

THINKING AND TEACHING FOR A
NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THINKING AND TEACHING FOR A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Folio Paper One:
Why Narrative and How?

Folio Paper Two:
The Shaping of A Teacher

Folio Paper Three:
A Narrative Perspective in Teaching ESL Writing

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A Paper Folio Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education
(Teaching & Learning)

**Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland**

April 2003



St. John's

Newfoundland

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTIONIV

Paper One: WHY NARRATIVE AND HOW?

Introduction 1
Why Narrative 3
 The relationship between experience and education and
 narratives 3
 Reflective practitioners 5
 Teacher voices 8
 Teacher knowledge: pedagogical content knowledge and
 personal practical knowledge 10
Methodology of Narrative Research..... 13
 Autobiography 13
 Collaborative (auto)biography 14
 Narrative inquiry 16
In-depth discussion of Narrative Inquiry..... 17
 Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space 18
 Negotiating researcher and participant relationships 19
 Narrative collection and construction 19
 Preparation for research text: making meaning of
 Experience 21
Conclusion 25
References 28

Paper Two: THE SHAPING OF A TEACHER

Introduction 1

Methodology	5
Method considerations	5
The autobiographer.....	7
Writing stories	7
Two types of autobiographical stories	8
Analysis	9
A teaching style that bears the mark of a particular period of time I had gone through as a school student	11
An attitude to students and ESL teaching that can be traced back its origin from the early school days	18
An attitude to the out-of-classroom landscape that has an obvious link to the experiences lived in the years at school	24
Results	27
Discussion	28
Implication	30
Conclusion.....	31
References	33

Paper Three: A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE IN TEACHING ESL WRITING

Introduction -- Motive of the Paper	1
ESL Writing I Experienced	2
Story one: as student	2
Story two: as teacher	4
Approaches of ESL Composition Instruction	6
Controlled composition	6
Current-traditional rhetoric	8

The process approach	10
English for academic purposes	12
Narrative Inquiry: A Research Approach and A Concept in ESL Composition Instruction	13
The four approaches	14
The essence of narrative inquiry approach for educational research	16
Narrative inquiry and ESL composition instruction	18
Conclusion of this section	30
Conclusion	31
References	33

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the folio is to support the narrative approach as a research perspective and to show that it can be translated into a teaching perspective in ESL writing instruction as well. The support is from a self-felt need that individuals in less powerful or oppressed positions not only want to be understood but also have valuable ideas and experiences to share. And narratives are the medium that lead to this understanding and reveal a valuable contribution.

Folio paper one reviews the foundations of narrative research approaches and discusses several widely used narrative research methods including autobiography, collaborative biography and narrative inquiry. Folio paper two, a self-study on my autobiographical storied school experiences, reveals how a teacher (myself) can be impacted by past school experiences in teaching practices. The narrated stories are also clues for a better understanding of a teacher and her choices of teaching styles. Folio paper three is an attempt to extend the range of narrative approaches, from a research perspective to a classroom teaching one. It opens a vision of implementing the narrative research perspective to ESL composition instruction based on the ideology of centering the less powered in narrative research approaches and lays out the feasibility of transferring the narrative research approach to a teaching perspective in ESL composition teaching in an university setting.

The motivation for this folio research is largely rooted in my experiences being a Chinese student studying in Canadian contexts. As a less powered foreign student, when I was sitting in a Canadian classroom, I was surrounded by Canadian professors and students. I took it for granted that I was here to listen and comprehend the educational

theories and teaching methodologies, which are rooted in the Canadian or Western background. Even though this happened several times that professors either skipped or put quotation marks to my Chinese related reflections, I always thought it was my fault: "Maybe my comments were irrelevant. Maybe I did not make myself clear about the comments. Maybe my Chinese experience was just not that important in a foreign learning context." But I know I did appreciate when professors and peer classmates showed *real* interest in me and my Chinese experience, not out of politeness or a need of diversity.

The enlightenment for the folio is from readings such as Marshall and Rossmans':

An interdisciplinary approach with many guises, narrative analysis, seeks to describe the meaning of experience for individuals, frequently those who are socially marginalized or oppressed, as they construct stories (narratives) about their lives. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 5)

Marshall and Rossman summarized the original vision of educational narrative research that brings teachers, the less powered role in the educational research process, to the center of research. Teachers may have similar feelings to mine when involved in educational activities: "We just do what the researcher asks us to." But at the same time they must have plenty to share with the researcher about their context specific practices. Realizing that teachers have practical knowledge gained from their specific teaching environment and aiming to discover teacher knowledge, narrative researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly believe that teacher personal practical knowledge is to be recovered by interpreting teachers' narratives: "Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 19). Thus teachers'

narratives of experiences become the focus of narrative approaches to educational research, aiming to recover the neglected teacher's personal practical knowledge.

The narrative research perspective has an irreplaceable position in reevaluating the roles of the researched and the researcher in education research. It also has significant meaning to those who are in a less powered position, teachers being studied or students in the classroom. They need a chance to speak. Therefore, the narrative perspective is the focus of this folio research.

Folio Paper One

WHY NARRATIVE AND HOW?

Why Narrative and How?

Introduction

People have an inclination to make generalizations, including this one. Such generalizations as “The French are great lovers”, “The Chinese are good cooks”, and “Professors are absentminded” are among hundreds of them. Even though generalizations may be dangerous in some contexts, for scientists, their job is to find general laws for individual events. For example, Isaac Newton deduced a general law – gravity – from a fallen apple. Examples of scientific generalization are “All A’s are B’s”, i.e., under any circumstances, $2 + 2 = 4$. Under what circumstances should a scientific law like gravity be claimed? Positivists assume that there is a fixed external world, and it is “by comparison with this world that scientific claims are tested” (Huang, 1997, p. 345). So, in the positivist view, “knowledge is built by the rational activity of scientists who use scientific methods to justify their claims” (Huang, 1997, p. 345). There is no doubt that knowledge should be built this way in physical sciences. However, when a positivist position has been taken to guide research in social/human sciences, some scholars have been critical. Henry Giroux was one of them. Giroux (1981, 1983, 1986) does not believe that objective and value-free research are possible in the social sciences because human contexts such as attitudes, values, experiences are too complex and could not be eliminated. In educational research, for example, a positivist view can be problematic for as Kincheloe (1991) put it: “It simply does not produce insights relevant to the professional life of the teacher” (p. 59). The most important reason is that so many factors in the process of teaching and learning cannot be controlled

such as the school environment and teachers' various reactions to it due to various personal experiences and backgrounds.

General laws are what we need in knowing the physical world; however, in a human world, human contexts and the contexts of time, environment and interaction must be taken into account in drawing conclusions. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), to use a narrative inquiry research approach is to substantially involve teachers in conducting educational research by inquiring into their teachers' context-specific knowledge. Teachers are empowered this way because researchers consider context factors when drawing conclusions.

In response to the concerns of empowering teachers as individual contributors to the professional knowledge landscape, this paper will review the literature that relates to the narrative research approach. Section one of this paper will discuss the importance and necessity of narrative research (why). Section two will present autobiography, collaborative (auto) biography and narrative inquiry – three of the commonly used narrative research methods (how). The third part will focus on one of the narrative research methods, narrative inquiry: What narrative inquirers do to collect, construct field narratives and what narrative inquirers need to do to develop them into research texts. The main reason that narrative inquiry will be discussed in detail is that it is more inclusive than other narrative approaches in practice in terms of narrative forms. For example in narrative inquiry, narratives can be in any forms such as life stories, narratives and photos, and from both sides, the researched and the researcher, for example, researcheds' stories and researchers' field observing notes. So it is applicable to

conducting research that involves children or adults who are not able to write detailed and consistent autobiographies. Therefore it should have a wider range of application.

Why Narrative

Why is narrative important in educational activities: teaching and learning, curriculum development, and especially educational research? For this topic, four subtopics will be addressed in this section: experience and education, reflective practitioners, teacher voices, and teacher knowledge.

The relationship between experience and education and narratives

Narrative research is the study of teachers' narratives of their own stories and experiences. For some narrative researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the foremost influence is from John Dewey, especially his *Experience and Education* (Dewey, 1963). In the debate on whether education is from without or within, Dewey (1963) supports and promotes the latter: Education development is from within. Traditional educational theory is grounded on the position that education is from without in that learning is to acquire the knowledge written in books. However, Dewey (1963) argues that education from without is one that assumes the world is static.

It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future. It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception. (Dewey, 1963, p. 19)

Education from within takes a stance that supports that learning should center on learners themselves. So, personal experiences and the context in which learning activities occur should be considered in the process of learning so as to reduce the gap

between the subject matter and the learners. As a result, learning and the method of learning are not foreign but rather meaningful to them. In Dewey's view, education is much more than transmitting book knowledge and "Education, in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society, must be based upon experience – which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (Dewey, 1963, p. 89).

Dewey's philosophy of learning is one that connects internal factors, personal experiences, for example and external factors, say, knowledge written in books. However, educational researchers in teacher education found a problem, a *disconnection* between professional knowledge that "pours down through the conduit" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.9) to teachers and teachers' knowledge. This situation failed Dewey's philosophy of what learning should be. According to Clandinin and Connelly's studies (2000, 1997, 1996, 1995), teachers usually were treated as passive receivers and mere implementers of research products. According to Dewey's idea that learning was a connection between external and internal factors, as teacher students should not be only taught the knowledge that is refined and "poured into the landscape via the conduit" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.10), but should also learn to relate to their own experience and apply it to solve their own problems. Hence, in teacher education, for example, teachers need to be involved in and their experiences included in learning and educational research to make meaningful connections between external and internal factors.

Narrative researchers were also inspired by a feature of experience – continuity, which means that experience is a moving force (Dewey, 1936, p. 38). Past experience affects present experiencing and leads to future experiences. The continuum of

experience impacts how narrative inquirers should reflect on and interpret educational problems when analyzing narratives. It is quite impossible to understand the being of a person or an event without reading their stories from different periods of time. The being of a person and the event that is happening are only the result we can see. What we cannot see is the stories behind that cause the becoming of the person and the happening of an event. Thus understanding means knowing who and what, and more importantly why and how to reveal a somewhat complete picture. By reflecting on Dewey's continuity of experience, Clandinin and Connelly stated: "We learned to move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present, and future, and to do so in ever-expanding social milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Education and experience are not separable. Narratives are the medium of experiences. So the significance of narratives in educational research is that they serve as a bridge between researchers and practitioners, helping researchers understand teachers and their knowledge.

Reflective practitioners

In Dewey's view of traditional education, teachers are seen as mere transmitters, who are supposed to pass on what they were taught, while students are passive receivers. Reflecting on theory-driven practice, Schön also sees teachers to be mere implementers of research products.

The positivist epistemology of practice rests on three dichotomies. Given the separation of means from ends, instrumental problem solving can be seen as a technical procedure to be measured by its effectiveness in achieving a pre-established objective. Given the separation of research from practice, rigorous practice can be seen as an application to instrumental problems of research-based theories and techniques whose objectivity and generality derive from the method of controlled experiment. Given the separation of knowing from doing, action is only an implementation and a test of technical decision. (Schön, 1987, p. 78)

In order to react to *technical rationality*, which is linked to the idea of practice being separated from theory and the teacher being a technician (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998, p. 4) in educational practice, Schön (1983, 1987) proposed a new type of practice: “reflection-in-action”. This type of reflection means that teachers reflect on their practice in the process of teaching. And this practice: reflective practice, has become a trend in teacher education so that while reflecting on their teaching experiences, teachers are able to construct and reconstruct a context-related professional knowledge of their own.

Teachers need to be reflective to fuse the separation of “knowing and doing.” But how? Dewey (1938) defined thinking and logic as the “reflective reconstruction of experience” (Dewey, 1938, quoted in Cortazzi, 1993, p. 6). Thus, to be reflective teachers, they ponder on experiences and in narrative ways. Keeping personal journals on everyday practice and writing autobiographies are examples of the strategies teachers can use to keep an account of what they are doing. Teachers reflect on those recorded experiences and finally, through the written narratives, reconstruct them into a context-related knowledge that is meaningful to them in a specific professional knowledge landscape.

Reflecting on narrated experiences can be done in a silent way such as keeping journals and writing autobiographies to ponder them alone. It can be also in a two or multi-dimension way, namely reflecting while interacting with people. For example, in teacher training programs, teacher students write their teaching stories and in groups or pairs discuss and rewrite the stories, and through a class newsletter students in different groups share their rewritten stories. In terms of cognitive learning, interactive reflection may be more effective than reflecting on stories on one’s own, according to Maas (1991).

The following paragraph introduces a way of reflecting by *talking* over narrated teaching experience.

Ghaye & Ghaye (1998) scrutinized their method of interactive reflection, which is reflective conversation, “a medium through which we (teachers/practitioners) are able to learn from our teaching experiences and question the educational values that give a shape, form and purpose to what we do” (Ghetto & Ghaye, 1998, p. 19). Reflective conversation is meaningful conversation based on the belief that teachers learn from their practices and talking about them with others. For teachers, reflective conversation provides and creates a space to talk about, articulate, and make sense of their teaching experiences. In the process of reflective conversation teachers become confident, competent, critical, creative, responsible and, finally, knowledgeable and professional by exchanging opinions on teaching practices. Reflective conversation involves two parties, the owner/teller of teaching experiences, and a conversation partner, who may be a colleague, researcher, or supervisor. The conversation is based on question and answer. In order to respond to a conversation partner’s questions, the practitioner goes through such mental activities as recalling, describing, reflecting on her/his finished teaching experiences with personal feeling, linking her/his own teaching philosophy with others, interacting with her/his past experiences and future actions, and critiquing an existing theory. As a result of such reflective conversations, the practitioner is empowered by constructing a context-related frame of teaching of her/his own. This empowerment is actually achieved by learning from narratives, either written or oral, through a medium – reflection, which involves teacher’s reflecting on experiences by interacting with herself/himself or others on these experiences and listening to her/his or others’ voices.

Thus, the point here is no matter how and in what way teachers exercise “reflection-in-action”, the key falls on narratives of teacher’s teaching, which make empowering teachers possible when they reflect on their narrated teaching experiences.

Teacher voices

There are two major reasons that teachers need to have a chance to talk about their stories and experiences. The first major reason is that teachers are under-represented in educational research activities. According to Butt et al, (1992) teachers’ perspectives are a fundamental source for school development; however, the effort of involving teachers’ voices in research, reform and curriculum implementation has been missing for twenty-five or more years. As a result, there is a gap between the published documents and what is happening in the real world. As Nelson (1992) put it, the gap is between what we can discover when we rely on published accounts of some historical event and what we can discover when we ask questions of the on-site participants of those same events (Nelson, 1992, p. 68). In the view of Clandinin and Connelly (1995), the gap also comes from the abstraction of policy statements.

There are few, if any, links between the abstract statements of policy and research coming from the conduit and the phenomenological world to which they refer. There are no people, events, or things--only words cut off from their origins. Life and what we might call the existential world are not involved. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.10)

Not surprisingly, for teachers, especially the creative ones, this gap, resulting from the “narrative context” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, p.11) being taken away, may place them in an embarrassing situation. For example, Karen Whelan, a teacher at an Edmonton public school, finds “her story to live by comes into tension with the stories of others and the stories of the school” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 90), which means that her own teaching style – drawn from her past experiences of teaching – conflicts

with what the school advocates teachers to follow. Thus if she keeps her teaching based on her experiences of teaching, tension will occur around her because schools are supposed to be the place to implement the “sacred stories”¹ (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) “funneled from the conduit, where ‘narrative context’ of practical individual voices are taken away for a *theoretical knowledge*, which is abstract, objective, and packed for teachers in textbooks, curriculum materials...”(Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, p.9).

The second reason is that there is a long-term notion that “theory is superior to practice” (Butt, et al, 1992, p. 52). In this view, “teachers were not able to participate in determining the changes that were thrust upon them” and “in general they (researchers/reformers) were ignorant of the culture of the school and classroom” (Butt, et al, 1992, p. 52). Clandinin and Connelly (1995) also pointed out that “North American education is so deeply embedded with a notion of theory-driven practice that it is difficult to get a hearing for an alternative view” (p. 8). Since teaching, a very context-related activity, does not happen in a vacuum, there should be “a hearing for an alternative view” (Cortazzi, 1993, p.10), which is one that sees educational practices from the eyes of teaching practitioners, the “key participants in education” (Cortazzi, 1993, p.10).

