-year college in northern China. For the purposes of protecting the confidentiality of the participant teacher in this study, pseudonyms were used for the college name and the participant teacher’s name. I refer to the university as Heishui College. The college is located in a prefecture-level city in northern China close to the capital Beijing and has a population of around 3 million people. Heishui College has three campuses in the city; this study was conducted on only one campus of the college.

In the Chinese higher education system, all of the nation’s universities are categorized into four selectivity tiers: generally speaking, the first tier is comprised of the most competitive public four-year universities and colleges; less selective four-year public universities and colleges comprise the second tier; still less selective private four-year universities and colleges comprise the third tier; and three year vocational institutions and colleges comprise the fourth tier (Loyalka, Song, & Wei, 2012). Heishui College is mainly a second-tier college with some first-tier majors, which is a typical example of colleges in prefecture-level cities in China. A comparative study conducted by researchers in China and Japan found that young and well-educated labor forces in both China and Japan identify region of origin as a key determinant factor of employment choices (He, Zhai, Asami, & Tsuchida, 2016). First-tier cities in both China and Japan such as Shanghai, Tokyo, and Beijing are popular work destinations which attract well-educated talents and have employment opportunities and economic well-being (He et al., 2016). Therefore, different from prestigious or first tier universities and colleges in big
cities, municipalities, and capital cities, second-tier colleges in prefecture-level cities such as Heishui College often have larger classes with fewer economic resources and instructional support.

Information about the research site was collected through first looking at the introduction about the research site on the official website of Heishui college. Second, I asked the participant teacher, Mei, about how she described the college at which she works. Also, my own observations of the site added a third perspective, and all three sources combined provided a rich description of the research site.

**Description of the design.** A case study is the research design chosen for this project. According to Creswell (2013),

Case study is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes. (p. 97)

Case study research begins with identifying a case bounded by a specific place and time (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I applied a single instrumental case study to explore the participant teacher Mei’s College English classes in Heishui College from May 2018 to July 2018 as the case or bounded system of the study.

“In a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). An instrumental case study is applied when the intent of the case study is to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern and a case selected to best understand the problem (Stake, 1995). The intent for selecting the participant teacher, Mei, as the unit of analysis was to understand the specific issue
of teaching College English in large classes through using the Cooperative Development model of professional development. Patton (2002) mentions to always collect data on the lowest level unit of analysis possible; therefore, in this study, the participant teacher, Mei, rather than the college where Mei teaches, was the unit of analysis for the study.

In order to collect an in-depth understanding of the case, multiple forms of qualitative data were collected from document analysis, observations, and discussions. A detailed and thick description of the case and the research site are provided in Chapter 4. Through identifying the issues to be studied and analyzing the data collected from multiple research methods, four themes were identified, analyzed, summarized, and discussed in Chapter 5 of the dissertation. Case study allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003). This study applied a holistic analysis of the entire case through providing a detailed description of the case, such as Mei’s background, information about her classes and classrooms, and discussions organized by chronology of events (Creswell, 2013). I focused on a few key issues from classroom observations and discussions to generate themes that emerge from the data. I intended to focus on only one case, Mei, to provide an in-depth description and analysis of the case.

**Description of the Participant and the Classrooms**

This part addresses the selection and background of the participant teacher Mei, as well as provides a description of her classrooms. The participant teacher Mei was selected through convenience sampling. Mei taught the course of College English Reading and Writing (CERW) as well as College English Visual-Audio-Oral course (CEVAO) in the spring and fall semesters of 2018.
**Participant selection.** There were several criteria for selecting the participant in this study. The single subject must be above 18 years old and have a Master’s or above degree in the field of English (English literature, English translation, linguistics, or English education). Subjects who did not have a Master’s degree in English were excluded from this study in consideration of the content knowledge needed to teach the College English course. The participant needed to be a College English course instructor who taught in a large class format in China and had at least three years’ experience in College English teaching. For the purpose of this study, the participant needed to be teaching one or more large College English classes during the spring and fall semesters of 2018. The subject needed to be a native speaker of Chinese and needed to teach at a college in the researcher’s hometown city. Instructors who were non-native speakers of Chinese or native English speakers might have different experiences compared with native Chinese speaking instructors; therefore, they were excluded from this study. Because of the availability and transportation reasons, instructors who were not teaching in the researcher’s hometown were excluded from the selection of this study.

The participant teacher, Mei, was chosen as a participant for this study due to several reasons. My family member knows and contacted an instructor who teaches English at the research site, Heishui College. The instructor suggested Mei as the participant for this study because of Mei’s rich experiences of teaching English at the research site and because she teaches College English in large classes. Mei has taught English major students before and later focused on teaching College English courses for non-English major students. She taught the CERW and the CEVAO in the spring and fall semester of 2018. Since the purpose of the CD model is to empower teachers through professional development based on their understanding of their own classroom context and practices (Stewart, 2003), Mei’s knowledge and many
classroom experiences were a good fit for this study since they could serve as foundations for the metacognitive reflection during the post-observation discussions.

Also, Mei’s experience was a typical example of a College English instructor in China in that Mei graduated as an English major, which provided her little pre-service training in pedagogies. This is in accordance with the literature that most teachers who teach English as a foreign language in universities graduate as English majors who received little pre-service training in pedagogies, which makes such teachers feel unprepared for their career in teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). Therefore, Mei was supportive of this study since she has the motivation for discussing issues that she would like to talk about during the post-observation discussions to improve her teaching of College English in large classes. The desire for self-improvement was in accordance with the origin of Edge’s Cooperative Development framework that sprang from the research of Carl Rogers (2004), who believed that the essence of teacher development is self-development (Edge, 1992).

The participant was recruited through emailing the participant teacher a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) in Chinese to introduce the purpose of this study, methods, the researcher’s contact information, and so on. The recruitment letter was written by myself in English and then translated by myself into Chinese. I emailed the recruitment letter to the participant teacher to get her agreement of participating in this study. After the participant teacher Mei agreed to participate in this study, an informed consent (see Appendix C) which introduced the purpose of this study, risks and ways to avoid the risks, benefits of this study, voluntariness, and ways of protecting the confidentiality of the participant was provided to Mei. The informed consent was also written by myself in English, then translated into Chinese by myself. I asked Mei to help with signing the informed consent form at the beginning of the pre-observation discussion before
I officially started to collect any data from her. The compensation for the participant teacher to participate in this study was a 200 yuan (which equals to around 30 dollars) local grocery store gift card. The compensation was funded by myself.

**Description of the classes and classrooms.** All students Mei taught in the spring semester of 2018 were in their first year of college. The College English courses, including the College English Reading and Writing course (CERW) and the College English Visual-Audio-Oral course (CEVAO), are required for freshman and sophomore students at Heishui College. Mei taught three large classes of CERW in the spring semester of 2018. Students from each of the three large classes needed to take twenty lessons of CERW during eighteen weeks in the spring semester of 2018. Moreover, students also were required to take eight CEVAO lessons during the last eight weeks in the spring semester. One lesson is defined as 100 minutes of class time. In total, each class had twenty lessons of CERW, as well as eight lessons of CEVAO during the spring semester. A more detailed description of Mei’s classrooms is included in Chapter 4.

**Data Collection**

In this case study research, data were collected through multiple methods, including document analysis, classroom observations, and discussions. Each of the data collection methods is described below in detail.

**Document analysis.** Document analysis is a systematic process of reviewing or evaluating documents, both hard copy and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). As a research method, document analysis is particularly applied in qualitative case studies to provide rich descriptions of a phenomenon, event, organization, or program (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Both public documents and private documents can be collected and analyzed in document analysis.
under permission (Patton, 2002). In this study, on the one hand, public and electronic documents were reviewed through looking at the introduction from the official website of the research college to provide information related to the research site. On the other hand, under the participant teacher’s permission, other documents were collected from the participant teacher which included course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, and slides used during her classes.

First, documents can provide data on the research site and context of the study (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the introduction of Heishui College on the Heishui College official website was used as the document to provide information about the research site. The introduction was written in Chinese which described the number of students and faculty on campus, information about schools under the college, and priority fields of study in Heishui college. The information from the official website about the research site were used to provide a detailed description of the context for this study. The information was reviewed in Chinese. Pertinent parts of the information were translated into English and described in the dissertation.

Second, information contained in documents might suggest questions that can be asked and situations that need to be observed in the research (Bowen, 2009). In this study, with the participant teacher’s permission, document analysis was conducted through analyzing other documents that included course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, and slides used during the classes. Those documents could provide important information about the way a large class format influences the teaching of College English courses and instructional strategies used by the classroom teacher for College English teaching in a large class format. In addition, through analyzing related documents from the participant teacher, I hoped to generate suggested foci for the classroom observations and questions to discuss about during the post-observation discussions.
Last, document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Denzin, 1970). In this study, the documents from the participant teacher could also provide supplementary research data to the study and triangulate findings from the observations and discussions (Bowen, 2009).

Observations. Creswell (2013) distinguishes observations into four types which include complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. According to Creswell (2013), for complete participant, the researcher is completely engaged with the people he or she is observing. For participant as observer, the researcher is participating in the activity at the site when the participant role is more salient than the researcher role (Creswell, 2013). The third type of observation is observer as participant, which is also called nonparticipant observer by Springer (2010). In this case, the researcher is an outsider of the group who only records data without direct involvement with the group (Creswell, 2013; Springer, 2010). Complete observer is neither seen nor noticed by the people under study which is like covert observation mentioned by Patton (2002).

In this study, first I conducted the observations as a nonparticipant observer who only observed and took field notes at the back of the classroom without direct involvement with the students or the teacher during the observations. I observed the classes from an outsider perspective or used an etic approach which means “standing far enough away from or outside of a particular culture to see its separate events” (Pike, 1954, p. 10). As a nonparticipant observer, I looked and listened without conversing or sharing activities with the students in the classroom (Springer, 2010). My nonparticipant observer role continued throughout the classroom observations.
However, during the post-observation discussions my role as an observer changed from a nonparticipant observer into participant as observer of the study. While conducting the post-observation discussions, my participant role was more salient than the researcher role since this process helped me gain insider views and subjective data (Creswell, 2013). I actively listened to Mei’s ideas during the discussions and provided understanding responses. According to Oprandy, a former associate of Counseling-Learning Institutes,

Carl Rogers’s empathic (or understanding) responses by a counselor (or teacher, colleague, relative or friend) reflect back the speaker’s ideas, perceptions and feelings about the issue they are discussing. By hearing the sensitive listener’s words for what they are saying as well as feeling, the speaker can feel a sense of being deeply understood and gaining more clarity about the issue they are attempting to express. (R. Oprandy, personal communication, March 26, 2018)

Sometimes Mei and I switched roles and had collaborative conversations when I had an idea that I would like to discuss. Through observing the participant teacher and having discussions related to teaching College English in a large class format, I got deeper level views and insights about the data.

The initial observation process followed a series of steps which included site selection and permission for access, identification of who, what, when, and for how long the study were conducted, and the design of the observation protocol (Creswell, 2013). Patton (2002) describes that the duration of observations depended to a large extent on the time and resources available in relation to the information needs and decision deadlines of the researcher. Essentially, the length of time for the observations depends on the purpose of the study and the answering of the research questions (Patton, 2002). I observed all College English classes that Mei taught within
the three weeks for the purpose of understanding the sub-research questions of “In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses?” and “What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes?” In answering the research questions, a large number of observations and field notes of Mei’s classes were conducted in this study.

Considering the focus of the study was on the College English instructor, Mei, instead of the students, and the class schedule for students with different majors vary, it was difficult to follow a specific group of students that Mei taught. Therefore, I observed all College English classes Mei taught from the end of May until the end of June for a total of three weeks. Each week I observed about three CERW lessons from three large classes for about five hours, and five College English Visual-Audio-Oral lessons in three large classes for a total of 8.3 hours. Each lesson observed lasted about 100 minutes. A total of eight observations totaling 13.3 hours were conducted within a week. About 35 hours of observations, including the observations of the CERW and the CEVAO classes, were conducted within the three-week period. A timeline for this study is included in Appendix A. As planned earlier, the timeline could have been extended if a) there were not enough data to sufficiently answer the research questions after four post-observation discussions and b) Mei agreed to participate beyond the one-month period. The observation site for this study was Mei’s classrooms, which included classrooms for the CERW and classrooms for the CEVAO.

The early observations began with taking few notes and simply observing (Creswell, 2013). Those observations were conducted from a holistic view and identify the emergent foci of observations during the process which could help with the post-observation discussions and
analysis of themes (Patton, 2002). The observations were focused on topics such as question (or task) types, distribution of talk, wait time, teacher movements, and so on (Oprandy, 1999).

An observation protocol was designed to help with recording notes in the field (see Appendix D). The protocol was headed by the date, location, time, and course name of the observation (Angrosino, 2007). The left column was used for taking descriptive notes and the right column was used for writing down large class issues related to the class teacher and students in the classroom. The descriptive section was used for recording a description of the observer’s attempt to summarize activities in the classroom in chronological order (Creswell, 2013). Descriptions provided what happened in the classrooms that were useful for the post-observation discussions to help with analyzing what went on in the classroom, offering interpretations about what went on, and coming up with alternative ways for teaching (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). The right column was used for describing large class related issues specifically for the classroom teacher and the classroom students. Large class related issues for the classroom teacher had examples such as what instructional strategies the teacher applied for accommodating large class teaching and how students sitting at the back of the classroom reacted to the teacher’s instruction. Sketches of the physical settings of the classrooms were also included in the observation field notes to describe the classroom organization.

Field notes are an important determinant for later data analysis and provide the observer with valuable descriptions and insights (Lofland, 1971; Patton, 2002). In this study, I took detailed field notes to help with the post-observation discussions and answering the research questions. I took field notes in English, and Chinese was used whenever needed. Taking field notes in English saved my time for translation. In addition, since I have learned a lot of pedagogy terms in English, taking field notes in English reduced my cognitive load for code
switching the terms into Chinese. I first looked over the field notes of the classes prior to the discussions to let Mei focus on representative samples of the classes to help with answering the research questions. The purpose of analyzing before the discussions and selecting representative samples was to effectively and efficiently use the 45-minute post-observation discussion time.

**Discussions.** The discussions for this study could be divided into a pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions. The discussions were conducted in Chinese, and English was used if needed. Conducting the discussion in Chinese avoided any misunderstanding or confusion caused by using a foreign language. I wanted to elicit as much information as possible through using the participant teacher’s native language. Besides, using the participant and my native language made both Mei and me more comfortable during the discussions.

Before conducting the first observation, I conducted one 30-minute pre-observation discussion with Mei to have knowledge about the classes such as objectives of the lessons, instructional strategies, and backgrounds of the students. I also asked Mei about how she would describe the college she works for in order to collect data about the research site college. In order to value Mei’s ideas, I asked Mei if there was anything that she would like me to particularly focus on in relation to large class sizes during the observations.

After conducting the observations of Mei’s College English classes every week, I also had a post-observation discussion with her every week for a total of three weeks from the end of May until the beginning of July. The post-observation discussions were scheduled for 45 minutes and extended beyond that time limit when the participant agreed to do so. A total of four discussions for four hours, including one pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions, were conducted within that two-month period. Another discussion of
member checking which lasted for 30 minutes was conducted at the end of the study. The purpose of conducting the discussions was to answer the overarching research questions, the second sub-research question, and the third sub-research question. A table (see Table 2) is provided below to show the relationship between data collection methods and corresponding research questions.

According to the Cooperative Development model, the Speaker is self-motivated to participate in the conversation (Edge, 2009). The role of the Understander is to help the Speaker develop the Speaker’s own ideas by clarifying and following the Speaker, wherever he or she leads (Edge, 2006b). At the beginning of the post-observation discussions, Mei took on the role of the Speaker who sought professional development and chose the issues that she would like to discuss. I took on the role as the Understander to listen carefully to what Mei said and helped her develop her own ideas through clarifying and following her speech.

However, it was also important to notice that the process of the discussion did not have to strictly follow the CD model since in this study the Understander could also come up with topics or issues she would like to discuss to have collaborative conversations (Oprandy et al., 1999). A collaborative conversation approach is to work with classroom teachers in an exploratory, non-judgmental way to describe their pedagogy and teaching lives (R. Oprandy, personal communication, October 17, 2018). “Active collaboration leads to shared or mutual reconstruction that is agreed upon by both practitioner and researcher” (Richardson, 1994, p. 7). The results of collaboration are suggestive of new ways of looking at the practitioner’s context and provide possibilities for changes in practice (Richardson, 1994).
Table 2. Data Collection Methods and Corresponding Research Questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
<th>Instruments and Documents</th>
<th>Corresponding Research questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>Introduction of college from college official website; course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, vocabulary handbook, slides used during classes</td>
<td>Description of the research site; Sub-research questions: 1) In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses? 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Observation Discussion</td>
<td>Discussion transcripts</td>
<td>Description of the research site, the participant teacher, and her College English classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Observation protocol (Appendix D), field notes</td>
<td>Description of the research site, the participant teacher, and her College English classes; Sub-research questions: 1) In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses? 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Post-Observation Discussions | Post-observation discussion protocol (Appendix E), discussion transcripts | Overarching research questions: In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes? Sub-research question: 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes? 3) What findings from the post-observation discussions could be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors?
During this process of discussion, Mei and I switched roles when I would like to bring up an issue to discuss based on the field notes, the observations, and the post-observation discussion protocol. The discussions were semi-structured with some prompts that I needed to address with the participant teacher, sample discussion questions were “Tell me about or describe this week’s lessons” and “What strategies have you applied before which you find effective when teaching College English in large classes?” A more detailed post-observation discussion protocol includes a list of questions which were worth discussing is included in Appendix E. The questions were designed in English, then translated and asked during the discussions in Chinese. Also, the process of the discussion did not have to include all interactional moves in the CD model. The reasons for those adjustments of the original CD model were to better help the participant teacher in addressing the research questions instead of being restricted to the requirements of the CD model.

The process of having post-observation discussions involved several interactional moves, including attending, reflecting, thematizing, challenging, focusing, goal setting, and trialing (Edge, 2002). “Attending” required me to make Mei feel actively and supportively listened to through non-judgmental attitude, nonlinguistic communication such as body language, and showing sincere interest in the topics that she discussed (Edge, 2002). “Reflecting” required me to reflect Mei’s ideas by repeating or paraphrasing what Mei said to make her be clear about what has been understood (Edge, 1992). I paid special attention to Mei’s attitudes and emotions during the discussion for the strong feelings might indicate essential points that were worthy to explore further (Edge, 2002). “Thematizing” involved me in identifying potential thematic links between two items mentioned by Mei to help her make connections or distinctions (Edge, 2002).
The next step was “challenging”, which involved my bringing up statements from Mei that conflicted with each other (Edge, 2002). I invited Mei to articulate further so that Mei could understand and empathize with what she attempted to express (Edge, 2002). I paid attention to avoid expressing evaluation of or agreement or disagreement with the statements and tried to have a non-judgmental attitude toward what Mei talked about (Edge, 2002).

In order to move towards action, I let Mei focus on one specific idea which had developed during the discussion to achieve deeper understanding (Edge, 2002). The next step involved “goal setting”, which was when Mei formulated a specific goal or action that could be implemented or evaluated to accomplish (Boon, 2011). The last step of “trialing” required Mei to talk about how to implement the plan (Edge, 2002). Mei had no pressure in strictly following the plan but to articulate it in a meaningful and organized way which supported the adaptability and flexibility in pedagogical practice (Edge, 2002). The process of the post-observation discussion did not strictly go over all the steps, but it was important to have the guideline and logic in mind to be aware of the process for the discussions.

At the end of each post-observation discussion, I asked some questions about the time and location of the following week’s College English classes and the objectives of her next week’s lessons to better contribute to the following week’s observations. I also asked Mei if there was anything she would like me to particularly focus on during the observations to help her with issues she would like to work on and asked her if she had any suggestions for the post-observation discussions for the following week. During the last post-observation discussion, I asked Mei questions such as “Tell me about what you have learned, if anything, from the post-observation discussions” to help her reflect on her learning during this process. I also asked her questions such as “What suggestions would you make for colleagues who conduct post-
observation discussions in the future?” and “What suggestions would you make for College English instructors who teach College English in a large class format?” to provide suggestions and recommendations for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors to know about. A figure is included below to show the data collection process for this study (see Figure 2). It can be shown that the relationship between the observations and the post-observation discussions were cyclical.

Figure 2. Data Collection Process.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted from June 2018 until July 2018. First, the pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions were transcribed verbatim in Chinese. In considering that the post-observation discussions incorporated moves from the Cooperative Development model, it was important to have verbatim transcripts ready to contribute to the data analysis. Since Chinese is my native language, using Chinese as the language for data analysis saved me a lot of time and energy for the analyzing process. Moreover, since the discussions were conducted in Chinese, it was important to avoid changing
information or meaning due to translating the transcripts into a second language. I numbered the lines of the transcripts to help with analyzing pertinent parts of the data. The recordings for the discussions were deleted immediately after transcribing. Transcripts of the post-observation discussions were saved in my personal laptop which was protected by a six-digit code and in a password encrypted USB flash drive for the backup of the data. Both a hard copy and an electronic copy of the transcripts were prepared during the data analysis process (Patton, 2002).

I read the documents, observation field notes, and the transcripts for the post-observation discussions several times to be thoroughly familiar with the data (Agar, 1980). Through detailed reading of the documents, field notes and the transcripts, margin notes were taken to record ideas or key concepts that occur to me during this process (Creswell, 2013). I used markers of different colors to highlight quotes related to different themes. After reading and memoing the data, I provided detailed and thick descriptions of the research site, Heishui College, the case participant teacher Mei, her College English classrooms, and her College English courses (Geertz, 1973). The information to describe the research site and the case were gathered from the documents, observations, and pre-observation discussions.

The next step of coding involved aggregating the field notes and the transcripts into small categories of information which was like “winnowing” the data according to Wolcott (1994). I assigned a label to each code to describe information and develop themes. Categorical aggregation was used in that categories were reduced to a limited number to classify or collapse the categories into four themes in the end (Creswell, 2013). Interpreting the data included using direct interpretation and developing naturalistic generalizations of what people could learn from the case (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I interpreted the themes generated from this study with reference to the literature mentioned in Chapter 2 and other literature to show the
relationship of this study to previous research findings. The interpretation process also involved combining the theoretical framework, i.e. the Cooperative Development model, into the interpretation.

The third step involved representing the data through in-depth descriptions and a large number of quotes from the documents, field notes, and the transcripts of the post-observation discussions (Creswell, 2013). At this point, the quotes from the transcripts which were included in the final dissertation were translated from Chinese into English. I presented findings of this study in a narrative format supplemented by tables and figures (Roberts, 2010).

At last, I presented the initial findings to the participant teacher Mei to get her views towards the findings. Member checking was used in this study to avoid misrepresentation or misunderstanding of the data. Instead of showing the participant the written findings, member checking was used in this study through talking about the initial findings and themes with the participant teacher to solicit feedback and opinions. Mei agreed with all identified themes and added information about the effect of the discussed strategies. After getting Mei’s feedback, I made revisions accordingly in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 to better answer the research questions and present the findings.

Confidentiality

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participant teacher, several measures were implemented before conducting the study, during the study, while reporting the data, and after the study.

First, before conducting the study, I met with the participant teacher in person and went over the consent form (see Appendix C) with the participant to let her acknowledge her rights in
this study. The consent form was written by myself in English, and then translated into Chinese also by myself. I answered several questions my participant had for this study.

Second, during the study, the discussions were conducted in a quiet and private location following the participant teacher’s choice. Only the participant and I were present during the discussions to ensure the confidentiality of the discussions. A series of measures were applied to ensure the confidentiality of the participant teacher during the discussions. The pre-observation and post-observation discussions were recorded on two Samsung phone recorders to ensure the quality of recording. The recordings of the discussions were saved in my Samsung S4 and Samsung S6 phones (both secured and could only be opened with my fingerprint), my personal HP computer which was protected by a six-digit code, and a password encrypted USB flash drive for the backup of the data. The transcripts were saved in my personal computer (protected by a six-digit code) and in a code protected USB flash drive for the backup of the data. Both the recordings and the transcripts were saved in password-protected files. Only I could get access to the data and the data were only used for the purpose of this study. Immediately following the discussions, I transferred the data to my laptop. After transcribing the audio recordings, the recordings were immediately deleted from my phones, computer, and USB flash drive. In the recording, the participant was not identified by name. As the researcher, I transcribed the recording and saved the file using the participant's pseudonym. Documents included the consent form, the field notes, and other documents in this study were kept in my home office in a locked drawer, and only I have the key to the drawer.