While teacher empowerment is a key concern in teacher education, listening to teachers’ stories, i.e., their voices, becomes a fundamental way of understanding teachers and their practices so that a research product is capable of representing their practice in the front line. Therefore, educational researchers and policy makers, before drawing conclusions and making decisions, need to study teachers’ voices, which is the first-hand

¹ “Sacred stories” are the published documents of researchers and governmental and educational authorities.

data and “may emerge at its strongest in *teachers’ narrative accounts*” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 11).

Teacher knowledge: Pedagogical content knowledge and personal practical knowledge

Teachers are not only knowledge distributors but also knowledge constructors.

According to Shulman (1987), teachers’ knowledge is obtained particularly by weaving content knowledge with teaching contexts.

A key source has been the several dozen teachers whom we have been studying in our research during the past three years. Through interviews, observations, structured tasks, and examination of materials, we have attempted to understand how they commute from the status of learner to that of teacher, from being able to comprehend subject matter for themselves, to becoming able to elucidate subject matter in new ways, reorganize and partition it, clothe it in activities and emotions, in metaphors and exercises, and in examples and demonstrations, so that it can be grasped by students. (Shulman, 1987, pp. 14-15)

When teachers are able to “elucidate subject matter in new ways, reorganize and partition it, clothe it in activities and emotions, in metaphors and exercises, and in examples and demonstrations” so that it can be grasped by students, they are producing their “pedagogical content knowledge” (Shulman, 1986, 1987). *Pedagogical content knowledge*, a kind of knowledge of teaching but “beyond knowledge of subject matter”(Shulman, 1986, p. 9), “represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (Shulman, 1987, p.8). In Shulman’s view, to be effective in teaching, teachers need more than “content knowledge, and general pedagogical skills” (1987, p.6). Shulman (1987) argues that “the results of research on effective teaching, while valuable, are not the sole source of evidence on which to base a definition of the knowledge base of teaching”(p.7). “Generic principles of effective teaching” (1987, p. 10), where the “general pedagogical

knowledge” comes from, are far from adequate to deal with the “complex activity of teaching” (1987, p. 11). Therefore, in order to solve highly contextualized teaching problems teachers creatively combine subject matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge into a pedagogical content knowledge, which is the “wisdom of practice” (Shulman, 1987, p. 11), and it is also what researchers need to work with teachers to discover. Teachers are able professionals. They teach based on what they understand about a teaching context, not merely on what they were taught of “generic principles”.

According to Shulman (1987), teachers cannot simply be taught to be “effective” since the real classroom is highly contextualized. Thus, effective teaching needs an integration of subject matter knowledge and a context-specific pedagogical knowledge. The two types of knowledge when integrated become contextualized pedagogical content knowledge, which makes up Shulman’s fourth source of knowledge base for teaching, “wisdom of practice” (Shulman, 1987, p. 11). When addressing the uniqueness of classrooms, Vaughan (1984) also views teachers as a source of knowledge: “... we must also honour the concomitant characteristic of a profession that emphasises recognition and full consideration of the qualified practitioner’s perceptions and judgements as a source of feedback and action” (p.4).

To Shulman, teaching is a highly contextualized activity. Thus subject matter knowledge and generic pedagogical knowledge teachers learn in classrooms are inadequate to meet the demands of complex practical situations. In his view, this inadequacy can be made up for when teachers connect these two types of knowledge based on various teaching and learning situations. Shulman called this combined knowledge “pedagogical content knowledge”. Connelly and Clandinin also believe that

teachers have particular knowledge of teaching because of the complexity that involves individual teachers, learners and the landscape they are in. They call teachers' experiential knowledge "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, 1985, 1984; Clandinin, 1985), which is "experiential, valued-laden, purposeful and oriented to practice" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 364). It comes from teachers' practical experiences and in turn serves their practical purposes on each individual educational landscape.

Although Shulman, and Connelly and Clandinin addresses teacher knowledge from different views and with different terms, they all see the classroom as a source of knowledge and teachers as creative and positive agents dealing with context specific learning and teaching demands. After their long term of ethnographic research with school teachers at Bay Street School, Connelly and Clandinin convinced themselves and other teacher educators that teachers' personal practical knowledge is "experiential, embodied and based on the narrative of experience" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 363). As for Shulman (1986), in order to be effective, teachers integrate their knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter to meet specific teaching and learning demands. Connelly and Clandinin further Shulman's work by claiming that teachers' integrated knowledge is expressed in narratives: "Knowing a teaching and learning situation is a matter of the recollections from one's narratives that are called forth by the situation" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985, pp. 184-185).

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1985), there are two types of inquiries: disciplined inquiry and narrative inquiry. Disciplined inquiry aims at finding in a cognitive world conceptual knowledge, i.e., knowledge of generic principles in

Shulman's terms. However, in a context specific world such as a classroom, general rules may be only assumptions. Therefore, "knowing is an experience" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985, p. 178) and researchers need to inquire into teachers' narratives to recover knowledge in a world of uncertainty and stories.

Methodology of Narrative Research

While many educational researchers agree that teacher narratives are a valid source of information about teaching experiences and practical knowledge, the methods of collecting and analyzing these narratives vary. The following paragraphs will present an introduction to three methods: autobiography, collaborative (auto)biography and narrative inquiry.

Autobiography

Autobiography is a vehicle that can recover teacher experiences because it reveals the "authentic self" (Pinar, 1988). People under the pressure of a conditioned social world are unlikely to tell their true stories publicly, i.e., the "authentic self". Hence writing autobiographies offers a way to fulfill "the task of self formation" (Pinar, 1988, p.27). According to Pinar, autobiography is not only the "architecture of self" but also goes down to the deep self and "dismantles self-defenses" (p. 28), which is where the "authentic self" comes from. Its aim is to encourage teachers to write, reflect on and interpret their past experience, "so that this can be transferred to a usable present by writers who can see themselves as responsible for the shape and texture of their own experiences" (Grumet, 1980, quoted in Cortazzi, 1993, p. 13).

Diamond (1991) defined autobiography as “a reconstruction that involves a conscious and reflective elaboration of much of the author’s life, including personal and professional experiences (and) it provides an interpretation of the episodes of a life and the relation the author has to them” (Diamond, 1991, quoted in Cortazzi, 1993, p. 12). So the interest of reading autobiography is to find information about teachers’ personal and practical experiences and discover their relationship. According to Pinar and Grumet (1976), the autobiographical method consists of four steps: 1) regression, teachers turn back to their past experiences and reflect on them; 2) progression, teachers look ahead to their future to talk about how they might change in their later practices; 3) analysis, teachers describe and respond to their present being; 4) synthesis, they put all the previous thoughts together.

Therefore, we can see that through the four phases teachers are encouraged to talk about and reflect on the past and look ahead to their future. The cycle basically is an “unaided” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 13) process. Even though tutors (researchers) could help analyze and interpret teachers’ autobiographical narratives and teachers could read aloud and invite others’ input, the author and the reader/the subject, are essentially the same person. Autobiography is able to recover an informative record of teachers’ past, present and predicted future; however, researchers may benefit most when including it as part of the research process in a collaborative way.

Collaborative (auto)biography

Collaborative (auto)biography is different from the method discussed above. Autobiography emphasizes the researched, their own reflection on their past and looking

ahead to a future practice. In collaborative (auto)biography, the researcher's role is also emphasized as a facilitator to complete the reflection in a co-operative way.

“Collaborative biography is the joint description and interpretation of a teacher's life experience carried out by the teacher concerned working with one or more researchers” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 14). The aim of a collaborative (auto)biography approach is, by placing teachers in the center of the research process, to discover teacher practical knowledge, the formation of it and the important influential experiences of the past.

Butt and his co-researchers conducted substantial research using autobiographies to recover teacher knowledge. Their argument for the collaborative autobiographical approach is that it inquires into teachers' autobiographical narratives not only for teacher knowledge but also its formation. They believe that “autobiographical interpretation of one's life course revealed the formation of teacher's knowledge” (Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi, 1987, p. 104). To these co-researchers, autobiographical narratives are a life history, which “represents the ‘whole’ story – not just fragments derived from what is most obvious in action’ (1987, p. 117). Therefore, it offers researchers a profound source to examine “the span of a person's life” (1987, p. 105) for the identification of relationships between teacher knowledge and its formation.

According to Butt, et al. (1987, 1989 and 1992), there are four phases of writing autobiographical accounts: 1) description of the reality of the current teaching situation, 2) description of the current teaching strategies and curriculum that are in use, 3) reflection on and depiction of past experiences that might impact the choice of current

teaching strategies and curriculum, 4) imagining future choices of teaching strategies and curriculum and how the previous three accounts might influence such choices.

While reading through teachers' autobiographies, researchers ask two types of research questions: questions of substance and questions of formation to interpret teacher autobiographies. For the questions of substance, they could ask:

- What might the central aspects of a teacher's autobiographic praxis be interpreted to be at the present stage of professional personal life and in the present context? What forms do they take?
- What are the major elements of a teacher' present professional personal context?
- What are the major elements of a teacher's past personal and professional life that are relevant to autobiographic praxis?

For the questions of formation, they could ask:

- How do elements of current context interact with and shape autobiographic praxis and its expression?
 - What are the major sources of or influences on autobiographical praxis from the past?
 - How have elements of a teacher's perceived past influenced the formation of autobiographic praxis? How are antecedents related to subsequent elements?
 - What crucial life episodes occurred in which new lines of activity were found or new aspects of the self brought into being? How and why?
- (Butt, et al., 1987, 1989, 1992)

As we can see here, Butt and his co-authors used a similar method to the autobiography method to collect teacher narratives. The difference is that the researchers were more involved as facilitators and teachers were more involved as co-investigators.

Narrative inquiry

"Narrative refers to the making of meaning through personal experience by way of a process of reflection in which storytelling is a key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, quoted in Cortazzi,

1993, p. 17). So, even though, like the collaborative autobiography method, narrative inquiry is also a narrative research method that requires close collaboration between teacher(s) and researcher(s), Connelly and Clandinin's definition of narrative is more inclusive. Narrative inquiry is more flexible in terms of collecting teacher narratives. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the source of research texts can be observation notes, journals, teacher stories, autobiographic writings, interviews, conversations, photos, and family stories, not just teacher histories. As put previously, the aim of a collaborative (auto)biography approach is to discover teachers' practical knowledge, the *formation* of it. Thus autobiography/collaborative (auto)biography has a focus on the *formation* of teacher knowledge: process and reason, based on the nature of autobiographies, i.e., consistency of personal stories. In contrast, the aim of narrative inquiry is "explicating experiential understanding of teacher thinking in terms of everyday meaning, developing a theory in terms of practice" (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 17). Thus narrative inquiry places more emphasis on revealing and understanding teachers' lives and their situated knowledge.

Based on its flexibility in practice in terms of narrative collection, which I mentioned at the beginning of this section, I will discuss narrative inquiry in more detail. Thus, the following section: Section Three, will focus on Clandinin and Connelly's experiences of narrative inquiry from their most recent book: *Narrative Inquiry—Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000).

In-depth Discussion of Narrative Inquiry

As Cortazzi (1993) states, “narrative inquiry has less emphasis on method” (p. 17), it itself is a process of experiencing research stories. Thus, Clandinin and Connelly suggest rather than claim what narrative researchers should do in their book: *Narrative Inquiry—Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000). As its name suggests, the book is a collection of their and their students’ narrative inquiry stories. In this section, selected topics that narrative inquirers should be aware of once in the field will be introduced based on Clandinin and Connelly’s substantial work.

Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

Even though there is not a “standard” method to guide what narrative inquirers should do, Clandinin and Connelly do draw a working frame for narrative inquirers, i.e., to think of time (continuity), context (situation) and people (interaction)—“the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), while working in the field with teacher participants, writing, reading and analyzing narratives. Clandinin and Connelly further interpret Dewey’s notion of interaction by what they call “four directions in any inquiry: inward and outward, backward and forward” (p. 50). The pair, inward and outward, means that inquirers experience narratives personally with either internal factors such as emotions or external factors such as the surroundings. The other pair, backward and forward, means that inquirers experience narratives by time, finding relationship between past, present and future (p. 50). The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and the four directions in inquiry, in my opinion, are a response to the criticism of narrative inquiry for focusing on “the individual rather than social context” (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 87) because studies done in the three-dimensional inquiry space not only “have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters”, but also “focus

on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry”(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

If the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is a framework for narrative inquirers, with respect to how to collect and construct narratives, it does not seem easy or necessary to set rules. Instead, Clandinin and Connelly shared their experiences in the ever-changing narrative inquiry fields to help novice narrative inquirers.

Negotiating researcher and participant relationships

Narrative inquiry is a long-term research process. Narrative inquirers usually work with their teacher participants for several years and visit the school or sit in the classroom on a regular basis, sensing the environment and experiencing the lives of their participants in the classroom and on campus. Thus, to keep an appropriate relationship between researchers and participants is very important. Clandinin and Connelly’s experience is that researchers and participants need to negotiate their relationships frequently regarding what to do and the ways of entering and leaving the landscape so as to maintain a relationship that is comfortable, but neither too businesslike nor too intimate.

Narrative collection and construction

Narrative collection: A selective process

As mentioned earlier, the source of research texts can be observation notes, journals, teacher stories, interviews, conversations, documents, photos, family stories and artifacts. So narrative collection has a selective stance in terms of personal interest and types of information. One of the concerns regarding narrative inquiry is the credibility of the stories: Are the stories true? McEwan (1997) argues that “the issues of sorting out which stories we should believe and which we should doubt requires an analysis of

narrative process rather than the application of strictly non-narrative criteria” (McEwan, 1997, p. 90). Clandinin and Connelly’s field experience supports McEwan’s emphasis on *process*.

Researcher relationships to ongoing participant stories shape the nature of field texts and establish the epistemological status of them. We assume that a relationship embeds meaning in the field text and imposes form on the research text ultimately developed. What is told, as well as the meaning of what is told, is shaped by the relationship. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94)

Interwoven filed narratives in a three-dimensional inquiry space

The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is Clandinin and Connelly’s most important metaphor for narrative inquirers to remember while collecting, interpreting and composing field texts. As mentioned earlier, field narratives/field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) are of various types, which has made researchers task demanding and complex. Further, these field narratives can be isolated in terms of time, place and the people involved. To connect the seemingly isolated field narratives, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) show us a way through the complexity, that is to *interweave* the field narratives in a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space so that the “isolated” field narratives are connected in a consistent way. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, pp. 96-97) used Davies’ dissertation as an example and illustrated in detail how the field texts were linked in a three-phase format within the frame of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space so that “isolated” stories could be consistently connected. Here is a brief example of Davies’ three-phase format.

Davies was interested in investigating “how teachers negotiated team teaching relationships” (2000, p. 96). In the first phase, when she wanted to bring forth her own educational experiences, she arranged such independent field narratives as her childhood school stories in Britain, early teaching experiences in Canada, and her team teaching

experiences years later. In the second phase, she moved on horizontally to construct her field texts by the stories of each one of the team teachers. In the third phase, she moved forward for the stories of the current team teachers and still in the phase, she moved even further asking them to retrospect on their past experiences and their influences for their future practices as team teachers. As we can see, Davies interwove stories of different places (Britain, Canada; her school, school of the participants), of different times (when she was a school girl, a novice teacher, a team teacher; stories that are happening at the time of her research, and are likely to happen), and of different people (hers, her former team teachers, current team teachers). By moving back and forth, and in and out, Davies neatly linked stories by interweaving them in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

Preparation to research text: Making meaning of experience

When narrative inquirers have finished a field narratives collection, they move on to another stage of the journey of narrative inquiry, i.e., from constructing field texts to research texts. When preparing and in the midst of the transition, Clandinin and Connelly raise a few topics to share with narrative inquirers, especially the beginners. Considering the length of this paper, only three of those topics will be discussed: justification (why), phenomena (what) and method (how), for they are the pavement of the transition from field texts to research texts and finally a research paper.

Why: Justification

On transition from field narratives to research texts, Clandinin and Connelly suggest that researchers ask questions of meaning, social significance, and purpose (2000, p. 120) to present personal interests in a broader social context. Earlier in this section, I

mentioned a criticism that narrative inquiry focuses on “the individual rather than social context” (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 87). Clandinin and Connelly’s early narrative inquiry work was rejected by reviewers labeling it to be “idiosyncratic and narcissistic” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). To avoid such a label, narrative inquirers need to justify their research interests, and this personal justification should be related to “a public, social sense of significance” (2000, p. 121) so that research texts reflect social concerns and cause resonance among public audiences.