Third, while reporting the data, the participant and her school were both identified by pseudonyms in the reporting of the data. Only general information about her and her school were provided in the study.
Lastly, after the study, the consent form, documents, transcripts of the discussions, and field notes of the observations will be destroyed three years after the completion of this study (which includes publication or presentation of this study). Three years after the study, the documents will be shredded, and the electronic data will also be erased.

**Role of the Researcher**

In this study, I had multiple roles which included observer, data collector, data analyzer, translator, and the Understander according to the Cooperative Development model. At the beginning of the study, I conducted the observation as a nonparticipant observer who only observed and took field notes at the back of the classroom without direct involvement with the students or the teacher during the observations. I observed the classes from an outsider perspective or using an etic approach, that is “standing far enough away from or outside of a particular culture to see its separate events” (Pike, 1954, p. 10). During the post-observation discussions, my role as an observer shifted from a nonparticipant observer into participant as observer when I participated with the participant teacher, Mei, through having collaborative conversations. The data from the observations and the post-observation discussions were collected by myself. I recorded both the pre-observation discussion and the post-observation discussions and transcribed the recordings verbatim into Chinese. I analyzed the transcripts in Chinese, and then translated pertinent parts of the quotes which were included in the dissertation into English. Therefore, I was the observer, data collector, data analyzer, and translator of this study.

In addition, I was also the Understander during the post-observation discussions according to the Cooperative Development model. The CD model involves the roles of the Speaker and the Understander (Edge, 1992). The role of the Understander is to help the Speaker
develop his or her own ideas by clarifying and following the Speaker (Edge, 2002). At first, I listened carefully to Mei’s ideas and helped her develop thoughts through clarifying and following her speech. During the discussions, Mei and I switched roles when I brought up issues which I would like to talk about based on the field notes, observations, and post-observation discussion protocol that might shed light on the research questions.

The process of Cooperative Development was non-judgmental and required the attitudes of respect, empathy, and sincerity (Edge, 2002; 2009). As a researcher and an observer of the classroom, it was important to let go of my judgments about Mei’s teaching because such judgments could interfere with my focus on descriptions (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). Respect required me to accept Mei’s decision on what topic or direction she would like to work on and accept her opinions and intentions without judging them according to my values (Edge, 2002). Empathy required me to see things from Mei’s perspective and context by acceptance, imagination, asking for clarification, and paying attention to the attitudinal and emotional aspect of our conversations (Edge, 2002). Sincerity required the genuineness of my respect and empathy, without pretending but being honest (Edge, 2002). It was also important for me to provide understanding responses to actively listen to the participant teacher during the discussions.

**Researcher Positionality**

During the data interpretation process, it is important for the writer to be conscious of the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013). On the one hand, being a doctoral student major in Curriculum and Instruction in the United States provided me pedagogical knowledge which contributed to the post-observation discussions and data analysis. Moreover, my past experience as an undergraduate student
majoring in English provided me content knowledge related to the College English courses I observed.

On the other hand, I am also an international student who grew up in China for 22 years. During my experiences as a college student in China, although most of my English classes were small, I took other classes which had student numbers that varied from 120 to almost 300 students. Being one of the students in a class which had 300 students provided me rich experiences of being a student in a large class. I could empathize with the students and the participant teacher’s situations of having to learn and teach classes under such difficult circumstances. Also, since this study was conducted in my hometown, I had the urge for hoping this study could benefit the community where I grew up.

I tried to bracket my experiences through avoiding judgments of Mei’s classes, following Mei’s ideas during the discussions, and being a nonparticipant observer during the classroom observations. However, since I participated during the post-observation discussions in the role of the Understander, it was difficult for me to bracket my perspectives and experiences from this study. Therefore, it was important for me to be aware of my biases, values, and experiences that I brought to this study.

**Trustworthiness**

Denzin (1978) has identified four basic types of triangulation, including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. In this study, methodological triangulation was applied by using multiple methods to study a single problem through document analysis, classroom observations, and post-observation discussions. The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that “no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors” (Denzin, 1978, p. 28). Patton (2002)
explains that studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors of that method than studies that use multiple methods in which different data provide cross-data validity checks. However, it is worth mentioning that different kinds of data may generate inconsistent results which should not be viewed as weakening the credibility of the study (Patton, 2002). Instead, the inconsistencies might offer opportunities for deeper understanding of the relationship between the approach and the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002).

Member checking was used in this study through talking about the initial findings and themes with the participant teacher to solicit feedback and opinions (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider this technique as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). According to Maxwell (2013), member checking is the most important way of reducing misinterpretations for the meaning of what the participants say and do from their perspective. In this study, I did not take back to my participant teacher my transcripts or the raw data in consideration of Mei’s limited time and schedule. Instead, I talked about the initial findings and themes with Mei as the way to identify my potential biases and misunderstandings of what I understood through the analysis of the observations and discussions. This also allowed Mei to add on her ideas and reflect on her self-awareness of teaching.

Lastly, rich and thick descriptions were provided to describe in a detailed manner the case, the research site, and the themes (Geertz, 1973). According to Creswell (2013), “thick description means the researcher provides details when describing a case or when writing about a theme” (p. 252). Detailed descriptions were provided in this study to describe the research site, the participant teacher, the classrooms, and her College English classes. Document analysis, observations, and the pre-observation discussion were used to collect data about the research site. The pre-observation discussion and observations were designed to collect data about the
participant teacher and her College English classes. Moreover, a large number of quotes were included in the findings to support the themes. The verbatim transcribing of the discussion transcripts also provided rich data for describing the themes.

**Limitations**

Due to the limited time, ability, and resources of the researcher, some limitations existed for this study. First, this study employed convenience sampling as the sampling strategy to recruit the participant. Convenience sampling saves time, money, and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, convenience sampling was used because of the saving of time and money and the convenience of transportation. The use of convenience sampling might influence the trustworthiness of the study in that the case may not be representative of the studied population. However, by applying rigorous research methods consistent with case study, I could draw conclusions from the collected data.

Secondly, each 45-minute post-observation discussion was designed to discuss all College English classes the participant teacher taught within one week’s period considering the participant teacher’s workload and the uncertainty of students’ class schedules. The discussion of several class sessions might cause difficulty and confusion for the participant teacher and me to recall what happened during the classes. In an ideal world, a post-observation discussion following each class would eliminate such potential difficulties and confusion. In order to minimize this limitation, each discussion was conducted after finishing all observations as soon as possible. I reviewed the field notes immediately after the observations several times to organize points that would be worth discussing during our meetings in order to contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the discussions.
Thirdly, the video-recording or audio recording of the classes that I requested were not permitted from administrators at the research site because of the college rules. Therefore, the data for observations were collected through taking field notes rather than video-recording or audio recording of the classes. The recordings provided more clear evidence to support the discussion points or recalling the information. However, by taking field notes I was able to focus fully on the class without looking only through the lens of video-recording material which might provide more insights on what happened during the classes.

Lastly, this study was limited in my lack of experience in teaching English, especially teaching in a large class format. My lack of experience in teaching English might influence how I view the issue of teaching large classes from a classroom teacher’s perspective. It might influence how I participated in the discussion with Mei since Mei had much more experience in teaching College English in a large class format. However, the knowledge I learned from my Master’s and doctoral courses in curriculum and instruction, and from the reviewed literature related to large class teaching and the CD model helped me with providing more theoretical knowledge and ideas during the discussions.

Chapter Summary

This single-instrumental case study focused on exploring the experiences of a College English instructor who teaches College English in large classes in a four-year public college in northern China. The participant was selected through convenience sampling. Data were gathered through document analysis, observations, a pre-observation discussion, and post-observation discussions. An observation protocol (see Appendix D) and a post-observation discussion protocol (see Appendix E) were used to facilitate the observations and the discussions. The discussions mainly incorporated the Cooperative Development model and a
collaborative conversation approach. Methodological triangulation, rich and detailed descriptions, as well as member checking were used to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Through analyzing data collected from the College English instructor’s experiences and perspectives, this study generated findings and themes to provide references regarding post-observation discussions and strategies for instructors who teach College English in large class formats in China. A detailed and thick description of the research site, the participant teacher Mei, her classrooms, the students, and her College English classes will be explained in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Research Site, the Participant and Her Classes

To provide a context for this case study, this chapter provides a more detailed description of the research site Heishui College, the participant Mei, her classrooms, the students, and her College English courses. The thick description of the research site and the case enables the reader to have a deep understanding of the context for teaching College English in a large class format in China. The information about the research site and the participant were collected through document analysis of the research site college website, observations by the researcher, and the pre-observation discussion conducted with the participant teacher. The data for the overview of the College English course was collected from the College English course textbooks and the course syllabi. Vignettes of typical large College English classes Mei taught are also provided in this chapter. Through honest and detailed description of the research site and the participant, I hope the readers are able to visualize the setting of this study.

Research Site

This study was conducted in a four-year college in northern China, I refer to the college as Heishui College (pseudonym). The College was established in 1941 and has full time students at undergraduate and Master’s degree levels. There are around 69 undergraduate majors from nine fields of disciplines. The priority fields of study for Heishui College include biology, horticulture, chemistry, food science, zootechny, and education. According to Mei and the College website, Heishui College currently has around 20,000 full time undergraduate and graduate students, supported by over 1,000 faculty members. The College has three campuses and this study was conducted at only one of its campuses.
The College English courses Mei taught were the College English Reading and Writing courses (CERW) and the College English Visual-Audio-Oral courses (CEVAO). In this part, I will provide a detailed description of the CERW classrooms and the CEVAO language labs.

**CERW classrooms.** The several classrooms for the CERW course all had almost the same structure and furniture arrangement. All students that Mei taught for the CERW course in the spring 2018 semester took the classes in this type of classroom.

In the front of the classroom was the computer for the teacher which was on a podium, and beside the podium was the blackboard, chalk in several colors, erasers, and a projector. On the left side of the blackboard was a poster of student rules and regulations decorated by frames. To the right side there were several fire extinguishers which were put tidily on the ground. The classroom had one front door and one back door which were closed most of the time when the class began except during the summer. The reasons for closing the front and back doors were to avoid distractions from people walking in the hallway and noises from other classrooms.

The CERW classroom had 11 rows and 12 lines of seats which could hold a maximum of 132 students. Two aisles divided the 12 lines into three parts. The left part had three lines of seats, the middle section had six lines, and the right part had another three lines of seats. The very left side of the classroom had large windows to help with the air flowing and daylight, and blue curtains to prevent too much light while students watch the projector screen. Below the windows and blue curtains were heaters used during winter. The CERW classrooms did not have air conditioners but several ceiling fans to make them cooler during the summer. Nevertheless, when the summer arrived during June, the classroom became a little bit suffocating especially when the front or back door of the classroom was closed. There were several ceiling lamps with white light. The right side of the classroom had newly painted walls without any
decorations. The top half of the sidewall was white and the lower half was grey. At the back of the classroom was a rubbish bin. Below is a visual map of the classroom structure for the CERW course (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Visual Map of Typical CERW Classrooms.

As an observer of the CERW classrooms, most of the time I sat on a chair at the back of the classroom separated from the students’ seats. However, there were times when no chair could be
found at the back of the classroom, so I sat together with students who sat in the last row of the student seats. Sitting together with the students let me have the opportunity of experiencing what it was like to sit among other students in the student seat which provided me a different perspective. I noticed that the chairs and the tables were connected in rows. In addition, each desk table and seat were also connected with each other just like seats in the cinema. It means that the chairs and the desks could be moved, and the space between the chairs and the desks could not be adjusted. Each student had a limited space on the desk which was only big enough to put down an opened textbook. I sat very carefully without much body movement to prevent myself from touching students who sat beside me.

**CEVAO language labs.** The classrooms for the CEVAO course were located in another building on the same campus in Heishui College. The CEVAO classrooms were called language labs which had computers for both the teacher and each student. There were two types of language labs different in capacity, however, with almost the same arrangement and structure. I refer to them as Language Lab 1 and Language Lab 2. Language Lab 1 had 9 rows and 8 lines which could hold up to 72 students, whereas Language Lab 2 had 12 rows and 8 lines which could hold up to 96 students. In both language labs, two aisles divided the 8 lines into three parts: the left side had two lines, four lines were in the middle, and the right side had another two lines. Students majoring in Engineering Management, Marketing, and Human Resources used Language Lab 1 as their CEVAO classroom. Students who major in Accounting Education used Language Lab 2 for their CEVAO course.

In the front of the language labs were a floor air conditioner, the blackboard, the teacher’s chair, and the teacher’s desk with a computer. To the left side of the blackboard were the rules and guidelines for using the language lab decorated in a frame. The rules and guidelines were
written in both Chinese and English. For example, the second set of rules were “Students are not allowed to enter the laboratory until 10 minutes before the class; students are not allowed to use the teacher’s computer without the teacher’s permission; students need to leave the laboratory immediately after the class finished.” To the right side of the blackboard there were several fire extinguishers on the ground.

Language Lab 1 had one floor air conditioner and several ceiling fans to help with the air flowing and reducing the temperature during the summer. Language Lab 2 had two floor air conditioners as well as ceiling fans to help with cooling the temperature, one in the front left corner and another at the left corner in the back of the classroom. The very left side had windows and blue curtains, and below the windows were the heaters used during winter. The right sidewall was in white decorated with several proverbs written in both English and Chinese in a black frame, one of them was “All the splendor in the world is not worth a good friend” by French philosopher Voltaire. Both types of language labs had two doors, one in the front and another at the back. But the back doors of both language labs were locked all the time for safety reasons, so students could only get out of the classroom by using the front door. At the back of the language labs were cabinets and the rubbish bin. Below is a visual map of the CEVAO classroom (see Figure 4).
The seats for each student in the CEVAO language labs were very different from the seats in the CERW classrooms. Each student had an individual cube which included a computer screen, headphones, a keyboard, a small control board, a table, and a stool. In the language labs, the stool could be moved so students could adjust their space while sitting. The computer screen for each student was controlled by the teacher’s computer in the front of the classroom. The teacher could switch different pages on the computer screen into seating chart, movies, videos, and other pages. Students could press the keys on the small control board to adjust the volume in their headphones or volunteer to answer the questions on the screen. The seating chart on the
computer screen could show the students who volunteered to answer questions. A more detailed description of how this computer system assists students’ English listening and speaking will be explained in Chapter 5. A visual map of Language Lab 2 is included below (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Visual Map of CEVAO Language Lab 2.

While I was observing in the CEVAO language labs, most of the time I sat at the back of the classroom without any contact with the students. However, there were several times when I
sat in the front rows of the language labs because of the lack of seats at the back. Sitting in both front and back of the language labs provided me valuable opportunities to conduct observations from different perspectives. I was able to find something new each time I changed my seat.

Having described the physical settings of the research site, I will next turn to the people involved in this study.

**Case Profile**

This part provides more detailed information related to the participant teacher Mei and her College English students in the spring semester of 2018.

**Participant teacher Mei.** Mei got her bachelor’s degree in English in 2005 and then got her Master’s degree majoring in English Linguistics in 2011. She started teaching after getting her bachelor’s degree in English in 2005 and has been teaching English at the college level for 13 years. Mei used to teach College students who majored in English; however, she has been focusing on teaching College English for non-English major students in recent years. Some of the courses she has taught include Intensive Reading, English Pronunciation, English Listening, and College Integrated English.

When asked whether Mei had attended any teacher training or professional development related to large class teaching, she shared that she hadn’t attended any formal teacher training or professional development specifically related to large class teaching. However, she said that every summer her department has training classes when teachers in the department attend lectures together. In the summer of 2017, Mei went to a prestigious university in the UK to attend a three-week teacher training and study tour. During the teacher training, she discussed with her colleagues about the issue of teaching College English in large classes. Also on every
Thursday, Mei attends a meeting when teachers in a teaching and research group share ideas related to teaching together. Mei thought that the methods discussed in the meeting were very helpful. However, when applying the strategies in her classes there were always emerging questions that needed to be addressed. Mei’s experience was in accordance with Hayes’ (1997) study that an important aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences of teaching English in large classes. Mei’s challenges corresponded with the purpose of this study, which was to fill the gap of structuring training or professional development to cater to teachers’ needs and empower them based on their own classroom contexts and practices (Stewart, 2003).

**Mei’s College English students.** Mei taught a total of 317 College English students in the spring semester of 2018. According to the course syllabus of CEVAO, all students Mei taught that semester were non-English major undergraduate students in the first year of college. The students were expected to grasp about 3,300 English vocabulary words and be familiar with basic English pronunciation and grammar after graduating from high school. Students had gone through preliminary training in English listening, speaking, reading, and writing before entering college. The students’ English grades on the 2017 College Entrance Exam varied from 50.60 to 130.14 (out of 150), which reflected a variety of English levels. All of Mei’s students are Chinese citizens with the native language of Chinese. Most of the students are from the province where the Heishui College is located or neighborhood provinces and cities where they have Mandarin as the mother tongue. However, there are also students from other provinces in the country with various places of origin and dialects.

The 317 students who took the College English courses were from four majors: Engineering Management, Accounting Education, Marketing, and Human Resources. All of the
students were in the first year of college and it was the second semester for them to take the CERW and CEVAO courses. The CERW class of Engineering Management students had 110 students who took the class on Monday morning from 8:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. Eighty students majoring in Accounting Education took the CERW course from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. every Tuesday afternoon. On Wednesday afternoon from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., students majoring in Marketing and Human Resources took the CERW course from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The 110-minute class had a 10-minute break in the middle of it.

Students who took the CEVAO course were divided into five classes based on their majors. Fifty-four students majoring in Engineering Management took the CEVAO on Monday from 10:10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The rest of the 56 students majoring in Engineering Management took the CEVAO on Wednesday afternoon from 2:30 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. Students who major in Marketing took the CEVAO course on Wednesday morning from 10:10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Students majoring in Human Resources took the CEVAO course on Friday afternoon from 2:30 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. All of the students from Engineering Management, Marketing, and Human Resources took the CEVAO course in Language Lab 1. The 80 students majoring in Accounting Education took the CEVAO course from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Friday afternoon in Language Lab 2. The same as the CERW course, all CEVAO courses lasted for 110 minutes, with a 10-minute break in the middle of the class. A class schedule is included below to describe the time, student numbers, and majors for all of Mei’s College English students (see Table 3).
Mei taught eight lessons with a total of 800 minutes (13.3 hours) each week from the end of May until the end of June 2018. However, there were exceptions when the class cancelled, such as during the three-day national holiday break or when students majoring in Engineering Management stopped every class and went off campus for field work during the third week of the observations. Therefore, a total of 21 observations for 35 hours were conducted during three weeks from the end of May until the end of June 2018. The next part is about introduction of the College English Courses in Heishui College.

**College English Courses**

The College English courses, which include CERW and CEVAO, are required for non-English major undergraduate students in Heishui College. According to the College English courses syllabi in Heishui College, those courses are part of liberal arts education in higher
education and have both instrumental and humanistic functions. For the instrumental function, College English courses are for the development of K-12 English education skills to further improve students’ ability in English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating. For the humanistic function, an important task of College English courses is to improve students’ intercultural communicative competence. The humanistic function, according to the syllabi, stresses the impact of College English learning in “enhancing the comprehension of different cultures, improving the awareness of similarities and differences in cultures at home and abroad, and cultivating students’ intercultural communicative competence” (Han, 2017, p. 1).

**CERW course.** The requirements of the CERW course during the entire college period consists of listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating, and vocabulary development. The listening and speaking requirements for the CERW course are the same as those for the CEVAO course. The reading requirements demand that students understand general topics of newspapers and periodicals from English speaking countries at the reading speed of 70 words per minute. While reading longer texts, students should be able to read at the speed of 100 words per minute. Students should be able to skim and scan the reading materials and understand literature in their professional fields. Students should correctly understand the main idea as well as be attentive to the facts and details. For English writing, students who take the College English course need to be able to do practical writing, such as English letters, invitations, notes, and an English abstract for their thesis. With the help of reference materials, students should be able to write reports and papers in clear structure and rich content. Students should be able to describe various figures or charts at the speed of 120 words in half an hour. The content needs to be complete and clear. For English translation, students should be able to translate articles in American and British journals with the help of a dictionary. The speed of translating from English into Chinese needs
to be within 300 to 350 words per hour, the speed of translating from Chinese into English needs to be within 250 to 300 words per hour. The stock of vocabulary words should reach 5,300, with 2,500 being positive vocabulary words. Positive vocabulary are words which people can not only recognize the meaning of while reading or listening, but also be able to actively use in English speaking and writing.

Specifically, the requirements of the CERW course in the spring semester of 2018 consisted of vocabulary development, reading, writing, and translating. The vocabulary requirement during that semester was that students should learn 500 words, with an accumulated understanding of 4,300 words and 2,200 positive phrases, which are phrases students able to actively use in English speaking and writing. The requirement of English reading during this semester was that students should read articles in various genres at the speed of 60 words per minute. Students should read a total of 40,000 words during this semester, including 10,000 words during intensive reading and 30,000 from extensive reading. For the goal of English writing in this semester, students should be able to write a passage of 80 to 110 words within the time of 30 minutes. The content needed to be complete, the logic needed to be clear, and the sentences needed to be coherent. For translation, students needed to be able to translate English into Chinese at the speed of 200 to 250 words every hour while translating Chinese into English at the speed of 150 to 200 words per hour.

The learning materials for the CERW course were the College English textbook and the vocabulary handbook. The textbooks were developed by experts from England and China to incorporate advanced TESOL methodological principles while being respectful of the context in China. Both the CERW textbook and the CEVAO textbook have colorful pictures to catch the learner’s attention. The textbooks have both open-ended and close-ended questions, student-
centered activities, and focus on tasks instead of the study of language for its own sake. The textbooks incorporate a lot of principles, including balanced language knowledge and language skills; the integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening language skills; the incorporation of authentic materials; the development of intercultural awareness; the promotion of a learner-centered approach; and the development of critical thinking ability (Greenall & Wen, 2016a). The vocabulary book was designed to correspond with each reading passage in the CERW textbook.

The assessment of the CERW course consisted of daily performance and a final test. The daily performance comprised 40% of the final grade. On the one hand, the daily performance assessment included quizzes of vocabulary words, attendance, and a participation grade, which consisted of 20% towards the final grade; on the other hand, the other 20% of daily performance was decided by students’ finishing of exercises from the online learning system. The final written test at the end of the semester accounted for 60% of students’ CERW course grade. Apart from the above-mentioned assessment of the CERW course every semester, the College English Test (CET) grade four also tested students’ English reading and writing ability.

**CEVAO course.** The goal of the CEVAO course during the entire college period is to cultivate students’ English listening and speaking abilities. The listening part of the course is aimed at cultivating students’ instant memory, especially the capturing of essential information. Through listening to native language in authentic contexts and various exercises, students should basically understand dialogues, speech, and lectures from native speakers of English. Students also should be able to comprehend English radio broadcasts or TV shows from Chinese media at the speed of 130 to 150 words per minute. For English speaking, students should be able to have relatively fluent conversations with native speakers of English. Students should be able to
express their opinions and emotions and state facts, recount events, or give reasons. The expressed ideas need to be clear, and the pronunciation and intonation also need to be accurate.

Since the CEVAO course during college is taken over four semesters, the requirements in the spring semester of 2018 were more specific than the above-mentioned requirements. The goal of English listening was that students need to understand general conversations and newspaper reports at the speed of 120 words per minute. For English speaking, students should be able to make a statement about a topic, picture, or article in three minutes. Students should be proficient in daily language. The expressions needed to be complete and fluent, the meaning needed to be coherent, the use of words needed to be correct and appropriate.

The learning materials of the CEVAO course included a College English textbook in listening and speaking and a DVD (Greenall & Wen, 2016b). The textbook for the CEVAO course and the textbook for the CERW course were developed by the same team and can be the supplement of each other. The CEVAO textbook DVD could show the new words and the transcripts of the listening materials. While playing the video of the listening material, the user could choose normal or slow speed, and select showing subtitles or not. The listening materials were read by native speakers of English and incorporated English from both American and British accents. The videos in the “inside view” part is from daily conversations made by a British company (Greenall & Wen, 2016b). The videos from the “outside view” are selected from authentic materials from English speaking countries such as news reports, documentaries, talk shows, and lectures (Greenall & Wen, 2016b). In addition to the textbook and the DVD, Mei also incorporated the authentic material of movies from English speaking countries into the CEVAO class. The inclusion of various resources greatly enriched the class content and was aimed at enhancing students’ knowledge of oral expressions and pronunciation.
The assessment of the CEVAO course in the spring semester of 2018 consisted of daily performance and a final test. Daily performance accounted for 40% of the CEVAO final grade and was based on a participation grade during daily classes. The final test which was in the form of a role play accounted for 60% of the CEVAO final grade. In addition to the assessment of the CEVAO course each semester, the College English Test (CET) grade four also tests students’ abilities in English listening and speaking. The next section will provide vignettes of typical classes for Mei’s teaching of College English courses.

**Vignettes of Typical Classes**

This part provides a detailed description of typical classes for Mei’s CERW and CEVAO courses. Vignettes provide the reader a chance to dive into someone’s life and empathize with the participant’s life and context, specifically her classroom life and context. These vignettes provide a glimpse into representative CERW and CEVAO classes to the readers. The selection of the classes considered students’ majors, representative class procedures, time of the day, and typical numbers of students in the classrooms. These vignettes combine a lot of details during my observations in Heishui College from the end of May until the end of June 2018 and can be considered typical classes of Mei’s teaching during my three weeks of observations, or among her decade of teaching in large class contexts. In order to make sure of the trustworthiness of my descriptions, clarification questions were asked during the observation intervals and the post-observation discussions to verify my understanding of the situations beyond mere observations. Through providing a vignette, I hope to make the reader better understand what it is like to teach College English in a large class format in China.

**CERW class.** The following is a typical CERW class that happened on a Monday morning from 8:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. The class had 110 students majoring in Engineering
Management. I will introduce this class following the chronological order of before the class, the first half of the class, class break, and the second half of the class.

Before the class. On a Monday morning at 7:30 a.m., I got in Mei’s car and went together with her to Heishui College. Mei looked excited and enthusiastic. I asked her, “Do you feel sleepy?” Mei smiled and said, “I am fine, I usually drink some coffee in the morning to avoid being too sleepy.” The Heishui College isn’t very far from Mei’s home, so at 7:43 a.m., Mei and walked into the CERW classroom in the north classroom building at Heishui College.

The front and middle of the classroom were already filled with students, there were only some empty seats left in the back rows of the classroom. The CERW class didn’t have a fixed seating chart, so students who would like to sit in the front had already arrived at the classroom much earlier than others. Although some seats were empty, several textbooks had been put on the desk. They were used for students to take up to the seats for friends or roommates who would come later to the class. Several students who came to the class were carefully negotiating with their friends about choosing where to sit. Other students who came to the class late lowered their voices and asked students beside the empty seats whether they could sit there. Most of the students were looking at their vocabulary handbooks and preparing for the dictation in that day’s class. Some students were chatting with each other; others were looking at their phones.

The class started at 8:00 a.m., however, when Mei was preparing for her class on the podium at 7:45 a.m., a female student leader came to the front of the class and called the class’s attention. “Take out your vocabulary handbook and let’s start reading the vocabulary words,” the girl said. The class read the vocabulary words together following the student leader, “lottery”, “lottery”, “unlucky”, “unlucky”. Mei later explained to me that the school of engineering has the regulation of starting the class 15 minutes before the scheduled beginning of
the first class every morning. Students need to come to the class 15 minutes earlier and start either reading aloud together or self-study the textbook. Today, the students read aloud the vocabulary words together. The lead girl’s voice was loud enough to be heard at the back of the classroom. The girl’s pronunciation was correct most of the time, however, when she read a word wrong, a boy quickly corrected her by reading the correct way aloud in front of the class. The girl did not stop reading, but when she went back to her seat, I saw her head was down and she looked embarrassed.

At around 7:50 a.m., the students finished reading the words. Another student came to the front and started calling the students’ names. The name calling was used to check students’ attendance. While the student was checking the attendance, several other students were handing out the assignments to the class. It took the student about 10 minutes to finish calling the 110 names of the students in this class. While the students were calling the names and distributing the assignments, Mei was busy opening the computer in the front and setting up her microphone to prepare for the class. The music bell in the corridor suddenly rang which signaled the start of that day’s lessons.

The first half of the class. Mei said to the class, “Now let’s start the dictation,” the students quickly became quiet and students all took out a piece of paper. Mei explained that today all students need to hand in their dictation quizzes since it will be their last dictation for this semester. Mei usually dictates to the whole class and randomly selects one third of the class to hand in their dictation quizzes because of the large class size and limited time for grading them. Each student has a student number since they entered college and that number makes it more convenient for Mei to randomly select students and grade their dictation or assignments.
The class suddenly burst into the sounds of disappointment, complaints, and astonishment because apparently some students were not ready yet for today’s dictation. Mei dictated 40 words and expressions chosen from the last unit. She told the students the Chinese meaning first, then students needed to write down the corresponding English on their papers, for example, words like “punch” and “essence”, or expressions such as “be attributed to”. Although most of the students were honest during the dictation, some students whispered with each other about the answers during the dictations. The close distance and limited space between the students made it very convenient for individual students’ plagiarism. Therefore, Mei ceaselessly circulated around the classroom, and reminded the class and several students not to cheat. After the dictation, Mei randomly chose several students based on their student number to help with collecting the dictations.

The dictation and the collecting of them took 15 minutes and finished at 8:15 a.m. After the dictation, Mei started her leadership of the class with talking about some procedures related to the schedule, “This is our last unit and we still have two units left during this semester. The last two units won’t be included in the finals, but I will email you the power point and the self-study guide so you can study them by yourself after class.” Then Mei started to talk about three oral expressions on the slides. The oral expressions were collected by Mei after class and aimed to improve students’ knowledge of idioms which are seldom mentioned in the textbooks. This has become a routine and Mei would introduce three oral expressions every time she taught the CERW course. One sample idiom imbedded in sentences is presented below:

Oral expressions:

- I can’t believe you’re cleaning the whole house. That’s long, bro. Come out and enjoy the sun.
- Why don’t you stick with your diet? Dieting is long. I just eat what I want and go to the gym instead.

Instead of directly telling students the Chinese meaning of “that’s long”, Mei first showed several sentences which used the same idiom, then let the class guess the meaning from the context in the sentences. The font in the slides was very large to make sure students at the back could also clearly see it. The sentences were written in blue font and the idioms were in red and underlined. After giving students several minutes to think about the question and the eliciting, Mei paraphrased the meaning of “that’s long” in English which means “boring”. Then Mei explained the meaning of “that’s long” in Chinese and made sentences by using the idiom. Mei said, “Can the movie Inside Out be described as ‘that’s long’?” Several students in the front said “No,” and some shook their heads. Inside Out is the movie Mei let students watch during their CEVAO classes and students really like it.

Most of the students were carefully taking down the notes, and some used their phones to take pictures of the power point slides. Because of the large class size, some students needed to shuffle from side to side in order to get a full view of the power point, especially for the last two lines of the slides. The introduction of oral expressions took around 11 minutes from 8:15 a.m. to 8:26 a.m.

Mei told me later that although she tried her best to use English as much as possible during the class, the previous semester several students told her after class that they could not fully understand the English she spoke. After that, Mei tried to speak English first during the class, then repeat the English in Chinese, especially for important information. In addition, in order to make sure students could clearly hear her voice, she took a clip-on microphone wherever
she walked around during the class. However, when the students answered questions during the class, another problem arose that students’ responses could not be heard by a lot of students in the class. So Mei would either remind the students to speak louder, repeat their answers, or pass her microphone to the students.

At 8:26 a.m., Mei said, “Ok, so much for the oral expressions. Now take out your textbook and turn to page 116”. The temperature had been getting higher at that time of year, and I saw one student use her notebook as a fan to cool herself a little bit. The ceiling fans were always on, but without an air conditioner, the room with 110 people became somewhat suffocating during the summer, especially when the doors were closed to avoid the distraction from noises in the hallway or other classrooms.

The class was going to start a new article about Hiroshima and the Second World War. Mei provided the following slide (see Figure 6) and gave a brief introduction of Hiroshima as the lead in to the lesson. The slide shows a comparison of Hiroshima in 1945 after the atomic bombing and today’s Hiroshima.

The slides immediately caught students’ attention. After the introduction about Hiroshima, Mei clicked the keyboard which showed the next slide (see Figure 7), and asked students to work in pairs to discuss what led Japan to surrender in WWII. The students started discussing, Mei circulated around the classroom and reminded students by saying “Get to talk, get to talk.” She stopped at times to answer students’ questions or listened to students’ discussions. When she walked to the back of the classroom, several students who were sleeping or looking at their phones suddenly woke up and quickly flipped their textbooks. The first morning class started from 8:00 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. which made a lot of students feel sleepy.
Figure 6. Slide 1 in the CERW Course.

Figure 7. Slide 2 in the CERW Course.
After the discussion, Mei asked the question again to the class, and several students whispered, “The atomic bombing”. Mei repeated the students’ answers so that the class could hear, then translated the answers into Chinese. Mei continued the lesson by providing more general knowledge about the second world war. She asked, “When did WWII happen and when did it stop?” After several seconds of wait time, a student shouted out an answer. Without immediately pointing out the accuracy of the student’s answer, Mei repeated the student’s answer in a questionable tone. After another several seconds of wait time for other students, she said the correct answer by herself. While saying the answer in English, she simultaneously wrote the answer “1939-1945” on the blackboard with a piece of white chalk. Her handwriting was very clear, and she wrote the words big enough so that students at the back could also see it.

Mei continued to ask questions related to the second world war, “The WWII has allies and axis, what countries are in the Allies? What countries are in the Axis?” Mei looked at the class and waited for students’ responses, “How about the Allies?” She then wrote down the word with a colon “Allies:” on the blackboard. One student called out “America,” and Mei said, “Yes, America”. After a series of eliciting student responses, and giving feedback, Mei wrote down on the board “Allies: America, UK, China… Axis: Italy, Japan, Germany.” The ringing of the music bell again signaled the ending of the first lesson. Mei said to the class, “Okay, take a break.”

**Class break.** The break took 10 minutes from 8:50 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Most of the students remained in their seats during the break, especially students who sat in the middle. Mei turned on a video of a song named “The day you went away” by M2M, a Norwegian girl group. She stayed in the front and answered several questions from the students. Then a student leader came to the front and asked her to sign the class attendance form. Mei barely got any rest during
the 10 minutes. The music bell rang again which reminded Mei and the class about the beginning of the next part of the lesson.

*The second half of the class.* The second lesson started with showing a video clip from a Japanese documentary about the atomic bombing in Nagasaki. Mei pulled the curtains, and students helped with turning off the lights to make sure students could clearly see the screen. When the video’s sound increased, the class quickly became quiet. The video first had several lines of introduction about the atomic bombing in Chinese, then showed the real recording video of carrying the bomb and releasing it in Nagasaki with only background music. The video immediately caught students’ attention. Students were shocked at the massive power of the atomic bomb and discussed with each other in low tones. While seeing the release of the atomic bombing and the consequences, the class became totally silent.

The video ended but the class was still immersed in the feelings. Mei asked the class to open the College English reading and writing textbook and turn to page 116, work in pairs to discuss two open-ended questions on task 2 number 3: “What questions do you think the American journalist has prepared to ask the mayor of Nagasaki and other people?” and number 4 “What do you think the mayor will say in his speech of welcome?” Those two were preview questions to infer before reading the article. Apparently, after the first part of the class and the video, students were more engaged during the discussions. Mei walked around the classroom and reminded the students by saying, “Discuss with your partner, find a neighbor and get to talk.”

After the discussion, Mei calmed down the class and then again asked the question, “What questions do you think he has prepared to ask the mayor and other people?” After silence for a while, Mei said, “Think about it, think really hard about it.” She walked to the middle rows and asked, “Somebody have a try? Just use your imagination. I am the American journalist,
Hiroshima was the first city to be bombed by nuclear weapon. Think about what I will ask to the mayor of the city.” Mei called on a student’s name who sat in the front to answer the question. “How many people covered under the ground?” the student stood up and answered. Mei repeated his question and translated it into Chinese, “What else? Maybe he will ask do you hate the US?” Then Mei continued with asking question number 4 and called on students to answer, and after calling one student’s name, the student stood up and said, “Welcome them to Japan.” Another student volunteered and said, “What should we do in the future?” Mei provided feedback by saying, “Good, thank you,” then repeated the student’s answer. She supplemented other possible answers, such as “It hurts, it really hurts.” or “We are supposed to love peace and stop the war.”

The time quickly passed to 9:20 a.m., when Mei decided to move on to the new vocabulary and expressions of this unit. She said, “Alright, so much for the discussions. Now take out your vocabulary handbook and let’s read the vocabularies for this unit, turn to page 76.” While students were preparing the handbook, Mei opened the audio for the vocabulary list of this unit. Then students read after the audio together, their voices were crisp and loud. Students who sat at the back paid attention as well. The audio was from the textbook DVD and recorded by native speakers of English. After the students followed the audio to read the vocabulary words together, Mei chose five words from the vocabulary list and wrote them down on the board; they were “agitated,” “assent,” “cautiously,” “locate,” and “suicide”. Then Mei asked students to make sentences by using the words on the board. The students had their preassigned groups for the CEVAO class, and each student who volunteered to make sentences by using the words could add five points to his or her group. The group’s points would be accumulated at the end of the semester and proportionally converted to each student’s class participation grade.
An additional requirement from Mei was to repeat the previous students’ answers before making their own sentences. Mei wanted the students to not only think about making their own sentences, but also listen carefully to what others have said. A girl put up her hand and made a sentence by using the word “suicide”, but because of the student’s low voice and the large classroom size, students at the back could barely hear what she said. The students were discussing with each other about what the student said. A boy who sat in the back complained, “What’s she talking about?” then yawned. Mei passed her microphone to the student and helped by repeating the sentences several times. Also, in order to make sure students could hear the speaker, Mei asked the students to repeat their sentences three times. The girl once again said, “Even if I met many difficulties, I never thought about suicide.” Mei smiled and said “Good attitude! Good.”

Three students answered by making several sentences, it became harder, so no one answered the fourth one. Mei waited for a long time, then walked to the middle of the classroom and said to the students “Have a try?” After a while, finally another student stood up and made up a paragraph. The student made a mistake, so Mei pointed out, “It should be ‘give assent to’; assent is an intransitive verb, not a noun.” Maybe because the students from other places could not hear clearly, students who volunteered to make sentences were clustered in the front rows. This activity took about 20 minutes, Mei looked at her watch and there was only 5 minutes left before the end of the class.

The last part of the lesson involved teaching pronunciation. Mei wrote down the word “atomic bomb” on the board, then asked students how to pronounce the word “bomb”. She pointed out that here the “b” is a silent letter and does not have a sound while pronouncing the word. “What are some other words that has the same silent ‘b’?” A student called out, “Climb”.
Mei said, “Right, climb. What else? Also ‘comb’, what does comb mean?” Mei waited for a while, then gave the Chinese translation by herself. “Another word that has the same rule is ‘plumber’,” said Mei.

The music bell suddenly rang, it was 9:50 a.m. and that was the time for a 20-minute break before the students’ next class. Mei told the class the homework was to memorize the new words and expressions, as well as try to make sentences by using them. Also, students needed to preview the article and looked up unfamiliar words in the dictionary. “So much for this lesson.”
The class finished, and the students immediately went out of the classroom through the aisles. Mei chatted with several students and turned off the computer, I helped with shutting off all the lights and the ceiling fans. We waited until all the students went out of the classroom before leaving.

**CEVAO class.** The CEVAO class happened on a Wednesday morning from 10:10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Language Lab 1. The class had 60 students majoring in Marketing. According to Mei, students who major in Marketing were usually more active during the class. I will describe the CEVAO class following the chronological order of before the class, the first half of the class, the class break, and the second half of the class.

**Before the class.** When Mei and I arrived, a group of students had already gathered at the front door of Language Lab 1. They were waiting for Mei to open the door of the classroom. After Mei opened the door, the gathered students entered the classroom and tried to find their seats. Students who took the CEVAO class have their fixed seats, and Mei had a seating chart which recorded each student’s name and their corresponding spot. Even if sometimes students did not sit accordingly, Mei would ask them to sit back in their assigned seats to make it convenient for the recording of their participation grade. While students were finding their seats
and preparing for the class, the student leader went to the front of the podium and started calling the names of the students to check their attendance. Another student leader went to the front and asked the students to hand in their cell phones to a large mobile phone bag. The reason for students to hand in their mobile phones was to prevent them from the phone’s distraction during class. This was a measure carried out by the school of Business Management to prevent students from playing with their phones during the class time. Mei was busy checking the seats and making sure students sit according to the seating chart. She also helped with confirming that students’ headphones and the computers worked well. For students whose computers were not working, she helped with changing them to other seats. A lot of students were using the time before class to practice reading dialogues in the textbook or prepare for reading self-selected dialogues with their partners. The familiar music bell rang again which indicated the start of the lesson.

The first half of the class. Mei started the class by putting on her headphones and asking, “Can you hear me?” The class quickly calmed down and students put on their own headphones one by one. Mei began the class by talking about the procedures in Chinese, “Next week we will have our last class, the week after next week you will have your exam for the CEVAO course. For those of you who haven’t read or speak during the CEVAO course, you will not have the participation grade. So, take this class and the next class as the last chances to participate more during the classes.”

The week before, Mei assigned the homework of letting students prepare to read either the dialogues in the textbook or self-selected dialogues.
Mei: Okay, now. Any volunteers? (The class became quiet.) Don’t be so shy, somebody have a try? (After the eliciting, Mei waited about one minute until one student put up her hands through the computer software on the screen.)

Mei: A5, Jiali Xu (pseudonym). Who’s your partner?

Jiali Xu: B5 (Mei clicked the seats of A5 and B5 so that everyone can hear them through their headphones.)

Mei: Since we have a large number of students, if you come to the front it might be difficult for everyone to hear. You can stay in your seat, but please stand up while reading. Also pay attention to your eye contact and body language.

The students chose to read a dialogue selected by themselves about the plan to do more housework for their parents during the coming vacation. After reading the dialogue, Mei provided feedback in English related to the topic and the students’ body language:

You are so sweet. But we still have homework during the vacation, right? Also, you need to have eye contact while speaking. See Si Chen (pseudonym) and Meng Xiao (pseudonym); they always have a lot of eye contact while speaking English.

Mei provided feedback in English to another two groups of students related to body language:

Good, thank you. Next time it’s better for you to have the conversation without reading your notebook, textbook, or phone. Also, it is important to have some eye contact. Imagine you are talking in real life, will you stand and look at your book without any eye contact?
Mei’s reminder about the participation grade at the start of the class had a good effect because more students volunteered to read the dialogues than usual. Mei provided feedback on the pronunciation of several groups of students by saying:

Ok, good, and your pronunciation is good. Pay attention to the stress of the word ‘interesting’. The stress is in the beginning” and “It is ‘I’m full’, not ‘I’m fool’. Be careful of the long vowel and the short vowel.

When the students were reading the dialogues, some students were listening carefully while others were murmuring since they were preparing their own dialogues with their partners. Mei noticed when the class became too noisy and reminded the students in English, “Order, please! Show your respect. Keep silent!”

Time passed quickly, and Mei realized there had been 25 minutes spent on reading the dialogues, so she reminded the class that only one more group could read the dialogue. The large class size and limited time means only a limited proportion of students were able to read and participate during every class. Mei provided feedback to the last group related to intonation:

Mei: We have talked about intonation, when should we rise the tone while asking a question? (Mei waited for a while then continued.) Pay attention, we need to find a stressed syllable. It is in the last word of the sentence. E5, your conversation has mentioned having chicken for lunch, right? Can you say that again?

E5: Would you like to have some chicken?

Mei repeated the student’s sentence, then explained that the interrogative tone is in the last word “chicken” with a stressed syllable at the beginning of the word. She demonstrated the correct way of saying it.
Mei: After class read it more. Pay attention to the emotion; it’s not flat tone. For those of you who did not get a chance to read today, be prepared and volunteer to read next week. Ok, movie time.

The next part of the lesson involves students watching a movie clip and finding oral English expressions from the listening and the subtitles. Before watching the movie, Mei showed a slide which had a list of Chinese translations for some oral expressions that students needed to take down and try to find them while watching the video clip. The movie Mei selected for this semester was Inside Out.

Students were fully engaged while watching the movie and the classroom was filled with laughter and tears. Student were attracted by the screen in front of them and took notes while finding the oral expressions. The subtitles had both Chinese and English to make it convenient for students to find the corresponding English phrases from the subtitles. The watching of the movie lasted 15 minutes and Mei started to address the oral expressions from the movie. A table which shows the oral English expressions is included below (see Table 4).

The left side of the table has Chinese translation of oral expressions and the right side has English sentences which highlighted the oral expressions in red font. Mei first showed the Chinese meaning in the left column before watching the movie and left students time to write them down. After watching the movie, Mei checked the Chinese meaning of them one by one through a series of elicitations. For the sake of time, Mei did not call on individual students to answer the phrases. Instead, she asked the whole class to report to her what they found. While introducing the phrase “dumb it down”, Mei connected it with the silent letter ‘b’ rule mentioned in the CERW course. Mei also stressed the two meanings of the word “mad” which means angry
or crazy. Most of the students who reported the answers were in the front several rows. Because of the large class size, students’ voices at the back were difficult for the teacher to hear.

Table 4. Oral English Expressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Status</th>
<th>Riley’s better off without me.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simplifying</td>
<td>Guess I’ll just have to dumb it down to your level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messy</td>
<td>Things are really messed up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>We were worried sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Please don’t be mad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut up!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curse Word Library</th>
<th>I have access to the entire curse word library.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My bad</td>
<td>Sorry, I did it again. My bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Told you</td>
<td>Told you it was a great idea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next half of the lesson focused on the pronunciation of several sentences which involved typical rules of pronunciation. The two sentences were selected from the just watched video clip from the movie. Mei showed the next slide which has several sentences:

- Of course your tiny brain is confused. Guess I’ll just have to dumb it down to your level.

- You need me to be happy, but I want my old friends, and my hockey team.

Mei explained the pronunciation rules in those two sentences. The first rule is the linking of sounds. Examples would be “brain is”, “dumb it”; the second rule is incomplete plosion, and examples were “guess I’ll”, “need me”, “but I”, “old friends”, “and my”. This is when plosive
consonants (b, p, d, t, g, k) meet obstruction and create an incomplete loss of explosion of the consonant. The third rule is when have/ had/ has/ he/ him/ his/ herself/ himself are not in the beginning of a sentence, not a stressed word, and beginning with “h”, the “h” is not pronounced.

Mei talked about those rules through first explaining the rationales in Chinese, then demonstrated the way of pronouncing them in the movie. While Mei was explaining, a lot of students were practicing by themselves in low voices following Mei’s explanation. After the explaining and demonstrating, Mei asked students to read the sentences by themselves for one minute. Then Mei picked several students to read the sentences and provided feedback on their pronunciation. Mei stressed that both read in the non-linking form and read in the linking form which she introduced were correct. She explained that the intention for her to introduce the rules was to help the students be able to recognize the sounds when applicable. It’s already 11:00 a.m., so Mei said to the students, “Take a break”.

Class break. Mei played another movie for the students to watch during the break. Most of the students did not leave their seats and started to watch the new movie. Mei was busy answering students’ questions and chatting with her colleague who came from another classroom. The students enjoyed the movie so much that they were totally engaged in it. Ten minutes passed quickly, and the next half of the lesson began.