Justification of one’s narrative work does not merely stay at the “ideological” stage. While practicing narrative inquiry, Clandinin once encouraged her student, Hedy Bach, to write her girlhood experiences and shared them with the girl students in her study for responses. As a result her interests were justified by sharing her girlhood stories with her girls students. According to Clandinin’s experience of her doctoral defense, narrative inquirers are asked to answer such questions as why narrative inquiry method was chosen rather than other qualitative research methods. To answer this question, narrative inquirers need to distinguish between narrative inquiry and other methods by articulating what phenomenon narrative inquiry can explain that other methods cannot. For example, when the researched’s “experiences were largely silent” (2000, p. 123), it is necessary that narrative inquiry be used and researchers enter the silenced group and listen to the overlooked voices because narrative inquiry “seeks to describe the meaning of experience for individuals, frequently those who are socially marginalized or oppressed”(Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 5).

What: Phenomena

Researchers usually have an assumption or a research problem before conducting quantitative or qualitative research. Their research purpose is to figure out a solution to that problem, or to prove their assumption right or wrong. Clandinin and Connelly point out that this is not the case in narrative inquiry. Since the aim of narrative inquiry is to make sense of experiences, it actually “carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution” (2000, p. 124). In addition, because the phenomena, “the *what* of the (narrative) inquiry” (2000, p125), are always in an ever moving, changing, complex context, narrative inquirers have to be prepared to shift their research interest and concentration from time to time. At this point, phenomena shift due to the shifting context.

Clandinin and Connelly also point out another way of phenomena shifting: “Phenomena also shift depending on how we frame their contexts and our researcher positions within the contexts” (2000, p. 126). For example, the information that catches most of narrative inquirers’ attention varies if an observation phenomenon is placed in different contexts, say a teacher’s sense of implementing strategies in a grade-one classroom and a college classroom.

How: Method

Because conducting narrative research is different from doing research with other research methods, it is important to know its especial means of doing research to make sure that researchers are on the right track of narrative inquiry. Thus Clandinin and Connelly discussed three sets of considerations as to the method to be used in constructing research texts from field texts: theoretical considerations; practical, field text

oriented considerations; and interpretive-analytical considerations (2000, p. 127) to lead narrative inquirers, especially the novice ones to a right direction.

Theoretical considerations: According to Clandinin and Connelly's practice, narrative inquirers "tend to begin with experience as lived and told in stories" (2000, p. 128). It is gradually more productive to begin with explorations of the phenomena of experience rather with comparative analysis of various theoretical methodological frames (2000, p. 128). So, as to theoretical considerations, narrative inquirers' theoretical considerations are grounded in interactions between the participants' lived stories and the researcher's narrative experiences in the frame of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.

Field text-oriented considerations: Since narrative inquirers spend a long time at the participants' school and in classrooms to collect field texts, narrative inquirers need to consider an appropriate way to withdraw from the field but still keep in touch with the participants, when moving to the phase of reconstructing research texts from field texts. Practical field text-oriented consideration is crucial because the researcher's being around in the field can become part of the "rhythms" (2000, p. 129) of the participants and their students. If researchers do not prepare a schedule of withdrawal, an unprepared leaving could break the participants' school rhythms. When preparing to leave the field, researchers also need to negotiate the last level of researcher-participant relationship, which should be close enough to get participants involved in research texts construction but not too close to "fall in love" (2000, p. 130) with the participants to be biased in writing research texts.

Interpretive-analytical considerations: Even though narrative inquirers, like other researchers, code field narratives, the analysis and construction of the narratives is often more complex. Because the field texts are heavily loaded with information and full of “research potential” (2000, p. 132), researchers need to read and re-read them and keep consulting with participants about their interpretations.

As researchers start dealing with field texts, narrative inquirers need to consider how to analyze and interpret the field narratives collected and constructed with participants. The important thing to remember is that this is a process of making meaning out of the field narratives and connections with social interests. And a philosophy of “let field texts speak for themselves” (2000, p. 130) may fail to identify in the field texts social interests because field texts are “descriptive” not “reflective” (2000, p. 132).

Conclusion

There are two major purposes of this paper. Purpose one, the purpose of Section I: *Why Narrative*, is to demonstrate that teaching has its uniqueness as a profession and needs researchers to find new ways of looking at and thinking about educational problems. McEwan (1997) states that “the issues of sorting out which stories we should believe and we should doubt requires an analysis of narrative *process* rather than the application of strictly non-narrative criteria” (p. 90). Even though she was addressing the narrative inquiry process, this also tells us that the *way* we do research which matters. No one would argue that teaching is interaction with students and environments. Teachers possess special knowledge in dealing with different needs from different students and in different environments. Teaching and teacher education need appropriate ways to address

its problems and suggest solutions. Teaching is a profession of experiences. Teachers grow with their years of teaching in the classroom. And their growth can be enhanced through the reflective and biographical and narrative methods outlined here. I am convinced that narrative inquiry is another angle and “the best way to understand experiences” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is among the best, in my opinion, to bring teachers from classrooms to the front of the academic forum because it is the teacher, not the researcher, who should have more power to decide what to do in an ever changing teaching context.

Purpose two is the intention of Section II and III, presenting narrative research methods – autobiography, collaborative autobiography and narrative inquiry – to show how the narrative approaches reveal teachers’ real practices in a complicated and context-specific teaching landscape. Section III: *Narrative Inquiry*, particularly demonstrates in greater detail Clandinin’s and Connelly’s experiences of using narrative inquiry to recover teachers knowledge and make sense of their experiences. Teaching is a process of experience accumulation. So is narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly’s years’ of experience in narrative inquiry with their participants were recorded descriptively and reflectively in *Narrative Inquiry – Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000). This book is the evidence of how complicated the real work of teaching is, and how tough the task could be for researchers to understand teachers’ knowledge and make sense of it in a broader vision. The book also shows that narrative inquiry is a workable method for researchers and teachers to work together to investigate situation-specific knowledge and producing reference knowledge for the public, which is just what education should do, and narrated experiences can contribute.

Overall, teaching or conducting educational research, similar to other social sciences, is an activity that deals with individuals. And each of them has different stories of lived experience, which makes each case a unique one. At this time, it is a crucial task for narrative method advocates and practitioners to avoid the criticism that they are focusing on “the individual rather than on the social context” (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p. 84), and or that they have “selective recall” (Marshall & Rossman, 1994, p.84). Thus, Clandinin and Connelly use the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and interwoven field narratives to triangulate and broaden narrative collection. To reduce researcher’s “subjectivity” in selecting narratives, McEwan (1997), and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize the process of narrative analysis for it is assumed that “a relationship embeds meaning in the field text and imposes form on the research text ultimately developed” Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p. 94).

I have discussed narrative inquiry in more detail because as mentioned earlier in this paper it has the characteristic of inclusiveness in terms of narrative forms. Thus, it may be applicable to more research situations. However, the motif of the whole paper is to elaborate the significance of the narrative perspective in teacher growth and empowerment. In narrative research, autobiographical stories are one of the forms of narratives. In the next paper, I will rely on my autobiographical stories to do a self-study. It will be a silent reflection on my school stories, aiming to discover how these lived school experience may have influenced me as a teacher.

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Folio Paper Two

THE SHAPING OF A TEACHER

The Shaping of A Teacher

Introduction

Christians believe that humans were born to have sins. Ancient Chinese debate, however, was over whether humans were born to be good or evil. But later the assumption that people were born to be good became the dominant ideology. The beginning of *Three Character Classic*¹ states: “Men at their birth, are naturally good. Their natures are much the same; their habits become widely different”. Then what may contribute to the cause of people’s different habits? *Three Character Classic* continues: “Of old, the mother of Mencius² chose a neighbourhood.” It is a well-know story in China that Mencius’ mother moved three times so that her son could have an environment for a good upbringing. From *Three Character Classic* and Mencius’ mother’s story, we see that the ancient Chinese, more than a thousand years ago, believed in the power of the environment and the experiences resulting from it.

Ancient Chinese people's simple belief is echoed in a 20th century educator and philosopher, John Dewey's explicit statement, "education, in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society, must be based upon experience - which is always the actual life-experience of some individual" (Dewey, 1963, p. 89). According to Dewey, experience is the pivot of learning. Narrative researchers such as Clandinin and Connelly believe that teachers have personal practical knowledge, which is "experiential,

¹ *Three Character Classic (San Zi Jing)*: “Written in the 13th century, is not one of the traditional six Confucian classics, but rather is a distillation of the essentials of Confucian thought expressed in a way suitable for teaching young children. Until the latter part of this century, it served as a child's first bit of formal education at home. It is written in couplets of three characters (syllables) for easy memorization. One might call it a Confucian catechism”. (Source: <http://raptor.depauw.edu/sanzijing/index.html>)

valued-laden, purposeful and oriented to practice" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 364). Based on this belief, Clandinin and Connelly use the narrative inquiry method to translate teachers' experiences to professional knowledge, asserting that "experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 19).

It seems that ancient Chinese and modern Western educators would agree that environment, experience, knowledge and the growth of a person are inseparable. In paper one: *Why Narrative and How*, I elaborate the foundations of narrative research approaches in teacher education. Narrative research approaches are valuable because, first of all, experience and education are inseparable. Education must be based upon experience - which is always the actual life-experience of some individual (Dewey, 1936, p. 89). Secondly, teachers' voices need to be heard. According to Butt et al (1992), teachers' perspectives are a fundamental source for school development; however, the effort of involving teachers' voices -- contextual teaching experiences -- in research, reform and curriculum implementation has been missing for twenty-five or more years. Thirdly, teacher knowledge needs to be discovered. Knowing is an experience (Connelly and Clandinin, 1985, p. 178) and researchers need to inquire into teachers' narratives to recover personal practical knowledge from a world of uncertainty like the classroom. Fourthly, to be empowered from personal practical knowledge, teachers need to be reflective practitioners, reflecting on their teaching experiences so as to be able to construct and reconstruct a context-related professional knowledge of their own. Narrative research methods such as narrative inquiry and autobiography are aimed to

² Mencius (Mengzi) (327BC-289BC) is a student of Confucius's grandson, Zi Si, and author of "Mencius", one of the most important scholars of Confucius (Ru Jia) in Chinese history.

retrieve teachers' knowledge from their lives and professional experiences. From the discussion above, it is not impertinent to say that the foundation for narrative research approaches is respecting experiences.

When I found a clue of today's respect for the individual's situated experiences in an ancient Chinese story: Muncius' mother's three-time moving, I suddenly felt that people are all alike because we are all humans, but are all so different because of different experiences. The position of experiences is undoubtedly crucial in education! This paper is an attempt to present the power of experiences in a specific context, attempting to discover the clues from my school student experiences so as to see how they shaped me as a teacher. The direct rationale of this paper is from Knowles case study research: *Models for Understanding Pre-service and Beginning Teachers' Biographies*. Knowles (1992) conducted a case study to investigate beginning teachers' biographies aiming to discover how their classroom teaching is influenced by their early school experiences. His study is based on the assumption that "pre-service teachers' thinking about teaching and their classroom practice is partially shaped by their prior experiences" (p. 99). This assumption is originated from one of two viewpoints on beginning teachers' socialization. The first viewpoint emphasizes teaching experiences and formal educational training:

One view places the role of the student teaching experience, along with the latter years of pre-service teacher education and early in-service teaching, as the major socializing influence. Contextual influences that seem to be important, from this perspective, include: the structure of schools; cooperating teachers; and the powerful ecological force of the classroom, of which miseducative results are possible for the pre-service and student teacher. (p. 100)

The second viewpoint emphasizes beginning teachers' student experiences before they become teachers and "asserts that formal pre-service education and student teaching has little effect on the beliefs and practices of student teachers and beginning teachers" (p. 100). Knowles cited Zeichner and Grant:

This position emphasizes the primacy of biography in the socialization of student teachers and locates the major sources of socializing influence at a point prior to the advent of formal training. (Zeichner and Grant, 1981, cited in Knowles, 1992, p. 100)

Knowles supports the second viewpoint. In his view, "understanding the origins of student teacher perspectives is largely a product of understanding the impact of biography – those experiences that have directly influenced an individual's thinking about teaching and schools" (Knowles, 1992, p. 102).

Knowles's study aims to discover the impact of biography on student/beginning teachers' teaching practice. Although I do not fall into either of the categories, neither a student teacher nor a beginning teacher, my focus is more on biography and its impact on the formation of a teacher. Thus this paper is a self-study based on my biographical stories. Its aim is to discover how my school experiences account for the shaping of me as a teacher, my teaching style in the classroom, my attitude to students and outside classroom landscape. I will discuss methodology considerations and introduce the setting of the research and the way of data/stories collection in Methodology. In the section following: Analysis, the main body of this paper, I first categorize my teacher roles from the data/stories and discuss them respectively with teaching stories and school stories to make a connection between the identified roles and early school experiences. The last sections are left for discussion, reflection -- an attempt to relate the result of the self-study research to a broader context to make it meaningful to a larger audience.

Methodology

As stated earlier, this paper is a self-study research report of a relationship between the experiences and the shaping of a person as a teacher. The experiences were recorded in my autobiographical stories, which were excerpted for the purpose of analysis. Paper one of this folio reviewed the rationale of narrative research approaches in educational research. This paper is to conduct a self-study to uncover a person's student experiences and how they may have impacted on shaping her as a teacher based on autobiographical stories and with a narrative research approach.

Method considerations

The readings on narrative inquiry impress me that personal stories are very powerful; Knowles' case study research and findings on the impact of biography on student/beginning teachers' teaching practice embody my belief in the power of personal stories. As mentioned earlier, Knowles believes that early school learning experiences have an impact on beginning teachers' later teaching performance. In order to prove it, he studied five beginning teachers' biographies of their early school learning experiences. The findings support his belief: There are "explicit links between biography and practice in the classroom" (Knowles, 1992, p. 116). Activated and enlightened by his work, I study my biography of my school learning experiences and attempt to discover similar links between biography and teaching practices. The difference is that this research report is based upon a self-study rather than a case study.

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) wrote a paper: “Guidelines for Quality in Autobiographical Forms of Self-Study Research”, in which they listed nine guidelines for quality autobiographical self-studies. These guidelines are:

- Guideline 1: Autobiographical self-studies should ring true and enable connection (with other’s experiences).
- Guideline 2: Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation.
- Guideline 3: Autobiographical self-study research must engage history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand.
- Guideline 4: Biographical and autobiographical self-studies in teacher education are about the problems and issues that make someone an educator.
- Guideline 5: Authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study.
- Guideline 6: The autobiographical self-study researchers have an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other.
- Guideline 7: Powerful autobiographical self-studies portray character development and include dramatic action: Something genuine is at stake in the study.
- Guideline 8: Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting.
- Guideline 9: Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspective on established truths. (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, pp.16-18)

The guidelines are the leading rules for a whole self-study. Some guidelines are more for specific phases during self-study. For example, Guideline 2: “Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation” and 9: “Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspective on established truths” are more related to the outcome of the self-research. In this self-study, under the sub-topic, “Data”, Guideline 3: “Autobiographical self-study research must engage history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand” and Guideline 8: “Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting” will be especially considered for writing and selecting stories. Guidelines 1, 4, and 8 are for special consideration in analyzing, interpreting the stories. The contexts and authenticity of the stories to categorize the characteristics or problems of teaching are considered to make convincing connections to the school stories.

Guidelines 1, 5, and 6 are very important for self-study. Guideline 1 will be addressed in the section of “Discussion” in order to make the self-study meaningful and relevant to teachers in different contexts. And Guideline 6 will be addressed in “Implication” for the purpose of improving future practice.

The autobiographer

I entered elementary school in the fall of 1969 and finished high school in 1980. In 1984 I graduated from Jiangxi Normal University, Jiangxi, China, and was an ESL teacher in a community college until 1996. This college was a three-year teacher’s college with about twelve academic units. The student body was about 3,000. The goal of the curricula was to train middle school teachers. English was offered to English majors and the students in other departments. The subjects I taught were phonetics, grammar, reading, translation, writing and business English. Presently I am an MA candidate at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Writing stories

(Auto) biography is a record of a person’s experiences and it is also a narrative research method. Knowles (1992) believes that “the formation of the ‘teacher role identity’ was found to be strongly related to biography” (Knowles, 1992, p. 106). Thus the experiences, recorded in (auto) biographies, are the source of data for uncovering the connection between teacher role identities and past school experiences. According to Guideline 8: “Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting”, I added footnotes to give Western readers some knowledge of the background of my stories, and they are also a reminder for me when I am interpreting the stories. Based on Guideline Three, “Autobiographical self-study research must engage

history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand”, I ensure that the stories and the background descriptions are true to my best knowledge. I did not select stories in particular when I was writing them down. I wrote in a chronological order and I believe I wrote down the most impressive incidences because some of the stories have been told several times to my parents, siblings and husband. Thus if there should be a selection, this might have been done by my memory for they are the most influential experiences in my life and therefore stood out in my memory at the time of recalling and writing. It took me about two months recalling and writing down the stories. The excerpts in the sections that follow were all taken from the stories I wrote during this two month-period.