The second half of the class. The first part of the lesson was focused on speaking, while the next part of the lesson was focused on listening. The second half of the lesson worked on the exercises in the College English listening and speaking textbook. Mei started by saying, “Ok. Now. Turn to page 58. First, let’s look at the vocabulary words.” Each student’s computer was controlled by the teacher’s computer and showed the textbook DVD which has the video and audio listening materials. Students were very familiar with the procedures of the class. When
Mei clicked the audio, students started to read the new words for conversation 2 following the audio. The new words were showed on the screen with English spelling and the Chinese meaning. After learning the new words, Mei guided the class together to look through the Chinese meaning of the four multiple choice questions in task 5. Sample questions were like the following:

5. Watch Conversation 2 and choose the best way to complete the sentences.

1. Kate didn’t enjoy the play because ______.
   a. it was too long
   b. Mark’s acting was disappointing
   c. she didn’t want to see it
   d. she didn’t understand what was happening  (Greenall & Wen, 2016b, p. 59)

After a quick review of the Chinese meaning of the four questions, Mei started to let students watch the conversation 2 video twice. The screen of conversation 2 had several choices including slow/normal speed, with/without English subtitles, full screen on/off, and start/stop the video. During the first viewing, Mei broadcasted the video in normal speed without English subtitles. The second time while watching the video, Mei chose slow speed without the English subtitles. The first time provided students a chance to understand the general meaning of the video, while the second time allowed students to focus on answering the questions. After watching the video twice, Mei went back to the questions in conversation 2 task 5 and asked the class to together report the answers. The questions in task 5 were gone over quickly.

Task 6 involved watching conversation 2 again and completing the sentences. That task had transcripts of the video with eight blanks. Sample questions were like the following:
Kate: I didn’t (1) __________ what was going on. Absolutely nothing happened! I don’t know why (2) __________ to see it. (Greenall & Wen, 2016b, p. 59)

This time, before watching the video, Mei divided the eight lines of students into four groups. Students who volunteered to answer the questions correctly could add five points to the group. The points are proportioned to the individual students’ participation grade in the CEVAO class, which will be part of the students’ grade in the College English course. Mei broadcasted the same video a third and fourth time. Mei intentionally selected normal speed first and then again slow speed without subtitles. The students were engaged while watching the video and took down notes whenever they found the answers. After watching the video, Mei first picked on students who volunteered to fill in the blanks. Since students might not be able to get all the answers for the blanks, Mei provided choices to students by letting them select a blank they would like to talk about.

(Student who sat in B4 put up his hand on the screen.)

Mei: B4, Chenyu Zhang (pseudonym), which blank do you want to talk about?

B4: The first one, “Have a clue.”

Mei: Have a clue. What does it mean?

B4: 有线索 (Chinese translation).

Mei: Good. Add 5 points to this group. Next one, (Mei saw D6 put up her hands.) D6.

D6: I didn’t get the second one. I heard the third one is “easier to follow it.”

Mei: “Easier to follow it.” Good. 更容易理解它 (Chinese translation). 5 points to this group.
Many students volunteered to report their answers. The rewards had such a good effect. Students preferred to speak for the group and to add marks to support their group members. Mei picked on the students who volunteered first, then called on students to answer when no one volunteered anymore. Finally, all the blanks were filled except blank number 2. Mei picked on three students to answer it, but no one’s answer was accurate. Mei did not directly tell the class the right answer but played that part of the video again which focused on the specific sentence. The intensive listening of a specific blank had a good effect because after the listening one student volunteered and correctly answered blank 2. This time all blanks were filled, and Mei broadcasted the video again with subtitles and asked students to pay especial attention to the blanks. The listening of task 5 and task 6 took 30 minutes, so the class had only 20 minutes left.

The next listening material was a news report, which was different from the conversation listening. The same as the first video, Mei asked the students to first read the new words following the audio. Then Mei asked the students to turn to page 65 of the textbook and looked at two multiple choice questions. The first one is included below:

1. Listen to a news report and choose the best answer to the questions you hear.
   
   (a) Many cafes limit customers to one hour of playtime.
   
   (b) Many cafes have staff members that can teach customers how to play a game.
   
   (c) Many cafes only offer European strategy games.
   
   (d) Many cafes don’t charge an admission fee. (Greenall & Wen, 2016b, p. 65)

Mei guided the students to look over the choices and translated each sentence into Chinese. Before listening to the audio, she also told the students some test-taking skills to infer the questions and exclude possible wrong options. For example, in the above question, choice (a) doesn’t seem to be a likely answer since rarely do cafes limit customers’ playtime. The analysis
of the questions before listening could improve students’ understanding of the questions. It also guided the students to listen purposefully. After listening to the audio twice, Mei asked the class to report their answers. The class quickly got the correct answer for both questions. Mei played the audio again with the transcript shown on the screen. Reading while listening the audio enabled the students to check if there were any parts they did not yet fully understand.

The last part of the lesson was to watch a video and answer some questions related to the content. While the first video in conversation 2 was about campus life among students, this time the video was about daily conversations in life. The video had several different scenarios among couples, families, and friends. The variety of listening materials attracted the students’ attention while watching. Mei asked the students to turn to page 63 and looked at the listening comprehension questions in task 6. Sample question was like “2. Why does he agree to watch it?” After watching the video twice in normal speed without subtitles, Mei started to call on students who volunteered to answer the questions.

Mei: Now think about the questions and pick one to answer. Can you follow it?

(D1 first put up her hands on the screen.) Ok, D1. Which question would you like to answer? Do you think Joe would like to watch the movie?

D1: The first one. No.

Mei: Good. How about the second question?

D1: His turn to watch sports.

Mei: His turn to watch sports, what sports?

D1: Basketball.

Mei: Can you say it completely once again?
D1: Tomorrow has basketball and it’s his turn.

Mei: Yes. There’s a basketball game tomorrow and he can watch it.

In addition to let students answer the questions in the exercises, Mei also probed students to spell challenging vocabulary words, translate the meaning from English into Chinese, or give a complete answer to the questions. Mei recorded the points for each group and announced the final marks, “So add 25 points for group A and group B. Group C and group D add 5 points.”

At the end of the lesson, Mei talked with students about the homework for the next class. Students needed to form a group of two or three people, make up a conversation and give a role play at the beginning of next class. Students were very excited for the end of the class and could not wait for the weekend.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research site, the participant teacher Mei, her College English students, the classrooms, and vignettes of the courses. While the information about the site, the participant teacher and her students, and the classroom are self-explanatory, there were some revealing insights into the way the classes were conducted. The CERW class followed the procedures of students read the words, called the attendance, distributed the assignments, dictation, oral expressions, lead-in discussions, class break, video watching, read new vocabulary and expressions, sentence-making activity, pronunciation, and homework. The CEVAO class followed the procedures of students hand in their phones, called the attendance, announcements, role plays, watched movie clip, oral expressions, pronunciation, class break, new words, went over the meaning of the exercises, watched the videos and finished the exercises, checked the answers, and homework. Apart from the procedures, the CERW course addressed more of the lead-in of the reading material and new vocabulary, while the
CEVAO course focused more on listening and speaking skills which involved a variety of materials. Overall, the CERW and CEVAO classes cultivated students’ English listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities which is in accordance with the requirements of the course syllabi. The next chapter will illustrate the findings of this study following the thematic topics that emerged from data analysis.
Chapter 5: The Findings

Research reveals that College English teachers report that they are in need of effective teacher training to improve the quality of their teaching in order to meet the current needs for qualified teachers in the globalization efforts in China (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Lamie, 2006). Hayes (1997) explored an in-service training program in Thailand and found that a crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes. However, gaps exist about how to structure the trainings or professional development to cater to the teachers’ needs and adapt to the context of a large class format. Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the experiences of a current College English instructor in a public four-year college in China to explore how post-observation discussions influence the instructor’s awareness of her pedagogy, especially as it relates to teaching in large classes. This study, as you read further, provides insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world.

The findings revealed in this chapter were collected from post-observation discussions, observations of Mei’s College English classes, and document analysis. The data were analyzed through detailed reading of the documents, observation field notes, and transcripts of the post-observation discussions. Next, I collapsed the sub-themes through “winnowing” the data and categorized them into four major themes (Creswell, 2013; Wolcott, 1994). Those themes are the following: student participation, affective factors, classroom management, and instructional strategies. This chapter is organized to explain the four themes combining data from the observation field notes, documents, and transcripts of the post-observation discussions. Those themes shed light on the research questions for this study.

Research Questions
The overarching research questions for this study were: In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes?

The sub-research questions were: 1) In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses? 2) What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes? 3) What findings from the post-observation discussions could be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors?

In order to answer the above research questions, four themes were identified from the data collection and data analysis. The first theme is about student participation in Mei’s College English classes.

**Student Participation**

Mei emphasized in each of the post-observation discussions that student participation is the biggest problem for teaching College English in the large classes. In a classroom with over one hundred students, Mei found it very difficult to let each student participate in the class. Mei and I discussed the following ways of encouraging student participation in her College English classes.

**Group rewards.** While mentioning the issue of student participation during the first post-observation discussion, following the steps of attending and reflecting in the Cooperative Development model, I then tried to make connections between the assessment of the College English course and student participation (Edge, 2002) by saying:
You mentioned the requirement of syllabi, also the issue of student participation during the class. So are there any requirements for student participation in the course syllabi? Or are there any requirements or restrictions to student participation in the course assessment system?

Mei acknowledged the connection between course syllabi and student participation but said that not enough attention was paid to this part. I probed further by asking about the connection between student participation and course assessment. With the focus of thematizing being more specific, Mei suddenly remembered that she used to divide students into several groups. Students who answered questions in each group could get rewards by adding points to their group participation grade. The group participation grade was proportioned to each student’s individual participation grade, which influenced their grade in the College English course. Mei shared:

One way which could let them speak is to add the participation grade. I would lead them with the grades, made them feel that the ten groups were competing with each other. The first group would have a better reward, while the last group would have a punishment. Then no one would like to be the last one and they would participate… Students would think “I am the only one who did not speak in my group; other people have won marks for our group,” then they would try to speak for at least one or two sentences and help the group get some points.

Mei admitted that this is a really good way to stimulate student participation in a large class. However, due to the requirement of the course schedule, she did not have much time to apply this strategy near the end of the semester.
When asked the discussion question “What are some issues related to large class teaching you would like me to pay attention to during next week’s classroom observations,” without any hesitation, Mei said student participation was the one she would like me to pay special attention to. Therefore, I observed two CEVAO classes on a Friday afternoon, one with 67 students and the other with 80 students. I took down the number of students who participated during the class and the place they sat on a seating chart. The observation showed that although both classes happened to have the same number of 32 students who answered questions within the same class time, students in the smaller class had greater chances to participate during the class time. The observation also showed that two students answered questions four times during the class. This is in accordance with Mei’s description that students who are more active get many more chances to speak during a large class.

After sharing my observation of students’ participation in the CEVAO class, Mei expressed her opinion that teaching in large classes has more disadvantages than advantages. Mei’s attitude towards teaching in large classes is in accordance with the literature that teachers in general have negative attitudes toward teaching in large classes (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960).

The week following the first post-observation discussion, I observed that Mei intentionally applied group rewards in her classes. In the CEVAO courses, Mei divided students in the eight lines into four groups. While forming students into groups, she averaged the number of students in each group. Mei carefully took down the points for each student who answered the questions. At the end of the class, she totaled the points for each group and reported them to the class. The group rewards played an essential effect on students’ participation; many more students participated in the class than the previous week.
During the second post-observation discussion, Mei and I discussed the effect of group rewards. We were surprised and happy about students’ increased participation. Nevertheless, Mei shared that a new problem arose, i.e. that it seemed like students read during the class only for the participation grade without much practice after class. Our discussion extended to the topic of motivation, which I will illustrate further in the affective factors section of this chapter. It can be seen that the Cooperative Development model can be cyclical, with numerous rounds of focusing, goal setting, trialing, and back to attending and reflecting. The several rounds of observations and post-observation discussions also made this cycle possible in continuously finding issues to explore further.

**Throwing a beach ball or fuzzy bear.** Since Mei mentioned that student participation was the topic she would like to discuss during our next post-observation discussion, I observed student participation in Mei’s classes and thought over possible ideas before the third post-observation discussion. During the third post-observation discussion, I shared my experiences of seeing how my professors stimulated student participation while I was studying abroad in the US:

I remembered that the professor I was helping with would use a beach ball during the class. This beach ball has two purposes: on the one hand, sometimes when two or more students simultaneously want to speak during the class, the last speaker can pass the ball to only one student and let them take turns; on the other hand, when no one would like to speak, the last person who speaks can pass the ball to the class and whoever is closer to the ball needs to answer the question… Another professor would like to throw a fuzzy bear.

Mei immediately agreed that this is a good idea. She provided understanding responses to my answers by saying “One situation is to avoid competing for the chance to speak, when no
one would like to speak someone can simply throw the ball”. Mei also shared that she used a similar way before which was to randomly call on students based on their student numbers. In another discussion, Mei shared a strategy used by her colleague to randomly call on students through a turntable game which shows students’ names on the computer. Mei said students were very interested in this way of calling on students which contributed to the class atmosphere. The innovative way of calling on students also engaged the students through attracting students’ attention and interest in the class. In the CEVAO course syllabus, I also found that the syllabus requires the teacher to apply various multimedia to stimulate interaction between teacher and students to motivate students’ learning (Han, 2017). The equal opportunity to be called on and considered by the teacher is very important in a large class format. However, Mei also explained that when she randomly called on a student and the student said “I don’t know,” she would feel helpless and did not know how to react to the student.

**Eliciting.** While observing Mei’s classes, I noticed how she elicited responses from the class when no one would like to answer a question or when the called-on student had no idea about the answer. During my observations, sometimes I noticed the silence after Mei asked a question, especially in the CERW class when a larger number of students took a class together. In those moments, I observed how Mei reacted to the “silence” during the class time and ways that she elicited students’ answers.

I observed Mei’s wait time for students to give an answer after bringing up a question. Rowe (1972) defined wait time as the amount of time the teacher gives the student to respond after asking a question. Rowe’s study showed that when the teacher leaves at least three seconds of wait time, significantly positive outcomes can happen. In a CERW class I observed, for nine out of sixteen questions Mei would leave three or more seconds for students to think over the
questions after asking the questions (see Table 6 in Chapter 5). The wait time provides students enough time to think over the questions before coming up with answers, which is particularly important in a large class with various levels of student English abilities. In addition, Mei would use a variety of questions to encourage students to voluntarily answer the questions, such as “Any volunteers?” “Don’t be so shy?” “Somebody have a try?” or “Just give you a shot”.

Therefore, I described my observation of Mei’s eliciting strategies during a post-observation discussion combining studies in wait time:

> My professor used to mention that the past studies show that a lot of teachers immediately give students answers or answer the question by themselves after asking a question (Rowe, 1972). The reason might be to catch up the progress of the course schedule. However, I observed that in your class you would leave students at least three seconds for their thinking, even using a lot of language to stimulate their thoughts, such as “Have a try?” or “Just give a shot?” My field notes showed that there was a class when you used five sentences to encourage students answering the questions.

> Mei acknowledged that she would remind herself about leaving students enough time to think before speaking at the beginning of the semester. However, when it came to the end of the semester the time left for students to think became very limited because of the course schedule; therefore, she would forget to leave some time for students’ thinking at times.

> During several post-observation discussions, Mei explained the puzzle for not knowing how to react to students when they said they did not know the answers of questions during the class. Mei said:
There is a problem that some students, of course they are the minority, the problem is that they do not really care about you. For example, the student is looking at the phone, then the beach ball comes to him or her. The student would say “I don’t know”. Often this time I do not know what to say. Sometimes I would say several words in an indirect way. Other times when I am not in the mood I would just say, “Sit down please”.

From my observations, I also noticed similar situations like this in several classes. Since Mei mentioned this phenomenon several times during the discussion, I intentionally observed this point and prepared to discuss it with her in the last post-observation discussion. As the discussion again focused on this problem, I brought up an effective example of how Mei elicited the student’s answers after asking a question. For example, below is a conversation that happened in a CEVAO course between Mei and a student:

Mei: Look at the picture, where are they and what are you doing? Where are they?

(The student kept silent for a while.)

Mei: Just tell me, where are they? They are?

Student: 河边 (The student did not know how to say “river bank” in English, so she said the Chinese word for river bank.)

Mei: At the river bank. What are they doing? How about Janet?

Student: Reading.

Mei: How about Mark?

Student: Sleeping.
Mei: How about Kate?

Student: Studying.

Mei: Ok, that’s good. How about the second picture? What do you think happened? Do they look happy?

Student: I don’t know.

Mei: Look at her facial expression. She looks…

Student: Worried.

Mei: She looks worried, nervous. How about Kate and Mark? They are just… (waited for the student’s response) focusing their eyes on… (again waited for the student). They are just focusing their eyes on the computer, right?

Student: Yes.

During my post-observation discussion with Mei, I described my observation of Mei’s eliciting of responses in the CEVAO course:

I noticed that sometimes you would again repeat the question or again paraphrase the question. For example, there was a class when you asked the question “What do you think happened?” based on the picture, then let the student have a guess. When the student said “I don’t know,” I saw you again refined the questions and asked her “What did Mark do?” “What did Kate do?”, and “What did Jenny do?” The student then answered the questions little by little; this is a process of eliciting.

Through the description of the method Mei used in her class, I hoped to help increase her awareness of her pedagogy from the experiences and practices. After my description, Mei
provided me understanding responses by summarizing the process of eliciting as simplifying or refining the question to make it more understandable to the students. This way of eliciting can be effective when a student is reluctant to answer a question or has no idea about the answer to the questions when Mei teaches College English in a large class format.

**Providing feedback.** During the observations of Mei’s classes, I paid attention to the way Mei provided oral feedback to her students to contribute to their participation. Mei always encouraged students’ participation no matter whether their answers were right or wrong. After the students finished answering the questions, Mei would repeat the questions and emphasize the students’ answers. Although the students might have grammatical problems, Mei seldom directly pointed out the mistakes. Instead, she would again repeat their answers and correct the mistakes by saying the answers in a correct way. Mei said she would not be picky about students’ grammar as long as they dared to speak. She believes that the most important thing in using English is to understand and communicate with each other.

In a post-observation discussion, Mei mentioned that she used to let students critique each other’s mistakes in class. Mei said this method was used at the beginning of this semester. She let the students read a dialogue in groups while the other groups needed to listen carefully and pointed out students’ mistakes of pronunciation and tone after listening to the reading. When students correctly pointed out mistakes, they would get bonus points for their participation grades. Mei said this method had a great effect because the students were concentrated while listening and pointed out all kinds of mistakes. However, she gave up using that method recently because of the course schedule and the saving of class time.

I observed the way Mei provided feedback, especially verbal praise to students in several CERW and CEVAO classes. I found that the most common verbal praises from Mei to students
were “Ok”, “Thank you”, and “Good”. Such feedback could be very effective in a fast-paced large classroom. However, I realized that the repeated use of the same verbal praises might gradually decrease its effect in rewarding or reinforcing students’ positive behavior (Brophy, 1981; Costa, 1984). Therefore, I prepared for and discussed with Mei about this point during the next post-observation discussion.

I acknowledged Mei’s awareness of providing verbal praise to students’ behavior. Meanwhile, I described to her the most common feedback I observed during the observations. Based on the literature, I provided suggestions to Mei that maybe she could add language variety to the way of providing verbal praise, showing enthusiasm in tones or emotions while praising, or acknowledging students’ efforts in front of the class (Borich, 2011). I also introduced the concept of “positive reinforcement” which is used to reinforce behavior by methods such as verbal praise following students’ positive efforts (Skinner, 1957).

During the next week’s observation of Mei’s classes, I noticed that Mei intentionally added variety to her language while praising the students, such as “You are so sweet,” “Thank you, good job,” “Ok, good, and your pronunciation is good”. When she provided feedback to students for their role play activities, she not only provided feedback to their language, but also asked questions based on the contents of their conversations. Mei also praised one group as the model because of their excellent body language and eye contact while role playing the dialogue. The specific feedback and relaxed conversation made students feel that they were being well listened to and closed the distance between the teacher and students in their large classes.

In the following discussion, Mei showed great interest in knowing more ways of encouraging student participation from other countries. Therefore, I looked up some materials and introduced to her some other types of rewards, including letting another student explain the
reason why a response is correct, letting a student help or tell others how to do it, and asking the classmates to show admiration for one another’s efforts (Borich, 2011). The way of Mei providing feedback, her eliciting of responses, and group rewards all contributed to participation in the College English classes. Somewhat connected to these strategies is the second theme and sub-themes generated from the data, which are affective factors that influence Mei’s teaching.

**Affective Factors**

Through the analysis of observation field notes and post-observation discussion transcripts, the key words of motivation, personality, and respect, which relate to the affective factors of language teaching in a large class, became evident themes and sub-themes for this study.

**Motivation.** During one post-observation discussion, Mei mentioned the phenomenon that some students volunteered to answer questions only for their participation grade without enough practicing after class to refine their pronunciation and tones. Another phenomenon was that nowadays students study English only for the postgraduate entrance exam. They thought studying English for the test was very important. They would speak if they are called on to answer the questions; otherwise they would not volunteer to speak during class. Unlike the student who said “I don’t know” or those who passively wait to be called on, Mei provided an example of a student who would volunteer to speak English during and out of class.

Mei shared the experience that she had a previous student who loved to communicate with others in English. During his English class, he loved to ask questions. When he went to the gym and met international students from other countries, he would actively talk with them in English. Another time, when the student took an airplane and met a couple from New Zealand,
he talked with the couple in English from boarding until getting off the plane. His fluent oral English astonished his fellow travelers.

When Mei and I discussed the example of this student, I combined the theory of motivation to analyze students’ English learning during and out of the classes. I talked with Mei about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000):

Intrinsic motivation is when the person really likes to speak English. They learn English because of the love to this language and communicating with native speakers of English. Like the student you mentioned, he is a typical example of having intrinsic motivation in learning English… For students who study English for the postgraduate entrance exam or pass the CET-4 or CET-6 to get their diploma, they are more like learning English because of the extrinsic motivation… However, studies have found that the combination of both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation have the best effect in motivating students’ learning.

After my sharing, Mei said that she used to learn theories like this when she was in graduate school. She thought those theories were very helpful at that time, however, after years of teaching she has forgot a lot of them. She expressed that it would be very helpful to combine theory with practice in daily teaching. While agreeing with Mei on the combination of theory and practice, I also shared that sometimes theory might not fit with the practice. Therefore, there are times when experience is more valuable than theory to produce new knowledge. Nevertheless, we recognized the importance of motivation in influencing students’ English learning during our discussions.
**Personality.** During my observation in a CEVAO course, I found a girl who was very active and willing to communicate during the class. In one CEVAO course I observed, the girl volunteered to speak four times during a 100-minute class. I talked with Mei about this student during the third post-observation discussion.

Mei said that this girl impressed her a lot for being very confident. The girl always talked with the teacher during the class, especially at the lead-in part of the lesson. For some questions, she always brought up points that were different from others and kept discussing them. Even if sometimes her idea seemed not very logical, she loved to communicate in English. Different from other students who had excellent English but were too introverted to speak, this girl would catch all opportunities to communicate in English. Although the student’s English had grammatical mistakes and was not as good as native speakers, she often had the confidence and courage to speak.

Mei explained that even if some students do not have a high level of English ability, they would love to interact with the teacher during the class. She believes that it is closely related to students’ personalities. When Mei asked a question and let the class volunteer to answer it, some students who were active and extroverts would simply shout out the answer. This made students who were introverts or less active lose the opportunity to speak. This resulted in a lot of questions being answered by several students who were very active, while the introverted students were always waiting to be called on by the teacher like in high school. Therefore, during several post-observation discussions, Mei recognized personality as an important factor in influencing students’ College English study and participation in large classes.

For the students who rarely volunteered to participate or sat at the back of the classroom, Mei has her own understanding of those students. Mei said that for students who sat at the back
or did not volunteer to speak, they might be engaged in the teacher’s instruction all the time. For some introverts, they simply did not want to get the class and teacher’s extra attention to be put on the spot. But when they were called on to answer the questions, sometimes they would have excellent answers. For students who sat at the back, they might simply want the safe space and be attentive without getting much attention. Therefore, Mei would leave the safe space for them to avoid them being anxious, while calling on them at times to give them a sense of presence during the class.