Two types of autobiographical stories

According to Knowles’ studies, early childhood experiences, early teacher role models, and previous teaching experiences are most important in the formation of an ‘image of self as teacher’ (Knowles, 1992, p. 126). Thus my autobiographical stories for this self-study do not include my four-year college education. There are two parts of the autobiography, 1) recalled stories about my teaching at the community college; 2) the stories of my school days from 1969 to 1980³. The school and teaching stories were written in chronological order. After writing, pondering, interpreting my teaching stories, I sorted out three major categories to address my teaching practices: teaching style; attitude to students and education; and attitude to the out-of-classroom landscape, and several other sub-categories under each of the three major categories. According to the characteristics of each of the seven sub-categories, I picked a metaphor for them to

³ An important thing to be noted is that most of the stories fell in the years of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Later Deng Xiao Ping defined it as a ten-year havoc because it disaffirmed almost all Chinese culture except Mao Ze Dong thought.

dramatize the characteristics of my teaching activities. Keeping in mind that biography has an impact on later teaching practice, I read my school learning stories to identify stories that are relevant to the shaping of a teaching performance. Hence regarding the two parts of my autobiographical stories, the school experiences are interpreted to explain my teaching behaviors in and out of the classroom, identified from my teaching stories.

Analysis

I found each of the categories of teaching could be traced back to the events of my school days or my school experiences, which had left a mark on the way I acted as a teacher. The categories and the subcategories are listed below:

1. Teaching style
 - i. Teacher as housekeeper
 - ii. Teacher as product-supplier
 - iii. Teacher as “gardener”
2. Attitude to students and teaching
 - i. Sending charcoal in snowy weather
 - ii. Teacher as an easy-going peddler
 - iii. ESL teaching was a dual-duty task.
3. Attitude to the out-of-classroom landscape
 - i. Reluctance—a ploughing buffalo

An introductory story -- A fundamentally negative childhood

I begin this section with a background story for a better understanding of the context of the autobiography.

I have mentioned that the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)⁴ lasted for ten years. Unfortunately my elementary years were shadowed by the ten-year havoc. Even though my five-year middle school days were after that period, the pressure was still there. Basically I lived through more negative than positive experiences. One of the most impressive preschool experiences described in my autobiography was:

I saw from the window a group of “monsters and demons” -- bad people – who were forced to walk through the street. Each of them had a cone-shaped paper hat on the head and a paperboard hanging down the neck. On the paper hat and the board, was written what type of “demon” he/she was accused of being: landowner, secret agent, capitalist, bourgeois follower, current anti-revolutionary, or historical anti-revolutionary. Among them I saw my father, wearing a cone-shaped paper hat and a paperboard like the others. Later on, I knew his “crime” was “historical anti-revolutionary”. (Preschool experiences)

It seemed that my life changed overnight and a normal life pattern was broken. How terrible it was that one’s hero-like father became an enemy of the society! What a terrible stigma it was to be a counter-revolutionary’s daughter!

I felt ashamed and did not know what to say when my playmate yelled at me, “Your dad is a bad guy!” My life changed over night from a carefree little girl to an “anti-revolutionary’s” daughter. After the day I saw my father walk on the street in 1967, he did not go back home until 1970. (Preschool experiences)

I was too young (five years old) to understand such a sudden and unexpected change. I simply felt that I was no longer the same as I was before, not the same as my playmates. The change was indeed substantial and thorough in my life and for my family.

⁴ Some websites can be visited for more information about the Cultural Revolution, 1. [The Cultural Revolution \(http://members.fortunecity.com/stalinmao/China/Cultural/Cultural.html\)](http://members.fortunecity.com/stalinmao/China/Cultural/Cultural.html), 2. [Posters of the Cultural Revolution, \(http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/poster/exhibintro.html\)](http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/poster/exhibintro.html) 3. [Stefan Landsberger's Chinese Propaganda Poster Pages \(http://www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/index.html\)](http://www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/index.html)

After my father was taken away, "good people", i.e., revolutionaries, came to search our home. They confiscated letters, photos, diaries, and books (no money and jewellery because we did not have any). My father was an elementary teacher before the Cultural Revolution. Since he was labelled an "anti-revolutionary", he was forced to work in the labour camp. In the summer of 1972, my sister and I went to see my father on the work site. The board, the stigma of disgrace, the one with his name and a red italic cross on it, was still there under his bed! Then I saw with my own eyes how my father was working: he was raising pigs, wearing a long leather apron. I knew it was a humiliation. I felt we were different deeply. (Preschool experiences) (Appendix, Poster 1)

In my view, there may be three major types of feeling different. The first type is that people feel good and special to be different when people choose to be that way. For example young girls try not to wear the same clothes. The second type is that people may also feel uncomfortable when being different. This is when people feel out of place. The third type is that people feel humiliated and may lose self-confidence if the difference is forced and at odds with the mainstream which is seen as representing correctness and justice. The feeling of difference in my life unfortunately is the third type. It was a feeling of forced difference, which was the main colour of my life in the school and the root that consciously and unconsciously affected my understanding of teaching. For the remainder of this section, I will interpret my stories to account for the identified characteristics of my teaching one by one.

A teaching style that bears the mark of a particular period of time I had gone through as a school student

"In the context of this chapter, biography refers to those formative experiences which have influenced the ways in which they think about teaching and, subsequently, their actions in the classroom" (Knowles, 1992, p. 99). Knowles' remark can be an introduction remark and theme of this section. In the section -- Analysis, I present each subcategory of my teaching practices with a teaching story and articulate the origin of the teaching style or attitude with my student stories.

1.i. Teacher as housekeeper

That teaching is like housekeeping is interpreted from the first experience as a full-time teacher because there was no attempt to be innovative and creative. My mind was occupied by keeping pace with the routine, doing as everybody else was doing because it was the safe thing to do.

My first teaching task was to teach math sophomores English. The course was called “College English”. When I was teaching at that time, I did not think very much about teaching strategies. Instead my focus was to get the job done. I did the routines as my colleagues and as my teacher did to me: correcting pronunciation, explaining grammatical points, translating from English to Chinese, and practicing sentence structures and so on. It seems very mechanical, but it was safe to stick to tradition. (Who I Was as A Teacher—First teaching experience as a real teacher)

Reflections: To do differently or break routines needs courage, confidence and a sense of belonging. If these attributes have not been encouraged, students’ self-confidence is underdeveloped. As a result, it is likely that people tend to play “safe” games. For marginalized students, timidity is often a characteristic in behavior. Being marginalized, I was deprived of the sense of belonging:

Since we had about 40 students in our class, I thought that I was sure to be on the honour roll having 33 votes. Here came the honour-reporting day at last. The school leaders went from door to door to present the “Five-Good-Student” certificates. I could hear the gong and drum. When my mother and I saw the honour presenting group pass our home, I knew I was not approved (Marginalized elementary years—The first setback)

During the Culture Revolution, almost all units such as schools, institutions, factories, and communes had a performing arts propaganda team, whose duty was to disseminate or give publicity to the Party (Chinese Communist Party) policies in the form of arts performances such as singing, dancing and drama. In the school, to be a member of the propaganda team was the best opportunity to be popular. I dreamed of being a member not only because I wanted popularity but also because I liked singing and could sing well; however, I was not chosen for the honour. “Why not let Zhao Guming try, Teacher Liu?” Maybe the girl’s word reminded her of something. Ms. Liu asked me to go for a try at last. The teachers were satisfied with my performance. However, a few hours before the formal

performance, I was told I could not take part in the formal performance. (Marginalized elementary years—Performing arts propaganda team)

These two accounts impressed me that not being trusted was my condition that could not be changed in the school, the social world for a schoolgirl. Doing well in the school could not change how the society looked at me. It seemed that I could not be recognized by the school authority and could not join in the mainstream of the school. I was marginalized. To do things differently or creatively, people need at least self-confidence and a sense of membership of the community that will respect their contribution. Being neglected by the school I was left little room for the initiative to do things differently. In addition, creativity also needs an environment that supports critical thinking. What the following records is not a critical thinking learning experience, but rather the opposite.

Writing critiques was a significant part in Chinese class during the Cultural Revolution to exercise writing skills and sharpen political awareness. However, in order to make sure the political critique agreed with a particular political campaign, we would copy long paragraphs from the official newspapers of the Party, such as People's Daily. (Learning experiences at the elementary school—At grade five) (Appendix: Poster 3)

The first two stories tell a marginalized experience. The direct impact on me was a feeling of low self-esteem and timidity to the outside world. The third excerpt depicts a learning environment that discourages critical thinking. When I reflect on my teaching role as a housekeeper, I think these experiences are partially responsible for my housekeeping practice, trying to do what was safe and do as my colleagues did.

1.ii. Teacher as product-supplier

Teaching was providing answers and solutions to students' puzzles. This was the teacher's principal duty. It sounds strange and hard to believe. But it is true for particular people and in particular periods of time:

Every class was a challenge to me because I felt that I might not be prepared for the answers to all the puzzles the students might have. Before each class meeting, I tried to make sure that I knew the answers for my puzzles, which included word formation, sentence structures, background knowledge of a story, and so on. Sometimes I spent hours trying to provide an explanation to a puzzle, AP (the Associated Press) for example, which was only a commonplace expression to general American readers. I would be satisfied about myself if I could explain those linguistic and cultural puzzles. (Who I Was as A Teacher—Many puzzles and many unexpected puzzles to prepare)

Reflections: The role as a product-supplier is related to the role of a housekeeper. As mentioned above, my long experience of trying to be politically correct resulted in obtuseness in independent thinking. There are hardly any memories about creative or critical activities in the whole of my autobiographical writing. Teachers and students were all implementers, not decision-makers. Ms. Liu must have felt awkward in deciding whether or not to let a student of an “anti-revolutionary” family have a try:

Ms. Liu, the teacher in charge of our class, had no idea of who was good at performing. So, she let almost every girl have a try. I could hear my heart beating fast waiting for her to call my name. The girls kept coming back from the performing classroom. Ms. Liu still did not call my name. “Why not let Zhao Guming try, Teacher Liu?” a girl sitting beside me said to Ms. Liu. “Well, we also need some good students in the class.” She replied. I did not say a word. Maybe the girl’s word reminded her of something, Ms. Liu asked me to go for a try at last. (Marginalized elementary years—Performing arts propaganda team)

She knew she could not make a decision on her own and her decision had to be congruent with what the political campaign advocated. In addition, the texts were supposed to be politically flawless:

No matter what subject, political correctness must be guaranteed. So, in a Chinese textbook, we learned Mao’s poems and teachings, Dr. Bethune’s⁵ stories,

⁵ Dr. Bethune (1890-1939) was a Canadian Communist Party member. He went to Northern Shanxi province in 1938 to help Chinese Communists fight against Japanese invaders, and died of a blood infection in 1939. At his funeral Mao ZeDong greatly appreciated Dr. Bethune’s selflessness and international communist spirit. Mao’s memorial speech, which is titled *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, was published and became one of the most widely read of Mao’s articles during the Cultural Revolution. Here is an English version of *In Memory of Norman Bethune*: http://www.maoism.org/msw/vol2/mswv2_25.htm.

and stories about the hard lives of the workers and peasants in the old society, before 1949⁶, and stories about today's heroes in socialist construction after 1949. Thus, the variety of texts was limited and those idealistic stories were carefully selected. There should not be any flaws in ideology. Nobody would try to make a creative interpretation of such classic stories. Under such circumstances, teachers had to be suppliers and students had to be receivers. (Learning experiences at the elementary school— The courses I had at elementary school)

After the Cultural Revolution, factual knowledge was emphasized. Political correctness could be obtained by *staying away* from talking about politics. Math, physics, biology and chemistry were safe to teach and learn because they were ideology-free. English was also thought to be ideology free in terms of linguistics. And because of the resumption of national entrance examinations to colleges, the purpose of learning was directly linked with passing the entrance examinations, especially for the high school students.

Reflecting on the last year at high school, I really experienced the meaning of learning for tests. For example, because listening was not tested in the English exam, our focus was only on sentence structures, vocabulary for the written test and everyday English conversations for the oral test. Besides the textbooks, exercise books, which collected the questions that had been asked in previous entrance examinations, were most important for preparing for the exams. (At senior high: 1978-1980)

Exercise books were collections of previous exams and answers. Students needed this kind of exercise to sharpen the skills of solving would-be asked questions in the entrance exams. I experienced two important examinations. One was a countywide high school entrance examination in 1978. The other was 1980's national entrance examination. (At senior high: 1978-1980)

It seems that if learning for tests was the major and most impressive learning experience, the learning experience is likely to be carried on to one's own classroom teaching practice, even though the teaching environment is changed: no longer teaching

⁶1949 is the year when the People's Republic of China was founded. From 1911 to 1949, the official name of China was Republic of China. Before that for over two hundred years, China was ruled by emperors of the Qing Dynasty.

high school graduates to prepare the college examinations. Thus, when I was teaching college students who did not have to pass national college entrance examinations, I still based my teaching on my own experience of learning, teaching as a product-supplier treating the students as knowledge receivers.

1.iii. Teacher as “gardener”—a teaching practice reflecting rote learning past

Gardening is goal-oriented. As a gardener, he/she knows his/her goal and also should be well aware of the character of the plants so as to provide the right nutrients and environment for them to grow. The attributes for a gardener are teacher gardeners’ as well. To teach as gardener, teachers take care of students so as to provide what the students need to achieve the learning goal, such as individual’s abilities, learning environment and appropriate teaching strategies. As I was reading my teaching stories, I found that one of them is similar to the teaching style of gardening in terms of goal-oriented teaching. Similar to the gardener who with the duty to take care of the plants, say, tomatoes, does not expect anything else but tomatoes to grow into a harvest to achieve fullness, I, a teacher, wanted to see nothing more than the students master listening, speaking, reading and writing, the four skills of learning English and the major goal to achieve. However, in order to achieve the goal, my teaching strategy basically relied on rote learning. And “Practice makes effort.” was the “theoretical” basis.

Comprehensive English, the course I taught, as the name suggests, was supposed to cover all the four skills. Once in a while, students would come up to me and asked for advice for learning techniques. I always borrowed the English proverb: “Practice makes perfect.” as my advice: exercising phrases, language usage time and time again not only to memorize it, but also to develop a habit, an automatic reflex. Thus, the two tasks for me in teaching were 1) assisting students to understand the formation of sentences, the meaning, and 2) helping them to practice the structures to memorize their usage. It was my goal of teaching and also the goal of learning for my students. (Who I was as a teacher—Two tasks of teaching)

Teaching as gardening requires teachers to care for individual needs to ensure the suitable nutrients and environments. My rote learning method used to achieve learning goals is not completely for teaching as gardening because of the lack of a sense of individual consideration and the simple rote learning: drill exercising teaching method. I used this metaphor because it partially illustrates a teaching practice with specific learning goals, passing examinations, for example. In this sense the practice is similar to that of a gardener with a clear goal to harvest the fruit from the plants. In both cases the goal is to achieve the expected end product.

Reflections: The teacher role as a “gardener” was an extension of the role of a supplier. To be a supplier, the main duty was to provide answers, solutions. To be a “gardener”, the duty was to supply and also with a goal to achieve for teaching and learning. As mentioned above, two objectives in teaching ESL were identified from the stories: 1) helping students understand the formation of the sentences and the meaning, and 2) enabling them to practice the structures to memorize their usage with a guiding strategy: “Practice makes perfect”. As part of my own long-time personal learning experiences, “Practice makes perfect” is reflected in my autobiographical writing on English learning strategies and this is identified as a reason for me to encourage students to do accordingly.

As for learning strategies, I think the most impressive was “Practice makes perfect.” I valued early mornings the most because I believed that “spring is the best time of the year; while morning is the best time in the day” for memorizing the answers to whatever questions: historical events, English grammar, geographical facts, political terms. (At junior high -- Learning English)

At a time, CCTV (Chinese Central TV) was broadcasting English learning programs. The most popular one was BBC’s English learning program: *Follow Me*. In the late 70s and early 80s, the television set was a luxury for most families. Since my family did not have one, I walked to the school to watch TV

English learning programs. Another popular English learning program was VOA's (the Voice of America) radio English learning program, *English 900*. Both of the programs were kind of conversational English, especially *English 900*, but *Follow Me* was more situational. (At junior high—Learning English)

These experiences impressed me and meant to me that the more exposure to language learning the better. This learning experience also became my teaching advice to my students, i.e., there was no shortcut to learn a language, practicing was the only answer. To achieve the learning goal meant time and energy investment. It is correct to say that there is no easy way for learning, but a monotonous learning experience was the result of the teacher gardener's desire for an end product rather than an exciting process.

An attitude to students and ESL teaching that can be traced back its origin from the early school days

2. i. Sending charcoal in snowy weather

A Chinese phrase – *sending charcoal in snowy weather* – would be an appropriate metaphor to describe another aspect of my teacher-student relationship. Sending charcoal in snowy weather is a figurative expression meaning helping the needy. Giving attention to the needy/the “inferior” was interpreted from my autobiographical writing:

The newly elected class monitor attracted my attention. He was from a poor rural county in southern Jiangxi province. Except for a few student friends from his hometown, he had no ties in the capital city. I could see his desire to turn his life cycle around: coming to the capital city for a college degree and realize his family dream -- leaving the countryside for a better life. He came to visit me on a regular basis updating me with what was going on in the class or asking for advice, suggestions. As we got to know each other better, he would tell me his past, his family, and his hometown. He wanted to leave his hometown because he saw with his own eyes that the “privileged” had an easier life than ordinary families. He said he would want to go to the coastal cities after graduation. He even told me that if he had a fortune he would invest the money to his hometown. I knew for him the bridge to college education was built by sleepless nights of studying. “How can I help him, a self-reliant young man? I should encourage and will help him as long as I am able to.” I told myself. (Who I was as a teacher-- Class monitor and me)

This attitude was also reflected in classroom teaching.

Because the size of the class, it was not the case that every student had a chance to get involved in classroom activities such as answering questions, reading aloud a paragraph to the class, sharing a piece of writing and so on. My principle of distributing the opportunity was to encourage the shyest, the quietest, and the seeming least popular students. I remember I called a girl on purpose to answer a question that I was sure she knew the answer because I wanted to give her, a girl from a peasant's family and always sitting in the corner, particular attention. I believed teacher's attention could build up her confidence in classroom participation (Who I was as a teacher-- Class monitor and me)

Balancing the attention to the whole class should be a teacher's common practice.

But to me it had special meaning and understanding, which can be related to my school experiences that I interpreted to be "sending charcoal in snowy weather", an attitude of caring the needy and "inferior".

Reflections: Several schoolteachers were mentioned in my autobiographical stories. Among them Ms. Yan's role was very special. She did what other teachers didn't dare: trusting a student from a "politically incorrect" family. Her impression was profound: "I was very thankful to Ms. Yan. I took a train to visit her at a spring break in 1982, when I was a sophomore at college" (Marginalized elementary years: 1969-1976—Teacher Yan). Obviously, Ms. Yan served as a role model of caring the needy.

In the previous semesters, no matter how many votes I had and how well I had done, I was never given a position on the class leadership team. As usual, at the beginning of the third academic year, the class gathered to vote for a new class monitor and four other class cadres. As usual, I was nominated and received 2/3 of the votes. Out of my expectation, this time the votes counted. Ms. Yan announced that I was on the leadership team as a representative of study. ... I was publicly recognized as a student leader! (Marginalized elementary years: 1969-1976—Teacher Yan).

A little attention was so precious for a student in an "inferior" situation that the detailed memory lasts the longest.

Ms Yan not only put me on the class committee, but also gave me a chance to participate in a formal on stage performance. It was the first time I, representing the grade, performed in front of a large audience. My brother was among them.

He said to my mother that he could not hear others' singing but mine. I knew I was excited and sang as high as the song demanded:

*My little brother is 3-foot tall,
Holding a shovel on the shoulder, he goes to work.
Open a piece of land for seeds to grow,
And dig a ditch to let clean water run without end.
The seedling drinks the water,
And looks at him with smile.
'Oh, my little brother, I understand what you want,
To be a farmer, you have already started perfecting your skills'.
(Marginalized elementary years: 1969-1976—Teacher Yan).*

The stories were precious for me, a young girl who had long been left out of public recognition and was forbidden to join the propaganda performance team, an honourable extracurricular activity. They let me realise how important it was for teachers to show care for the inferior or the felt inferior. They were so impressive that I can still remember the lines and sing the song. When I read the teaching stories of caring for the needy, I immediately linked this teaching to my school stories about Teacher Yan and named this teaching as “sending charcoal in snowy weather”, a Chinese metaphor praising the people who are caring.

2. ii. Teaching like an easy-going peddler—An unassertive element regarding to teacher-student relationship

Some teachers are assertive, radiating self-confidence and authority; some are not so assertive in dealing with students' unacceptable requests. Sometimes to be assertive is very important in efficiency and disciplining. An autobiographical narrative described me with an image like an easy-going peddler, hesitating to turn students down:

Ms. Zhou was a colleague of mine. The most remarkable characteristic of her teaching was her strong self-confidence. Her confidence, when in the classroom teaching, was partially transformed to non-negotiability. For her, it was non-negotiable with the students about such things as how much and what to be tested in the final and the like. Compared with her, I was not that assertive. I had principles, but I was more likely to be affected by my students' requests and was very soft in dealing with their requests about assignments, the due time of the

assignment, etc. What was ironical was that my “leniency” did not work well for me. In contrast, Ms Zhou’s class was sort of more disciplined than mine. There may have been other reasons for her better student evaluation than that of mine, but I thought her non-negotiable attitude might be interpreted as having confidence in what she was doing. And I always wanted to be like her. (Who I was as a teacher—A comparison)

Reflections: Marginalized or depressed experiences dominated my school days recorded in the autobiographical writing. A feeling of being out of the mainstream resulted in lacking a sense of belonging and self-confidence. These experiences may account for various hesitance in my teaching practices such as the mentioned “playing safe games”, and a conservative teaching style: “teaching as a product-supplier”. Nonassertiveness should also be related to lived negative experiences. Even though Ms. Yan helped me regain a little confidence, being a political inferior went on with my school life until 1978:

Junior high students had an honor organization – the Youth League. Ambitious students wanted to join the League and the earlier, the better. I submitted my application at the first semester of junior high. Ping, my best friend at junior high, said to me that Mr. Liu, the teacher in chief of our class, told her that even though I was one of the top students in the class, I could not be admitted to the Youth League in the first batch. (At junior high: 1976-1978—Clinging political shadow)

This story was a clear message that “You do not belong”. There was no place to play master to be assertive. From the stories, we can read that there were many things that were out of my-control:

The following day (the honour reporting day), Ms. Tian, the teacher in charge of the class, asked me to her office. She told me: You did well in the courses (I got two full marks for Chinese and math.), but not good enough for the title: Five-Good, which means you need to be good in political awareness and other areas, not only in study I vaguely knew why I was not good in political awareness. I vaguely knew I could not change it. (Marginalized elementary years: 1969-1976—The first setback)

A few hours before the performance, I was told I could not take part in the formal performance. No explanation, no comfort, no sorry. I did not need one for I had

got used to such disappointment. (Marginalized elementary years: 1969-1976—Performing arts propaganda team)

These experiences depict a girl who accepted everything no matter how unfair it was. There was simply no chance for the development of a habit to be a little assertive, learning some skills to negotiate for self-benefit. These experiences must have left an impact on the teacher role identification sometimes as an easy-going peddler, yielding to make a deal. A consequence might be a lack of an important management skill—decisiveness.

2.iii. ESL teaching – dual-duty task

One of the narratives from the autobiography is about a self-felt obligation to be an ESL teacher and a moral guide as well, i.e., to draw students' attention to moral values in ESL learning. The obligation to teach language and at the same time remind the students of the moral message of language materials was a teaching philosophy which regarded second language instruction as a dual-duty task, namely no matter what subject matter to teach, I should see teaching as having two functions: to train the students to become capable professionals and simultaneously educate them to be responsible social persons.

English as a foreign language was considered to be a skill or a tool. So, the teachers' job was to train the students to learn the skill well, and this usually was also the students' expectation. I did not know why I did a little differently. While I was in the classroom, I tried to help the students not only literally understand the meaning of an English passage but also its historical background so that students got an integrated understanding of a story. For example, I wanted my students to get a message of honesty and forgiveness from "Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree" besides the knowledge of syntax and rhetoric. (Who I was as a teacher—Language and messages)

I remember we had a text about the American Civil War. An old lady of the Confederate found a seriously wounded Union soldier in her backyard. She did not report him because she put herself in the soldier's mother's position: She must

worry about her son just like me. So, she risked her life crossing the border to the Union controlled area to ask for medicine for the wounded soldier because she thought it was not fair to use the scarce medicine of the Confederate to treat a Union soldier... .. The story could be read merely as a dramatic story in a language class. But I did not want my students to read only for literal meaning, but also think in a moral scope. What I usually would do was to raise some questions for them to ponder just on the moral values the author(s) brought up even though such questions usually were not asked in the examinations (Who I was as a teacher—Language and messages)

Reflections: It was the ESL teachers' task to teach students such language knowledge as grammar, syntax and other skills. Foreign language teachers were not expected to be moral educators. A sense of responsibility to facilitate moral discussion was an unusual act in an ESL classroom. However, the root for this can be traced back in my autobiographical stories, those troubled experiences partially resulting from lack of independent judgment. After reading my school stories, I think there is a reason for viewing ESL teaching as a dual-duty task, if a person is a victim of a mass movement out of some people's irresponsibility, in which people fought against each other to protect themselves under the name of being a national leader's loyalist. Let's read the following excerpts to connect the self-felt obligation to be a moral guide in an ESL teaching classroom.

If somebody would ask me why I had brought up moral discussion in the ESL classroom, I would answer:

The Cultural Revolution was a mass movement, in which people fought against each other to protect themselves under the name of a national leader's loyalist. A direct result was the loss of trust. I was deprived of the opportunities for honor titles and to take part in on-stage performances because the society did not trust me, a daughter of an "anti-revolutionary" family. What if teachers would do something to help regain trust and respect among people? Human society is too complicated to draw a line to distinguish black and white, good and evil. The society is made of individuals. A society of variety cannot use a mass movement like the Cultural Revolution to solve human conflicts. My father was not a pro-Communist, but it did not mean that he was a bad guy and should be brought to public insult. I hoped my students to get some useful messages from the story of

a mother in the American Civil War. I hoped that they could have a chance to think independently regarding moral judgment to avoid reoccurrence of such a tragedy like the Cultural Revolution since my experiences told me that responsible and morally sensitive citizens were the foundation of a good-ordered society. (The connection between teacher role identity and school experiences—ESL teaching, a dual-duty task)

Obviously the answer shows the power of my lived experiences in the formation of such a classroom practice as a moral guide. My unhappy experiences in the school did not result from the fact that I couldn't do well but rather from a disordered ideology, an either-black-or-white judgment. Moreover the criteria of the either-black-or-white judgment were constituted by one single person, the top leader of the country. The cause of a mass movement like the Cultural Revolution is too complicated for me to discuss here. However my belief might have been that a destructive mass movement would not have happened if people had had their own independent judgment. To explain my teaching as a moral guide, I would say that the incentive was originated from the occurrences that happened to my family and myself during the Cultural Revolution. The reason that my father was accused of being a "historical anti-revolutionary" was that in the university he was a supporter to the then Nationalist government. I was discriminated against in school because I was his daughter. We both were the victims of the idea of either-black-or-white judgment. I believed that if independent thinking were encouraged, there would be less chance for the occurrence of the so-called Cultural Revolution. Thus to be a moral guide in teaching was actually learned from my experiences.

An attitude to the out-of-classroom landscape that has an obvious link to the experiences lived in the years at school

3.i. Reluctance – the ploughing buffalo

One of the teaching stories tells of my indifferent attitude to an out-of-classroom work. The reluctance was like of a buffalo plowing in the sun. My reluctance and perfunctoriness in handling out-of-classroom activities can be read from the following description:

Besides classroom teaching, my attitude to the administrative activities outside classroom was kind of perfunctory because I thought they were just formalities. Sometimes the college would organise some activities to promote quality teaching, a teaching plan exhibition, for example. I did not think it would help improve quality teaching. Reluctantly I took part because every faculty member had to. I had a teaching plan, of course, for each class, but some were only teaching notes, memoirs and some were not even written down. Therefore I had to make up the incomplete teaching plans for the previous teaching. It took me a couple of days to finish the job! (Who I was as a teacher—The landscape outside of the classroom)

Working on the same landscape, some people would do a little differently, in a more active manner:

After I came back from a one-year in-service training program in Shanghai, the head of our department reminded me indirectly that I should also pursue political growth. He told me that Ms. Z, my colleague, had applied for Party membership. I knew he meant well; however, his word went in one ear and out the other. I did not even follow up his words and directed the conversation to the learning experiences in Shanghai. (Who I was as a teacher—The landscape outside of the classroom)

Reflections: The lived experiences in the schools offer a clue of explanation to different reactions to the same professional landscape. To be an active participant, one should at least have a sense of belonging, a feeling of being part a community. With out this feeling, a passive, indifferent attitude may result. From the introductory story, we see that the main theme of the childhood was a negative one. This attitude is a comprehensive reaction based on the lived stories of refusal and disappointment throughout the whole school years. For example, being told that no matter how good I was in schoolwork, it was impossible for me to be admitted to the Youth League in the first batch. As a result,

“I did not submit an application for the Youth League membership until the spring of 1980, the last semester year at the high school when the teacher in chief of our class asked to do so” (At junior high: 1976-1978 – Clinging political shadow). Thus marginalized, left-out school experiences should be at least partially responsible for my reluctance and indifference to what I saw as formalities. This can be traced back to elementary school days:

One morning I begged my father: "Dad, please help me think of a rhyme to criticise Confucian feudalist ideas." Maybe Confucian thought was too complicated for an eleven-year-old to critique or maybe there were too many these kinds of rhymes to write. My father did not say anything and a few minutes later, he spoke out:

San Zi Jing (Three Character Classic) is a bad fairy.

It tells nothing but harmful ideas.

Let us pick up our pens,

Let us get started to criticise it.

At the end of that semester, my school report stated that I was an active participant in the campaign to criticize Lin Biao⁷ and Confucius and wrote seven children's rhymes. But I knew at least one of the seven rhymes was written by my father. (Learning experiences at the elementary school—At grade four) (Appendix: Poster 2)

I link my reluctance to out-of-classroom activities to my experienced formalism in the school. “Criticise Lin Biao and Confucius” was a national campaign and everybody should be involved including eleven-year old school children. In the campaign, what really mattered was the participant's position, not people's opinions of Lin Biao and Confucius. Confucius is a philosopher. His thoughts on nation-governing were the most influential and far-reaching in Chinese history, and the cornerstone of thinking. When the campaign defined Confucius thoughts as decadent, everybody had to echo the definition to avoid being accused of being an anti-revolutionary, running dogs of

⁷ Lin refers to Lin Biao, the deputy Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and successor to Mao Zedong. He, his wife, son and several other followers died of a plane crash in Mongolia when flying to the former USSR.

Li Biao. As a result, the political campaign was just a formality for ordinary people, and had no substantial meaning. My own experience of politics led me to see out-of-classroom activities such as the teaching notes exhibition as meaningless formalities. If I had to participate, I was a passive buffalo, moving only when being whipped.

Results

The categorized characteristics of a teacher (myself) in and out of the classroom are all interpreted from the autobiographical stories—teaching part. From the other part of the autobiography—early school experiences, an invisible bridge is felt that leads to later teacher performance behaviors. The relationship between teacher behavior and early school experiences is illustrated in the following table.