Another common situation in the class was that students were not confident enough to speak or spoke in a low volume in front of the class. In the CERW classrooms with around 100 students for each class, a common problem was that the speaker’s voice could not be heard by other students. Mei believed that one reason was that they were not confident in their English and afraid of making mistakes. When some students spoke, they would like to speak in a low voice so that the mistakes could not be heard by others.

This was in contrast with the first class when the students went to college. Mei described that when the students just entered college, they were very active during the first class of self-introduction because of their high marks on the College Entrance Exam. A lot of them got really good grades in English which made them feel that their English is pretty good. However, later the students found the difference between high school and college in teaching methods and in the foci of their classes. They were used to being called on by the teacher in high school rather than volunteering to answer the questions. Introverts might experience more challenges in adapting to the college mode of instruction and not want to volunteer to speak in class. In addition, different from high school English which mostly focused on listening, reading, and writing, College
English stressed all four skills, which added oral English ability. The changes made some students gradually feel less confident in their English.

In order to gain students’ confidence in the College English courses, Mei said she always told the students that it is very common to make mistakes and they should not be afraid of that. Mei mentioned that it was important to set up students’ confidence in English learning. She would talk with students after class and try to close the distance between the teacher and the students. When the student gave an answer to a question, she would pick the right thing to praise and reminded them about the wrong part in a gentle way without directly pointing out the mistakes to destroy their initiative.

In order to let more introverted students participate during the class, Mei said she would remember each student’s name and intentionally call on students who rarely speak as much as possible. For the CERW course, when Mei graded the dictation quizzes she would pay attention to students who had done well on the dictation but were unwilling to speak in class. Mei would take down the names of those students and gave them opportunities to speak. Mei said one strategy she tried before was to look over the name list of the classes the night prior to the class, thought over students who seldom spoke and gave them chances to speak during the class. For the CEVAO course, Mei had a seating chart for each class, upon which she recorded the name of the students in accordance with where they sat. Sometimes she would call on the name of students who seldom speak to answer the questions during the CEVAO class. Since students had their fixed seats, sometimes Mei would intentionally call on students who sat at the back of the classroom to engage them during the class. Nevertheless, Mei admitted that because of the large class size and the limited class time, the chance of participation during the class was still limited.
For students who were extroverted, active, and willing to participate during the class, they would get many more chances to speak than others who were quiet.

**Respect.** While analyzing the post-observation discussion transcripts, I found that Mei mentioned the word “respect” nine times during our discussions. Mei’s respect of her students, respect of the school rules, and respect regarding her career as a teacher touched me numerous times during the study.

Mei said the following words during a discussion, “I have been thinking, no matter how many students in my class, I should remember their names out of respect”. This was what Mei said, which was also what Mei had been doing. During my observations of Mei’s classes, she would say the name of a student almost every time she called on one. Even in the CEVAO classroom when each student had a seat number, for example “E1”, she would still call the seat number first, and then told the class the Chinese name of the student. Mei believed that:

If you only call this student for example this girl, this lady, this gentleman, or this boy, the student would feel different. But when you call the name of the student, they would know that “my teacher remembers me”. Therefore, they might be well-behaved during the class time and show respect to the teacher as an interaction.

In addition, Mei reflected during the discussions that she believed whatever the grades of the students in the College English course, she needed to be respectful to the students. There was a case I observed during the classroom observation that demonstrated this. A boy was looking at his phone and distracted from the class. Mei found this out and asked the student to answer a question:

Mei: Tian Hao (pseudonym), what’s the meaning of “That’s long”?
Tian: Sorry, I don’t know.

Mei: Are you looking it up in your dictionary?

Tian: Yes. (The boy smiled and had his head down.)

Mei: All right, you don’t need to look it up, I’ll tell you. Sit down please.

(Tian sat down and put his phone aside.)

Instead of criticizing the student Tian in front of his classmates, Mei reminded him in a gentle way which also “saved his face” in front of the public. Mei had a tacit understanding with the student that you need to stop playing with the phone, and the student accepted the teacher’s reminder and followed the class rules. The leaving of space and being respectful to the students is a strategy that is particularly important for adult learners.

In addition to showing respect for the students, Mei was also respectful of the school rules. Mei mentioned in the discussion that “I am absolutely fair to students’ grades”. Mei shared that during her decades of teaching, sometimes she met students who would like her to help with adding some marks to the final grade. Mei said although she treated her students like friends after class, when the student asked her to help with changing the final grade she would absolutely refuse that. In Mei’s class, every student’s grade was proportioned by their class participation, attendance, quiz grades, online learning, and final test. Being just regarding students’ grades is also evidence that Mei is respectful to her career as a teacher. The next section will address the third theme identified from the data which is classroom management.

**Classroom Management**
During our post-observation discussions, Mei expressed the confusion that sometimes it is difficult to maintain a balance between respecting the students and engaging them during the class time. Mei said:

Of course I would not criticize them; I just want them to not being too nervous…

However, sometimes I observe them and feel that they are not afraid of me at all.

Sometimes it is obvious that they simply did not listen.

This reflected the puzzle of Mei’s classroom management while teaching in a large class, which was also discussed during the post-observation discussions. In this section, I am going to illustrate classroom management in the large classes from several sub-themes: clear routines, circulating in the classroom, student helpers, and communication with students.

**Clear routines.** Mei’s classrooms had a series of routines and procedures which made it easy for students to understand and follow. At the start and end of a lesson, Mei usually gave students clear attention getting signals such as “How are you?” “Can you hear me?” “Take a break.” “Ok. Now let’s come back.” and “So much for today’s lesson”. These attention signals established clear routines for students to understand the class rules and expectations from the teacher.

Both CERW and CEVAO classes began with checking the attendance and stating the objectives for that day’s lesson or schedule for the week. From my observations, Mei’s lesson plans, and the post-observation discussions, the CERW course began with dictation or procedures for the week, then Mei would introduce several oral expressions. After this part, the lesson would start with new words and expressions for the article from the vocabulary handbook. Then the lesson would address the article following lead-in activities, new words study,
skimming the text genre, scanning useful expressions, text analysis, and exercises. According to Mei’s lesson plans, the instruction methods during the CERW course were designed to be flexible based on the article topic for each unit. The CEVAO classes, on the other hand, often involved the process of reading the dialogues or role plays, watching movies, and working on oral expressions, pronunciation, warm-up activities, conversation 1 and additional activities, conversation 2 and additional activities, news report, and passage 1 and 2 exercises. New words and phrases for the listening materials were interspersed throughout the class time. Compared with the CERW course, the routines of the CEVAO classes were more fixed. The class breaks in CERW and CEVAO always involved listening to English songs or watching English video clips. Students were very familiar with those routines so it was easy to follow the teacher’s instructions.

From my observations, I found several examples to prove how clear routines help the effectiveness of instruction in large classes. Before the beginning of the class, students would either read the dialogues or memorize the new words since they knew that Mei would check the reading or have dictation on the words at the beginning of the class. When Mei played the audio for new words, students immediately read along which showed a clear routine. Since Mei usually let students listen to the listening material twice and then address the questions, students could focus on understanding the general meaning first, then be more careful about specific questions. In addition, students majoring in Business Management needed to hand in their phones to a large mobile phone bag which prevented the distraction from cell phones. Food eating was not allowed during class time in Heishui College. Students were also clear that when they would like to go to the restroom, they needed to ask the teacher’s permission. Lastly, since some students reported it was difficult to understand Mei’s instructions in English during the previous semester, Mei had the habit of telling students some important information in Chinese,
such as the announcements about CET-4, talking about difficult language points, or asking questions in both English and Chinese. There were many routines established in Mei’s classes which contributed to classroom management in the large classes.

**Circulating around the classroom.** From my first day of observation, I noticed that Mei used a clip-on microphone whenever she moved during classes. The clip-on microphone was helpful to ensure students at any place in the classroom could clearly hear the teacher’s voice. In addition, Mei intentionally made the font in the slides or words on the blackboard big enough so that students at the back could also clearly see it. During the discussion, Mei reflected that:

The voice projector makes it convenient for me to move around in the classroom… But I realized that I like to walk in the left side of the classroom while seldom go to the right side. Since some classroom does not have the remote control for the computer, I need to walk back and forth to play the slide. Therefore I gradually walked less during the class time. I should have walked around in the classroom with my voice projector so that students might be more serious when the teacher comes during the class. They might be more careful while listening.

Mei’s reflection happened to be the same as the point I was prepared to discuss with her during the last post-observation discussion. During the observation of Mei’s classes, I drew two visual maps of Mei’s circulating in the classrooms, one for the CERW class (see Figure 8) and another for the CEVAO class (see Figure 9).
Each curve or line with an arrow in the visual maps represents a movement by the classroom teacher. In my field notes in my notebook, I also cited specific times and reasons for each movement. For example, Mei walked around in the CERW classroom to close the front door at 5:12 p.m., clicked the computer in the front at 4:40 p.m., invited students to answer questions, and answered a question asked by a student during the CEVAO course.
After showing Mei the visual maps and my descriptions, Mei reflected that she had been thinking she should have written more words on the blackboard and used more slides at the end of the semester. However, because of the pressure to finish all of the teaching content, she had given up some ways of adding variety to her classes. Mei also explained that her tendency to seldom move to the back of the classrooms was influenced by my presence in the classrooms. Mei shared:

For the issue of teacher movement, if you were not in the class, I might have walked around to the back of the classroom for several times. But I was thinking you might feel nervous if I walked to the back, so I stopped going to the back when you were there (Mei and I laughed loudly together).

After Mei’s sharing, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of being descriptive rather than prescriptive during post-observation discussions (Oprandy, 1999). Although I had been observing carefully during the three weeks, I could never fully understand
and capture Mei’s decades of College English teaching practices. It is only through the respect, empathy and sincere conversation after the observations that I could know the story behind the behaviors in the classrooms (Edge, 2002).

Hearing what I said about being descriptive rather than prescriptive, Mei shared her belief that:

If the teacher could be more attentive of his or her pedagogy, every teacher could have the chance of being an excellent teacher. It all depends on the teacher. The competence is only one part. On the other hand, practice can make perfect. If the teacher could think more carefully about how to guide the students using the time after class, the students could also feel the teacher’s effort and give you a positive interaction.

Mei’s words reflected that she had been self-consciously increasing her awareness of her pedagogy.

The discussion continued as I shared some research about teacher’s circulating in classrooms. I mentioned the research by Hall (1977) which found that as a teacher stands closer to the students, communication can be more interactive since the students can be influenced by the teacher’s body language, eye contact and changes in voice and tones. I shared with Mei that at times I observed she intentionally talked with students at the back. Based on the research by Hall (1977), as Mei stood closer to the students, the communication could contribute to students’ participation. Mei further shared:

Students would feel the teacher really cared about us and did not neglect us. If you often stayed in the front and did not move, the students would feel that the teacher did not care about students at the back and lost their attention. I feel that a good teacher should know
a lot about students’ needs… This is a great suggestion, I will walk to the back of the classroom more often during the class, or sometimes teach the lesson at the back of the classroom.

Mei’s reflection on the importance of teachers walking more often to the back of the classroom was evidence for her heightened awareness of her pedagogy. In addition, this discussion also contributed to Mei’s awareness of understanding students’ needs, which is an important aspect of teacher knowledge. Mei’s willingness to take this suggestion into practice was a sign of goal setting in the Cooperative Development model, which aims to move beyond discussion to learning through experience (Edge, 2002). It is reasonable to assume that Mei will work toward this clear goal during her later teaching and achieve the last step of the Cooperative Development model, i.e. trialing (Edge, 2002).

**Communication with students.** During the last post-observation discussion, Mei reflected that when she taught students who majored in English in a smaller class, she used to pay attention to students who were not very active during the class and talked with them after class. The talk used to have a positive effect on those students’ class performance and relieved students’ nervousness during class time. However, with the current large class format, she felt she was too busy to care about each individual student.

Mei reported another barrier for communicating with students was the generation gap between her and the students. Mei recalled that when she just entered her career, the close age gap made it feel very easy for her to find common topics and communicate with her students. However, as she grew older it became more difficult for her to communicate or understand the students. Mei brought up a case when she heard students talk about “chicken dinner” during and after class. Out of curiosity, she asked the students whether it was healthy for them to always eat
chicken for dinner, the class laughed and said “chicken dinner” was used to refer to a popular online game.

Mei realized the lack of enough communication between her and her students could be detrimental and thought that it was essential to keep open the lines of communication. Communication could close the distance between the teacher and the students. During an after-class communication with one of her students several years ago, the student asked Mei whether she could stop calling on her to answer questions. Mei said the student was always attentive during the class but might have low psychological diathesis and afraid to speak in front of the class. For introverts like this girl, communication after class was the only way to have direct contact with the teacher.

Nevertheless, from my observation, Mei had already tried her best to talk with the students after class. During the ten-minute break, she always answered students' questions or checked the class attendance. In addition, Mei’s communication with students not only happened after class, but also during class discussions. There was a case when Mei intentionally talked with students at the back of the classroom about their field work schedule for the following week. During my observation, I also noticed that when Mei made sentences in English, she always tried to use people or content which attracted students. Below is part of our discussion:

Me: I noticed that when you made sentences, you would consciously find topics students might be interested in, such as Han Lu and Xiaotong Guan (popular stars in China).

Mei: Right. (Mei and I laughed together.)
Mei’s laughter indicated that she agreed with my observation. The capturing of such nonlinguistic communication is an important aspect of “attending” in the Cooperative Development model (Edge, 2002). Mei shared that she did not like watching news about popular stars before. However, now she had the habit of watching a little bit of entertainment news every day. Mei felt that knowing students’ topics of interest could easily attract their attention during the class. However, she felt that she still needed to know more about history, geography, literature, and many other aspects of general knowledge to engage students during classes. The point of general knowledge will be explained more specifically in the section on content areas under instructional strategies in this chapter.

**Student helpers.** From my observation of Mei’s College English classes, I found that Mei’s classrooms had many student helpers which greatly helped her with class routines. Those student helpers sometimes helped Mei with checking student attendance, distributing dictation quizzes, counting group participation grades, creating an active classroom atmosphere, maintaining classroom equipment, managing class order, and leading morning study. The description of those student helpers could also be found in the vignettes in Chapter 4. For example, Engineering Management majors had the regulation of students starting their learning 15 minutes before the official start of the first class. The student learning was guided by a student leader every time.

Those kinds of help from students greatly reduced the classroom teacher’s work load which also enhanced students’ ability in responsibility-taking, leadership skills, and engagement of the class. These student helpers reflected the educational concept mentioned in the College English syllabi, which is to create a “teacher-fronted, student-centered” classroom (Han, 2017, p.
4). The last part in this chapter will discuss instructional strategies in Mei’ College English teaching.

**Instructional Strategies**

The theme of instructional strategies is the one Mei and I spent the longest time discussing during our post-observation sessions. In the difficult circumstance of teaching large classes, the variety and clarity of the instructional strategies are important in leading to successful lessons. In this part, several sub-themes were identified from the data which are mediums, content areas, question types, selection of activities, and student-centered classrooms.

**Mediums.** In the first week of observation, I applied Fanselow’s (1987) FOCUS (Foci for Observing Communication Used in Settings) to observe the latter half of one of Mei’s College English classes. FOCUS contains five characteristics of communication, which are the “source and target” of communication, patterns of “moves,” “mediums” used to communicate content, the “uses” of communication to attend to mediums around us, and “content areas” (Fanselow, 1987). After the observation of these aspects during the class, I chose two aspects to discuss with Mei, which were mediums used to communicate content and content areas.

According to Fanselow (1987), the mediums used to communicate content include three aspects: the linguistic mediums, non-linguistic mediums, and paralinguistic mediums. The linguistic mediums include spoken words and written words; non-linguistic mediums contain organized sounds, pictures, objects, or sketches; and paralinguistic mediums include pronounced tone of voice to emphasize words, gestures, body movement, and facial expressions (Fanselow, 1987). A list of the above mediums used to communicate content are shown below in Table 5.
During a discussion, I described my observations of mediums in Mei’s classes, and shared with her my observations combining the theory of mediums used to communicate content:

In the CEVAO course, you asked the students to look at the picture and answer the question “What do you think happened through looking at the picture?” The question you asked incorporated spoken words in the linguistic medium, the picture students looked was part of the non-linguistic medium. When students read the vocabulary words together with extra emphasis on key words or syllables, the lesson focused on the pronunciation, tone and stress of the words in the paralinguistic medium. Later the students watched the video and filled in the blanks which applied written words in the linguistic medium. When asked the students to watch it again and let them read their answers, you again used spoken words in the linguistic medium. Lastly, when you let them read after the video with subtitles, this was the pronounced tone of voice and emphasis on a word, which also utilized spoken words in the linguistic medium [and I forgot to mention that the linguistic medium, the spoken words themselves, was combined with the paralinguistic medium, i.e. the emphatic pronunciation of those words].

My description of Mei’s CEVAO class combining Fanselow’s (1987) mediums used to communicate content was based on routines used in the CEVAO class. I used the following table to represent the mediums used in Mei’s CEVAO class (see Table 5). I further added that although this class did not involve gestures and body movement in paralinguistic mediums, Mei designed the homework to let students have role plays which include the paralinguistic mediums of gestures, body movement, and facial expressions. I shared that body language could be
essential in communicating with native English speakers and could enhance students’ intercultural communication awareness.

Through the analysis of the mediums, I shared with Mei that the various mediums help build up students’ English ability in all aspects with the foci of listening and speaking skills. The foci of listening and speaking skills were also in accordance with the objectives of the CEVAO class, which was to cultivate students’ capturing of essential information, understanding listening materials, and being able to state facts with accurate pronunciation and intonations (Han, 2017).

Table 5. Mediums used to Communicate Content in Mei’s CEVAO Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mediums used to Communicate Content</th>
<th>Activities in the Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Mediums</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken words</td>
<td>Asked a question; read the answers; read after the video with subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written words</td>
<td>Filled in the blanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-linguistic Mediums</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized sounds (e.g., chanting, music)</td>
<td>Read the vocabulary words together in a rhythmic way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures, objects, sketches</td>
<td>Looked at the picture; watched the video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paralinguistic Mediums</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronounced tone of voice, emphasis on a word</td>
<td>Read the vocabulary words together and read after the teacher with extra emphasis on key words/syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures, body movement, facial expressions</td>
<td>Homework role play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After hearing my description of the mediums used to communicate content, Mei said that the explanation and analysis made the lesson seem more professional. She also reflected that the class should increase the opportunities for students to listen and speak, which was a sign of Mei’s gaining awareness after knowing about the mediums used to communicate content in her CEVAO class.

Through the analysis of mediums used to communicate content, I also realized the importance of incorporating computers in assisting Mei’s CEVAO lessons in the large classes. With the English learning online system and the textbook DVD, students were able to watch the images while listening to the dialogues, which created a lifelike language context. The audio for new words and videos were easy to repeat, following the user’s choices of showing the subtitles or not, and choosing slow or normal speed. With the help of headphones and microphones, Mei and each student’s voice could be heard by everyone in the classroom. Students could also adjust the volumes to accommodate individual needs. This solved a common problem in a large classroom, i.e. that the speaker’s voices could not be clearly heard by others. The computer screen helped each student to see the words more clearly which solved the problem that the words could not be seen clearly by students in a large classroom. The headphones and computer cubes also evidently reduced small talk among the students during class time which avoided unnecessary distractions. In addition, the using of the computer allowed Mei to bring authentic materials such as the movie Inside Out to the classroom. The computer-assisted learning greatly inspired students’ learning interest, motivation, and engagement for learning English in large classes.

I consulted Mei about the number of language labs in Heishui College and the possibility of also using them for the CERW courses. However, after knowing the number of
language labs, I realized currently it is unrealistic for non-English major students to take the CERW courses in language labs. It could be seen that there was a lack of enough resources to support instruction for College English teaching in large classes.

Apart from mediums used during classes, Mei also applied email, QQ group (social software), WeChat official accounts (social software), English blogs, and an online learning system after class to provide supplementary materials and exercises. For example, during one of my observations, Mei sent students a document of frequently tested words in the CET-4 through email. She also shared helpful English learning articles through the QQ group and recommended WeChat official accounts or websites for English learners such as China Daily. Based on the College English course syllabi (Han, 2017), internet resources such as the China Daily English Edition website, the College English Learning website, and Higher English Education Publishing websites could be used to benefit both College English teachers and their students. Moreover, Mei recommended students to recite articles from another classic textbook *New Concept English* 2 (Alexander & He, 1997) to supplement textbook learning materials. The online English learning system used for students’ homework had exercises that corresponded with the textbook articles which were created by publishers of the textbook. Students’ finishing of the exercises counted towards students’ final grades in the College English class.

**Content areas.** Another part of FOCUS which was discussed in a post-observation discussion was the “areas of content.” According to Fanselow (1987), the content areas which are communicated in English classes include “procedure,” “life,” and “study.” During my post-observation discussions with Mei, we talked about the content areas in her classes.

Mei mentioned she found that foreign language teachers in Heishui College often prepared a lot of after class materials in advance. For example, the teacher would print some
paper or materials and let students read them after class. In contrast, Mei felt that Chinese teachers were used to teaching the materials from textbooks or power point slides, with a lack of extracurricular supplementary materials. Following up on Mei’s discussion, I talked with her about content areas, thus combining my knowledge about research in FOCUS:

While introducing the content areas, my professor mentioned a study which showed that content areas of procedure, such as giving directions or discipline the students were mentioned a lot in the classroom while teachers seldom mentioned content areas related to life such as general knowledge, personal experiences, or feelings. Moreover, content areas related to study such as analyzing grammar or teaching vocabulary words were mentioned a lot. Therefore, suggestions from this study showed that teachers should talk less about procedures and more about personal experiences or general knowledge. (Gebhard, 1999)

Mei strongly agreed with the results of this study. She shared that students were always interested in personal experiences of the teacher and being deeply engaged when the teacher shared thoughts about life. Mei gave the example that last year two articles in the textbook were related to family affection and success. Mei found videos of how two celebrities shared their stories about these two topics. She described students’ responses to the videos, “Oh, students were all crying while seeing those videos and shared a lot about how to treat their parents in the future.” It can be seen from Mei’s previous experience that sharing life content could be helpful in encouraging students’ participation and sharing of personal experiences during the class.

While Mei recognized the importance of sharing more knowledge related to life during the class, she also expressed her worry about not knowing enough general knowledge to supplement the class material. Mei told me that her scope of knowledge was very limited in
referring to general knowledge such as technology or western politics. When she mentioned general knowledge during the class, she always worried that the expanded topics could involve knowledge she was ignorant of. Interestingly, Mei shared that through her experience of teaching, she found that students’ scope of knowledge was much less than she thought. Nevertheless, the discussion of content areas in the FOCUS observation system greatly inspired Mei’s awareness of incorporating life (both personal and general knowledge) in her College English classes.

While I observed Mei’s teaching in the following week, she intentionally incorporated video and discussions about general knowledge related to WWII in her CERW class. The discussions about WWII and Hiroshima greatly inspired students’ participation and engagement during the class. In the last post-observation discussion, I described my observation with Mei that the incorporation of general knowledge related to culture and history made her class become more vibrant.

**Question types.** When asked about points Mei would like to discuss during the next post-observation discussion, she shared her confusion that sometimes it seemed that students did not like to answer questions since the types of questions she asked were lack of effectiveness. Mei shared her puzzle that when she asked questions in English, sometimes she realized that students had already known the answers of the questions, so they simply did not want to say anything about them. It seemed that the questions were too simple to be asked. Nevertheless, Mei still felt the necessity of asking them, just to encourage the students to speak.