School experiences	Teaching style/ Attitude to students and teaching	Examples of behaviors in as teacher
Depressed experiences and non-critical learning environment	As housekeeper	Follow the rules, do as the others do, have little intention to be creative
Non-critical learning experience and learning for tests	As product-supplier	Weak sense of problem-solving teaching
Rote learning and hard working in the middle school for a goal	As “gardener”	Assist students to meet a goal of learning, passing a test for example, with monotonous teaching strategy, rote learning for example
Lack of confidence from marginalized childhood experiences	Like easy-going street peddler	Not assertive, inclined to give in with students’ request
Experience of being left out and teacher role model (Ms. Yan)	Like charcoal sender in snowy weather	Caring teaching and pay attention to the students from “inferior” background
Negative childhood experiences during the Cultural Revolution	As moral guide	Balance language training and prompt of moral value awareness

Externalist learning experiences and negative experiences out of being judged to be “politically incorrect”	Like a reluctant ploughing buffalo	Adoption of perfunctoriness and indifference
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Discussion

Similar to Knowles’ (1992) statement, “Family and early childhood experiences significantly affected performance in the classroom” (p. 127), the findings of the self-study on my biography reveal tangible evidence that lived school experiences do serve as important determiners in the formation of a teacher. What I experienced in early school life influenced me as a teacher in one way or another no matter whether the experiences were positive or negative. For example, left-out experiences might have been responsible for my being unassertive in making decisions, caring for the “underprivileged”, and sensitive to the perceived formalities in the out-of-classroom landscape.

Felt positive learning experiences could be a positive influence on teacher’s performances. Ms. Yan’s (My third grade Chinese teacher) nondiscrimination to me was a role model, which reflected in my practices as caring teaching and her model was translated to a role of a sender of charcoal in snowy weather.

Negative learning experiences may be both positively and negatively interpreted for teacher role identification. For example, my elementary school experiences were shadowed by an out-of-control pressure that myself, my family and school teachers could do little about. The interpretation of the negative experiences affected my attitude positively. The positive interpretation of “being left out” was that it resulted in caring

teaching, treating the students with the same degree of attention regardless of their background. Therefore I acted like a charcoal seller in snowy weather to show concerns to the needy. In contrast, negative experiences such as being seen as a political inferior were interpreted negatively in my attitude to college vocational, social, political activities. I had no interest and was a reluctant participant. However, no matter what experiences, positive or negative, a person had experienced in the school, they were influential for later teacher role identification, and in and out-of classroom behavior.

As stated by Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), autobiographical self-studies “should enable connection with readers’ experiences so as to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other” (p. 17), and “authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study” (p.18). While discussing the findings from my self-study on the impact of school experiences, I would like to mention some commonality between my self-study and Knowles’ findings from his case study. We probably can conclude that even though school stories are different, their impact on teaching performance is similar.

I had management problems acting like an easy-going peddler. I link this with the lack of confidence to be assertive from my long-time experiences of being put down through the whole of my elementary school years. Cynthia was one of the five participants in Knowles’ case study. She failed her student teaching due to her personality and management skills. Knowles related Cynthia’s failure to her insecure life at home and in the school. As a result, “Cynthia never developed the confidence that was necessary to deal with junior high school students, but rather, was hesitant about most of her actions” (Knowles, 1992, pp. 122.). Cynthia and I had similar problems. Our early

school experiences of being insecure and being put down had a direct connection to our management problems: we were unassertive in the classroom.

Although this self-study aimed at finding connections between school student experiences and the shaping of one teacher – myself – involved, the message from it is clear: As Knowles found in his case study research, for teachers, their early school experiences as learners do influence them on and off the teaching platform in this or that manner! Childhood and school experiences do have an impact on teachers' teaching performance. What other messages we learn from the self-study?

Implications

There is no doubt that experiences have an impact on people's lives. As for teachers, their school experiences influence their teaching practice due to the fact that "future teachers do not come to teacher education and beginning teaching ignorant and unskilled as to the mechanics, process and rules of their place of work – they already know classrooms" (Knowles, 1992, p. 101). According to Lortie (1975), "years of unformulated experience as a student precede formal socialization (formal teacher education); teachers themselves emphasize the importance of the private experiences they have as beginning teachers" (Cited in Knowles, 1992, p. 101). Studying my teaching practice, student experiences did affect me as a teacher in and out of classroom performance. Obviously teachers' personal practices are valuable; but for a better performance in a situated condition, to be reflective on one's own teaching is crucial since past student experiences are not always interpreted and translated into a healthy practice. For example, it might not be a good translation from rote learning to a rote-

learning teaching practice. Here the implication from the fact that past student experiences and later teaching practices are inseparable is that teachers also need to reflect on and elaborate self teaching style that comes from experiences, especially those experiences that are not well refined so as to be a beneficiary from self experiences, generator of productive practical knowledge. This reflection is important according to Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) Guideline 6: "The autobiographical self-study researchers have an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other."

Conclusion

This self-study uncovers a relation between school student experiences and later teaching practice. This relation has Chinese characteristics and is time specific. Nevertheless the findings obviously have enriched Knowles' statement: "Personal biography seems to have profound effects on what occurs in the individual's classroom and the concept teacher of role identity is central for understanding the process by which prior experiences are transformed into classroom practice" (Knowles, 1992, p.126). Past experiences can never be experienced the same in terms of time and space; however, they never completely leave our minds either. Later in life, when we encounter similar situations, the most deeply felt experiences will break out from somewhere in our mind to give us a push for actions. Experiences indeed need to be studied because they are paramount in the becoming of teachers and sources of information for researchers and teachers themselves to read about for understanding teaching and practical knowledge. Hence for bettering teaching and understanding teachers and their teaching, experience

needs to be studied and “study(ing) it narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 19) should be a valuable practice.

At the very beginning, I mentioned a famous story: Mencius’ mother’s three-time moving, which is also told in *Three Character Classic*. Her perceptual knowledge taught her she should move to a place where her son – Mencius – could have the best experiences. History also tells us her son was a beneficiary from her awareness of the crucial influence from childhood experience, and became a great philosopher in Chinese history. My self-study reveals a modern version of the impact the school student experiences had stamped on my teacher role identity, either positively or negatively.

Regarding the importance of school experiences, Knowles’ conclusion was:

Childhood experiences contributed greatly to the ways in which the individuals thought about teaching and acted in the classroom. Personality, socialization skills, self-confidence, habitual ways of dealing with situations, work habits and orientation to work and responsibility were important arenas of experience that surface in their practices, particularly their coping strategies, and many of these have their origins in patterns of family interactions and demands (Knowles, 1992, p. 129).

This conclusion also can fit into this self-study research and what could be learned from my self-study is that school teachers should provide positive teacher roles, and prevent students from negative experiences so that parents like Mencius’ mother would have fewer worries.

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Appendix

Chinese Propaganda Poster-- Cultural Revolution Campaigns
(Source from: Cultural Revolution Campaigns , Stefan Landsberger's Chinese
Propaganda Poster Pages)

Poster 1



Poster theme: Down with Monsters and Demons (1967)

Poster 2



打好批林批孔的人民战争 CON. SPRT

Poster: Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius (1974)

Poster 3



**把反击右倾翻案风
的斗争进行到底！**

col. SHL

Poster: "Criticize Rightist Deviationism" (1976)
Theme: Writing "big character" posters

Folio Paper Three

**A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE IN TEACHING ESL
WRITING**

A Narrative Perspective in Teaching ESL Writing

Introduction -- Motive of the Paper

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four skills for English learners in the classrooms in China. However, it was not until the third year that a writing course was offered in the English Department when I was studying at Jiangxi Normal University in China. And it was only offered for two semesters¹, which was short in time compared to other courses such as reading and listening, which were offered at least for two or three academic years. Although it was ranked as one of the four skills in English learning, writing was perceived to be an advanced level of acquisition of a foreign language and the most difficult in teaching and learning. Generally, I had good marks for most of the courses I did at the college except writing. As far as I know, most of my classmates were not satisfied with the marks of this course, and neither were most of my students when I was teaching them the English composition course. From my experience, I believe that English learners in China may think writing is drudgery because the same amount of or even more effort results in disappointing recognition; at the same time ESL writing teachers may feel little satisfaction when they see much less achievement in students' writing than in other skills.

Some teachers and learners, like me, took the result for granted: "Writing in a foreign language is just difficult." While I was conceiving of a folio for my master's degree, I was introduced to the narrative inquiry research approach. I was more and more interested in this idea as I read on and on. The theme of narrative inquiry is that teachers

¹ One academic year has two semesters, spring and summer.

and their felt surroundings as a whole, either past or present, ought to be a focus for educational researchers. Researchers should make meaning of teachers' lives rather than exercising a "theory-driven practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 8). If a researcher-teacher relationship is teacher-centered, then students should be the center in teacher-student relationship. A student-centered teaching approach is not a new notion at all. However, narrative inquiry as a research method lights a spark in my mind that it can be a concept of teaching for ESL writing teachers so that ESL learners would be able to have a personal, meaningful experience and teachers and learners would not see teaching and learning English writing as drudgery. Thus this paper is attempting to discover a logical relationship between narrative inquiry, a research approach and ESL composition teaching so as to reach a goal that ESL composition is both enjoyable and productive.

There will be three major segments of this paper. The first segment is an account of ESL writing I knew as a college student and the ESL teacher. The second is a brief review of four approaches to ESL writing instruction - controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes. The third section is a presentation of translating the concept of narrative inquiry into ESL composition instruction and the feasibility of doing so.

ESL Writing I Experienced

Story one: as student

As mentioned earlier, I had my first English writing course at the third year at the college. The instructor was Professor Zhang, one of the few instructors having the title of professor in the Foreign Languages Department and well respected as an expert in the

language of English. Like the rest of my classmates, I was excited that we had finally moved on to the advanced level of English learning and were able to sit in Professor Zhang's classroom.

For the previous two years, all our textbooks were written by Chinese English educators. But for the course of writing, our textbook was all English, and written by native speakers of English. Our textbook was *The Writer's Options* (Daiker, et al., 1982). As far as grammatical knowledge was concerned, the book and our command of English matched. Professor Zhang went directly to the text, explaining on the blackboard the alternatives of combining a group of separated sentences and which ones could be the most coherent. The example Professor Zhang demonstrated was a description of the start of a hockey game:

The referee blew his whistle.
 The referee called to the team captains.
 The referee dropped the puck.
 The referee began the game. (Daiker, et al., 1982, p. 2)

We did many sentence-combining exercises, which were the major task if not the only one for the whole semester. The following semester was like the previous one. Professor Zhang was still teaching. We continued with *The Writer's Option*. Professor Zhang introduced a new foreign textbook – *From sentences to paragraphs* (I did not find the book at Queen Elizabeth II Library). Later I found out that this book was one of a series composed of three levels: from words to sentences, from sentences to paragraphs and from paragraphs to an essay. To some extent, I found the exercise interesting as I had done little of this kind of exercise before. But even though he was one of the few well-recognized experts in English, Professor Zhang did not impress me more than other teachers due to the fact that I didn't feel achievement. The course did not have a clear

goal. It went randomly. For example we jumped into practicing sentence combinations without a warm-up or introductory section. And it seemed that the course could end anywhere in the textbook. Actually, we did not finish the textbook in two semesters. In the first we started from using participles and ended with noun substitutes in the second semester. The lack of a sense of achievement probably mostly resulted from the fact that we were not really involved in the writing since we did not write any topic essays that we could really relate to personally.

I am not blaming Professor Zhang for not having a specific teaching goal because at the time I was at the university in his class, it was only the sixth year after the resumption of the system that high school graduates could compete to enter colleges and universities through national examinations. Before that, university students were recommended by leaders from factories, communes, military or other working units. At that time, the focus of college education was on politics not academic growth. Thus when I was in Professor Zhang's class, the top priority for universities and professors was to get the institution going. Therefore the attention to quality teaching was overshadowed by administrative problems. This was an objective condition for my dissatisfaction with the writing course; however, the direct cause was that the writing class did not arouse my interest. There was no personal involvement in the course. And yet, in comparison to reading and listening, writing needs more input from within, the writers.

Story two: as teacher

I became an ESL teacher the same year I graduated from the university. My major teaching experience was teaching phonetics, grammar and reading. I do not remember under what scenario, the Dean asked me to teach two semesters of writing. He

said that since there was no standard textbooks, I was free to choose one. Unfortunately, I did not find any Chinese version of ESL writing textbooks. I decided to use *The Writer's Options*, which Professor Zhang used to teach me with at the college. I must say that neither my students nor I enjoyed the course as we did other courses. For example, in a reading class, no matter what strategies the teacher taught, students could always find meaning in all kinds of reading materials: prose, plays, and short stories. And the teacher could help figure out complicated structures until they understood what a story truly meant. Even seemingly boring phonetics was more enjoyable because the product out of the potentially boring process of practicing and imitating was tangible and encouraging. In contrast, in the writing class, which met once a week for two hours, the students' major duty was doing assignments, assigned from an alien textbook, and my major duty was correcting their errors. I usually started the class with discussing one or two sentence combination exercises from the textbook as examples. Because each type of exercise was practicing a particular English structure, say, present participle, the grammatical structure was the focus of attention while doing the combination exercise. After the discussion, students began individual practicing, sometimes in the class, sometimes after class as homework. If there were some common errors from previous homework, I would point them out in the class and demonstrate on the blackboard. Because there were no standard right combinations, I struggled to convince the students of the "best" combination. But sometimes I could not convince myself. I might have felt something was missing because neither my students nor I were satisfied. Thus I also assigned topic essays or free writing, trying to make writing a little more interesting and personal. But I gave up after a while because I found the workload much too heavy due to many more unexpected

grammatical mistakes I thought I needed to correct. Just as I was not impressed by Professor Zhang, my students were not impressed by me either. According to my memory, my students did not do well as far as the marks were concerned.

I didn't think too much of the dissatisfaction at that time. But when I am recalling the experiences as student and teacher in English writing class now, with the idea of the narrative inquiry approach in which the researched are more personally involved, I believe that the dissatisfaction in the English writing class was due to a lack of writers' personal involvement in the learning process.

I have just described an immature novice teacher's practice. However, undoubtedly there are ways for a better performance in an ESL writing classroom. A narrative perspective may be one of them. I will present this opinion following a brief review of ESL writing approaches.

Approaches to ESL Composition Instruction

Controlled composition

Contrary to free composition, which means "writer-originated discourse" (Silva, 1990, p. 12) and relies on creativity and "inventiveness" (Pincas, 1962, in Silva & Matsude 2001, p. 1), controlled composition has its root in the belief that "learning is habit formation" (Silva, 1990, p. 12). If it is a habit, the habit must be right. Thus the purpose of controlled composition is to prevent language learners from making mistakes. "By certain controls..., the student is helped (guided, directed, controlled...) to produce a correct composition" (Paulston, 1972, p.37). Anita Pincas (1962) states very clearly that "For the foreign learner, any free, random, hit-or-miss activity is eliminated wherever

possible, so that errors arising from the native-to-target language transfer can be avoided” (In Silva & Matsuda, 2001, p. 1). Some advocates of controlled composition even believe that to correct an error is a loss for habit formation because for correcting a mistake, the writer is actually “cancelling one wrong practice with one right practice” (Rojas, 1968, p. 127). Thus, foreign students do strictly controlled exercise and practice only according to models so as to minimize the chances of making mistakes. Examples will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

If learning a language is a process of habit formation, the habit has to be developed with abundant controlled writing exercises so that writers can manipulate that language, i.e., its patterns, structures, and grammatical rules. The implication is that ESL writers must exercise to manipulate the target language to form a right habit of using English. The theme of the methodology is imitation, and drill and practice such as “substitutions, transformations, expansions, completions” (Silva, 1990, p.12). An example of the grammatical transformation exercise was demonstrated in Ross’ *Controlled Writing* (1968):

1. A fellow gave me some directions. (Matrix)
2. I met the fellow in the student center. (constituent
 {whom})
3. A fellow whom I met in the student center gave me some directions.
(p.225)

The first two simple sentences were transformed into sentence three, a compound sentence with an attributive clause. The following are two examples of exercises of single and multiple substitution:

1. I feel tired today. (Paulston, 1972, p. 42)
 sick
 exhausted
 horrible

2. The children stole the apples.
 Students/borrow/book; woman/choose/cake; porter/life/suitcase. (Paulston, 1972, p. 45)

From the two typical types of exercise, we can see that the focus in teaching writing with the controlled composition approach is on familiarizing students with grammatical usage and language patterns. And there is no active role needed for ESL learners to play to think about the development of the passage. “The writer is simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures” (Silva, 1990, p. 13) and as a result “the text becomes a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items – a linguistic artifact, a vehicle for language practice” (Silva, 1990, p. 13).

Current-traditional rhetoric

One belief that backed up controlled composition, according to Carr (1967), is that “teaching composition to non-native speakers goes ... step by step from writing sentences to writing paragraphs to writing full length compositions – in considerable mastery of each step before the student proceeds to the next one” (p. 30). So, ESL students are not allowed to move on to a higher level of language skill – free writing – until they have the power to manipulate the target language. But unfortunately, the assumption that if “a student has learned to manipulate English sentence patterns, he has somehow or other learned to handle the ideas expressed in them” (Carr, 1967, p.30) is not true. Carr (1967) continues that “frequently we find students who are able to write beautiful sentences but who come up with something almost unintelligible when asked to compose a paragraph, or students who seem to have mastered the simple paragraph but who explode into a chaotic discourse when asked to compose a full length essay” (p. 30). Raimes (1985) also echoed Carr’s claim with her findings that language proficiency was

not a reliable indicator for proficient university course work. So, controlled composition training obviously was not enough to produce expressive ESL writers. This is why current-traditional rhetoric was introduced in ESL composition education.

The essence of current-traditional rhetoric is to train students to be aware of writing. Its styles and effective expression of ideas, according to the advocates of this approach, cannot be learned with controlled sentence building exercises. Silva (1987) has a clear description of this approach:

The central concern of this approach was the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms. Of primary interest was the paragraph. Here attention was given not only to its elements (topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions), but also to various options for its development (illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, partition, classification, definition, causal analysis, and so on). The other important focus was essay development, actually an extrapolation of paragraph principles to larger stretches of discourse. (In Kroll, 1990, p. 14)

The writer's role is more involved in the writing process with the current-traditional rhetoric approach because writers may need to identify appropriate forms for ideas and then fit sentences into paragraphs. The teacher provides students with facts to write in different forms. Look at an exercise based on this approach:

Bill: Hi, Mary.

Mary: Hi.

B: Where are you going?

M: To the beach. Why don't you come along?

B: I think it's going to rain. Look at those clouds.

M: It can't rain again today! It's rained every day this week.

(Direct speech)

"Hi, Mary," said Bill.

"Hi," the girl answered. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"To the beach," Mary replied. "Why don't you come along?"

"I think it's going to rain." Bill pointed. "Look at those clouds."

"It can't rain again today!" his friend exclaimed. "It's rained every day this week."

(Narration)

Bill greeted Mary. Mary asked where she was going. She said that she was going to the beach. She asked Bill to go along. He answered that he thought it was going to rain. He told Mary to look at the clouds. Mary said that it couldn't rain again that day. It had rained every day that week.

(Essay)

“The pessimist vs. the optimist”

Bill and Mary had opposite ideas about the weather: he was a pessimist and she was an optimist.

When Mary asked Bill to go to the beach with her one day, he was very pessimistic, telling her that he thought it was going to rain, and to look at the clouds. On the other hand, Mary was optimistic. She said that it couldn't rain again that day since it had rained every day that week.

People like Bill, who notice clouds in the sky, are pessimists, while people like Mary, who don't notice them, are optimists. (Arapoff, (1967), pp. 35-37)

This type of exercise demands students to have not only grammatical ability, but also the skills to differentiate between the expressions in different composition forms.

The process approach

The process approach was introduced because the approaches of controlled composition and current-traditional rhetoric did not seem to be able to encourage creative writing. Controlled composition's strict drill practicing for grammatical correctness and current-traditional rhetoric's sentence arrangement for form correctness leave little room for ESL writers to be active and creative participants in writing. Thus the process approach shifts the spotlight from teacher to student, from product to process. Writing skill improves when students write what they want to, rather than writing for correctness (Erazmus, 1960, Briere, 1966). In her 1976's landmark essay: *Teaching composition in the ESL classroom: What we can learn from research in the teaching of English*, Zamel, a major theoretical contributor to the process approach, explicitly supported the shift of attention to students:

We should become more concerned with the individual's purpose and desire for writing, while providing simulation, a minimum of interference and correction

and some indirect instruction” [and] “ESL teachers of writing, whether ESL or English, should continuously strive to provide that instruction which best meets the real needs and abilities of individuals.” (In Silva & Matsuda, 2001, p.33)

Writing is non-linear. The process approach advocates believe that ESL students cannot be trained to be effective writers with one ideal method. To them much effort has been wasted trying to find one ideal method to teach writing. For Zamel (1987) it is not possible that “teaching writing was a matter of prescribing a logically ordered set of written tasks and exercises, and that good writing conformed to a predetermined and ideal model” (p. 697). Zamel (1983) points out that “composing is a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (p. 165). So, “writing is a complex, recursive, and creative process” (Silva, 1990, p. 15).

Process writing educators consider the process approach “not an approach”, but “many approaches” (Liebman-Kleine, 1986, p. 785).

To think of writing as a process instead of a product is simply a perspective, a way of looking at writing, an orientation that has led to hundred of different approaches for researching and teaching and theorizing about writing. Process is not a dogma, but a concept that enables people to see writing in a new way and thereby ask questions that were not asked as long as people saw writing simply as finished products. (Liebman-Kleine, 1986, p. 785)

The focus of the process approach is not merely on the finished product but most importantly the experiences, the procedures that lead to a writing task.

In classroom practice, the concept of process writing includes:

- the process is as important as the product, and the product is as important as the process
- process writing is student-centered
- process writing follows the principles of co-operative learning
- process writing is an enjoyable, social experience and requires a high degree of writer commitment and involvement. (Scane, Guy & Wenstrom, 1991, p. 9)

The steps of process writing usually include:

- Prewriting stage: gathering ideas about what to write about and organizing the ideas into a form to be put on paper.
- First draft: the students put their thoughts on paper or on the computer screen.
- Conferencing/revision with other students and /or with the teacher primarily about the content of the composition.
- Revising when the content has been discussed.
- Conferencing with other students and/or the teacher for final surface correction of grammar, spelling, and other errors.
- Publication/Sharing the final version with others. (Scane, Guy & Wenstrom, 1991, p. 11)

English for academic purposes

The process approach was criticized for not being able to prepare ESL students, especially ESL university students, for academic course work because it focuses too much on the writer, but little on the “particular context for writing” (Silva, 1990, p. 16). To be successful in academic performance, ESL students need to be aware of what professors require. Therefore, English for academic purposes is an approach that shifts the attention of ESL composition back from writer focus in the process approach to reader focus, namely “the academic discourse community” (Silva, 1990, p. 16). According to Jordan (1997), a working definition of English for academic purposes is that it “is concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal education systems” (p. 1).

Advocates of English for academic purposes question the process teachers’ belief that “good writing is involved writing” (Silva, 1990, p. 16) in certain academic contexts. Their point is that academic papers on science and technology deal with facts not personal opinions and academic writing should avoid subjectivity. They point out that university “students rarely have a free choice of topics in their university writing assignments” (Horowitz, 1986b, p. 142). The discrepancy between process teaching and

the real academic demands is thought to create “a false impression of how university writing will be evaluated” (Horowitz, 1986b, p. 143). So, Horowitz (1986a) suggests that “if the starting points of the tasks we give our university-bound students are essentially different from those they are given in the university, we are doing them a disservice and should adjust our pedagogy” (p. 435).

When translated into classroom practice, English for academic purposes aims at training ESL students to be aware of the language and style of the academic “discourse community” (Johns, 1990, p. 28) so that they generate academically acceptable products. The duty of the teachers is to help students to be able to write according to standards and requirements. And the major task for students is to meet these demands in academic contexts. The content that an English for academic purposes course of writing may cover may include definition, paraphrase, summary, synthesis, organization, citation, and language style, etc. Andy Gillett’s website--
<http://www.uefap.co.uk/writing/writfram.htm> --of “Using English for academic purposes” delivers a whole package of the “musts” that ESL university students need to know about the academic discourse. For example, the process of writing an academic essay is that students need first to understand the questions, next find relevant books and articles, then make notes on readings, and finally organize the ideas and write a first draft of the paper. The process of writing an academic essay is one of the “must” for training ESL students’ skills writing English academic papers.

Narrative Inquiry: A Research Approach and A Concept in ESL Composition Instruction

I have briefly presented the main points of the most influential ESL writing approaches. But the purpose of this paper is to deliver a message that the narrative perspective is important in ESL composition. As a matter of fact, narrative writing itself is widely practiced in ESL writing teaching. Many ESL composition teachers have been using personal narratives such as journals, autobiographies, life stories as writing tasks to “create a meaningful writing experience” (Schraeder, 1997, p. 3) for ESL students, whose culture is under-represented in the mainstream and to whom the mainstream does not belong yet. Fraser (1998) used journal writing to help ESL students “cross cultural boundaries” (Margerison, 1994, quoted in Fraser, 1998, p. 4). Brisk used critical autobiographies to “facilitate literary development” (1998, p. 3), helping ESL students practicing language, academic skills and exploring their world. In this paper, the focus is on planting a narrative perspective in ESL composition course deliverance, not on narrative writing activities, so that teachers may realise that a narrative perspective is an applicable way of thinking in teaching ESL composition.

In this section, I will first make a comprehensive comparison among the four approaches: controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach and English for academic purposes, the most influential and representative in the field of ESL writing instruction. And then I will introduce the concept of narrative inquiry, an educational research approach to ESL composition education. Finally, under *Narrative Inquiry and ESL Composition Instruction*, I will discuss the feasibility of translating the essence of narrative inquiry into ESL composition instruction.

The four approaches

Controlled composition aims at developing a correct habit of a language. Its focus lies on individual sentences, not an essay. Current-traditional rhetoric aims at delivering skills so as to construct and arrange discourse in appropriate forms. Its focus is on expression of words and forms of writing. English for academic purposes aims at adapting to academic writing discourse. It focuses on meeting the reader's, to be specific, the professor's requirements so as to produce acceptable writing. The process approach aims at bringing enjoyment, creativity and personal involvement into writing experience. Its focus is on the writing process, the experience that leads to a finished product. If a piece of writing is compared to a forest, the interest of controlled composition is the trees rather than the forest. As for the approach of English for academic purposes, its attention is on catering to what the tree demands, if academic writing is compared to a tree. If the writing is compared to building a house, current-traditional rhetoric is concerned with the frame of the house; while the process approach focuses on creating a meaningful relationship among the bricks, the frame and the house.

Whenever a new approach is introduced, there is always a strength that the old one(s) lacks. For example, controlled composition was criticized for assuming that ESL students are capable of expressing ideas just because they can manipulate the target language. But this is only a myth because if it is true all native speakers should be writers. Current-traditional rhetoric then is introduced to make up the deficiency by teaching ESL students skills of expression and forms of writing in composition class. With similar reasons, the process approach steps in because it seems that controlled composition and current-traditional rhetoric are not able to produce creative second language writers. Meanwhile the approach of English for academic purposes accuses the

process approach of ignoring the product and not preparing ESL students for academic work in English speaking universities. If narrative inquiry is introduced as a concept in ESL composition instruction, there should be a well-grounded reason. Let's take a look at the rationale of narrative perspective in teaching ESL composition.

The essence of narrative inquiry approach for educational research

Narrative inquiry is a widely used qualitative research approach. In teacher education, the aim of narrative inquiry is to understand the teacher's practice in the situation in which they live through their stories. The uniqueness about narrative inquiry is that it centers on teachers, who are the observed in traditional educational research activities. Teachers are the major players in narrative inquiry since its aim weighs first on understanding and then testifying. The few paragraphs following will outline the rationale of narrative inquiry for stressing the role of teachers in educational research in teacher education.

The rationale for narrative inquiry first of all is from Dewey's opinion that education is not static but ever changing. It is not enough that education teaches students the world "as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future" (Dewey, 1963, p. 19). Thus educators should focus on developing student's initiative of learning and teach them how rather than only what. Similarly, in the view of Clandinin, Connelly and other advocates of narrative research approaches, researchers should center on teachers to discover and study teachers' professional knowledge, which has gained from their lives and practices in a changing educational landscape where they live and teach. Centering on the teachers, the practitioners at the front line, is crucial and essential because of a

discrepancy between personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge refined by professional researchers. Unfortunately teachers' personal and situated knowledge is often overlooked and we are expected to accept the refined knowledge. In Clandinin and Connelly's words, the professional knowledge was refined and filtered through the "conduit" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 9). Similarly ESL students' situated knowledge is often overlooked by their instructors

Another basis of the rationale is the finding that classroom teachers are under-represented in published documents as theory-oriented research tends to take away the contexts in research activities. Thus "there are no people, events, or things--only words cut off from their origins" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.10). Narrative inquiry strives to uncover the real picture of teachers in an all-round situation. It can do the same for students, thus enabling them to learn to write in ways that are practical and relate to their own experience.

The third basis of the rationale is that strict and uncreative practicing, rigorous practicing (Schön, 1987, p. 78), can be dangerous due to the existence of a gap between theory and practice. Schön emphasizes it in his famous work--*Educating the reflective practitioner*: "Given the separation of research from practice, rigorous practice can be seen as an application to instrumental problems of research-based theories and techniques whose objectivity and generality derive from the method of controlled experiment" (Schön, 1987, p. 78). To be responsible practitioners, teachers need to reflect on their teaching experience so as to effectively combine theory and practice.

Now, from the above we see two relationships: researcher—teacher in teacher research and teacher—student in composition instruction. It is not difficult for us to

make an analogy between the two pairs of relationships. The researcher in the researcher—teacher relationship is analogized to the teacher in the teacher—student relationship. The role of the teacher in the researcher—teacher relationship is the role of the student in the teacher—student relationship. This analogy translates the concept of narrative inquiry in educational research into a narrative perspective teaching practice in ESL composition classrooms. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to rationalizing the translation, and exploring the significance and feasibility of a narrative perspective in the approaches to ESL composition instruction described above.

Narrative inquiry and ESL composition instruction

From narrative inquiry to composition instruction: First of all I would point out my inclination to the process approach among the four discussed approaches. The reason is that as long as a course is called composition, the major task is to write an essay, which may be as personal as a letter, or as academic as a book report. No matter what the writings are they are written by writers. The process approach is the only approach that puts writers in the center of writing, emphasizing the writers, their “purpose and desire for writing” (Zamel, 1976, in Silva & Matsuda, 2001, p. 23). The process approach encourages students to write what they want, rather than write for correctness. The focus of the process approach is on experiences rather than the finished products. According to Scane, Guy and Wenstrom (1991), “process writing is an enjoyable, social experience and requires a high degree of writer commitment and involvement” (p. 9). Writing is therefore improved in this writer-involved meaningful and enjoyable process. Thus to me the process approach is similar to the narrative research approach – centring on the practitioner. It encourages writer’s initiative via writers’ self-involvement to realize the

goal that writing is an enjoyable and productive process. In fact, any writing assignment is a package, which reveals grammatical maturity and an effectively developed theme as well. Even a 30-minute TOEFL writing task requires the two factors. Let's take a look at the criteria for a full mark task for a TOEFL writing test:

1. Effectively addresses the writing task
2. Is well organized and well developed
3. Uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas
4. Displays consistent facility in the use of language
5. Demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice (TOEFL Information Bulletin, 2002-2003 edition, p. 11).

For this 30-minute TOEFL task, the full mark essay should show well-expressed ideas and appropriate choice of words. It is also interesting to notice that among the five items for grading, there are three for supporting the theme of the essay: organization, expression and development, and two about the correctness of the language: grammatical correctness and structural correctness. In my opinion the process approach is most capable of producing this full-mark essay, even though TOEFL would not allow the process approach since it involves peer and teacher editing of the writing. As mentioned earlier, an essay is a package, including the theme and language. The soul of the essay, however, is the theme, the idea. The language structures are the frames to display the theme nicely. People read for ideas. The soul is from the writer. And it is the process approach that grasps the soul treating students as independent participants and giving them chances to be creative to generate writing that is meaningful to them. In addition, the process approach endeavors to raise writers' awareness of the whole procedure of writing. It supports writers' thinking in developing ideas but also in the process of putting the ideas into the way of writing an essay. Thus when ESL writers are writing, they also reflect on "how I did it". What they are writing and the process of writing are

both meaningful to them. As a result, they will know not only what (contents) but also how (the reason for a better essay or a not so good one) and why (able to evaluate writing). This is exactly what a narrative perspective strives for, a personal meaningful interpretation of the relationship between self and an outside world so that teachers become active participants.

I see the two pairs of relationships not only as being analogous but also as similar as far as the process approach is concerned. The similarity is that both of them place the weight on the less powerful side in the relationship: the teacher over the researcher in narrative inquiry research, the student over the teacher in ESL composition instruction. As a result, both emphasize the input in the process either of research or writing from the less powerful sides. For the process approach teachers, involving writers' experience in the writing process is very important. Even though the experience that is involved in the process of writing may differ from that in a narrative research process, the theme is the same, i.e., participants' participation. Due to this similarity shared by narrative inquiry and the process approach, the rationale for narrative inquiry is translated to ESL composition instruction.