In the following week, I observed and recorded the types of questions Mei asked during a period of time in two CERW courses in hopes of finding reasons for her confusion. Combining knowledge about the six levels of questions from Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, Englehart, Furst,
Hill, & Krathwohl, 1984), I observed two of Mei’s CERW classes by using an observation form (see Table 6 and Table 7) from Borich (2011) to distinguish among the six types of questions. The first table (see Table 6) recorded the types of questions Mei asked in her CERW course on a Tuesday afternoon from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Eighty students who major in Accounting Education took the CERW course at this time. The second table (see Table 7) recorded the types of questions Mei asked in her CERW course on a Wednesday afternoon from 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. One hundred and twenty-seven students majoring in Marketing and Human Resources took the CERW course at this time. Both lessons were about analyzing the article “Hiroshima - the ‘liveliest’ city in Japan” in the CERW textbook (Greenall & Wen, 2016a, p. 117).

In addition to identifying the types of questions Mei asked during my observation, I also recorded all 30 questions Mei asked in a period of time during two CERW classes. The numbering and recording of each question enabled me to check my classification of each type of question after the observations.

During the last post-observation discussion, I introduced Bloom’s taxonomy to Mei. Interestingly, she expressed that she had heard her professor mention Bloom’s taxonomy when she was a master’s degree student. However, as years passed by, she had forgotten about it. Therefore, I discussed with Mei about the six types of questions, which include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1984).
Table 6. Six Types of Questions: Form One.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>LO</th>
<th>HO</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Wait Time (s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Six Types of Questions: Form Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>LO</th>
<th>HO</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The first three types of questions are lower order ones (LO on the table 6 and table 7) and the last three are higher order (HO on the table 6 and table 7) questions. I explained to Mei that
the classification of the questions was based on the key words in the question, for example, question number 11 on table 6 is “Do you think Hiroshima is the ‘liveliest’ city in Japan?” Since it asked one’s opinion to make a choice or judgment, I classified this question as evaluation.

Based on the observation of Mei’s Tuesday CERW class, she had asked eleven higher order questions and five lower order questions (see Table 6). However, for the lesson on Wednesday afternoon at the same time, Mei only asked three higher order questions and eleven lower order questions (see Table 7). While discussing this point, I asked Mei if it was because of the different students on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. Mei agreed that the class on Tuesday afternoon was the one which had the best performance. From my observation, I also noticed that students major in Accounting Education on Tuesday afternoon were much more active and engaged. Students who sat in the first several rows in that class would actively interact with Mei, and some even competed with each other to shout out the answers.

Mei also admitted that since the two classes had different class schedules, one had started for a long time while another was just beginning the lesson. Therefore, it had been a while since she prepared the lesson and she had forgotten a lot about it during the instruction. She shared she should have looked over the schedule before the class began and thought over where she left off the last time. In addition, Mei had only two lessons on Tuesday and six on Wednesday. Considering the CERW course on Wednesday was the last lesson during the day, it might also influence Mei’s energy load and led to her fatigue. It can be seen that the teaching of several large classes could make it difficult for teachers to coordinate the course schedule and accommodate to students’ characteristics in each class.

Back to the discussion of the question types, Mei said she used to ask several higher order questions after finishing a lesson, but students seemed reluctant to answer them. They would
share several sentences when exposed to topics they were interested in such as love, friendship, and family; otherwise they would prefer keeping silent. I also observed that when Mei asked close-ended questions such as the meaning of words, students would speak for several phrases, but for some open-ended questions, students would not even have eye contact with the teacher. Mei and I believed that students might have a fixed mindset that there were always correct answers to the questions. For divergent questions which had no fixed answers, students might be afraid of making mistakes. In addition, I shared with Mei that studies showed that higher-order questions need to use more complex thought processes while forming an answer (Borich, 2011). Therefore, the answering of the questions might require longer wait times. Meanwhile, the asking of higher order questions would promote critical thinking ability and develop students’ decision-making and judgment skills (Borich, 2011). Mei agreed that the development of creative thinking skills seemed lacking in Chinese education.

After the sharing of Bloom’s taxonomy and higher order questions, Mei reflected that sometimes students might not be willing to answer questions since the questions were not effective or meaningful. She could think more carefully while asking the questions and think over what questions to ask before class to make the questions more effective.

**Selection of class activities.** During the first post-observation discussion, Mei shared with me that she was uncertain about the effectiveness of watching the movie Inside Out during class time. Mei shared the following thoughts with me during the discussion:

I was confused about watching the movie Inside Out during the class for it took too much of the class time. At the beginning of the semester, I told the students that we are going to finish watching this movie during the semester. However, I was thinking about giving up it halfway through. The eleven to twelve minutes of watching it did not get as much
effect as I expected, and it took lots of time during the class. Students could have used this time to read the dialogue or have role play.

Mei shared that she used to utilize the class time for students to make up a new conversation based on the dialogue in the textbook. Students could either read the dialogue, retell the dialogue, or choose a new topic to make another dialogue. The effect of these activities was good in her opinion. However, since Mei changed that activity into movie watching during this semester, she assigned role plays as homework and called for volunteers to present them at the beginning of each class.

One reason for Mei to incorporate the movie into the class was that she would like the students to have a knowledge of the most recent oral expressions or idioms in English. Mei felt that College English students lack the authentic language contexts to hear and apply idiomatically oral expressions in real life. On the other hand, the movie could also let students focus on the pronunciation of several sentences which include stress, intonation, and pronunciational rules. Mei said she had discussed this issue with her colleague before. Different from Mei’s opinion, her colleague believed that as long as students could communicate in English, native English speakers will not care much about their intonations. Mei was in such a great dilemma while having the discussion with me, and we discussed this issue following the Cooperative Development model.

I was attending carefully to Mei’s ideas and reflecting through checking my understanding of this issue (Edge, 2002), “So you think that it is helpful to incorporate the movie Inside Out in the class… if they have the chance to use the language later maybe they can apply the language in life.” Mei continued her sharing with both advantages and disadvantages of incorporating the movie and the follow-up activities on oral expressions and pronunciation. I
provided several understanding responses to either summarize Mei’s ideas or provide description of what I observed during the class related to her points. Nevertheless, Mei was eager to know my opinion on this issue and asked me three times during this discussion, “Do you think it is useful?” Since one important aspect of the Cooperative Development model is to be sincere and not pretend (Edge, 2002), I honestly shared my opinion that I think it is helpful to incorporate the movie activities. Through several rounds of Mei’s sharing and my reflecting, I provided the following understanding response about this issue:

From my understanding, now the opposing view from your colleague seems to be if the CET-4 does not test the pronunciation, stress, and tone, why bother to cost a lot of time during the limited class to emphasize them.

Mei immediately agreed with my reflecting by saying “Right, exactly.” and we laughed together in feeling relieved about finding the focus of this issue. The step of focusing in the Cooperative Development model is an important step before taking action (Edge, 2002).

During the second post-observation discussion, Mei and I again talked about this issue while discussing the arrangement of online learning exercises. After careful attending to Mei’s description, I tried to make connections following the Cooperative Development model (Edge, 2002). Below is part of our discussion:

Me: You just mentioned that students have the online learning exercises; meanwhile, you also mentioned the issue that there was not enough time for students to watch the movie during the class time. I wonder if it is possible to make some connections between those two issues.
Mei: You mean online learning? Online learning sometimes is overlapping with the textbook.

Me: Right, is there any possibility that we let students to watch the movie after class? And…

Mei: Asking the questions during the class, right?

Me: Yes, let them check their answers for those expressions during the class time.

Mei: I thought about this, I thought about this way before. Actually this is a great idea. I was thinking if students watch it after class, maybe we should also watch it again during the class time. But actually the way you mentioned is good, and I can relate this homework to the participation grade which might have better effect. This is great! Thank you!

Mei’s excitement was a sign of her final relief in making a strategic choice to balance the limited class time with the class activities. Through a series of attending and reflecting during the first and second post-observation discussions, Mei was able to gain a deeper understanding of this issue and came up with a satisfactory solution to her concern about the selection of class activities.

**Student-centered classroom.** During my observation of Mei’s College English classes, I intentionally observed student and teacher talk time. From my observation, the teacher talk time was more than the student talk time during the CERW courses while the student talk time was more than the teacher talk time during the CEVAO courses. By using the patterns of moves from FOCUS to observe the CERW courses and the CEVAO courses (Fanselow, 1987), the most common patterns of moves identified were teacher structured, teacher solicited, student
responded, and teacher reacted. The most common source and target combinations during the class time were teacher to student and class, then student to the teacher and class. There were a few student-to-student communications focused on pair discussions and role plays. Mei also shared with me some ideas about the patterns in her large classes during the first post-observation discussion:

Since there is a large number of students in my class, the teaching model can fall into single pattern. Because of the large number of students, activities such as group discussion did not have as much effect as I thought before. Over time we have decided to put this method aside for a while.

If group discussion cannot fit the practical situation of teaching and learning in a large class format, I had been thinking about possibilities or adjustments which could be made to increase the student talk time and create a “teacher-fronted, student-centered” classroom according to the syllabi of College English courses (Han, 2017, p. 4). I looked up some materials in the following weeks and found a chart called the learning pyramid (National Training Laboratories, 1954).

Mei and I discussed this chart (see Figure 10) during the third post-observation discussion. We looked at the chart together and I described the forms of learning activities through sharing my own experiences in learning:

This chart illustrates the forms of learning through showing a pyramid. From the top it has reading, hearing a lecture, to the bottom of coaching others… I remember when I went to college in Shanghai and studied in the US, our teachers always let the students to
teach part of the lesson. It might be a choice to consider dividing students into groups and letting them give presentations in front of the class.

![Figure 10. Chart of the Learning Pyramid.](image)

*Note.* Adapted from National Training Laboratories Institute for Applied Behavioral Science. Alexandria, VA. Copyright 1954 by the National Training Laboratories.

Mei listened carefully and shared her previous experience in conducting presentation activities in her classroom. She shared that she used to assign about a dozen students in a group
and let them teach an article in the textbook. However, each group could only get one or two paragraphs to present. Some students such as the group leader did a lot of work while others did not participate at all, and the presentation cost twice as much time as Mei’s usual teaching. However, Mei shared the advantages of this method that the presenters were very active and well-prepared, and a lot of students asked questions to the student presenters. Mei observed that the student to student communication seemed to be much more active and interactive during such classes.

Mei’s sharing brought up a lot of practical issues that need to be considered while having presentation activities in a large College English class. I found that Mei used to ask all students to present during two classes, so I asked Mei if it was possible to let each group choose the unit they would like to present and let one or two groups be responsible for each unit. Also, students could have the freedom to choose which group they would like to be in and which unit they would like to present. Before presenting, Mei could also help with designing a rubric to let students know the teacher’s grading standards and expectations. The rubric could mention important points such as time limit, interactive activities during the presentation, each presenter’s contribution, and voice projection. The time limit could help with addressing the issue that student presentations cost too much of the class time and influence the class schedule. For example, the teacher could remind the students when their time has run out and ask them to wrap up the presentation in five minutes.

The requirement of interactive activity could help with students’ involvement, attention, and participation in the class. But since the chairs and desk tables in the CERW classrooms were connected with each other in rows and could not be moved, it might be difficult to have space for all students to stand up and move around. The guideline related to each presenter’s contribution
could help students learn how to cooperate with each other and enhance team spirit. The mention of voice projection was to prevent a common situation, i.e. that a speaker’s voice is too low to be heard by other students, especially those who sit at the back. I also suggested Mei to pass her clip-on microphone to the student speaker so that students’ voices could be heard more clearly by others.

Mei listened carefully to my suggestions and added on her opinions at times. After a series of suggestions, Mei shared:

I realize a thing that it is best for the teacher to be an organizer… Next semester I will try what you said and assign them the presentation task at the beginning of the semester. The group can select to present the article, or even present the translation exercises on the textbook…

Mei’s goal setting to apply those suggestions in her classroom during the next semester was an important sign before trialing (Edge, 2002). I shared with Mei that at the beginning there must be a lot of maladaptation to this learning model since the students might be used to the traditional way of teacher-dominated classes. But through many adjustments and adaptation, students and Mei might gradually find the benefits of this model. It can also help Mei with freeing her from preparing and covering every detail of the lessons and focusing more on guiding students’ participation and engagement.

During the member checking at the beginning of the 2018 fall semester, Mei was excited to share with me that she had applied the method of having student presentations in her CERW courses. She had divided students into six groups and each group was responsible for a unit. Mei observed the changes of students that they started to preview the lessons before the class and
explained the article through their perspectives. The students could ask questions to the class, or the class could ask questions to the students in the group. Mei was happy that now all students in the class could participate in the lessons. The presentations of the students attracted the class’s attention and students were more engaged during class time. Mei’s role became the supporter who summarized and supplemented to each lesson. She shared that this way also freed her from teaching six or eight hours a day without any rest in between. The success of trialing encouraged Mei and deepened my shift from a doubting stance into a believing stance (Oprandy, 1999, p. 106). We were worried that students might not easily adapt to a student-centered classroom since they might be used to the traditional way of teaching; we questioned whether student presentations might waste too much of the class time and influence the course schedule; we also considered that students might not be able to cooperate with each other and contribute to the presentation. After the success of trialing, Mei and I believe that we are able to create a student-centered classroom through changes step by step. The collaboration also suggested new ways of changes which could provide possibilities for practice (Richardson, 1994). Mei shared the following words with me throughout the discussion:

Every year we have the foreign language teachers to give us lectures. I observed that they have a rich and variety of ways to organize the classroom activities… From our discussion, I realized that instilling knowledge to students will not work… If the teacher only teaches well without students’ participation, it will become useless… I thought those activities were wasting time, but now through this discussion, I realized that it is necessary. Students will learn something new every time.

Mei expressed that she had been taking notes every time after our discussion and took down the good suggestions to apply in the future. She also asked me to share the chart of the
learning pyramid with her. At the end of the last discussion, Mei expressed that those discussions were really helpful. She realized that pedagogy is not only about theories, but also could be closely connected to practice. Mei shared the following words with me at the end of the discussion:

Today I was just thinking, learning pedagogy is so important. When I was in school, I did not pay much attention to teaching methods. Some of the things you mentioned today, we have learned them before. But I did not pay much attention to them since they are so theoretical. However, today we combined the theory with practice. I feel that theory could guide practice, while practice could supplement the theory, they are interactive with each other.

The discussion helped Mei with increasing her awareness of the importance of pedagogy in influencing her learning. She even expressed the aspiration to continue her studies and get a doctoral degree in the field of education. The next part provides a summary of themes presented in this chapter.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the themes generated from the data analysis, which are student participation, affective factors, classroom management, and instructional strategies. First of all, Mei and I discussed several aspects of encouraging students to participate in her large College English classes which are group rewards, throwing a beach ball or fuzzy bear, eliciting, and providing feedback. Secondly, several affective factors were identified in influencing students’ College English learning in large classes, which are motivation, personality, and respect. Thirdly, classroom management aspects in Mei’s College English classes were illustrated. They include
clear routines, circulating in the classroom, student helpers, and communication with students. Lastly, instructional strategies were considered during my discussions with Mei, which are mediums, content areas, question types, selection of activities, and student-centered classrooms.

By using the Cooperative Development model, I also got some insights from the discussions. The process of the discussion does not have to strictly follow the steps of the CD model. The Speaker and the Understander in the Cooperative Development model could take turns to come up with topics he or she would like to discuss and lead the discussions. The Understander needs to provide understanding responses to the Speaker to make the Speaker feel well listened to. In the step of attending, it is important to capture the Speaker’s nonlinguistic communication in addition to what they say. This could also reflect the equal relationship in the CD model. The discussions need to be as descriptive as possible based on the data revealed by the observation field notes. For important points, the observer needs to consult the cooperating teacher before making the final conclusion to avoid any misinterpretation of the observations. The recording and verbatim transcripts of the discussions could assist in the analysis of the post-observation discussions. To prepare for the following week’s observation, the observer could ask the cooperating teacher if there are any specific points on which he or she would like to be observed. This could make the observer better prepared for the next discussion and make the discussion more effective. The asking of possible topics for the next post-observation discussion also enable the observer to review research or theories to give suggestions, offer choices, or relate what is observed and discussed to other research. The next chapter addresses the research questions, as well as provides implications of the findings and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 6: Answering of Research Questions, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter provides detailed answering of the four research questions as well as the implications of and recommendations from this case study. The data for this single instrumental case study were collected from document analysis, observations, and post-observation discussions. Document analysis included analyzing lesson plans, course syllabi, course textbooks, and slides of the participant teacher’s College English classes. A total of 21 observations, each lasting 100 minutes for a total of 35 hours of observations of Mei’s College English teaching, were conducted from the end of May until the end of June 2018. Four discussions for a total of 4 hours, including one pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions were conducted from the end of May until the beginning of July 2018. By applying the theoretical frameworks of the Cooperative Development model and a “collaborative conversation” approach, connections between the findings and the four research questions are presented in this chapter (Edge, 2002; Oprandy, 1999). The implications of the findings and recommendations for further research are also addressed.

Answering of Research Questions

This section provides a detailed answering of the overarching research questions and three sub-research questions for this study. Through the post-observation discussions, this study led to the participant teacher’s increased self-awareness of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and provided insights for Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes. This study also addressed several sub-research questions from the aspects of influence of a large class format on College English teaching, strategies which might be useful for College
English instructors teaching large classes, and findings from the post-observation discussions which might be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors.

**Increased self-awareness in pedagogy.** The four themes presented in Chapter 5 of the dissertation mainly addressed the overarching research question “In what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, particularly as it relates to her teaching of large classes, and what insights emerging from those discussions might be useful to Chinese teachers teaching large College English classes?” First of all, the post-observation discussions lead to the participant teacher’s increased self-awareness in finding effective ways to encourage student participation in her large College English classes. During the post-observation discussions, several ways were identified. They included group rewards, throwing a beach ball or fuzzy bear, eliciting students’ answers, and providing encouraging feedback to motivate students’ participation. The teacher could divide students into several groups and add participation points to each member in the group when one member correctly answered the questions. Mei had used this method before and reported that it had a pretty good effect. However, as the course came to the end of the semester she had given it up because of the busy course schedule. Through applying the steps of thematizing, goal setting, and trialing in the Cooperative Development model (Edge, 2002), I assisted Mei in recalling this method during our post-observation discussions and applying it during the rest of the classes. This strategy had a positive effect based on my observations. Group rewards could benefit students’ cooperation and sense of community to collaborate with each other in achieving a specific goal. Students in the large classes could also be encouraged by other group members and make contributions to the team.
The throwing of a beach ball or fuzzy bear could be used when no one would like to answer a question or when two or more students answered a question at the same time. During the discussion, I shared this strategy with Mei based on my previous experience of classroom observations in the U.S. For eliciting students’ answers to encourage participation, I observed Mei’s wait time and the way of eliciting student answers in her classes, then reported to her my observations based on my field notes and an observation form I created. The sharing of wait time from Rowe’s (1972) study with Mei deepened her awareness of leaving at least three seconds of wait time for students to think over the answers before taking the next action. I also shared with Mei my description of how she elicited students’ answers when the called-on student said “I don’t know” or kept silent. Based on my observation of Mei’s classes, the teacher could either simplify, refine, paraphrase, or translate the question to make it more understandable to the students. The description of Mei’s practices also increased her self-awareness of how successful pedagogy applied in her classes could help with solving the practical issue of getting students to participate more. During the discussion, Mei reported that she always encourages students’ participation by first repeating their answers and then correcting their mistakes by saying the answers in a correct way. Sometimes she would also let students critique each other’s mistakes, thus combining group participation points to stimulate their extrinsic motivation. I provided suggestions to Mei that maybe she could add language variety when providing feedback, showing enthusiasm in tones or emotions while praising, or acknowledging the students’ efforts in front of the class (Borich, 2011). Later I observed Mei intentionally incorporated those suggestions into her teaching. Based on the literature, the teacher could also diversify ways of rewarding students, including letting another student explain the reason why a response is
correct, allowing a student to help or tell others the process or procedures of correctly answering the questions, and asking classmates to show admiration for one another’s efforts (Borich, 2011).

Secondly, through the discussion and sharing of Mei’s practical experiences, several affective factors were identified to be essential in influencing the pedagogy of teaching College English in large classes. Those factors are motivation, personality, and respect. Mei shared the phenomenon of how some students learn English only for the tests or grades, in contrast with a student who volunteered to communicate with others in English during and out of classes. Based on Mei’s sharing, I talked about the theories of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in explaining this phenomenon. Teachers who teach large College English classes should pay attention to ways they can stimulate both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in encouraging students’ English learning. For example, incorporating authentic materials or general knowledge content such as music or movies from English speaking countries during the College English classes could greatly increase students’ intrinsic motivation in learning English. In addition, group rewards which are linked with each student’s participation grade could be used to stimulate students’ extrinsic motivation in learning English.

During the discussions, Mei identified personality as an important affective factor in influencing students’ English learning. In a large class, students who are extroverted and confident would get many more chances to speak than those who are quiet. For students who are introverts and lack confidence, they might prefer a safe space and not get too much attention from others in their large classes. Therefore, Mei would look over the name list before class and call on students who seldom speak to engage them and provide them a sense of presence. Mei’s strategies to deal with students with different personalities could be referenced by other teachers who teach College English in large classes. Meanwhile, Mei frequently mentioned the word
“respect” during the discussions when she showed respect to students through calling on every student’s name. Mei would also respect students through avoiding criticizing them in front of the class and being fair with respect to every student’s final grade.

Thirdly, during the post-observation discussions, Mei and I discussed ways of classroom management, including clear routines, circulating in the classroom, and communication with students. From my observations, I also identified student helpers as a way for Mei to manage the large class format. At the beginning of the class, when asked “Tell me about or describe this week’s lessons,” Mei provided a series of routines which were effective in large classes. The clear routines made student easy to understand and follow the instructions in a large class format. By drawing visual maps of Mei’s circulating in both her CERW and CEVAO classrooms (see Figures 8 and 9 in Chapter 5), I was able to describe her movements in the classrooms while Mei reflected on her circulation patterns. Through analyzing visual maps combined with Hall’s (1977) research, Mei became aware of the power of nonlinguistic communication in engaging the students and decided to walk more often to the back of her classrooms. Interestingly, I also gained awareness of how my presence in the classroom influenced the teacher’s behavior. The discussion of a teacher’s circulating in the classroom provides suggestions to Chinese teachers in large classes to often walk around in the classroom to engage all their students, even those at the back, through nonlinguistic communication. Moreover, Mei expressed her worries about the lack of communication with students because of the large class size and the generation gap. To counter this issue, Mei intentionally expanded her knowledge about students’ interests and spent a lot of time talking with students after class. Teachers who teach in large classes could expand their knowledge and combine common topics with the class content to engage their students.
They could also spend time talking with students after class to close the distance between them and understand individual students’ needs.

At last, several instructional strategies were discussed during the post-observation discussions. Those instructional strategies were analyzed through the following lenses: mediums used to communicate content, content areas, question types, selection of class activities, and the philosophy of student-centered classes. I described the mediums used to communicate content in Mei’s College English classes following Fanselow’s FOCUS (1987), which includes linguistic, non-linguistic, and paralinguistic mediums. Discussion of those mediums (see Table 5) increased Mei’s self-awareness in providing a variety of them to her instruction. The other aspect of FOCUS discussed in detail was content areas, which include procedure, life, and study (Fanselow, 1987). When Mei and I discussed those content areas, Mei identified life (general knowledge) as the one she should mention more in the classes to stimulate students’ interest in learning. General knowledge such as politics, history, and music of English-speaking countries could be incorporated into the class to enhance students’ understanding of those countries’ cultures. Meanwhile, the discussed points based from FOCUS can serve to remind College English teachers in China to incorporate a variety of mediums to communicate content and include more content areas to motivate students’ learning.

In order to address the issue that concerned Mei about the effectiveness of her questions, I observed Mei’s two CERW courses by using a form with six types of questions (see Tables 5 and 6). Based on that observation form and my sharing of Bloom’s taxonomy, Mei reflected on reasons for her different instruction in the two CERW classes and decided to look over the progress of the course before teaching the lesson the next time. The discussion about higher
order questions also enabled Mei to decide to think over her questions before class to make them what she considered more effective and meaningful.

In addition, Mei shared her worry about movie watching during the classes taking too much time and, therefore, not being as effective as Mei thought. Through thematizing about the relationship of online learning with movie watching, a possible solution came out, i.e. having students watch a movie after class and then checking oral expressions and pronunciation during class time. From the discussion, it can be recognized that the selection of class activities needs to consider the time allotted for classes and the curricular demands, as well as guiding students to take after class time to self-explore tasks by themselves. Most importantly, Mei expressed a paradigm shift through discussing possible activities to create a student-centered classroom. The awareness mentioned by Mei to be an organizer in the classroom is in accordance with the College English course syllabi to create a “teacher-fronted, student-centered” classroom (Han, 2017, p. 4). This can be a reminder for teachers who teach College English in large classes to be aware of the student-centered role they can facilitate in their classrooms. The next part provides a detailed answer of the second research question.

**Influence of a large class format on College English teaching.** Through a series of data analysis, the findings of this study also answered the first sub-research question “In what ways does a large class format influence the teaching of College English courses?”. Overall, the participant teacher Mei believed that there were more disadvantages than advantages to teaching College English courses in a large class format. This was in accordance with the literature that teachers in general have negative attitudes towards large class teaching (Devi, 2016; Hayes, 1997; LoCastro, 1989; Shehu & Tafida, 2016; West, 1960). There were clearly observable behaviors in Mei’s large classes that influenced her teaching. From my observation, one
difficultly was the teacher’s and student speakers’ voices being heard by others in the classroom. The words on the blackboard and power point slides were hard for students at the back of the classroom to see. The rising temperature and suffocating air during the summer might also have influenced the emotions of the teacher and the students. Moreover, in some large classrooms the chairs and seats could not be moved. The limited classroom space made it difficult for the teacher to incorporate activities such as group discussions in the classes. This may make it easy for teachers in large classrooms to fall into a single method of instruction with a lack of instructional variety to meet each student’s needs. The single method of instruction in large classrooms also seemed to make students less engaged and lessons less effective which further influenced the progress of the course.

During the post-observation discussions, the participant teacher Mei reported several aspects of large classes influencing the teaching of College English courses: student participation, classroom management, instructional activities, and lack of individual attention. In a large class format, it was difficult for the teacher to get every student to participate in the class. This finding was consistent with the literature that students in large classes often lack individual support to students who need help (LoCastro, 1989). The lack of student participation might cause some students to be distracted from the class and have behavioral issues such as playing on their phones or chatting with other students.

Meanwhile, there were many outside factors which influence the teaching of College English courses in a large class format, such as the teacher’s heavy workload, the requirements of the course schedule, and the lack of enough resources to support large class instruction. The last phenomenon was in accordance with Ur’s (1996) qualitative definition of large classes that the available resources cannot support the number of students in the classroom. Some large
classrooms did not have the remote control for the computer, so the teacher needed to stand in the front of the classroom to adjust the computer. This led to the consequence that teachers often could not monitor or engage students in the back of the classroom. In addition, although the language labs had headphones and microphones to make the students in the large classes communicate better, the labs were so limited in number that they could only be used for the CEVAO classes each semester. Most of the time, students needed to take the College English classes in the usual classrooms when around 100 students took the class together.

The requirements of the course schedules on the College English syllabi also challenged teachers who teach in large classes. In order to keep up with the course schedule and finish the required teaching tasks on time, the teacher needed to cover a large amount of material in her limited class time. Such limited time make it hard to incorporate activities that need a lot of time to engage students. This caused the classroom teacher to use direct instruction, and only a limited number of students could be called on to speak English during the class. With the large number of students, the chances for each student to speak became limited.

Students’ personalities and motivations also influenced the effect of teaching in a large College English classroom. Students who were active and extroverted would have many more chances to speak than students who were introverted or less confident. This led to the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 2009), which was first applied in the educational field to explain the situation of students who have better reading ability getting better chances of cognitive development, whereas students who are left behind in reading ability become further behind in academics after grade three. The Matthew effect can be observed in a large class when the teacher’s attention and chances to speak were clustered among students who sat in the front rows or those who actively volunteered to participate during the class, with a lack of individual attention to each
student in the classroom. In addition, some students studied College English only for the extrinsic motivation of passing the final test, for CET-4 or CET-6, or the postgraduate entrance exam, thus lacking motivation during class to practice their oral English. This was in accordance with the literature on students’ lack of motivation for learning oral English and their unwillingness to speak English as common problems in Chinese College English classes (Chen & Goh, 2011).

Considering that teachers who teach College English in a large class format often needed to teach more than one large classroom, sometimes they might have difficulty remembering the names of hundreds of students. This lack of individual attention might distance the teacher and student. In addition, students might be nervous or anxious because of the large class size, and, therefore, be unwilling to voluntarily speak.

Teachers who teach in large classrooms also often have the problem of a heavy work load, teaching many large classes every week. For example, Mei taught a total of 317 students from four majors for a total of 16 hours every week in the spring semester of 2018, without counting the time for lesson planning, grading assignment, faculty meetings, and other responsibilities. The large class size might cause the teacher’s fatigue, especially large class teaching at the end of a busy day. This might cause teachers to react differently in different classrooms because of the energy load, time of the day, and students’ reactions.

Lastly, teachers who taught in a large College English class also lacked enough after class time to communicate with each student. Considering the large number of students Mei taught in the spring semester of 2018, it was difficult for the teacher to grade each student’s quizzes and provide detailed feedback every week. For oral homework such as role play, Mei could only allow a limited number of students to present during class time. The lack of role play time
during the class was in accordance with the literature showing that students often lack practice time in a large class format (West, 1960). The following part addresses the third research question.

**Strategies for teaching large classes.** Through the observations and post-observation discussions, this study addressed the second sub-research question “What are some strategies revealed in the observations and post-observation discussions that may be useful for instructors teaching College English in large classes?” In order to adapt to the practical situation of teaching College English courses in a large class format, many strategies were identified during the observations and post-observation discussions to address this issue. To address some of the environmental factors influencing instruction in a large class format, the teacher could use a carry-on voice projector whenever he or she moves around in the classroom. The words on the power point or blackboard need to be big enough and the color needs to be reader-friendly so that students sitting at the back could also clearly recognize them. The school also needs to provide resources such as a remote control for the computer to enable the teacher to walk around in the classroom. If possible, language labs should be used for large College English classes to benefit students’ English learning. The school should also support teachers who teach College English in large classes without clustering too many lessons in a day.

In order to let students participate more during classes, Mei said that she would try her best to remember each student’s name and call on students by their names to show them respect. During the CEVAO course, Mei had a seating chart which was used to record each student’s name and their participation grades. For introverts who did not volunteer to speak, Mei would go over the name list before the class and at times call on students who seldom speak.
During the post-observation discussions, I shared the strategy that the teacher could throw a fuzzy bear or beach ball to attract students’ attention. The fuzzy bear or beach ball could be used to randomly pick on students to answer questions or let students take turns when two or more students want to answer at the same time. In addition, the teacher could divide students into several groups based on their seats. If a student in the group correctly answered the question, the group would get participation grade rewards. The teacher could elicit students through giving them at least three seconds of wait time to think about the answers after asking questions. If no one would like to answer the question, the teacher could then use encouraging words such as “Somebody have a try?” or “Just give a shot?” If the called-on student kept silent or did not know the answer, the teacher could either simplify or refine the question to make it more understandable to the students.

To encourage students to participate, teachers need to provide non-critical feedback to avoid destroying students’ learning initiative. The teacher could repeat the students’ answer again to make it clearly heard by others in the large class, then correct the mistakes through saying the answers correctly. In addition, the teacher could add variety to the way of providing feedback such as having students point out each other’s mistakes and giving them participation grades as group rewards. While providing feedback, the teacher can also pay attention to the variety of language he or she uses, demonstrate enthusiasm in their tones or emotions, and acknowledge the students’ efforts (Borich, 2011). Some other types of rewards include letting another student explain the reason why a response is correct, allowing students to help or tell others the process or procedures of correctly answering the questions, and ask classmates to show admiration for one another’s efforts (Borich, 2011).
While teaching in a large class, teachers need to identify students’ learning motivations and personalities to accommodate to their individual needs. The teacher could incorporate a variety of mediums to communicate class content, thus making the content more attractive and clearer. General knowledge related to English-speaking countries’ cultures, politics, or histories could be incorporated into lessons. The teacher could also use authentic materials such as English movies and songs to cultivate students’ intrinsic motivation for learning English. In large classes, the teacher needs to be aware of the different personalities influencing the behavior of the students. For students who are extroverts and active in class, the teacher could give rewards such as participation grades to keep their initiative. For students who are introverts or prefer safe spaces to sit at the back of the classroom, the teacher could call on them at times to give them a sense of presence and belonging. Lastly, it was important for Mei to show respect to the students whatever the students’ grades were in the College English course. When students had behavior issues, it was better to point it out in an indirect way without shaming the students in front of a large number of classmates. Also, to teach in a large class, the teacher needed to be respectful of the school rules and be just in grading students’ daily performance and final tests.

Concerning classroom management in a large class, the teacher could set up a series of routines and procedures to make students easy to understand and follow. The teacher could often circulate or sometimes stand at the back of the classroom to teach. To close the distance between teacher and students in the large class, the teacher could intentionally combine students’ interests with the class content. The teacher should also talk after class with students who seldom speak to relieve their nervousness and get to know more about them and their interests. To involve students in large classes and share the teacher’s heavy workload, students could be helpers to
assist with sending out assignments, calling the attendance, counting group participation grades, and so on.

For instructional strategies, computer-assisted learning could be used in the CEVAO course to help with students’ listening and speaking skills. Teachers in large classes could recommend English learning websites, emails, and social software, including QQ groups, WeChat official accounts, and English blogs to share English learning materials with the students. Considering the limited class time and requirements from the course schedule, the teacher could guide students through arranging assignments to let students prepare and practice English after class. In order to engage students during class time and develop their critical thinking ability, higher order questions which involve analysis, synthesis, and evaluation could be asked to make discussions more meaningful and varied. The teacher should also think over the questions before class and be prepared about the course schedule for each different large class. The planning of the course schedule should be more realistic and flexible, leaving the time and space to mobilize students’ initiative for participation.

In order to create a “teacher-fronted, student-centered” classroom based on the College English course syllabi (Han, 2017, p. 4), student-centered activities such as English presentations, role plays, debates, and speeches could be used to increase student talk time. A rubric could be designed and provided to students before conducting the activities to show the teacher’s expectations. The rubric could include important points such as a time limit, inclusion of interactive activities during presentations, each presenter’s contribution, and voice projection.

At the end of the last post-observation discussion, Mei shared her belief that if a teacher has the determination and concentrated attention to think carefully about practical issues encountered during teaching, he or she could achieve the goal of being an excellent teacher.
When the teacher puts a lot of effort on researching how to guide students’ participation, the students could also be affected and actively interact with the teacher. The next part discusses answers to the last research question.

**Findings for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors.** This study also provided answers to the last research question “What findings from the post-observation discussions could be useful for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors?” In this study, the Cooperative Development model was used for Mei and me to work over a period of time and discuss the issue of teaching College English in a large class format in China. Although the CD model requires the Understander to set aside his or her own opinions while the Speaker brings up an issue to talk about (Edge, 2006b), the Understander and the Speaker could take turns to have collaborative conversations to achieve a specific purpose. In this study, the first and second post-observation discussions were directed by Mei to discuss issues she wanted to talk about. In the third post-observation discussion, I brought up specific issues that Mei wished to discuss based on the recording of the second post-observation discussion. Such turn taking in terms of the topics to be discussed could benefit in a more equal relationship in the discussions, helping both parties to work together towards the intended purpose.

From the procedural aspect, a pre-observation discussion prior to the first observation was important for the collaborating teacher, in this case the researcher, to have a knowledge of the context such as the classroom location, student backgrounds, the teacher’s background, and objectives of the lessons to better prepare me for the observations. At the beginning of the post-observation discussion, the colleagues could set up a scheduled agreed upon time to finish the discussion. If that time was passed, the collaborating teacher or instructional supervisor could ask for the teacher’s permission to continue the conversation. It was important to be respectful
of the teacher’s time, which is in accordance with the principle of respect in the Cooperative Development model (Edge, 2002). The location of the discussion was preferred to be in a quiet place to avoid distractions. During the discussions, signal words or sentences such as “Thank you so much for your sharing of this topic. Now I think maybe it is time to move forward to the next topic” or “I have been saying a lot about this topic, I am curious about what’s your opinion about this issue” could be used to structure the discussion and guide its progress for turn-taking or moving forward to the next topic.

To prepare for the next discussion in advance, the colleagues could discuss possible topics at the end of the first discussion and review research or resources to support the next discussion. The preparation for the discussion of possible topics ahead of time could make the follow-up observations more specific and effective. Examples of this were when I asked Mei the topics she would like to discuss during the next post-observation discussion or about issues related to large class teaching she would like me to pay attention to during the following week’s classroom observations. When Mei mentioned her puzzlement about how to make the questions more effective, I mentioned some educational literature by sharing with her the six levels of questions from Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1984). In addition, new issues could always come up after the step of trialing has been implemented. Therefore, it was important for both the Understander and the Speaker to realize that the CD model is a cyclical process with continuous discovering of new issues.

Mei’s roles in the post-observation discussions included these: shared strategies used by herself and her colleagues to teach College English in a large class format; expressed the issues or challenges she would like to discuss; provided understanding responses to my thoughts; reflected on her own practices; explained her rationales or reasons behind my observation
descriptions; and answered my post-observation discussion questions in the protocol. My roles in the post-observation discussions included the following: provided understanding responses to Mei’s thoughts; described my observations based on the field notes and observation forms; shared materials related to the discussed research and theories; gave suggestions when needed or asked for; asked questions in the post-observation discussion protocol; talked about my experiences as a doctoral student and graduate assistant in the U.S.; recorded the post-observation discussions; and set up the time and location for the next discussion. A table is used to represent the roles of the participant teacher Mei and myself in this study (see Table 8).

For collaborating teachers, it was important to understand that there is no pressure to find solutions to the issues every time during discussions. At times, simply sharing among colleagues could relieve the nervousness, anxiety, or pressure on the teacher and achieve the principle of empathy in the Cooperative Development model (Edge, 2002). It was important for the collaborating teachers in this study to support each other through positive conversations to acknowledge practices, relieve concerns, and enhance the participant teacher’s confidence. Colleagues could use the Cooperative Development model to share with each other issues they encounter which might be similar, thus enhancing the exchange of ideas. This finding was in accordance with the literature that the Cooperative Development model could be used to enhance collegiality building between or among colleagues (Edge & Attia, 2014).
Table 8. Roles of the Participant Teacher and the Researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mei’s Roles</th>
<th>My Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared strategies used by herself and her colleagues to teach College English in a large class format</td>
<td>Shared materials related to the discussed research and theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressed the issues or challenges she would like to discuss</td>
<td>Talked about my experiences as a doctoral student and graduate assistant in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided understanding responses to my thoughts</td>
<td>Provided understanding responses to Mei’s thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflected on her own practices</td>
<td>Gave suggestions when needed or asked for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explained her rationales or reasons behind my observation descriptions</td>
<td>Described my observations based on the field notes and observation forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered my post-observation discussion protocol questions</td>
<td>Asked questions in the post-observation discussion protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up the time and location for the next discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recorded the post-observation discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instructional supervisors, this study revealed that it was important to give the teacher enough time and space to reflect on her practice. I feel instructional supervisors should never cut into the teacher’s speech and be careful to let him or her finish sentences. During the discussions, the description of the observations from the supervisor should be as detailed as possible, making optimal use of field notes and observation forms. Important findings from the observations should be described to the teacher to probe for further explanations. The reason was that there might be stories behind the classroom observations which are difficult to understand merely from the observations. In order to ensure the accurate and deep understanding of the classroom behavior, it was essential for the supervisor to elaborate on the observed points and ask for the teacher’s opinions before finally reporting on the findings.
In this study, because of the difference between Mei’s background in English Literature and Linguistics and my background in Curriculum and Instruction, there were always times when we looked at the same issue through different perspectives. Therefore, if possible, interdisciplinary conversations could be conducted among colleagues to inspire the spark of thoughts across disciplines. In addition, because of Mei’s years of experiences in teaching College English in China and my background as a doctoral student studying abroad in the U.S., we could always make comparisons and contrasts among the different practices between Chinese education and American education. This suggested that conversations between advanced practitioners and researchers, or dialogues among local English teachers in China and returned Chinese students from study abroad programs could greatly supplement the theories and practices of each other. There were several times when Mei experienced a paradigm shift through learning about the research I mentioned, or when I was surprised by how the theory could not connect with the context of large classes in China. Our discussions once again proved that theory and practice cannot be separated and must be interdependent on each other.

During the discussions, Mei not only shared her own strategies and experiences but also incorporated excellent practices from other teachers. Those strategies from other teachers enriched the discussions and enabled both colleagues to be aware of other possible practices. The discussions and the success of follow-up practices made the participant teacher and I believe that changes are possible through the adjustment of practice step by step. The success of the trialing also proved that we could take a believing stance instead of a doubting stance when encountering new practices or possibilities of changes. The next part provides a detailed illustration of the implications for this study.

**Implications of the Findings**
Through the data analysis, which generated four themes, and in the process of addressing the research questions, this study provided several implications that may be useful to several audiences. In this section, implications of the findings are presented to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who teach large classes, teacher trainers who prepare such teachers in teacher education programs, and supervisors who work with such teachers on their professional development.

**EFL teachers who teach large classes.** This study provides many implications to EFL teachers who teach large classes. From the aspect of encouraging student participation, the teacher could divide students into several groups and add participation points to each member in the group when one group member correctly answers the question. The teacher could also throw an object such as a beach ball or fuzzy bear to let students take turns when two or more students want to answer the question together; or the teacher can choose a student to speak by throwing such an object when no one answers the question. After asking a question, the teacher could wait for at least three seconds to give time for students’ thinking. If no one answers the question in the class, the teacher could use a variety of questions or probes to encourage students, such as “Any volunteers?” “Don’t be so shy,” “Somebody have a try?” or “Just give you a shot.” When the called-on student does not know the answer or keeps silent, the teacher could elicit a response from the student through simplifying or refining the question to make it more understandable. After the student answers a question, the teacher could provide encouraging and non-critical feedback by first repeating the student’s answer, then correcting the mistakes by saying the correct answers.

In order to engage students’ listening carefully to fellow students’ answers, the teacher could also divide students into several groups and let students in the group point out other group
members’ mistakes and adding participation rewards. The teacher could also add language
variety while praising students, showing enthusiasm in tones or emotions while praising, or
acknowledging the students’ efforts in front of the class (Borich, 2011). Some other types of
rewards include letting another student explain the reason why a response is correct, allowing
students to help or tell others the process or procedures of correctly answering the questions, and
asking classmates to show admiration for one another’s effort (Borich, 2011).

From the aspect of affective factors, EFL teachers who teach large classes need to be
aware of the different types of motivation and stimulate students’ English learning through both
intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The differences in students’ personalities also reminds
teachers to pay more attention to students who are introverts or sit at the back of large classes.
The teacher could look over the name list prior to the lesson and call on students who seldom
answer questions or sit at the back during the class to give them some attention. However, the
teacher should also leave safe spaces for students to keep them from being overly anxious. The
teacher should remember the name of each student in the large classes to show them respect. If
possible, a seating chart could be used to look up students’ names when the seats are fixed in a
large classroom. In addition to respecting the students, the teacher should also be respectful of
the school rules and be just when grading students’ daily performance and final tests.

From the aspect of classroom management, the teacher could set up a series of routines to
make it easy for students in large classes to understand and follow what is expected of them.
Clear attention getting expressions such as “How are you?” “Can you hear me?” “Take a break,”
“Ok. Now let’s come back,” and “So much for today’s lesson” could establish clear routines for
students to understand the class rules and expectations from the teacher. In order to let the
voices be heard by students in every corner of the classroom, the teacher could use a carry-on
voice projector wherever she moves in the classroom. If possible, the teacher could circulate in
the classroom and engage the students sitting at the back through nonlinguistic communication.
The font on power point slides need to be big enough so that students at the back could see it. In
addition, the teachers should communicate with students as much as possible after class to close
the distance between them and their students. During class, the teacher could incorporate
students’ interests into the lesson content to attract their attention. After class, the teacher should
also expand their general knowledge in the fields of history, geography, literature, and many
other aspects. The teacher could also assign some routine tasks to students to reduce the heavy
work load and enhance students’ abilities in taking responsibility, developing leadership skills,
and engaging the class. Mei believes that as long as the teacher is attentive while teaching and
able to reflect after class about how to guide the students, the students would also understand the
teacher’s effort and have positive interactions with the teacher.

Lastly, regarding instructional strategies, the teacher should incorporate a variety of
mediums to communicate content during the instruction, including linguistic, non-linguistic, and
paralinguistic mediums. If possible, computer-assisted learning should be applied to increase the
variety of language input and inspire students’ interest, motivation, and engagement for learning
English in a large class format. Moreover, the teacher should also apply other textbooks, email,
social media (such as QQ group or WeChat official accounts), English blogs, online learning
systems, and English learning websites to supplement students’ learning outside of their classes.
The teacher should look over the progress of the course for each large class and be prepared to
ask some higher order questions to make the discussions more meaningful and varied. The
selection of class activities needs to find a balance between the time allotted for classes and the
curricular demands. The teacher could assign some tasks after class and use the class time for
students to share or present their responses to the tasks. In order to create a student-centered classroom, activities such as student presentations could be used during class to increase the students’ talk time. A rubric could be provided to students before the class to address important points such as time limits, use of interactive activities during their presentations, equitable contributions by each presenter, and voice projection.

Following the themes of student engagement, classroom management, instructional strategies, and affective factors, this study provides some implications to EFL teachers who teach large classes. The next section introduces implications for teacher trainers who prepare such teachers in teacher education programs.

**Trainers in teacher education programs.** Considering the importance of teacher education programs in preparing EFL teachers, this study provides several implications to teacher trainers who prepare EFL teachers who will teach in large classes. Shulman (1987) classifies teacher knowledge into seven domains, which are:

a) content knowledge, b) general pedagogical knowledge, c) curriculum knowledge, d) pedagogical content knowledge, e) knowledge of learners and their characteristics, f) knowledge of educational contexts, g) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical backgrounds. (Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 477)

Based on the literature, most College English teachers in China are English major graduates and receive little or no pre-service training on pedagogy, which makes them feel unprepared for dealing with practical problems in teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013). During the discussions, Mei also reported a lack of pedagogical knowledge to guide her practice. Pre-service teacher education programs in China should not only prepare EFL teachers with the
content knowledge of English, but also develop courses related to general pedagogical knowledge such as instructional strategies, to knowledge of learners and their characteristics such as educational psychology, and to educational philosophies and history.

In order to balance the relationship between theory and practice, knowledge of educational contexts must be addressed in pre-service teacher training courses to counter issues teachers will face when teaching large classes. The teacher education program should develop courses such as fieldwork to let students observe teachers who teach in such classes. After observing a cooperating teacher’s classroom, a teacher trainee could ideally have post-observation discussions with the cooperating teacher by using a collaborative conversation approach such as the Cooperative Development model. To increase students’ self-awareness in reflection, they could write reports or reflective journals to grapple with issues related to teaching in a large class format. If possible, students in the teacher education program could also teach trial lessons in real large class contexts and have teacher trainers or classroom teachers observe them. After such experiences, the teacher trainers or classroom teachers could have post-observation discussions with the student teachers. In addition, the teacher education program could invite guest speakers from study abroad educational programs or advanced practitioners in the field of education to share experiences or have one-on-one collaborative conversations with students in the pre-service teacher education program. Discussions among students who are going to teach different subjects in the future could also stimulate new thoughts and instructional strategies across the disciplines.

Teacher trainers who prepare EFL teachers in in-service teacher education programs could observe the teachers’ teaching and then have post-observation discussions following the Cooperative Development model or another collaborative conversational approach. It is
important to be aware that the post-observation discussion does not have to lead towards specific results. Sometimes simply sharing and listening could relieve the teacher’s anxiety and enhance their confidence. The teacher trainers could guide group post-observation discussions or have collaborative conversations for teachers in the same department. The teacher trainers should also combine theories and research findings with practice to be specific about the teachers’ contextualized concerns.