The significance of the translation: The most valuable idea that can be translated from narrative inquiry into teaching is a narrative perspective that espouses student-centered practice because a narrative perspective in teaching will be one that stresses the role the students play in the process of learning. This is the most directly related answer to the next question: "What is the significance of the translation?" The significance of the translation of narrative inquiry of educational research to ESL composition instruction is to bring into ESL composition instruction a concept that may guide the

teacher's deliverance of composition courses to realize the effect gained from student-centered practices and consider students' personal involvement in the writing process. The effect is to leave more space for students' contribution to the learning process. Thus the narrative perspective becomes a *concept* to consider for ESL teachers to deliver composition instructions. Here I want to stress that it is the *concept* of the narrative perspective not the method that is to be translated into the ESL composition classroom because it is not quite possible to use narrative inquiry, a research method, to teach an English course. However, the concept or the perspective of narrative inquiry is applicable and significant in ESL composition instruction. The translated concept of narrative inquiry in ESL writing class is to pay attention to students' personal experience, create a related context and involve the writers in the process of writing so that they enjoy and make sense writing.

The feasibility of the translation: Even though it is not recommended, "no longer operative" (Silva, 1990, p. 13), controlled composition "is still alive and well in many ESL composition classrooms" (Silva, 1990, p. 13). According to Scane et al. (1991), the teacher-centered method, works "best when teaching basic skills", while "the student-centered approach is more successful when reinforcing these skills" (p.5). Practitioners of controlled composition, a teacher-centered practice obviously, also mentioned that controlled exercises for writing are most beneficial to beginners. As early as 1968, Rojas pointed out that "students who can do independent writing without making errors ... are beyond the stage at which drill-type writing is profitable for them" (p. 129). Since there is a value for controlled composition for "teaching basic skills", it is not wise to "throw the baby out with the bath water". Is there a way to keep the baby, i.e. the value, while

trying to get rid of the bath water, i.e., unworkable factors? In my view, a narrative perspective can be a way of keeping the value, but leaving out the unworkable. Let's take a look of a typical controlled composition exercise from Dykstra et al's (1968) *Ananse Tales Work Book*:

Directions: Read the example and fill in the blanks:

Example: Andrew blew noisily (adverb) on his hot (adjective) soup to cool it.

Exercise: The dog chewed _____ on his _____ bone. (p. 75)

This is a noncontextual exercise focusing on intensifying a language structure rather than the students' needs. As I stated, a narrative perspective can be translated in composition instruction as a filter to filter out this deficiency. The simplest way to bring in the narrative perspective could be that the teacher shows the class a picture of a dog with a bone in the mouth and asks the students about their experience with pets. With a narrative perspective, the teacher adds in a controlled composition exercise a context in which students have a chance to talk about what they have seen with their own eyes besides practising the controlled exercises. It can be better if teachers facilitate the students to come up with a sentence with a similar structure from their own experience with pets. For example, the teacher may ask the students, "What would you do if your puppy, swinging her tail, welcomes you back from school?" After shouting out different reactions, under the teacher's illumination, the students may construct *I pat gently on her hairy head*, thus practising the use of adverbs and adjectives in a more meaningful way. The picture and conversation on dogs not only create a context for a controlled exercise but also remind students that there are chances that they can use the learned language structure to express their experience. Teachers can further encourage students to practice adverbs and adjectives on their own experience. Students may come up with personal

related sentences such as “my dog runs happily after her new ball”, “I saw a squirrel climb quickly up a big tree yesterday afternoon” and more. It is a controlled exercise in a sense that the students are practising adverbs and adjectives; however, with a narrative perspective, the teacher is involving the students in drill practising with personal contexts, which creates a meaningful learning experience. We all know that an Internet URL works when we click on it. The narrative perspective is just like a URL link. If the teacher gives a signal or an incitant, it will become active in the classroom, which means that a connection is created between a controlled exercise and the students who work on it.

The weakness in current-traditional rhetoric is its neglect of the contents of a piece of writing, its focus on form over content. Knowing the forms of writing is important, and so is knowledge of fitting sentences and paragraphs into discourse forms. However if the attention is too focused on forms, the implication is that ideas are not as important, which is not true because the nerve of a piece of writing is the contents, the idea it conveys. Readers read mainly for ideas. The format should be in a subordinate position. Playwrights write for the stage, but Shakespeare is the best not because of the format but rather the stories. And the most precious idea for an essay results from the writer’s creative insight on a topic. Some process approach practitioners consider that “involved writing is good writing” (Silva, 1987, p. 16). To be involved, the contents have to be stressed, and the writer should be concerned. With a narrative perspective in current-traditional rhetoric, teachers are able to balance the input from the teacher and the students in ESL composition instruction. I will illustrate it with an example.

The exercise showed on pages 9-10 of this paper is a very typical one of current-traditional rhetoric practice. It gives students the facts/contents:

Bill: Hi, Mary.

Mary: Hi.

B: Where are you going?

M: To the beach. Why don't you come along?

B: I think it's going to rain. Look at those clouds.

M: It can't rain again today! It's rained every day this week.

And next students practice fitting the same contents in different forms such as direct speech, indirect speech, narrative or essay. It is a necessary exercise, but lacks personal involvement. In this exercise, the forms of writing such as direct or indirect speech are the input the teacher introduces to the students from the textbook. And so is the content since the story of Bill and Mary is given to the students. The scale of inputs in ESL writing is unbalanced. The teacher provides two weights, forms (direct speech, narration, essay, etc.) and content (Bill and Mary's conversation) to the scale, but the students have nothing to contribute to the other side of the scale. If translating the concept of narrative inquiry into composition teaching, the teacher may try to encourage students' involvement in writing activities. They may ask the students to write a personally involved story and rewrite it in the forms of exposition, description, direct or indirect speech or essay. When students practice forms through using the stories they experienced or through writing about topics they really care about, balance is achieved, each side of the scale having one weight: forms from the teacher and content from the students. There are many channels to gain first-hand materials to write about and practice forms with. Pictures, visits and interviews are all valuable sources of personal experience for thinking, writing and developing into different forms of writing.

The problem found in the process approach, according to the advocates of the approach of English for academic purposes, is that it fails to prepare students for academic work in universities based on its focus on the process of writing and personal needs, but not enough on scholarly products. On the contrary, the aim of ESL composition for academic purposes, is that ESL students learn language of academic discourse so as to meet the requirements for academic assignments such as summaries, critiques, book reports, essays and so on. It is absolutely necessary that foreign students entering the academic arena play as per the rules as in athletics. However, being aware of the rules is only one of the factors needed for playing the game, and not the vital factor that guarantees successful performance. Similarly, as with sports rules, ESL students should know academic discourse, but there is more to know besides standard discourse for academic assignments. English for academic purposes practitioners still need to consider the role of the author in an academic writing assignment. Criticizing the “dogma” (Horowitz, 1986b, p. 142) of the process approach that good writing is involved writing, Horowitz (1986b) wrote “students rarely have a free choice of topics in their university writing assignments” (p. 142). Therefore, since it gives free choice, “the process-oriented approach gives students a false impression of how university writing will be evaluated” (Horowitz, 1986b p. 143). If practicing involved writing may give this false impression, uninvolved writing may also leave a false impression—that creativity is not as important as academic discourse. As stated earlier, just like sports rules, academic discourse is vital for academic success. However creativity/invention is not only important for good academic performance, but also beneficial to students’ academic studies and after-school professional careers. A narrative perspective always centering

on people's needs should be the source of encouraging creativity. No matter what the instructional approach a teacher may use, nurturing creativity should be the keystone in his/her educational practice because education is not only a process of inheriting but also of adjusting and developing.

English for academic purposes is recently well practiced in ESL programs because ESL students' work has to be acceptable to "the host of academic institution" (Jordan, 1997, p. 166). I have to agree on this because it was my motive and goal to take an academic writing course in my first semester at Memorial University of Newfoundland. However I agree more with Wu (1994) that ESL students are devalued because "their [ESL writing specialists'] attention to ESL students' inability to write and cultural backgrounds justify a pedagogical focus on academic discourse more than either 'self-reflection' or writing that explores ideological issues" (p. 3). To teach ESL students to be good writers, the fundamental thing to do is to pass on to ESL students the message of creativity and invention. And it should be planted especially into the mind of those students who were educated in a product-oriented learning environment. For example, most Chinese students were overwhelmed by all levels of examinations. They learn for passing tests. Thus their creativity was rubbed down by thinking too much of tests. I think there should be a way to avoid this.

Jordan's (1997) *English for academic purposes – A guide and resource book for teachers*, as its name says, is a resource book for teaching English for academic purposes. For academic writing, Jordan introduced the process approach along with the product approach. In fact, English for academic purposes can be called a product approach and academic writing is included in it. Thus the process approach can be used to teach

English for academic purposes. If English for academic purposes and the process approach are combined in ESL composition instruction, it may be an effective combination because it may bring students' personal involvement which English for academic purposes neglects and their immediate need for academic work which the process approach overlooks into ESL writing teaching. This combination can be practical and should work well in ESL composition teaching. Each should compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

As discussed earlier, the process approach shares the perspective of the narrative approach, though implicitly. The key of the process approach is that students learn from the process rather than the end product. Therefore, it focuses on students' *involvement* in ESL writing so that students learn and know how to write in the process, which should be enjoyable and personally meaningful. In other words, the process approach aims to help students discover a relationship between how they wrote, the process and end product, the quality of their writing. In comparison, what the narrative perspective strives for is a personal meaningful interpretation of the relationship between self and an outside world. Even though the process approach when in practice involves concrete activities and steps such as writing, revising, sharing, etc, the key is to initiate students' active involvement in practicing writing so that they learn from their own experience. Thus what the narrative research approach and the process approach to ESL writing shares is the opinion that pays attention to the people, the seemingly subordinate side in a relationship, researcher and the researched or teacher and learner. Therefore, in fact, the combination is to transfer the process approach's the narrative concept into teaching English for academic purposes.

Let's discuss the combination with an academic writing task. Writing summaries is an indispensable skill for academic work in universities. To summarize is to abstract *other's* work. Since it is academic writing, the characteristics of summaries need to be taught to students. These include presenting the main ideas, using one's own words, no personal ideas, no longer than 30% of the original article and so on. These are nonnegotiable rules for writing a summary. However, although writing summaries allows no personal ideas, practicing writing is undoubtedly a personal experience. After presenting the characteristics of summaries, the teacher usually will assign the students to write a summary. The process approach practitioner would ask students to discuss the teachers' feedback on the summaries they wrote. The feedback might differ from person to person. One might have missed some main ideas; others might have added personal comments with such a phrase as "I think". The process of discussing with peers about the teacher's comments provides students quality time thinking about a summary-writing assignment. Some of the students may have written some papers for their study. The teacher could ask the students to exchange their papers so that each writes a summary of the other's paper. As the authors of the paper, the students must know what kind of summary would satisfy them.

English for academic purposes practitioners may argue that personal writing is not the most common form of writing in academic contexts. However, it is indeed more common than it used to be. Here my point that the process approach shares the idea of the narrative research approach does not necessarily mean to write personal stories. I mentioned on page 14 of this paper that narrative writing as a writing activity is not the focus of this paper. The essence of the process approach is to make writing meaningful

and the process meaningful, and learn from the process of practice writing rather than from the product. All this is realized in bringing students into the process to be active participants, just like the roles of the researched in the narrative research process. What the ESL students learn is how to write for academic purposes. What to write is their subject field. Various criteria for academic discourse are the focus of English for academic purposes, while the process approach can be applied to deliver these criteria effectively. This is a workable and feasible combination.

Of course, the process approach is not a narrative approach. It focuses on learning writing in the process. Thus the process of writing is experiences of learning. ESL students learn writing from their experience, successful or unsuccessful, not merely from the product. Experience can be from interacting with others; so the process approach encourages cooperative learning. Experience can be individual; so it encourages learners' involvement. All this is to make the learning process rich, meaningful and enjoyable. Confucius also emphasizes *joy*: "Knowledge is not equal to devotion. Devotion is not equal to joy." What a learning strategy can be more efficient than one that can create joy? This is the main reason that I value the process approach. The pity is that in practice the approach process leans to writing, rewriting, revising, etc. As a result, it becomes a little routine and mechanical. However, with a narrative perspective, meaningful and enjoyable learning becomes *explicit* and a focus in every stage of the process. When considering the examples of using the process approach to teach ESL students academic writing, we actually combine a pattern (the process of learning) with a theme (the academic writing). It is only when we add a narrative perspective in the

combination that learning can be really goal-oriented and framed in an enjoyable environment.

Conclusion of this section

The narrative perspective in educational research values teachers and their practical knowledge, and encourages their creative and situated practices by centering on teachers rather than researchers. Similarly ESL composition teaching should and can value students and their personal knowledge, and encourage their creative and situated practice. English for academic purposes is a product-centered approach. Even though it is welcomed by some ESL teachers and students, it is still a short-term approach for immediate result. From the above discussion, it is not difficult to figure out that among the four most influential approaches, the process approach has an attribute of a narrative perspective and a long-term vision. It is also a comprehensive approach, which can be used to teach structure-centered, form-centered and academic product-centered ESL composition. Just as in narrative inquiry research, where researchers center on teachers to empower them to become creative practitioners, students should be the center in the process of learning so as to be cultivated to be creative learners.

No one would doubt that students themselves are the decisive factors for good learning. In order to cultivate the initiative of learning, educators need to focus more on teaching them how to think rather than on thought itself. This should be the ultimate goal of education. And this is what a narrative perspective can achieve.

Horowitz (1986a) once doubted the process approach's advocacy of involved writing: "A basic dogma of process-oriented teaching is that good writing is 'involved' (p.142). On the contrary, Sauvé (2000) points out that "writing is powerful in its

implications for the individual” (P. 129) and “the way people find and express their unique voice in the world” (P. 131). The writer needs to be involved in experiencing the meaning of writing and its process. She continues:

Those learning English are seldom choosing to abandon all they value in their own cultures, languages, and lives. They simply are choosing a new medium in which to express it. We have not appeared to understand how smothering it must be for learners to spend all their time in pointless exercises, which focus on grammar and have nothing whatsoever to do with life. As a teacher, you have the power to change that. (Sauvé, 2000, P. 131)

ESL students need a space for sharing their valuable differences and in the composition class, students need to be able to articulate the factors for good or not so good writing tasks. A narrative perspective should be a medium to achieve this goal.

Conclusion

Having a perspective in teaching is very important. Without it the theme of composition instruction may be unclear and learning can be an inconsistent and unrelated activity. A teacher can be a specialist in his/her teaching area; however, if he/she teaches only skills or even worse decontextualized skills, students learn only pieces of unrelated “skills”. Students usually do not sense satisfaction from such teaching just like my classmates and myself in Professor Zhang’s class, and my students in my class. I did not have a perspective while teaching ESL writing. When I was teaching ESL writing, I did not have a perspective to follow to teach the course. What I delivered was only the language structures. If I had had a narrative perspective, I would have been guided by this perspective, bringing students’ involvement into the writing exercise to achieve the balance of the inputs from the textbook and students as well. I would not have given up assigning free topic essays so easily with an excuse: It was too much work to read and

correct the essays. I would have worked out some strategies to integrate the narrative perspective with ESL writing. It is certain that my students would have had a different experience of learning English writing.

With a perspective in teaching, teachers know what they are doing and can make good decisions when choosing textbooks and teaching techniques. At the same time students, accordingly, can make sense of their learning no matter how tough the subject matter might be. Thus teachers will avoid the mistakes I made when teaching ESL composition: teaching without a specific goal or perspective in mind. If the teacher has a teaching perspective, say, a narrative perspective, the students will learn not only skills but also the meaning of the skills, and the meaning of the learning activities resulting from personal involvement. Then learning becomes an experience beneficial to the growth of a person for his/her whole life because the learning is relevant to his/her life. From reading works on narrative inquiry and other narrative research approaches in educational research, I believe the narrative perspective is especially valuable to ESL composition instruction because it focuses on students, their contribution to generating meaning from different backgrounds and their involvement in the process of writing. This involvement refers not only to content that the students have a chance to write about but also to developing an independent mind and examining issues that interest them in a systematic and thorough way. In this way, the ESL writing experience will not only prepare the students to be good school performers but is also more likely produce creative independent social contributors. And English writing may not be seen as a difficult but rather an enjoyable and profitable learning experience.

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