**Instructional supervisors.** This study also provides some implications for supervisors who work with EFL teachers in large classes. During post-observation discussions, the instructional supervisor and the teacher could take turns to be the Understander and the Speaker as in the Cooperative Development model. Such turn-taking could benefit in promoting a more equitable relationship in the discussions and in exploring topics that both parts are interested in. The supervisor should avoid being judgmental about the classroom teacher’s pedagogy and provide detailed descriptions based on observation field notes and pedagogically focused observation forms. The supervisor should give the teacher enough space and time to reflect on their practices and provide understanding responses. Being a classroom visitor for a week, a month, or even a year still could not fully capture the classroom instructor’s thoughts, ideas, and classroom practices. Therefore, the supervisor cannot prescribe what the classroom instructor should or should not do. The supervisor could only give suggestions, provide choices, or reference other research or practices. If the teacher is interested in the mentioned research or materials, the supervisor could share the resources with the teacher to increase his or her awareness in self-exploring this issue. If possible, the supervisor could give suggestions or offer choices connecting research findings and personal experiences without prescribing what the teacher should do.
In order to better understand an EFL teacher’s practice, the supervisor could observe the same lesson taught by the same teacher in different large classes to make comparisons and contrasts regarding different pedagogical foci. For example, the supervisor could observe question types during the first observation of the lesson, and focus on the mediums used to communicate content for the second observation of the same lesson. In addition, the supervisor could compare and contrast students’ reactions in different classes. It is important for the supervisor to understand that no matter the length of observations, what the supervisor could capture was only part of the teacher’s days, weeks, or months of teaching. Therefore, for important findings generated from observations, a supervisor needs to discuss the important points with those they observe during the post-observation discussions before making any conclusions. There are always stories behind the classroom behavior that the supervisor might not be able to understand which reflects the necessity of the post-observation discussions. Post-observation discussions among teachers of different subjects, between researchers and advanced practitioners, or local teachers with study abroad program teachers can be very helpful to inspire new sparks of thoughts. Also, both supervisor and teachers need to understand that the Cooperative Development model, if utilized, is a process with continuous discovery of new issues. Therefore, they need to realize that changes are possible through step by step practice.

From this study, it can be seen that the Cooperative Development model is effective in gaining the teacher’s awareness in classroom teaching, especially in addressing concerns or difficulties based on their practical contexts. The Cooperative Development model makes teachers feel they are being well-listened to and feel comfortable talking about their teaching. By creating a non-judgmental environment, teachers and supervisors could be relaxed and frank in sharing their concerns. The sincerity and honesty in sharing issues of interest to the teacher and
supervisor are vital in leading to a productive discussion. The findings of this study provide implications for supervisors and teachers, or discussions between teachers, to discuss a broad range of topics related to their specific contexts. It is important for teachers to work together in discovering teaching methods or instructional strategies to address their issues of concern. The next part presents recommendations for further research.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

What follows are several recommendations for further research. First of all, this study only explored a single teacher’s College English teaching in a large class format. The single case was recruited through convenience sampling. If possible, multiple cases should be explored to study how the Cooperative Development model could influence the teaching of College English in large classes. It would be preferable that the cases be selected from purposeful sampling or criterion sampling to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Secondly, three post-observation discussions for a total of four hours were conducted in this study. Future researchers should conduct more post-observation discussions for longer periods of time to investigate more findings related to this issue. A longer, more in-depth investigation would likely yield more trustworthy results (Maxwell, 2013).

Third, in this study observations of the participant teacher Mei’s College English classes were recorded by taking field notes instead of video-recording or audio recording of the classes. Recordings could provide more clear evidence to support the discussion points. Further research should study the teacher’s classes through video-recording or audio recording to get a more comprehensive perspective on the classroom observations.

Fourth, the Cooperative Development model or another collaborative conversational approach could be used to explore other issues related to teaching English as a foreign language,
such as exploring the issue of how to improve students’ listening and speaking skills. The exploration of other issues might provide suggestions for improving students’ language skills. It can also provide implications for how the Cooperative Development model could be used to address other issues in College English teaching.

Fifth, further research could explore how the students’ major or gender influence the teaching of College English in a large class format. In this study, the participant teacher Mei reported that students who major in Liberal Arts had much better interaction with her than students who major in Engineering Management. In addition, when a large class had more girls, the classroom discipline seemed easier to manage than when a large class had more boys. If possible, a comparison study should be conducted to explore in what ways do students’ majors or gender influence the teaching of College English in large classes. Possible findings and implications could, for example, provide reference for teachers to adjust their teaching to accommodate to students’ needs from different majors.

Sixth, further research could also explore how the Cooperative Development model or another collaborative conversational approach could be applied to advanced practitioners and researchers, or local EFL teachers and teachers from study abroad programs. A multiple-case study could be conducted to explore how teachers with different years of experience and theoretical backgrounds could work with each other to explore issues related to teaching. A multiple-case study could also be conducted to explore how teachers from study abroad programs might have different perspectives from local EFL teachers.

Lastly, the Cooperative Development model or another collaborative conversational approach could be used to explore the teaching of other subjects such as Chinese, Math, and
Science. The exploring of issues among teachers from different subjects could benefit the generalization of this professional development model.

**Summary**

In order to meet the growing demand for English proficient talents, College English has been a required course in Chinese universities and colleges for non-English major undergraduate students since the early 1980s (Chen & Goh, 2011; Gao, 2013; Li, 2009; Ruan & Jacob, 2009; Xu, 2001; Yan & Ding, 2013). However, challenges exist in College English instruction from contextual constraints, teacher factors, and student factors (Chen & Goh, 2011). Studies have identified contextual constraints as limitations in influencing the teaching of College English in China, such as large class sizes (Chen & Goh, 2011; Lamie, 2006). Given the fact that the large class phenomenon cannot be eliminated within a reasonable amount of time, it is important for teachers to develop effective strategies to teach English in large classes (Hayes, 1997). Hayes (1997) explored an in-service training program in Thailand and found that a crucial aspect of any training course is for teachers to exchange ideas and share their experiences to solve the problem of teaching English in large classes. However, gaps exist about how to structure the training or professional development to cater to the teachers’ needs and solve this practical problem. The purpose of this study was to understand in what ways post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world.

This qualitative study employed a single instrumental case study to explore the research questions. I have selected one Chinese College English instructor who currently teaches large classes in a four-year public college in northern China. The participant was selected through
convenience sampling. This study incorporated triangulation of the research methods: document analysis, observations, and discussions. Regarding document analysis, on the one hand public and electronic documents were reviewed by looking at the introduction from the official website of the college where the research was conducted to collect information related to the research site. On the other hand, with the participant teacher’s permission, other documents were collected from her which included course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, and slides used during the classes. A total of 21 observations, each lasting 100 minutes for a total of 35 hours of observations of Mei’s College English teaching were conducted from the end of May until the end of June 2018. Four discussions for a total of 4 hours including one pre-observation discussion and three post-observation discussions were conducted from the end of May until the beginning of July 2018. One more post-observation discussion for the purpose of member checking was conducted after writing Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 to avoid any misinterpretation of the information. The discussions were conducted mainly in Chinese, and English was used if needed. The discussions followed the theoretical frameworks of the Cooperative Development model and a collaborative conversation approach.

The discussions were transcribed verbatim and margin notes were taken to record key concepts or ideas that occurred to me during the process (Creswell, 2013). Categorical aggregation was used to reduce the key concepts to four themes in the end (Creswell, 2013). Those themes were student participation, affective factors, classroom management, and instructional strategies. First of all, in order to encourage students’ participation in a large class format, methods such as group rewards, throwing of a beach ball or fuzzy bear, eliciting student answers, and providing feedback in various ways were discussed during the post-observation discussions. Secondly, three affective factors were identified as influencing students’ College
English learning in large classes. They were motivation, personality, and respect. Thirdly, the following classroom management strategies were discussed in the post-observation discussions: clear routines, circulating in the classroom, using student helpers, and communication with students. Lastly, several aspects related to instructional strategies were considered during my discussions with Mei, which were mediums, content areas, question types, selection of activities, and student-centered classes.

The findings of this study also provided answers to the overarching research questions and three sub-research questions from the aspects of increased self-awareness in pedagogy, influence of a large class format on College English teaching, strategies for teaching large classes, and findings for collaborating teachers and instructional supervisors. Implications of the findings were provided for three audiences: EFL teachers who teach large classes, teacher trainers who prepare such teachers in teacher education programs, and supervisors who work with such teachers on their professional development. Finally, this study also provided seven recommendations for further research in this area.
References


doi 10.1007/s10755-007-9061-9


doi: 10.1080/13674580500480016


doi:10.5172/ijpl.5.1.25


Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.


https://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/worldpopgraph.php


### APPENDIX A: TIMELINE FOR THE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify target participant</td>
<td>August 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review literature</td>
<td>September – November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize committee membership</td>
<td>November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Chapter 2</td>
<td>October – December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Chapter 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>December 2017 – February 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal defense</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit UOP IRB request</td>
<td>March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>May – July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>May – June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>May – July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription of discussion recordings</td>
<td>May – July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>June – July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write Chapter 4, 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>July – September 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checking</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defend dissertation</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Ms. Mei (pseudonym),

It is my great honor and pleasure to get to know you through Prof. Gao (pseudonym). My name is Fan Yang and I am a doctoral student at University of the Pacific in the US. I am planning on conducting a research study for my doctoral dissertation about the topic of cooperative development in exploring teaching College English in a large class format in China. I would like to recruit an instructor whose age is above 18 years old and has at least three years’ experience in teaching College English in a large class format. Prof. Gao kindly suggested you as a possible participant for this study because of your rich experience in teaching College English in large classes. Also, Prof. Gao mentioned that you are teaching College English in a large class format in the spring semester and will teach this course again in the fall semester of 2018. I feel your expertise and teaching context would be a great fit for this study; therefore, I would like to ask whether you are interested in being a participant for this study.

The study will include document analysis, one 30-minute pre-observation discussion, classroom observations by myself of your College English courses for one month, and four post-observation discussions each lasting 45-minutes. With your permission, document analysis will be conducted through analyzing documents that may include your course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, curricula, descriptions of student assignments, and other printed materials. The post-observation discussions are scheduled for 45 minutes and could be extended beyond that time limit if you agree to do so. It will take you a total of 3.5 hours to participate in five discussions which include one pre-observation discussion and four post-observation discussions of this study. Approximately 60 hours of 36 observations of your College English courses, each
lasting about 100 minutes, will be conducted in this study. At last, I will invite you to read and check the initial findings and results of this study to avoid any misrepresentations or misunderstandings. It will take you about 3 hours to read the results of this study. This study is planned to be conducted from the end of May 2018 until the end of June 2018. If it is agreeable to you, the timeline might be extended beyond the one month if there are not enough data to sufficiently answer the research questions after four post-observation discussions. The issues during the discussions will be based on the classroom observations and topics you would like to explore or talk about. If you are considering about participating in this study or having any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me through my email 641434168@qq.com at any time. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you so much for your time! Have a nice day.

Sincerely,

Fan Yang
研究参与者招募书

尊敬的梅老师，

非常荣幸和高兴通过高教授（笔名）认识您。我的名字叫杨帆，是美国太平洋大学的一名在读博士生。我计划为博士论文开展一项研究，课题为利用教师协同发展探索中国大学英语大班化授课。我希望找到一位年龄在 18 周岁以上，并有着三年及以上大班化大学英语授课经验的教师。高教授亲切的向我推荐您作为本次研究的潜在参与者，因为您有着丰富的大学英语大班化授课经验。并且，高教授提到您将会在 2018 年的春季和秋季学期进行大班化的大学英语授课。我认为您的专业知识和授课环境非常适合这项研究；因此，想请问您是否有兴趣成为本次研究的参与者。

这项研究计划包含文档分析，一个 30 分钟的观察前讨论，为期一个月我本人对于您大学英语教学的课堂观察，以及四个持续时间为 45 分钟的观察后讨论。在您同意的情况下，文档分析可能会通过分析您的课程大纲、教案、教材、课程体系、学生作业描述，及其它文档材料进行。观察后讨论计划时长为 45 分钟，在您同意的情况下，观察后讨论时间可能会超过这一时间。这项研究会包含总时长 3.5 小时，共计 5 次的研究讨论，其中包含一次观察前讨论和四次观察后讨论。总计 60 个小时，每次时间为 100 分钟，约 36 次关于您大学英语课程的观察将会在这项研究中进行。最后，我将邀请您阅读和检查这次研究的初步发现和结果，以避免误解或不符合事实的解读。检查和阅读研究结果将会花费您大约 3 小时的时间。这项研究计划在 2018 年 5 月底至 2018 年 6 月底进行。在您同意的情况下，如四次观察后讨论所采集的数据不能充分回答研究问题，研究时间将会延长超过一个月。讨论的问题将会基于课堂观察以及参与者愿意讨论或探索的话题。如果您有兴趣成为本次研究的参与者，请回复确认。我将提供更详细的研究计划和参与的条件。

研究者：杨帆

日期：2018 年 5 月
趣参与这项研究或有任何疑问，可以随时通过电子邮件 641434168@qq.com 与我联系。我期待您的回复。感谢您的时间！祝您一切顺利。

此致，

敬礼

杨帆
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study. My name is Fan Yang and I am a doctoral student at University of the Pacific in the US. You are selected as a possible participant in this study because of your rich experiences in College English teaching and your interest in this research study. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participate. This form may contain words that you do not know. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

This research is being conducted for the purpose of understanding in what ways do post-observation discussions lead to increased self-awareness by a College English teacher of her pedagogy, especially related to large class teaching, and to provide insights which might be useful to teachers who teach large classes in China and around the world. With your permission, document analysis will be conducted through analyzing documents that may include your course syllabi, lesson plans, course textbooks, curricula, descriptions of student assignments, and other printed materials. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to conduct a 30-minute pre-observation discussion and four 45-minute post-observation discussions related to your teaching of College English in a large class format. The post-observation discussions are scheduled for 45 minutes and could be extended beyond that time limit if you agree to do so. It will take you a total of 3.5 hours to participate in five discussions which include one pre-observation discussion and four post-observation discussions of this study. In addition, I will observe all College English classes you will teach during the four weeks and take notes that will be helpful in our post-observation discussions. Approximately 60 hours of 36 observations for your College English teaching, each lasting about 100 minutes, will be conducted in this study. This study is planned to be conducted from the end of May 2018 until the end of June 2018. If it is agreeable to you, the timeline might be extended beyond the one month if there are not enough data to sufficiently answer the research questions after four post-observation discussions. As a non-participant observer, I will not interact with your students. With your approval, the discussions we have will be audio recorded, and I will transcribe those discussions. At last, I will invite you to read and check the initial findings and results of this study to avoid any misrepresentations or misunderstandings. It will take you about 3 hours to read the results of this study.

There are some possible risks involved for you as a participant. The risks associated with participating in the study are as follows: 1. Psychological — You may feel somewhat anxious during the class teaching because of my presence and observations. The post-observation discussions may make you experience some anxiety in talking about your lessons, including issues related to teaching in a large class format. 2. Potential loss of confidentiality — It is possible that the computer and USB flash drive will be lost or stolen during or after the study which might cause a loss of confidentiality.

However, I will do my best to protect you from those risks. 1. Psychological — This study involves a non-judgmental attitude towards your teaching and issues in a large class format. Therefore, you will not be judged based on your teaching performance. My role is to focus on the post-observation discussions to explore issues which you would like to discuss. I will also avoid being judgmental by taking descriptive rather than prescriptive field notes of what happened during the class. In addition, I will follow principles of the cooperative development
model to respect, empathize, and be sincere to you during this study. My role is to cooperate with you in exploring possible ways of dealing with the issues of teaching College English in a large class format. The discussion recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential. In addition, I will ask you to check the recording of the results of this study to avoid any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the data. 2. Potential loss of confidentiality — In the recording and transcripts, you will not be identified by name. As the researcher, I will transcribe the recordings and will save the files using your pseudonym. You and the name of your school will both be identified by pseudonyms in the reporting of the data. Only general information about you and your school will be provided in the study so that any potential readers of the study will not be able to identify either you or your school.

There are some possible benefits for you in this research. You will have the opportunity to review your teaching with me and one goal of the research is to raise your awareness of your teaching. This increased awareness could lead to improved teaching. You may also feel a heightened sense of social responsibility knowing that your experiences could help others who teach large classes. Last but not least, you will receive a 200 RMB gift card to Guangyuan Supermarket for participating in this research project.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me through my email address 641434168@qq.com at any time. Any information that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. To insure your confidentiality, the consent form, transcripts of the discussions, and field notes of the observations will be destroyed three years after the completion of this study. The recordings of the discussions will be destroyed immediately after transcribing them. During the retention period, the electronic data will be saved in my six-digit code protected personal computer, my two secured Samsung phones (can only be opened with my fingerprint), and a password encrypted USB flash drive. The recordings and transcripts will be saved in password-protected files. Documents included field notes and other data will be maintained in my home office in a locked drawer, and only I have the key to the drawer. Three years after the study, the documents will be shredded, and the electronic files will also be erased.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will receive a copy of this form.

SIGNATURES

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I do want to be in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

_____________________________  __________________________
Subject Date
知情同意书

您被邀请参与一项研究。我的名字叫杨帆,是美国太平洋大学的一名在读博士研究生。出于您对大学英语课程教学的丰富经验和对这项研究的兴趣，您被邀请参与这项研究。当被邀请参与这项研究，您有权了解研究过程，并以此做出决定是否同意参与研究。如这份知情同意书中包含任何您不了解的词语，请要求我给予解释。

这项研究的目的是了解观察后讨论如何增强一位大学英语教师对于教学方法的自我意识，特别针对大班化教学研究，并为在中国和世界进行大班化教学的老师提供借鉴。在经您同意的情况下，文档分析可能会通过分析您的课程大纲、教案、教材、课程体系、学生作业描述，及其它文档材料进行。如同意参与研究，您将参与一个 30 分钟的观察前讨论以及四个 45 分钟的观察后讨论，内容关于您的大学英语大班化教学。观察后讨论计划时长为 45 分钟，在经您同意的情况下，观察后讨论时间可能会超过这一时间。这项研究会包含总时长 3.5 小时，共计 5 次的研究讨论，其中包含一次观察前讨论和四次观察后讨论。并且，我将观察您在研究进行四个星期内教授的所有大学英语课程，并记录听课笔记以帮助我们的观察后讨论。总计约 60 个小时，每次时间为 100 分钟，共 36 次关于您大学英语教学的观察将会在这一研究中进行。这项研究计划在 2018 年 5 月底至 2018 年 6 月底进行。在经您同意的情况下，如四次观察后讨论所采集的数据不能充分回答研究问题，研究时间将会延长超过一个月。作为一个非参与性观察者，我将不会与您的学生进行互动。征得您同意后，我们的讨论将会录音，我将对讨论内容进行转录。最后，我将邀请您阅读和检查这次研究的初步发现和结果，以避免误解或不符合事实的解读。检查和阅读研究结果将会花费您大约 3 小时的时间。

这项研究对于您作为参与者有着潜在的风险。参与者参与研究的风险如下列所述：1. 心理方面——在课堂教学过程中，由于我的观察和存在，您或许会感到紧张。在观察后讨论中，对于课堂内容的讨论也许会让您感到焦虑，讨论内容包括大班化教学。2. 潜在的保密性损失——在研究过程中或研究结束后，我的个人电脑和 U 盘存在着丢失和被盗的可能，这些可能会对本次研究的保密性造成影响。

然而，我将竭尽全力保护您避免上述风险。1. 心理方面——这项研究将会本着非主观、不评价的态度对您在大班化教学中遇到的问题进行研究。因此，您不会因为教学中的表现受到任何评价或评判。我的研究角色关注于观察后讨论中您愿意进行讨论的问题。同时，在记录观察笔记时我将进行描述性记录而不是规定性记录，记录性记录将关注于描述课堂过程。我将恪守研究者同意发展原则，在研究过程中以尊重、抱有同理心和真诚的态度对待您。我将与您合作研究可能对大班化教学有帮助的方法。讨论的录音和文本将会完全保密。并且，我将邀请您对这项研究的结果进行检查，以此避免任何对数据的误解和表述不清。2. 潜在的保密性损失——录音及转录文本中，不会涉及您的真实姓名。作为研究者，我将转储录音，并以参与者在研究中的笔名对文档进行命名。在数据报告过程中，研究参与者及其所在学校都将以匿名称呼。只有关于参与者及其学校的概括性信息会出现在研究中，以避免任何潜在读者识别出您或您的学校的名字。
这项研究也包含了一些可能存在的好处。您将与我一起回顾您的课堂教学，本次研究目的之一就是提高您对于教学的自我意识。教学自我意识的增强有助于教学水平的提高。同时，您或许会体会到社会责任感的增强，因为您的研究将会为其他进行大班化教学的老师提供借鉴意义。最后，为感谢您参与这项研究，您将获得广缘超市价值 200 元的购物卡一张。

如您对这项研究有任何问题，请通过我的邮箱地址 641434168@qq.com 随时与我联系。任何对您有辨识性的信息都将保密，并只能在您允许的情况下对外公布。为确保您个人信息的保密性，知情同意书、讨论转录文本和观察记录将会在研究结束后三年内销毁。讨论录音在录音转录后会被立即销毁。在数据保留的过程中，电子数据将会被保存在我的受到六位密码保护的个人电脑、两部受密码保护的三星手机（只能通过我的指纹打开），以及一个加密的移动 U 盘内。录音及转录文本将会被保存在受密码保护的文件中。文本数据包括观察记录将会锁在我家中办公室的加锁抽屉内，只有我拥有这个抽屉的钥匙。研究结束三年后，文本数据将会被粉碎，电子数据将会被永久删除。

您有权了解您将如何参与这项研究，以便决定是否参与这项研究。您的参与完全自愿。如您在研究过程中随时想要终止参与这项研究，您可随时终止，并不会受到任何惩罚或利益的损失。您将获得这份知情书的一份复印件。

署名

我已阅读这份知情同意书，同时我的问题已得到了回答。以下签名表明我确认愿意参与这项研究。我了解我可以随时取消参与这项研究。

署名

日期
## APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Protocol</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Notes</td>
<td>Large Class Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Tell me about or describe this week’s lessons.

**Influence of large classes:**

2. How do you think the number of students in the classrooms influence your instruction on the College English Reading and Writing course?

3. How do you think the number of students in the classrooms influence your instruction on the College English Visual-Audio-Oral course?

**Instructional strategies:**

4. What instructional strategies have you applied during this week’s College English lessons?

5. What strategies have you applied before which you find effective when teaching College English in large classes?

6. What adjustments, if any, would you make during next week’s lessons or in the future to teach College English in large classes?

**Post-observation discussions:**

7. What are some issues related to large class teaching you would like me to pay attention to during next week’s classroom observations?

8. What topics or ideas would you like to discuss during the next post-observation discussion?

**Reflection and suggestions (only applicable to the last discussion):**

9. Tell me about what you have learned, if anything, from the post-observation discussions.

10. What suggestions would you make for colleagues who will conduct post-observation discussions in the future?
11. What suggestions would you make for College English instructors who teach College English in large class format?

12. Tell me something you think is important for me to know that I did not ask.
观察后讨论大纲

1. 请您谈谈或描述这个星期的课程。

大班化教学的影响：

2. 您认为学生数量是如何影响您在大学英语读写课程的教学的？

3. 您认为学生数量是如何影响您在大学英语视听说课程的教学的？

教学策略：

4. 在这个星期的大学英语教学过程中您采取过哪些教学策略？

5. 您过去曾经采取过哪些您认为有效的大学英语大班化教学策略？

6. 假如可能，您会对下个星期或将来的大班化英语教学做出哪些调整？

观察后讨论：

7. 在下星期的课堂观察中，您会建议我关注有关大班化教学的哪些问题？

8. 在下次的观察后讨论中，您希望讨论哪些话题或想法？

反思与建议（只适用于最后一次讨论）：

9. 假如可能，请您谈谈您从一系列观察后讨论中学到了什么？

10. 请问您对未来进行观察后讨论的教师们有什么建议？

11. 请问您对于进行大班化大学英语教学的教师们有什么建议？

12. 请您谈谈您认为我需要知道但是我没有问到的问题。